

SETTLER COLONIALISM AND WHITE SETTLER RESPONSIBILITY IN THE
KARUK, KONOMIHU, SHASTA AND NEW RIVER SHASTA HOMELANDS:
A WHITE UNSETTLING MANIFESTO

By

Laura Sarah Hurwitz

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Committee Membership

Dr. Noah Zerbe, Committee Chair

Dr. Renee Byrd, Committee Member

Dr. Michael YellowBird, Committee Member

Dr. Yvonne Everett, Program Graduate Coordinator

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ABSTRACT

SETTLER COLONIALISM AND WHITE SETTLER RESPONSIBILITY IN THE KARUK, KONOMIHU, SHASTA AND NEW RIVER SHASTA HOMELANDS: A WHITE UNSETTLING MANIFESTO

Laura Sarah Hurwitz

Contributing to recent research into settler colonialism, this paper takes an on the ground look at how this system manifests today. This research turns its lens on the white settler, unmasking settler myths of innocence and contributes to an understanding of how whiteness and white supremacy shape settler colonialism in what is now called the United States. This is a place-based study, focusing on the Klamath and Salmon Rivers. Consequences and complexities of the “back to the land” movement are looked at, and the question of “back-to-whose-land?” is asked? A convivial research approach, which is a back and forth interplay of analysis and action, has been utilized for this project. Also examined are efforts by settlers to engage with unsettling, both as individuals and through a collective settler effort at organizing, under the name “Unsettling Klamath River.” Unsettling can be described as the work of white settlers within the broader movement to decolonize, that is led by Indigenous People. Some false narratives have begun to shift and yet, this population of white settlers remains largely in a state of paralysis due to; a fragile settler identity, a reliance on a false entitlement and a debilitating fear of what will happen if truth-telling occurs. Building upon lessons learned, this paper concludes by

offering ways that white settlers can begin to chip away at oppressive structures and move forward out of a state of complicity into a sense of responsibility, that is long overdue.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis is a call-out to white settler society to break out of a long-standing silence and complicity. It is a call to engage in truth-telling. This paper reflects a continued hope that white settler society along the Klamath and Salmon Rivers will engage in the process of unsettling and will support one another in doing so. That together we can figure out what responsibility looks like and transcend the common expected trajectory of history, that dictates “those with power and privilege will never relinquish it”. It is a call to collectively take action aimed at dismantling the settler colonial system. This work is on behalf of the healing of humanity.

While I take full responsibility for the contents of this paper, this project is a product of the collective work of many people (both Indigenous and settler) along the Klamath and Salmon Rivers. There are many individuals to whom I would like to express gratitude. Dr. Noah Zerbe for patience, encouragement and diligence as my committee chair. Dr. Renee Byrd for joining my team in the culminating stages and working with my narrow time-frame. Dr. Michael YellowBird for sharing wisdom, reflecting back to me what I was trying to put forth with this work and for believing in me. To my comrades and mentors, Joe Orozco, Rhoby Cook, Jack Surmani and Suzanne Guerra for inviting me into the world of Convivial Research, provided me with the tools necessary to move into unknown and uncertain decolonizing realms, for always complicating things and for reminding me, in the hardest of moments, that what I am doing is an act of healing. To Tina Bennett, for sustained conversations

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Lastly, to my white settler community members and friends who know in your heart what is true and what is right. We need you! May you face the fear, break the silence and stand up for justice. Each one of us that joins this movement to unsettle brings something important and unique and will make a significant contribution towards healing and the unknown future that awaits us.

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INTRODUCTION

Standing at the top of the Etna Mountain Summit and gazing across at the many ridges, one layered upon the other as far as the eye can see, is a majestic sight to behold. “Look he says, as he dramatically casts his arm crosswise along the horizon. There is nothing out there. Nothing but wilderness” (one settler introducing another settler to the Karuk, Konomihu, Shasta and New River Shasta Homelands).¹ This breathtaking view looks down into the Salmon River drainage and the Salmon River flows into the Klamath River. The confluence, where these two rivers meet is called Katamin and is the center of the world for the Karuk people.² The above welcome to this area of study is not uncommon and succinctly represents the experience of so many settlers who have come to this place. Settler people who have been born and raised on the Rivers hold similar beliefs: that the land that they call home, is wild and open land.³ Only recently have narratives begun to shift within settler communities, acknowledging this land as Indigenous land. Most settlers still carry the assumption that this beautiful place is here for us, to experience as our own true paradise. Derek describes,

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1. Who is a settler? The Unsettling Minnesota sourcebook (2009,45) as well as an emerging cannon of research from Indigenous and settler colonial studies concur that although many people were brought, not necessarily of their own will to settler colonial situations as slaves, indentured servants or refugees. Anyone who is not Indigenous, living on a land base within a settler colonial state, is a settler living on stolen land. All settler people do not benefit equally from the settler colonial system and this recognition cannot be understated. Race, class, gender, gender identification, ability, sexual orientation and many other factors contribute to the degree to which one profits.
 2. See Figure one of the Karuk Ancestral territories
 3. Rivers, refers to the Salmon and Klamath rivers and will be addressed as such throughout this paper.

at first, I came out and didn't even think anyone lived here. I thought it was the wilderness and no-one lived here. Then all of a sudden, I came across this school in Forks of Salmon, and was like, this shouldn't be here. What the hell is that building doing there? This is my middle of no-where. I then realized that there was Native people here and what was going on with the fish kill and the salmon and layers and layers came, of understanding where I actually was. That was actually years of process.

Derek is one of ten settler people interviewed during the course of this study and his testimony illuminates a good starting point to begin to understand the settler, in this place.⁴

This thesis is written from the perspective of a white settler. For over two decades, I have lived in the Konomihu, Karuk, Shasta and New River Shasta homelands, that are situated along the Klamath and Salmon Rivers in Humboldt County, California. Most of the settler people currently living in this place came here to live a more respectful and meaningful life, then mainstream society in the cities and suburbs permitted. Many of this group of settlers are morally conscious beings and in our hearts, desire to live in a socially and environmentally just world.

In this place, settler people and Indigenous people have learned to co-exist in a somewhat cordial manner even while the overarching settler colonial system continues to benefit settlers at the expense of Indigenous Peoples. While relationships have been formed and bridges have been built between Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents, deep seeded tensions exist due to this settler colonial system that attempts to erase

4. In order to protect the anonymity of the subjects of this study, pseudonyms will be used throughout this paper.

Indigenous people and replace them with settler on the land. The acute awareness among Indigenous Peoples of the displacement from their ancestral territory can be read on the T-shirt of one Karuk elder: “Got Land? Thank an Indian!”

This paper focuses on Indigenous people and white settler people of European descent because we/they comprise the majority of the population in the location of this study. These groups are by no means the only actors within the settler colonial structure. While it is not the focus of this thesis, it is important to acknowledge the injustices endured by people of color around the world today. As a white settler, it is not my place to determine the role or responsibility of non-white settlers. I will argue throughout this paper that it is imperative to center Indigenous struggles and worldview not only as a matter of justice for Indigenous peoples but for the well-being of life on earth, thus the Indigenous/ Non-Indigenous dichotomy is necessary and useful.

Boom and bust economies have been bringing settler people to this place since the original gold rush of the late 1840's, followed by logging, and finally marijuana. Today, remnants of all of these settler societies remain present on the Rivers. The broad classification of back-to-the-lander encompasses the marijuana growers and represents the majority of settlers that occupy the land here in this place. This is also the group to which I most identify. For all of these reasons, back-to-the-land settlers will be the primary, but not the sole focus of this study. In the eyes of many local Indigenous people, white people fall into two distinct groups, Okies and hippies.

In addition to the economic attractants, the Black Bear Ranch commune has also brought a steady influx of back-to-the-landers through its doors, in the fifty years of its existence. Black Bear Ranch, continues today to bring settler people to the Rivers. It is estimated that this portal has brought well over a thousand people, to the Karuk, Konomihu, Shasta and New River Shasta homelands.⁵

When I came to the Rivers for the first time I had never heard of Karuk, Konomihu, New River Shasta or Shasta people. I unaware that Indigenous Peoples remained strong here in their ancestral territories. Nor did I realize that I was coming to one of the last places colonized, in what is now called the United States. I merely knew that I was leaving suburbia to come back-to-the-land and live a better life. I had known about Black Bear Ranch for many years before making the cross-country journey to move there with my four-month old baby girl. I had numerous friends who had lived on this commune and had heard stories and even read books written about the history of the somewhat infamous place. However, prior to coming here, I never had heard anything about the Indigenous people whose homelands this commune sits upon and neighbors with.

In the late 60's when hippies began to steadily arrive to the Rivers, settlers were not as aware about the past or current manifestations of settler colonialism, nor did we/they understand what role settlers continue to play in this system. Even while

5. Portals are the major gateways through which settler people find their way to the Rivers and is a concept that was collectively generated during the course of this study. This idea will be explained in detail in chapter 3, The Settler Situation.

relationships and friendships have been forged between settlers and Indigenous Peoples from the get go, national myths depicting Indigenous people as a thing of the past remain dominant.

It is not surprising then, that narratives alive within settler communities today continue to portray colonization as a one-time event, that is over. The expectation has therefore become to move “forward” with an assumed settler society as the norm. This explains why, before I came here, Indigenous people were never mentioned during letters and phone calls with friends who described life on the Rivers to me. Settler society has consciously built a new society on top of an already existing one. Here, settler colonialism continues to benefit settler people at the cost of Indigenous people and yet, in many ways settler colonialism has been a failure.⁶

Fifty years ago, when back-to-the-land settlers began to arrive in force, the social and political climate was quite different. For many Indigenous people, it was a time when the experiences of suffering abuse at boarding schools was fresh and raw. Ray came to this place in 1954 and he recalls this boarding school era vividly.

They did, they sent all the Indian kids. They wouldn't let them go to school down here, especially when they got into high school. There were a lot of Indians in grade school when you look at the old picture of Orleans grade school they were all there, and when they got to upper grades they decided to send the Indian kids off to the Indians schools.

6. White settlers by far, benefit the most and this will be discussed in subsequent chapters.

This was a time when the repercussions of speaking one's own native languages or being "Indian" remained in the fore-front of Indigenous people's consciousness. At that time, it was exponentially more unsafe than it is today, to be Indigenous. Indigenous people were forced to remain underground and to go quietly about their traditional practices. Thus, at this time Indigenous people were even more invisible to settler people than they are today.

Today is a much different time, as more people have begun to understand what colonization is and how it is harmful to life on this planet. It is becoming harder to deny that time tested traditional Indigenous knowledge is equivalent to true sustainability. While back-to-the-land people chose a new life style because we/they rejected mainstream settler society and sought a healthier way of living, today the harmful ways of settler society have begun to reveal themselves in force. Settlers have also begun to recognize who we are in the evolving story of this place. For settler society, the recognition of ourselves as settlers has taken over three years, although some are still refusing to accept this basic reality.

It is no small wonder that tensions exist between settler and Indigenous Peoples in the Karuk, Konomihu, Shasta, and New River Shasta homelands. An Indigenous woman describes what lies at the roots of these tensions. She explains,

This beautiful place I call home was environmental destroyed by all the greed with the green gold and still is being destroyed by the greed. As well as the settlers wanting to change this place. They came to this place because of the beauty, so leave it that way, don't need to change it. They all so try to imitate the great creator and fix their wrongs.

Until recently these underlying stresses have been tiptoed around, or swept under the rug in efforts to forge relationships and transgress the brutal realities of history and the disparities that remain between settler and Indigenous societies today. Renee illuminates these tensions.

There is an influx of people coming in a buying up place where Indigenous people used to live and there has to be some serious resent it is only reasonable against people who exercise what was formerly their rights. As a white person to do that without realizing the situation, as a white person coming in and taking something that used to belong to somebody. I don't know that there is anything particular you can that we can do, other than realize it. But to blithely go on with your own plans for a place without considering other people's opinions is the lowest rung of respect you can do. And it's not all that common that people really consider what has traditionally had been done with a place and how people would feel about what has been done with a place.

There remains an underlying assumption that, if we do not talk about adverse and brutal realities and resulting tensions between societies, then they will dissipate or fade on their own. I see the tensions more like a festering wound. A thin layer of skin may have grown back but it remains septic inside. An infection will continue to spread on the inside until the root causes of the wound are addressed. Land is clearly at the root of the settler colonial problem, and in this place "Land is Life" (Wolfe, 1999).

Perhaps finding words to talk about these very real tensions might help us as a human society, to begin to be able to move forward with true integrity. The realization that colonization is ongoing and that settlers continue to have a hand in it today, forces a recognition or a truth telling. What does truth-telling mean? Waziyatawin explains that,

the need for truth telling espoused here assumes that what has passed for the truth may not be truthful at all. It assumes that the

educational system has not engaged our history in a satisfactory way and that most Minnesotans still operate in the realm of myth making. This means that many well-intentioned people, who ordinarily would be horrified at the notion of being complicit in the cover-up of genocide and the ongoing denial of justice for Indigenous Peoples, have done just that. They have maintained ignorance about this history while continuing to enjoy their lives, unchallenged (71,2008).

This is exactly the overarching situation in the Konomihu, Karuk, Shasta and New River Shasta homelands and it continues at the expense of Indigenous peoples. Waziyatawin describes how most morally conscious settler people are troubled when they realize that they may be causing unintended harm to others and,

also feel compelled to commit to some kind of corrective action. Most, however, have no idea how to implement such a monumental project for justice that would rectify historical harms. So, they simply continue with their lives, confining the awareness of ongoing injustices to the recesses of their mind (72, 2008).

This describes the majority of back-to-the-land settler people in this area of study well. It is irresponsible for settler society to continue on in this way. It is also precisely why settler people, must actively and continually push colonization to the forefront of our consciousness, no matter how uncomfortable it makes us or how painful this might be. While many times it has been dangerous to do so, Indigenous Peoples have been truth telling since colonization began.

Some white settlers living along the Klamath and Salmon Rivers have been making efforts to engage in truth-telling. It has been a struggle, there has been much push back and the telling of more truthful stories is only a first step. Unsettling is a way

to describe the work of white settlers within the broader decolonization movement that is led by Indigenous Peoples. “For white settlers unsettling is a process of facing and destroying a false entitlement and be-heading an identity that affords us a toxic privilege (Unsettling Klamath River, 2015). This means working to return land to Indigenous Peoples and creating on the ground material changes to unjust circumstances.

Unsettling Klamath River can also be described as a painstaking and slow growing movement. For two years straight anywhere from 5 to twenty-five white settler people met one time a month. We called ourselves Unsettling Klamath River.⁷ We worked to develop an analysis of settler colonialism and who we are within this system. We aimed to take action towards unsettling ourselves and dismantling settler society. We spent much time trying to name the principal contradiction that we are faced with as settlers living on stolen land. While white settlers perpetuate and benefit the most from the persistence of the settler colonial system, we also suffer from a disconnection and a longing to belong to a people and a place. This contradiction is very difficult for the settler person to hold.

The elephant in the room has grown too big to be overlooked anymore. There has been some acknowledgement in these communities that we are settlers who are living on stolen land. White settler entitlement is so thick that this alone has taken many years to accomplish. Clearly not all settlers in this place will agree with or accept these truths,

7. Please see appendix for Unsettling Klamath River's Points of Unity.

but it is fair to say that old paradigms are beginning to shift. While it may bring about a somewhat paralyzing fear for many settlers, a small group of settlers have begun to carve a path towards responsibility. I argue that white people have a specific responsibility to Indigenous Peoples and to all life. This research paper is a call to white settler society to come together and assume a collective responsibility in the Indigenous homelands that we occupy.

Chapter one will outline the methods employed to conduct this research project. Chapter two will review literature regarding settler colonialism, decolonization and unsettling. The third chapter, The Setter Situation will set the stage for understanding the white settler in this place. The fourth chapter will explore settler innocence and the common ways in which most settler people defend these myths of purity. Chapter five will unpack whiteness and how it interacts with settler colonialism. The concluding section seeks to name where white settler society in the Karuk, Konomihu, Shasta and Shasta New River is in the process of unsettling, will illuminate obstacles to the taking of responsibility and finally offer suggestion as to how white settlers can move forward.



Figure 1. refer to caption

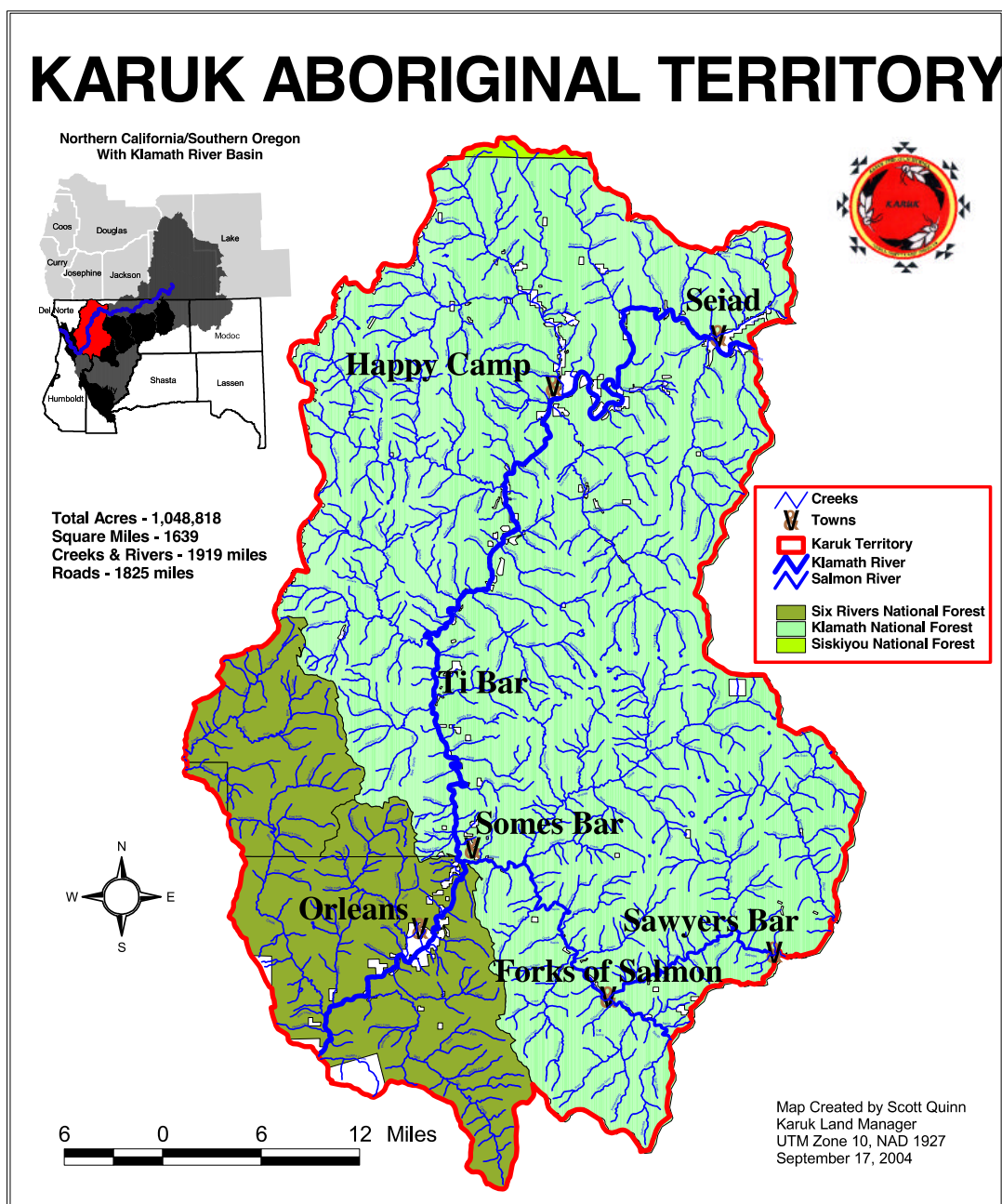


Figure 2. Karuk Tribe Map of Aboriginal Territory

METHODS

This research project has been conducted from within the communities that it seeks to study. I belong to the population that I am investigating. My experiences living in the Karuk, Konimihu, Shasta and New River Shasta homelands for the past twenty-two years, both exemplifies and deeply enriches my understandings of my place as a white settler living on stolen Indigenous lands. These homelands are unique as they are not reservation lands and Indigenous people have remained in place. My own experiences as a white settler person greatly inform this work and this auto-ethnographical approach allows the process itself, to help illuminate the final product.

This work has challenged my way of knowing about the world and what it means to be human and to have humanity (Wynter, 2015). Throughout the course of this project I have come to accept that the language I have been given with which to speak to this topic is not only limited but is insufficient. It is not possible to do analytical justice to such a deep and complicated matter by using the written word (Wilson, 2008, Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). This being said, I have tried to tease apart as many nooks and crannies of illuminating experiences and bring to light some new concepts and knowledges that have been collectively created throughout this research project.

True knowledge is never the work of a single individual, it is always collectively produced; I came to know this through my participation in a convivial research group. While I, the author, take full responsibility for the final analysis in this paper, the concepts and ideas created from this research project are the product of multiple communities of

people residing along the Klamath and Salmon Rivers. Individuals and groups both organized and informal, both Indigenous and settler, have contributed to this work through interviews, focus groups, community education events and sustained dialogue in person and on social media, over a seven-year period of time. Together, we have created new understandings and tools to aid us in our steps towards a decolonized world.

The collective approach taken for this thesis, was a convivial one. Convivial Research is built upon the premise that communities themselves are best suited to analyze their own issues and to strategize positive action for social change. I was introduced to these ideas by a friend, who invited by me to join a research group that she was a part of. She explained to me simply, that we are all researchers. People on the Rivers, as people everywhere, are the experts about their own lives. “Similar to participatory action or militant research, the convivial research approach presented here insists that a successful research project specifies an object of study, research agenda, direct action(s), and system of information and that these be the result of collective efforts to solve local problems and advance the shared interests of a community of struggle” (Mitotedigital, n.d.).

The use of convivial research that challenges a privileged group, such as white people, is an unusual endeavor. Convivial research refers to “communities of struggle.” As this project has unfolded, questions have surfaced, as to whether the research approach was the best fit for the white community. What constitutes a community of struggle? If there is push-back from a large portion of settler society are we still a community of struggle? Nevertheless, a tremendous amount of learning has been experienced, both

personally and collectively, and I do believe that some worn out, untruthful colonial narratives have shifted as a result of this work.

Contrary to Western Societies' gaze upon social issues through a binary lens, convivial research embraces contradictions which are “opposing forces that share a common element” (Zerkel, 1997, 24). Contradictions are everywhere and when left alone they may cause strife, but if exposed they can help us to direct our action. Many times, systems of oppression seem so enormous and infallible that humans remain paralyzed in their wake. We may not know how, or where to begin. Before my introduction to convivial research I did not fully grasp the meaning or impact of the multitude of contradictions that society today is up against. Nor did I fathom that naming these contradictions could illuminate openings for change. Without embracing and understanding contradictions much of the challenging and uncomfortable dialogue we are creating would have been stopped short at the get-go. “How can you say that we are all living on stolen land and talk about re-patriating land when you own land? You are a hypocrite.” I have heard this question and felt the sting of these accusations a multitude of times over the last seven years. I acknowledge the validity of these questions. I also believe that we have to start somewhere and refuse to remain paralyzed by the gravity of the situation. I have felt the weight of other white people's defenses trying to close the door on these conversations that make us feel uncomfortable and uncertain about our future. Without a convivial tool-box I would not be articulate or brave enough to remain dedicated to opening doors to new and more truthful dialogue.

As a way of organizing our work, we have used an educational strategy called Coyuntura, or conjunctural analysis. Coyuntura has been used by grass-roots struggles around the world including Latin America and Canada, as well as by the Black Panthers in the United States. Coyuntura is the Spanish word for conjuncture and is an on-going process of analysis and action. Conjunctural analysis can more simply be called “naming the moment.” The original concept of, “the moment” was developed by Antonio Gramsci during the 1920's at a time when Fascism had taken hold in Europe. Gramsci made the differentiation between structural (more long term) and conjunctural (short term) aspects of social organization and illuminated that an important tension exists between the two. The Jesuit Center describes how naming the moment is a spiral process, and is broken down into four phases: identifying ourselves, naming the issues and struggles, assessing the forces and planning for action. What has since become 'popular education' was dispersed to a wider audience of people by Paulo Freire who made clear that education either aims to support those in power or to uplift those struggling against those powers (Barndt,1991). The main goal is effective action for social justice.

Coyuntura is commonly described not as a method, but as a way of thinking. It challenges the EITHER/OR (binary) way of thinking imposed by dominant society and offers a more complex BOTH/AND way of understanding. Knowing that we can be BOTH settler people that continue the vicious system of settler colonialism, AND also be human beings who are bound by systems of oppression even while we might benefit from them. We have got to start somewhere. This simple shift in thinking has been

instrumental in helping to hold the complexities of being settlers who wish to decolonize, while still living within the confines of the settler colonial system.

During the planning stages for this project I had imagined organizing a Coyuntura gathering for settler and Indigenous people to come together and begin to talk about these issues. A friend and fellow member of the convivial group who is Indigenous reminded me of the recurring dynamic where Indigenous people feel compelled to excuse or soothe individual white people's guilt, when tensions around colonization are discussed. I have not only witnessed this very scenario many times but have myself been that white person who has been “let off the hook” by Indigenous friends who have reassured me that I am a good person, or it is not my fault. This illumination by my friend might seem minor but it was paramount to my process in figuring out how to organize. It became very clear that the white community to which I belong had a lot of work to do amongst ourselves before we were ready to engage in broader decolonizing with Indigenous community members.

Since the Back to the Land movement began, white people on the Rivers have worked both for and with Indigenous peoples to create environmental change such as dam removal, forest activism and returning fire to the landscape. This work has been done mostly within the accepted and unchallenged context of a colonized world. Social inequities, such as access to land and resources have not been formally acknowledged or challenged, nor have systems of white supremacy. Decolonizing change is slow. In order to take part in decolonizing struggles it is imperative that non-Indigenous white people are able to identify as settlers living on stolen land and that narratives around assumed white settler innocence and certainty are shifted. This first phase of identifying ourselves as white settler people,

has taken three years thus far and will be ongoing throughout time as these ideas spread and become normalized.

There are structural and conjuncture ways of analyzing the moment. An obvious structural problem along the Rivers is private property and the occupation of the land by settlers, as well as institutions like the U.S. Forest Service. If we view just the structural problems embedded in history, economics and the power structures of elites it may feel insurmountable and can paralyze us from acting because we by no means can combat all of these systems at once. Naming the particular moment in time will help illuminate where it will be effective to focus our work towards social justice.

At the outset of this research, interviews were conducted with ten white settlers, five women and five men. Their ages ranged from the late 20's to late 70's. One was born outside of the United States and two were born in the Klamath River region. Almost all of the subjects were chosen because of their engagement with Indigenous peoples and communities, and their expressed desire for a better world. Two informants define themselves as anarchist activists. Seven of the participants moved to the Karuk Ancestral Territory because they were dissatisfied with living in mainstream America and eight came to the mountains in search of a closer connection to the natural world. The settlers interviewed represent an elevated and unusual level of consciousness regarding these issues, and yet the stagnant mentality of settler society as a whole is clearly evident in their testimonies.

All ten interviewees were invited, along with an additional ten white settlers, to attend two Coyuntura workshops each, three hours in length. It was a goal that these gatherings

would ignite a long-term commitment to create an unsettling movement in this place. During the first Coyuntura meeting we shared lived experiences as non-Indigenous people living in a settler colonial state, brainstormed issues and conflicts and created questions for further contemplation. The second meeting was culminated with a commitment to continue to meet monthly as a group and engage in the coyuntural analysis process. Derek testifies to the value of having a vocabulary with which to dialogue about settler colonialism: “Finding the words for settler colonialism, calling myself a settler, all this process of finding language to express it, puts words to vague feelings and emotions that makes you better able to sort things out and get to somewhere with it.”

When first exposed to unsettling ideas, the response from most white people is strained at best, and at times hostile. “What am I supposed to do, go back to Europe?” Some of us on the Rivers we are trying to understand what it means to unsettle. We are striving to create actions on the ground so that people have ways to get involved. This is a process and the moment is always changing so there are no definitive. We do know that the more of us that are willing to engage the discomfort and uncertainty that this work brings the more powerful our movement will be. We have clearly illuminated that unsettling does demand the return or repatriation of Indigenous lands in some form, to eventually be determined by Indigenous people themselves.

Balancing frustration, anger and disappointment towards my white settler community with compassion, love and understanding has been difficult and challenging to my personal growth. It is easily observed that people with privilege rarely, if ever, willingly relinquish it. Nevertheless, a group of us remain dedicated to living up to our responsibility

as white settler people, living on stolen Indigenous land. We believe that the work of unsettling is done in service of justice. But it is also in our own best interest as well as in the interest of all life on earth. Unsettling requires that we illuminate the stake that white settler society has in this struggle while simultaneously accepting the uncertainty that is necessary for white settlers to be a positive force in decolonizing movements.

LITERATURE REVIEW

A review of existing literature about, settler colonialism and decolonization theory, creates an appropriate context from which to understand the current societal situation in the Karuk, Konomihu, Shasta and New River Shasta Homelands.⁸ This section will begin by describing settler colonialism globally and then will bring the analysis back to the Indigenous homelands of study. First, the white settler and concepts around whiteness will be introduced. Next, land will be illuminated as the essential constituent in settler colonialism. This Literature Review will culminate with a preliminary discussion about what it might mean to “unsettle” or decolonize.

Indigenous peoples have actively resisted colonization and Native American Studies Programs have theorized about colonization since its inception in North America. Yet, as Snelgrove, Cornthassel and Dhamoon (2014,11) point out, “when settlers take up these questions, it’s suddenly considered a legitimate field of study.” Macoun and Strakosch share some complexities around this dilemma,

It is precisely by using the strengths of SCT (settler colonial theory) that we can challenge its limitations; the theory itself places ethical demands on us as settlers, including the demand that we actively refuse its potential to re-empower our own academic voices and to marginalize Indigenous resistance (2013,426).

8. The settler colonial system has tried to impose rigid boundary lines between different tribal territories. Prior to invasion land was not viewed in a proprietorial way and these delineations were not made. This will be explained in further detail in this Literature Review in the section entitled Land Is Life.

As a settler person, it is with these considerations and with a clear understanding of my own role and responsibility within the settler colonial system, that I engage with this unsettling research.

Cole Harris (2004) contends that studies of settler colonialism are best conducted on the ground, in a particular place. In order to understand how these colonial powers operate it is best to view them not only from a theoretical standpoint but through the lens of communities living in a settler colonial state. The location being studied presents a unique and real-life example of a settler colonial situation. Indigenous people never left their homelands in this place, nor has the land been made into reservations. The population is roughly half Indigenous and half settler and the social situation is complex, layered and writhes with contradiction. Harris (2004) explains how post-colonial studies situate their research in the culture of the colonists and identify culture and knowledge production as the dominant power relations associated with colonialism. Although these post-colonial studies succeed in identifying important *assumptions* such as savage/civilized as well as race and gender assumptions, he posits that it is not clear if these analyses have revealed the principal momentum inherent in colonialism. He asserts that these holes are best filled from actual places where these structures are at work. By making observable how the settler colonial system is operating in the Karuk, Konomihu, Shasta and New River Shasta homelands, a better understanding of settler colonialism will be gained.

I will argue throughout this paper that it is imperative to have anti-colonial frameworks at the center of any organizing effort today, not only as a matter of justice for

Indigenous peoples, but for the benefit of all that lives. The Decolonizer's (The Decolonizer, 2017) analysis of the Anti-trump movement is relate-able to all movements towards justice today. They state that “An anti-Trump movement that fails to build anti-colonial foundations will be just another settler protest, impotent and unable to bring together the great masses people for the purposes of authentic liberation.” Bloom and Carnine (Counter Punch, 2016) suggest that settlers “incorporate an analysis of settler colonialism into all of your organizing work. It’s our responsibility as settlers to work to dismantle the settler colonial project.”

Settler Colonialism

Settler colonialism differs from colonialism, in, that colonialism relies on the labor of the colonized to operate, whereas settler colonialism requires the appropriation of the land and therefore the erasure of the Indigenous to function. Wolfe (1999, 1) writes, “settler colonies were not primarily established to extract surplus value from Indigenous labor. Rather, they are premised on displacing indigenes from (or replacing them on) the land.” European settler colonizers bring their ways of living with them, and in most cases, they never leave. Colonizers are different, as they move between their original home and their new home. As Veracini (2010, 97) further articulates these variances, “colonialism immobilizes relationships and establishes a pattern of repetition, settler colonialism mobilizes people in the teleological expectation of irreversible transformation.” The settler colonial system seeks to destroy Indigenous Peoples and life-ways and replace them with settler people and colonized societal value systems. This

system remains dominant today in Karuk, Konomihu and Shasta and New River Shasta Ancestral territories as well as other locations around the world. This system is ongoing, as it continues today. “Invasion is a structure and not an event” Wolfe (1999, 2).

A Global Glimpse

A global account of settler colonialism is far beyond the scope of this particular paper yet it is significant to acknowledge large-scale European expansion for purposes of this thesis. European settlers left their own homelands in search of freedom. Yet upon arrival they immediately became the oppressors, the degree of persecution inflicted, far surpassing that which they were fleeing themselves. Historical violence against Indigenous people is well documented. Of the estimated 125 million Indigenous Peoples in North and South America before contact, 90% of the population was lost (Churchill, 1).

The paradox of settler societies is that they simultaneously resisted and accommodated the authority of an Imperialist Europe, where colonial rule was the foundry within which [non-European institutions and culture] were melted down and recast into new political alloys, compatible with European requirements’ (Kennedy, 1987:335 in Stasiulis and Yuval Davis 1995, pg. 4).

Naming the white dominions of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United States is of particular importance to this paper as it seeks to unpack and confront whiteness (Stasiulis, Yuval-Davis,1995).

Current world systems leave life beholden to capital, for without it we do not have access to our basic human rights. An in-depth inquiry into capitalism is not possible within the confines of this paper; yet it is preposterous to attempt to detach settler

colonialism from capitalism for they have emerged side by side and co-exist as interlocking systems of oppression. Cole Harris (2004,172) writes, (as Marx originally explained), “the spatial energy of capitalism works to de-territorialize people (that is, to detach them from prior bonds between people and place) and to re-territorialize them in relation to the requirements of capital (that is, to land conceived as resources and freed from the constraints of custom and to labor detached from land).” A capitalist economic system compounds the ill effects of settler colonialism and depends on the extraction of infinite natural resources. Harsha Walia, (Briarpatch Magazine, 2012) articulates the importance of, “the development of an economic system that serves rather than threatens our collective life on this planet.”

While the making of whiteness is crucial in perpetuating dominating world systems, it is equally imperative that brown bodies are made to be dispensable or savage (Mbembe, 2013). Those who are deemed “savage” are not afforded their right to life which is currently the case for Indigenous peoples all over North America. Wolfe (2011, 274) explains how colonized people are “racialized” in different ways according to the needs of the colonizers. He distinguishes between race as a doctrine and “racialization as a variety of practices that have been applied to colonized populations under particular circumstances and to different (albeit coordinated) ends.” On the one hand, requiring Indigenous Peoples to have a certain percentage of native blood to be deemed a tribal member supported the goal of elimination of Indigenous Peoples. On the other hand, as more slaves meant more wealth for the slave-owner, the “one drop rule” declared individuals black if they had a trace of African blood. These stark differences in blood

requirements to racially define people are profitable to the colonizer and strategically implemented at the expense of African and Indigenous Peoples (Wolfe, 2011).

Around the world attention has been garnered by the people of Ferguson, Missouri, who were not willing to accept the cold-blooded murder of Michael Brown, a young, black community member, due to racialized police violence. The need for the movement slogan Black Lives Matter is applicable to Indigenous Peoples where, in the current state of world politics, only white lives are valued. The racialization of People of Color perpetuates the systematic condemnation of the human right to life. It remains a travesty that any people have to declare that their lives matter. The United Nation Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2008, article 7,) states that “Indigenous individuals have the right to life, physical and mental integrity, liberty and security of person.”

John Mohawk (2008, 57) aptly questions if clear thinking is “prevailing in the world system that is at this very moment, deciding who gets to eat, who has a place to lay down and who does not have a place to lay down, whose children will survive, even their infancies, and whose will not?” Paulo Freire (1970, 25) addresses this, when he says: “Concern for humanization leads at once to the recognition of dehumanization, not only as an ontological possibility but as an historical reality. And as an individual perceives the extent of dehumanization, he or she must ask if humanization is a viable possibility”? It is an inhumane world that we live in today and thus all life is harmed. What does it say when the human right to life has become a privilege?

Settler Colonialism Along the Klamath and Salmon Rivers

In his book *Genocide in Northwestern California: When Our Worlds Cried*, Jack Norton (1979) says the colonial attack in Northern California, beginning in 1849 was the most egregious example of colonial invasion during westward expansion. Indigenous people in this place, as in many other locations, fought back against colonial invasion with every personal and physical resource available. However, alongside the birth of the birth of the United States government were policies, laws and myths created to protect the interests of the colonizers and forward the goal of elimination of Indigenous populations. The Department of Homeland Security, 2016 *Guide To Naturalization* states that “the United States is a nation of immigrants.” This blatant lack of acknowledgement of the original peoples of the land base now called the United States exemplifies the settler colonial goal of erasing Indigenous Peoples.

It is important to understand both past and current manifestations of settler colonialism. One historical example from the Klamath River was an attack on an Indian village in 1855 that resulted, in twenty-six men dying, twenty-three women being captured and an unknown fate of numerous children that could have been sold as “slaves” to whites (Raphael and House, 2007). As one witness described the event:

[The volunteers] called the Indians from their homes, shook hands with them, and immediately after-wards, each white picking his man, numbers of Indians were shot. They then took away with them some squaws, “under the name of prisoners,” whom they “outrageously abused ... This is the battle which has been described heretofore in the newspaper in such glowing colors (Captain Judah, quoted in Raphael and House, 159).

Or take the man nicknamed Wooley (Tom Hinton), a well know Indian murderer (for whom a major tributary of the Salmon River is named today), who told a visiting Indian Agent, “he would shoot Indians whenever he could find them; that he had done so, and would continue to do so” (Raphael & House,157). Or in an attempt to stop Karuk traditional management; “the only sure way is kill them off, every time you catch one sneaking around in the brush like a coyote, take a shot at him” (Orleans District Ranger, 1918). This is the foundation of settler society on the Klamath and Salmon Rivers, today and the legacy of conquest inflicted on the relatives of Indigenous people, not so long ago.

Also, well documented is how settler colonialism continues to affect Karuk people today, negatively impacting health, economics, religion, and culture (See Salter 2003, Norgard 2004, Stercho 2005, Holmlund, Alkon & Norgard 2009, Norgard, Reid, & VanHorn, 2011). Tension over land and ownership, as Leaf Hillman, a Karuk ceremonial leader explains, has illegalized being a Karuk Indian. He explains how:

In order to maintain a traditional Karuk Lifestyle today, you need to be an outlaw, a criminal, and you had better be a good one or you’ll likely end up spending a great portion of your life in prison. The fact of the matter is that it is a criminal act to practice a traditional lifestyle and to maintain traditional cultural practices necessary to manage important food resources or even practice our religion. If we as Karuk people obey the “laws of nature” and the mandates of our creator, we are necessarily in violation of the white man’s laws. It is a criminal act to be a Karuk Indian in the twenty first century (quoted in Norgaard. 2004, 25).

Too often lives are lost to untimely deaths resulting from the trauma of colonization and the inability to access traditional life-ways

The White Settler

There are many layers of colonization in this place. This is evident through the various settler groups still present, including descendants of original gold miners, missionaries, loggers, farmers, different waves of “back to the landers,” and now marijuana growers. Unfortunately, to Indigenous peoples the newest batch of settlers might look different than past invaders, but the implications of our presence is one in the same (Limerick, 1987). Back-to-the-landers, who are a large portion of the current settlers, left mainstream society to live a better, more sustainable life and yet our/their return to the land is in direct relationship to Indigenous Peoples displacement from it (Waziyatawin, 2008, Mackey, 2016). In this area, as in other settler colonial situations around the world, non-Indigenous residents indisputably benefit from this system of land dispossession (Tuck, McKenzie, McCoy, 2016).

Veracini (2010,14) writes that “settler colonialism obscures the conditions of its own production,” thus a critical analysis of the consciousness of settlers is imperative to this study. Settler societies in general must create a myth about themselves as hard working and peaceful, while at the same time denying Indigenous People’s right to the land. Walter Hixson (2013,11) unpacks this idea, “historical distortion and denial are endemic to settler colonies. In order for the settler colony to establish a collective usable past, legitimating stories must be created and persistently affirmed as a means of naturalizing a new historical narrative.” Along the Klamath and Salmon Rivers this myth takes the familiar form of the peaceful settler and the violent Indian dichotomy. As

Veracini (2010,75) writes: “Settler projects are inevitably premised on the traumatic, that is, *violent*, replacement and/or displacement of indigenous Others. However...settler colonialism also needs to disavow any foundational violence.” The paradox of these narratives is monumental as historical facts show white settler society to have a record of violence and rage that cannot be understated (Anderson, 2016). These myths will be visited in detail in the following chapter, The Settler Situation.

Settler people are placeholders for the settler colonial system and simply by existing on the land we/they perpetuate settler colonialism despite our/their intentions. “There are no good settlers... there are no bad settlers... there are settlers” (Snellgrove, 2013). By not acknowledging institutional violence as foundational to, and the benefits settlers obtain from, such a system, false narratives continue to affirm settler existence. “Western history has been an ongoing competition for legitimacy—for the right to claim for oneself and sometimes for one’s group the status of legitimate beneficiary of Western resources” (Limerick,1987, 27). In this context of conquest, settlers today are still vying for land—and in the case of the Klamath and Salmon Rivers, Karuk, Konomihu, Shasta and New River Shasta land. Settlers often find it difficult to challenge their own privilege, as Veracini (2010, 103) states, “while settlers want to stay, even more, they want a colonial and settler colonial world to stay in place.” In her book, *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*, Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz (2014, 2) defines what she calls the “consensual national narrative” to be false. She explains that it is deficient not logistically, but in essence. Dunbar's book aptly questions, “how might acknowledging the reality of US history work to transform society”?

Those settlers that are willing to challenge hegemonic settler myths find themselves denied of their own very existence, as they have known it that which has defined them.

Bateman and Pilkington speak to the circumstances of the settler:

Even in a context of growing awareness of the injustices of the past, there is still a struggle to meet the needs of those most damaged by the process-the indigenous, as well as another population now dealing with the consequences, the descendants of the original settlers, who have inherited the blame, and possibly the guilt, but have no alternate identity, no other homeland (2011,3).

In the course of this study it has been clearly observed that the people of white European descent that are willing to recognized our/themselves as settlers, living on stolen land who benefit from settler colonialism, are by far still the minority. The idea of the self-rejecting and the self-accepting colonizer resonates here, as Albert Memmi describes,

it is not easy to escape mentally from a concrete situation, to refuse its ideology while continuing to live with its actual relationships. From now on the colonist lives his life as a contradiction, which looms every step, depriving him of all coherence and tranquility. What he is actually renouncing is part of himself, which he slowly becomes (1967,20).

However, the discomfort that settlers feel from questioning our/their entitlement to the land pales in comparison to the ramifications of the settler colonial system upon Indigenous Peoples.

Discourse that deems the white settler pure and free of responsibility remains notorious along the Rivers. Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang (2012,10) describe settler “moves to innocence,” “which are those strategies or positioning that attempt to relieve the settler of feelings of guilt or responsibility without giving up land or power or privilege, without having to change much at all.” There are as many moves to innocence as there are settlers

on the Klamath River (Hurwitz and Bourque, 2015). Several moves to innocence will be outlined in detail in subsequent chapters.

A Big White Lie

Another aspect of racial formation is “whiteness” which serves the end goal of settler colonialism and benefits people with white skin. There are many aspects of being white that require attention and this section will set the stage for a deeper analysis of the role and responsibility of white people that will occur later in this thesis. White supremacy is a system that justifies the denial of basic human rights, and many times life itself, upon people of color, while entitling white people to unearned privilege (McIntosh, 1988, Wise, 2008, DiAngelo, 2016).⁹ White supremacy is also a way of thinking and “knowing” that assumes an inherent superiority upon white people. Despite that the history of invasion and genocide wrought by settlers and colonization is well known, images of white purity and superiority are engrained in human consciousness. These beliefs have permeated and distorted reality so deeply that white people who benefit from these structures are permitted to elude that they exist (Veracini, 2010, Mackey, 2016, Tuck, McKenzie, McCoy, 2016). White supremacy is not just a manifestation of the Klu-Klux-Klan or racist skinheads but is a pillar of capitalist and settler colonial systems and is inherent in everyday thinking.

9. Using white and supremacy together as a term of analysis inadvertently reinforces that which it seeks to critique. I refer to white supremacy in an attempt to rename this racist system of oppression.

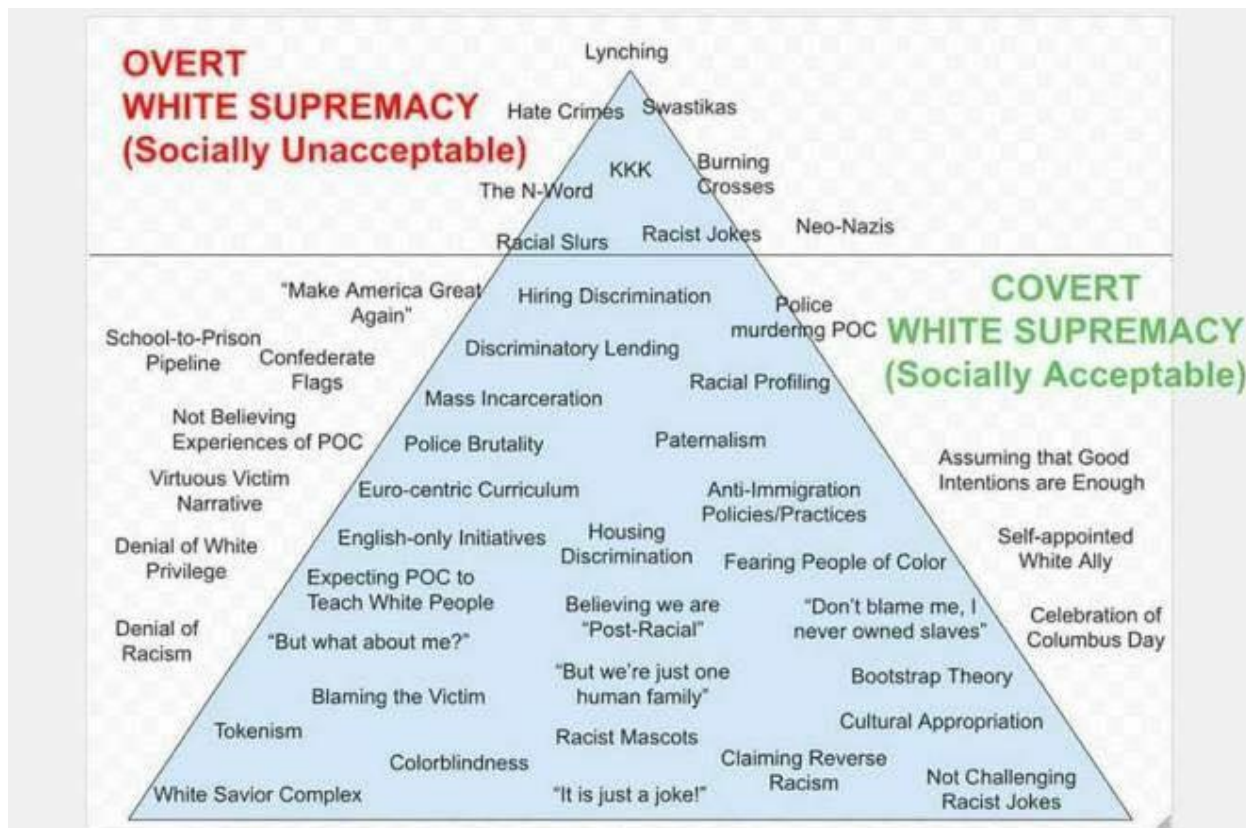


Figure 3. refer to caption

Michael YellowBird (2004,40) explains how “Cowboys and Indians” provides a master narrative that deems “Indians were inferior to whites by way of a seemingly inexhaustible supply of western movies and TV programs that showed huge numbers of Indians could be easily defeated by a few cowboys with large, shiny, phallic-shaped pistols and an endless reserve of bullets.” Due to the hidden strain of white supremacy over Indigenous Peoples, the colonizers story of cowboys and Indians remains socially acceptable today and it continues to reinforce both the idea that whiteness is superior to the “other” as well as myths around cowboys as innocent (i.e. the settler) and Indians as violent. A glaring example of this backwards narrative on the Klamath River was the murder of Mavis Mcovey’s son Daypay, by a marijuana grower, that resulted in police

protection of the assassin (McCovey, Salter, 2009). This horrid occurrence will be unpacked in detail in chapter five: Facing Whiteness.

One incarnation of white supremacy is how white people live with unearned privilege. Peggy McIntosh, who produced the “white privilege knapsack exercise,” which is used in critical race studies classrooms around the nation explains,

I have come to see white privilege as an invisible package of unearned assets that I can count on cashing in each day, but about which I was "meant" to remain oblivious. White privilege is like an invisible weightless knapsack of special provisions, maps, passports, codebooks, visas, clothes, tools, and blank checks (1988, 1).

Settler privilege is articulated through the unrelenting expansion of settlers where continued expropriation of Indigenous land provides a degree of economic self-reliance for settlers. Harris describes how:

in settler colonies, as Marx knew, the availability of agricultural land could turn wage laborers back into independent producers who worked for themselves instead of for capital . . . As such, they were unavailable to capital, and resisted its incursions, the source, Marx thought, of the prosperity and vitality of colonial societies (2004,173).

From the moment of colonization “boom and bust” economies have profited largely the settler. The marijuana industry on the Klamath and Salmon Rivers today is a prime example of this. Settlers, controlling almost all of the private land, profit from the growing of marijuana while this economy remains less accessible to Indigenous peoples. McIntosh addresses the way that white people are not taught to recognize our/their part in an unhealthy, oppressor culture. McIntosh's articulate analysis has been paramount in making white privilege understandable to a wide audience of people and still a collective plan of

action, in response to this recognition remains sorely lacking. What actions can white people take to become accountable and to create material change to power and privilege?

Robin DiAngelo's concept of white fragility is useful in helping to understand the push back felt from white folks on the Klamath and Salmon Rivers who are currently being confronted with our/ their role and responsibility in the continuing colonization of the Indigenous Homelands that we/they occupy. She explains how,

White Fragility is a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves. These moves include the outward display of emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation (2016, 247).

While it is not the only hurdle to be overcome, White Fragility is a major roadblock to settler people being accountable to the Indigenous people whose homelands we occupy. The license to turn away from the stress of being a settler living on stolen land leaves the white settler paralyzed in a state of guilt and inhibits movement towards justice and the return of our humanity. This will be made observable in Chapter Six: Facing Whiteness. A small group of white settlers in the Karuk, Konomihu, Shasta/ New River Shasta homelands have begun the work of analysis and action towards building an ethic of accountability aimed at taking these systems apart.

Land is Life

Settlers arriving to these territories brought with them European ways of land management and imposed them on original systems that had been functioning for thousands of years. Indigenous people have to a large extent come to abide by the invaders views on ownership— resistance continues, although as pointed out above most of these traditional activities have been criminalized: hunting and fishing has become “poaching,” traditional management and burning practices have become “arson,” gathering mushrooms, firewood, and many other activities have also been seen as “theft” from the National Forest. This criminalization has had drastic environmental consequences. As Leaf Hillman explains:

Excluding fire from the landscape and criminalizing our use of fire as a management tool has certainly been a huge detriment to our people as well as to all the things that depend on the natural world and this landscape, it’s not something that only affects Indian people. For sure it affects every person that depends on this landscape for survival whether they know it or not. That includes all of the animals and not just human people. It’s hard to overemphasize the importance of fire and having it as a management tool (March, 2012).

The removal of fire and the privatization of land have created dangerous conditions for catastrophic fire which threaten all communities on the Klamath and Salmon Rivers and have limited the land based food system which had been meticulously tended by the tribes in these areas (Blackburn and Anderson, 1993).

Settler colonialism and capitalism necessitates that land be held as private property and communal and local land and ownership ways be erased. Yet, with the force of the State supporting settler ideology, traditional land practices such as burning and hunting

today are a crime. Indigenous people on these Rivers have faced social alienation, court dates, loss of jobs and jail time as a result of existing within their traditional life-ways. Hillman describes how we witness a grave difference in ideas about land management and in the case of the Karuk it is a matter of life and death as their food and therefore their lives, are dependent on managing the land to which they no longer have access.

Indigenous ideas of ownership and land are much different from settler colonial views. It is not that traditional ways do not have a concept of ownership or wealth, indeed wealth (in relation to ceremonial regalia) is very important and dentalium shells functioned historically as currency. Leaf Hillman sums up a key difference of ownership when explaining that he comes from a traditional dance owning family, “when I say dance owning I always want to clarify that so people understand that it is not a glorious thing, it is a lot of responsibility and that’s really the definition of ownership, is *responsibility*” (March 2012, emphasis added). Individuals or families owned certain resources, but this had flexibility and was very different from settler ideas of owning a resource. A look at Kroeber and Barrett’s discussion of Karuk ownership of fishing spots clarifies this:

Single individuals privately owned the best fishing places along the rivers, sometimes, sometimes jointly by several. In the latter case, a fishing place could be used by each owner in rotation, according to the proportionate share of his ownership. An owner might give someone else permission to fish there on the day or days when his turn would normally come. But no one was permitted to fish or to establish a new fishing place immediately downstream from a recognized fishing place...most inferior fishing places, and a few excellent ones were not privately owned but were open or public (1960, 3).

Salter expands on this example further, observing that:

The concept of ownership applied strictly to the right to fish and not to ownership of land along the river. A Karuk “informant” stated “emphatically” that the issue was not who owned the land within which a fishing area lay, but that ownership related strictly to the right to fish. Those possessing what are still referred to as “rights” had, as was characteristic of the Karuk, degrees of flexibility in this ownership of rights. The owner of rights at a particular fishery might sell those rights in all or in part; might give away surplus fish and might allow others to fish at the site of his ownership. The concept of rights was not restricted to fishing sites but extended as well to acorn-gathering and hunting rights specific to certain areas. These rights, which had the force of law, might be attained by inheritance, as a gift or as payment for services. Women could own rights while not fishing themselves, but being fished for by a man, usually a relative (2003,11-12).

Not only do tensions exist between settler society and traditional Indigenous ways of holding land, but the assumptions inherent in western theories, such theories such as those produced by John Locke, pre-dispose an unfair advantage and permeate privilege upon those proponents of non-aboriginal systems of land ownership. James Tully (1994,153) articulates the way in which the judicial system is, in this situation, is unable to access justice, “many of the representative western theories of property do not provide an impartial conceptual framework in which these demands for justice with respect to property can be adjudicated.”

The Karuk, Konomihu, Shasta and New River Shasta are far from the first (or last) to have their usufruct practices of ownership and rights usurped by the needs of settler colonialism and/or capitalism. Not all examples have been indigenous either. The enclosure of common lands in England, making way for sheep herding and a displaced population, forced into wage labor constitutes Marx’s classic example of “primitive accumulation” (1976). Another example from England, which has been described by E.P. Thompson (1975, 241) was the remaking of forest ownership from a system of complex

rights, described as “the messy complexities of coincident use-right” to total private ownership. That meant the correct management of practices of the sight, or utilizing all of the resources and not wasting them. When settler colonialism and Indigenous ownership values came into conflict, an Indigenous person’s acorn patch, which they owned, may now be located within what a settler considered their property, resulting in a loss of resources and food to the Indigenous. This still is a lingering problem on the Klamath and Salmon River's today. Rebecca Adamson explains that,

what made traditional economies so radically different and dangerous to western economies were the traditional principals of prosperity of creation versus scarcity of resources, of sharing and distribution versus accumulation and greed. Of kinship usage rights versus exclusive individual ownership rights and of sustainability versus growth (2008, 33).

The relinquishing of definitive power to the individual (private property) to determine responsible land management practices creates an ethic of self-interest which in turn promotes greed. The checks and balances of holding land in common inherently necessitates a collective effort towards the greater good of all inhabitants of any land-base.

For the tribes along the Klamath and Salmon Rivers, as Wolfe (2007,387) writes more generally “land is life—or, at least, land is necessary for life. Thus, contests for land can be—indeed, often are—contests for life.” Leaf Hillman (March, 2012) explains his understandings about landholding and place that are beyond settler myth.

There are things I call natural truths. Man can pass laws, man can have his policy, he can have his institutions. Ultimately if those laws or policies or institutions are doing things that conflict with the natural law then those things will fail and along with those failures, will come the failure of everything, humans included.

Decolonization and Unsettling

Although colonization has negatively affected all life along these Rivers and Indigenous social infrastructure has been harmed by settler colonialism and a capitalist economic system, the settler colonial project in these Indigenous homelands has been largely a failure. Indigenous value systems and traditional knowledge still persist. Core principles requiring interdependence and reciprocity that kept Indigenous communities sustainable for time immemorial are embedded in the culture, only systems of oppression make the land and thus healthy living, inaccessible. How might we proceed to change the values that we rely on in a colonized world? We have to change the systems in order to transform ourselves. Andrea Smith (2013, 265) purports that “the undoing of privilege occurs not by individuals confessing their privileges or trying to think themselves into a new subject position, but through the creation of collective structures that dismantle the systems that enable these privileges.” Smith’s elucidation that we must change structures in order to become new people, and not the other way around clearly delineates the work of material change to settler power and privilege as essential. Smith also describes how creating new value systems means asking how we understand ourselves as people in relationship to the land and to all that lives. Smith writes (2013, 272) “if we understand ourselves as beings fundamentally constituted through our relations with other beings and the land, then the nations that emerge will also be inclusive and interconnected with each other.”

Decolonization ultimately and literally means the complete repatriation of First Nations land and the return of Indigenous life-ways (2012,3). “What is unsettling about decolonization – what is unsettling and what should be unsettling.” is articulated clearly by Tuck and Yang (2012,1). They explain how “[D]ecolonization is not accountable to settlers, or settler futurity. Decolonization is accountable to Indigenous sovereignty and futurity” (2012,26). Un-settling is a part of decolonization work for the non-Indigenous. Corey Snellgrove explains how,

disrupting settler society, and avoiding fatalism, requires a two-fold recognition: of settler colonialism and Indigenous resurgence. Destroying settler society, and allowing the rise of ethical relations, requires a two-fold *active* response: destroy the material and discursive foundations of settler colonialism and actively engage with Indigenous resurgence (2013).

Unsettling Klamath River has collectively defined unsettling as “a process of facing and destroying a false entitlement and be-heading (Snellgrove, 2013) an identity that affords us a toxic privilege” (Unsettling Klamath River Coyuntura, 2015). Shawn Bourque (2014) explains, “This is a fatality of their/our settler identity, a fragile selfhood constructed in the denial of history and current material realities, pillaring settler privilege.”

The idea of reconciliation with Indigenous people is appealing to many settlers here in this place and whether it is motivated by love, fear or guilt is not of great consequence. Tuck and Yang (2012,26) explain how “reconciliation is about rescuing settler normalcy, about rescuing a settler future. Reconciliation is concerned with questions of what will decolonization look like? What will happen after abolition? What will be the consequences of decolonization for the settler?” A representative gesture will

not change any of the structures that continue to oppress Indigenous Peoples. While the South African model of reconciliation was successful in creating a theoretical end to political apartheid, it remains problematic because the beneficiaries walked away pardoned, without relinquishing power or privilege, thus the material conditions of people on the ground remains largely the same.

What is required is a step into the unknown. Frantz Fanon (1963,36) describes decolonization as “a historical process: that is to say that it cannot be understood, it cannot become intelligible nor clear to itself except in the exact measure that we can discern the movements which give it historical form and content.” It is into this unidentified future, away from our/their entitlement, that white settlers fear to step. Tim Wise (2011,270) recognizes that “of course there is redemption in struggle, and victory is only one reason for fighting, only seems to be a surprise, or rather a source of discomfort to white folks. Invariably it seems that we in the white community who obsess over our own efficacy and fail to recognize the value of commitment irrespective of outcome.” For the settler, an epistemological rupture is necessary. Harsha Walia shines light through a crack in what may seem an impenetrable structure when she explains that,

decolonization necessitates a re-conceptualization of the discursive and embodied borders within and between us by grounding us in the fundamental principles of mutual aid, collective liberation, and humility- not in isolation but instead within our real and informed and sustained relationships with, and commitments to, each other and the Earth (2013, 19).

Wub-E-Ke-Niew shares hope from an Ahnishinabaeojibway perspective.

maybe we can, yet, recreate what was once here, a harmonious society in which everyone respected one another, where the eco-system was intact and abundant, and there wasn't even a word for war or peace in the language. Aboriginal Indigenous philosophy and reality is a new frontier of freedom and spirituality (241, 1995).

Waziyatawin (2012, 21) further explains, “the only hope for survival in the coming years will come from a reworking of the values of settler society-what we might call an indigenizing of values. The longer settler society takes to transform its values the worse will be the consequences for us all.” Eva Mackey offers the idea of uncertainty as a stepping stone for unsettling.

Living without the entitlement to know everything (and therefore be certain) will likely lead to settler discomfort, a discomfort that may need to be embraced instead of resisted in order to participate in the difficult work of decolonization (2014, 250).

The uncharted path of decolonization does not offer a road map and envisioning the potential rewards requires an imagining that is beyond accepted definitions of wealth and success in a capitalist, settler colonial society. For settler people understanding who we are and how we are positioned within the settler colonial system is a starting place.

THE SETTLER SITUATION

Generations of displacement and violence in European settler history prelude the colonization of North America (Price, 2000; Heather 2009; Fletcher, 1997). Modern day white settlers face a contradiction of circumstances. Settlers benefit from and are complicit with the settler colonial system. In the Klamath River region, the principal way that we/they have profited is through access to land. Here, land directly equates to more wealth through, gold mining, logging, farming and marijuana cultivation. Simultaneous to this unearned privilege, settlers carry a legacy of disconnection from people and place, and many suffer from a longing to belong that has, in part, defined settler identity.

Settler entitlement comes at the cost of Indigenous Peoples, and there are many obstructions to white settlers' ability to see this state of affairs clearly. There are a multitude of factors that greatly contribute to a perplexing sense of self for settler people. Whiteness is a complicated, contradictory and layered specification. As aforementioned, there are many factors that contribute to the level of privilege and entitlement received.¹⁰ These layers of contradiction have resulted in a paralysis of white settler societies' ability to collectively acknowledge our/their role and stake in the settler colonial system. Recognizing settler complicity is the first step on a long unchartered road towards

10. Chapter five will delve into an in-depth exploration into whiteness and the accompanying personal and societal identity that is riddled with problematic implications.

responsibility, and fear is the greatest stumbling block for settler societies' ability to take responsibility. When change does occur, it is a very slow and tenuous process.

This chapter sets the stage for understanding the white settler by describing the disconnection and longing experienced by subjects of this study. This will be followed by an explanation of how the community of study has reacted to and utilized the term “settler.” The next section will illuminate the insulated reality that settler communities are able exist within. It also will briefly discuss cultural appropriation. The chapter concludes with an in depth look at land and white settler people.

The knowledge and experiences of the ten interviewees helped give life to some of the challenges faced by white settlers on the unchartered path towards responsibility. Their testimonies also show how settler colonialism operates on the ground in this place. The ten settlers interviewed all, at some time, worked collaboratively with Indigenous people on projects both in and out of the workplace and have developed relationships with Indigenous people. Nine out of ten classify themselves as liberal, progressive or radical thinkers. Eight of the subjects partially or fully at some time have sustained themselves economically through the marijuana industry. Seven of the ten interviewees came through the Black Bear Ranch portal, lived there at some point, or are closely affiliated with the Black Bear family. All of them have shown a care for the well-being of their Indigenous friends and neighbors through both word and action.

Longing to Belong¹¹

One of the ways that the historical experiences of European settlers manifests today is in the deep desire to belong to people and to a place. While there are white settlers who have some connection to their ancestral roots, many do not. Even with the rise and accessibility of ancestral search websites, it is uncommon for a settler person to feel a true connection to the people and distant lands from whence we came. Derek speaks to the thoughts that he has given to going back to Europe and explains some of the difficulties surrounding this idea.

Going back to Europe is complicated because we don't know where we are from. Europe has been disrupted for not just 150 years, but anywhere from 8,000 in the Mediterranean to 5,000 even 3,000 in some places. If you count agriculture they were still land based and not hierarchical until the Romans came. I know where my relatives came to North America from, not where they are indigenous to.

The efforts I have made to trace my own family lineage back to Europe has been healing and an important part of my unsettling process. Still, I have come to accept that I will never really know what it means to truly belong to a place.

Some of the settlers interviewed were able to share their own stories that help illuminate the longing that the settler person feels to belong. Derek who is a landowner and identifies as an anarchist shares his personal experience describing, “even though I had alternative parents and they were trying to get back to something. It all seemed so

12. I first encountered the poignant phrase “Longing to Belong” in a workshop with Rain Crowe (callingourselveshome.weebly.com).

phony. All the types of spiritual appropriation and making of new things. It all seemed so hollow. I have always felt really lost.” Renee a longtime landowner and community member addresses the disconnection saying, “modern settlers to some degree, have left our families and gone to live in this place that’s pretty far from our cousins, grandparents to come settle. It is a big thing to step away from. Being able to do that is a kind of cultural detachment that you don’t see in Native communities.” Greg who also owns land and was born along the Rivers explains how, “there has been a disconnect in what it means to be in place, a disconnect in our rootedness. We could pick up and go anytime if we wanted, like if there is no good internet. My fear is that we are not rooted to the place and to the processes that connect the people to the place.” He breaks it down further. “There is a social thing, but it lacks a relationship to the land that is the root of survival in place, despite temporary things like getting food from the coop or just grow a bunch of weed and do what you want. That is just an artificial construct of this narrow window in time.”

Renee begins to address the difficulties of acknowledgement when she explains, “all the loss, the loss of homeland and being secure and knowing that you belong in a place. We are all still struggling with that at this point it is so convoluted and weird it doesn’t lend itself to frank discussion or dealing with it or anything.” She further describes the disconnect from her lineage:

I did some calculations about the source of our name, our last name, and seventeen generations ago my family name came into being. So, seventeen people who failed to tell seventeen people could have passed on some story, given me some information. Somewhere along the way the communication broke down.

Being severed from both a land-base and our relations is a long-standing trauma for settler society that is important to illuminate as it many times buried deep in the subconscious.

This unfulfilled desire to belong, is one underlying impetus for the Back-to-the-Land movement that has continued for roughly fifty years to lead people to remote places in search of a better way of life (Agnew, 2004; Jacob, 1997). It is a major factor in the continuous flow of settler people going back-to-the-land in this place. Myself, and many of the subjects of this study are explicit examples of this phenomenon. Scott Morgensen (2009, 157) offers insight into the rooted desires of the settler when he explains how, “settlers can study every attachment they have felt to Indigenous land and ask how those relate to colonization. Historically, a desire to live on Indigenous land and to feel connected to it—bodily, emotionally, spiritually—has been the normative formation of settlers.”

Currently, a new rendition of the Back-to-the Land movement brings re-wilding people to this area of study. Peter Michael Bauer (Re-wilding with peter Michael Bauer, 2017) describes re-wilding as “a sub-cultural movement of people returning to, or attempting to re-create, pre-industrial, pre-agrarian cultures and life-ways of hunter-gatherers and/or horticultural societies.” The population of this new group of settlers tends to be people in their twenties. This group is set apart from subsequent generations of back-to-the-landers by their innovative ways of thinking about gender identification and also by a commitment to a deep level of consent and dialogue in processes of inter-

personal communication. The large influx of young re-wilding settlers can be observed as another “portal” to settler society on the Rivers.

All of the interviewees expressed explicit discontent with life in the city or suburbs. They wanted to rebel against modern society, expressed the desire to live rurally, to farm or garden, to live lightly and sustainably, and to build community. Leslie is a landowner and has also been a longtime resident of the Rivers. She describes how “the city felt wrong... it just really felt good being on the land. It felt right to be growing my own food and walking in the woods.” Sally is a farmer and she echoes Leslie's sentiments saying she “did not want to live in suburban cookie cutter America,” and that she was “not comfortable in the city and wanted a rural lifestyle.” She came to the Rivers with a strong belief in agrarian values, which she described as “taking care of the land and building community on the land.” She simultaneously questioned those values asking, “who's version of taking care of the land are we talking about?” The goals and aspirations of this group of settlers (who came to this place to live a more meaningful life) aptly represents the greater white settler population on the Rivers. Claire addresses settler desire in the Dakota Homeland, which is applicable here,

I seek to belong, because I do not belong. I never considered that I did not belong because of a history of conquest, genocide and displacement. Nor did it occur to me that I did not belong because the land remains occupied by a colonialist power that I benefit from, or because of the fact that my ability to call this land home is dependent on the continued displacement of Dakota people (2009, 54).

Derek speaks with acceptance about “a place to be, a home. That's my issue. Then

It's all way more complicated because my place is somewhere in Europe and it's all disrupted. We are not going to be able to claim someone else's home and feel comfortable there and be grounded." This unfulfilled longing contributes to the strong repulsion that most settler people have to accepting the term settler as a description of themselves.

Am I A Settler?

"The settler term, at times it applies and at times it applies less. Not sure if it applies as much in my situation. But I could be just not wanting to deal with it." This is a revealing response from Phillip, a settler who lived on the Rivers for a short time and no longer lives here. When he was asked if he considers himself a settler. Settler identity is wounded and rife with contradiction. Settlers in this place have felt guilt, shame and remorse for witnessing the daily oppression of Indigenous people whose homeland settlers reside upon. Yet for the most part, these feelings remain safely tucked away in the attics of settler consciousness. Consequently, until the past few years, common discourse among the non-Indigenous has associated settlers with the gold miners who came in the early 1850s, as the current settlers would prefer not to be linked with the wrongdoing of their ancestors. When asked to define what it means to be a settler, the responses from informants in this study articulate the spectrum of stages settlers have gone through in their attempts to figure out what it means to be a settler in this moment in time.

Haley has spent two decades on the Rivers and defines a settler as "white people in 1850 who moved inexorably westward with the cause of manifest destiny on their side." She further names how "being called a settler is an acknowledgement of

opportunity and being entitled to go wherever. It does call this into question because it ties it to a history of western expansion. The term settler calls into question some ethical issues.” Phillip tensely questioned, “other Indians come here and are more a part of the place than me. What is the difference if I am indigenous to a place that is further away. What makes that different?” Sally argues many different positions and as she honestly tries to grapple with what it means to be a settler. She describes “as far as what I would consider not a settler around here it gets so complicated. When I see people, who are taking care of the land and the people around them... I feel like those people are a part of the community and are relatively Native to the place anyway.”

Back to the land settler people left behind lives in cities and suburbs and came to the Klamath River basin to live more ethical lives. Settlers strive to live in ways that reflect a morality and a sense of inherent goodness. When thinking of oneself as a settler and entertaining all of the complexities that this reality holds, the settler is forced to question the very foundation that one's identity is built upon. Many, cling even harder to settler entitlement and assert an identity of innocence when faced with the possibility that the society to which they belong may not be “the good team.” As Sally describes, “A lot of the European people whose families have lived here for a while, they don't feel like settlers. To them they are native to this place and feel like their values fit this place. There is definitely a clash of values going on in a big way. Because a lot of the values aren't mutually compatible.” She goes on to situate herself in relationship to this settler/Indigenous dichotomy. “I don't feel like as an individual I will ever be native to

this place or any other place unfortunately. I hate to be wallowing in self-pity, but it does seem kind of tragic to me. I feel like that is a thing that I wish I could be.”

While the situation is multilayered and complicated, the good/bad dichotomy haunts the settler mind. It has been a struggle for the past seven years to come to terms with the reality that personal discomfort and uncertainty are necessary parts of the role of white settler people who seek to assume responsibility.¹² Albert Memmi writes about the plight of the “self-rejecting colonizer,” which is highly applicable here. Derek refers to this, as he wonders how to engage settler people in the difficult work of unsettling.

Memmi is strong and I don’t know a way around it. It’s good to do things and not be paralyzed. How do you take people through that process, to really feel it and mean it? How are you unsettled if you don’t get that unsettled with yourself and your privilege, existence, and your place. The dilemma is how do we bring other settlers to the process of chopping off their own head.

How Dare You Disturb My Tranquility

The majority of settlers in this place do know the vicious history of attempted colonial genocide. Still, settler society is not able to fully perceive of the ways that we as settlers contribute to the continuation of this system. The settler naively believes that Indigenous people should be ready to unite and move forward with settlers into the future.

12. My husband and I refer to Memmi moments which are those painful moments of isolation, being cast-away from settler people we were once close friends with, while accepting the necessary lines drawn between ourselves and Indigenous people.

In order for settlers to remain living in a picturesque bubble of tranquility settlers must hang on to with false narratives that deny both settler colonialism's persistence and also the ways, that settler people are perpetuating it. Ray came to the Rivers in 1954, during the boom of the logging industry and is the oldest settler interviewed. His testimony articulates this settler expectation clearly. "You living now and me living now, we had nothing to do with all that goings-on, three or four hundred years ago."¹³ His wife interjected: "We need to forget it and go on." He countered: "Regardless of the past, that past should have been done away with. You know that's something we can't deal with anymore. It's gone. It's done. Not to say that they didn't get mistreated." While there have been some shifts in narrative from the 1950's, the ideas that the settler today is innocent, that the violence has ended and that it is time to move on remains largely the same.

Settler people who have developed relationships with Indigenous people and work for and in, Indigenous communities and organizations are more likely to come to terms with the current day manifestations of the settler colonial structure. One such settler astutely explains in a social media conversation, "it's hard to see the amount suffering historical and every-day in Native communities, that goes on right under the awareness of many other people's shiny happy bubble, and maybe you even think you bubble is not so shiny, happy... spend one day really listening to those stories. Bet your perspective will shift."

13. Invasion began in this place, only 167 years ago (Norton, 1979).

The divergence in the burdens that must be carried between white people and Indigenous people as a whole is stark. Aside from two environmental non-profits that employ white people, most Back-to-the-Landers do not have “regular” jobs. The settlers that do work are not required to punch a time clock and many times have the freedom to create their own time schedules. While some might work hard on homesteads, care-taking or volunteering time to local communities, settler people generally choose how they will spend their time in a day. Settler people come and go from the Rivers frequently, traveling to visit family or friends and vacationing. Most settler people are afforded money and time to recreate as we/they please. As one Indigenous elder commented, “it must be nice to always have a couple quarters in your pocket.” It is not atypical in this area for settler children to be home schooled, and this many times includes being transported as desired the one and a half to two, hour drive to the coast at least once a week to attend enrichment classes. Most settler children attend high school elsewhere from the River, requiring settler families to have access to abundant resources, often including a second home.

Indigenous people on the Rivers are more likely to have “real jobs” and to punch a time clock. In addition to working full time, many people's responsibilities are astounding. I am continuously humbled by my Indigenous friends and neighbors who may typically do much of the following as a part of daily life: work full time, garden, have a responsibility to a large extended family which at times means adopting and caring for children beyond their own, study to bring back their language and cultural ways, attend ceremony, gather and process traditional foods, and defend the land and

water. All of this is being done within the context of a settler colonial system that all the while seeks to destroy Indigenous people and ways of life.

Settler society on the Salmon River in particular exists in a bubble of tranquility. The area is geographically more remote and seemingly untouched by the outside world. The Salmon is one of the largest un-dammed rivers in California and the watershed is breathtakingly beautiful to behold. Influenced by this remote geography, the myths that claim Indigenous people are a “thing of the past” have been more accepted on the Salmon River than downriver, where there are more people and the tribes are federally recognized.

Greg grew up with Indigenous people in this place and yet the myth that Indians are gone has persisted beyond even what he could see with his own eyes. His story helps to unpack a confusing set of circumstances. As he commented,

As a kid, my favorite thing to do was to go out and collect arrowheads. It was my way of originally connecting. In that sense, it perpetuated the myth that the Indians were here and were gone. The local families were not making arrowheads any more, and so therefore something had happened, there was a disconnection in my mind between the culture that was of the people that were there originally and the people were there now. Early on my sense was of a loss that this incredibly robust and beautiful culture was gone.

This false narrative exists in force on the Salmon River, even for lifetime settler residents. In this place one Indigenous family is thought of as the sole surviving family of that watershed. I lived on the Salmon River for a decade and came to accept the myth as reality even when I personally knew a number of Salmon River Indigenous families. As one Indigenous woman had to explain in a social media conversation, “I just ask that

people not forget that the Konomihu people still exist and that there was intermarriage with Karuk and Shasta.” A settler who lives on the Salmon River, in the Konomihu homeland, responded by admitting, “I actually didn't know that there were still Konomihu peoples living.” This speaks volumes to the erasure imposed by settler colonialism and to the enormous amount of work we have to do collectively as settler society to educate ourselves about continuing colonialism.

There are Konomihu, Shasta, and New River Shasta people on the Salmon River today that remain strong in their ancestral territory. Yet most Indigenous Peoples from the Salmon River are still currently in exile from their own homelands. Some have been pushed down river and some have had to move off of the Rivers entirely. Almost all of the private land on the Salmon River is owned by white settlers, and when a place does come up for sale it is astronomically priced and unattainable for almost all Indigenous people to afford. Land will be discussed in detail in the next section entitled Back to Whose Land.

On Martin Luther King Jr. Day in 2015, Unsettling Klamath River met with twelve Indigenous community leaders, activists and dance leaders. Unsettling Klamath River's collectively developed Points of Unity were presented that day and a question (not uncommon to groups of white people seeking to support people of color in their efforts for liberation) was asked. What issues are a priority to be addressed and where would it be best to direct our action? The pot economy was named as a specific problem as well as the issue of settler portals. Portals are the places and opportunities through which settler people find their way to this area. There are a handful of identified portals

in this place including the United States Forest Service, the marijuana industry, organic farm internships and Black Bear Ranch.¹⁴ Black Bear Ranch is an intentional community, or hippie commune that was founded in 1969, and many of the current settlers came to this area through this portal. It was explained that Black Bear Ranch was significantly contributed to the continuing displacement of Indigenous people.

A letter addressing this problem was previously written to residents of the Black Bear Ranch by a Karuk man. His letter was entitled “Homeless in The Homeland,” and the only responses that he received were defensive. No action was taken to address his concerns. In an effort to take responsibility, Unsettling Klamath River wrote an Open Letter to Black Bear Ranch.¹⁵ The letter defined and explained settler colonialism and how it is operating in our River communities and asked for the closing of the Black Bear Portal, repatriation of the land-base, and an opening of community dialogue about these issues. Tensions around this letter have been ongoing, including heated Social Media conversations for the year and a half since the letter was released. I continue to argue that Unsettling Klamath River has taken appropriate action in writing this letter, which was akin to an arrow shot directly into the heart of settler society.

Some children were born at Black Bear Ranch, and they have been especially put off by dialogue that questions their entitlement to the land. Rachael, another landowner

14. It is a common move to innocence for settler people to divert our/their own responsibility and assert that the USFS and not private property is the problem, because the Forest Service owns more land. This does not acknowledge that most of the prime fertile, riverside farm land is owned by largely white property owners and not by the USFS.

15. See Appendix B for letter to Black Bear Ranch

and long-time resident describes “they are settlers also, but with another layer of depth that I don’t have. They do feel like they belong.” Some Black Bear elders attest that they want to be buried there. Subsequently, many settler people are attached emotionally and spiritually to this place, myself included. It is the heart of settler society here on the Rivers. While I lived at Black Bear for three full years and feel a deep connection to the land and the people there, I argue that settler society must become accountable to the direct requests of Indigenous people to take responsibility for the shortcomings of the Black Bear Ranch project.

There have been efforts by Unsettling Klamath River to organize open community meetings to foster places where it is safe for Indigenous people to speak about these issues. Most land owning white settler people refused to attend the monthly Unsettling meetings that took place for a two-year period even before the release of the letter. It is common to hear from settler people that they want to hear directly from Indigenous people and not from other white people about these issues. Yet, when Indigenous people have taken their time and energy to share perspective, most land-owning settler people have not shown up. This is perplexing, as these are liberal minded people, most of whom have done social justice or environmental work and yet they appear highly intolerant of any disturbance to their tranquil picturesque lives.

When the Black Bear Letter was released, an Indigenous friend who lives on the Salmon River remarked that she needed to call her nieces and nephews to let them know that possibly they would have a home-land to come back to after all. In response to the Open Letter, Dina Whittaker (2016), an Indigenous journalist stated that “there is a small

ray of hope that some settlers are capable of standing in solidarity with indigenous peoples in a profoundly meaningful way to break down the oppressive systems that are threatening all of our futures, settler and Indigenous alike.” While there has been positive feedback from many Indigenous Peoples regarding the work of Unsettling Klamath River, most settler people still take great offense and refuse to engage openly with the process. Two of the major roots of this defiance lie in the challenges that unsettling presents to the settler identity of innocence and the deep seeded fear of a loss of entitlement to the land.

Back to Whose Land?

“Why does it have to about land?” A settler person asked during a tense and heated social media conversation regarding the future and potential repatriation of Black Bear Ranch. Leslie explains why.

Oftentimes when a piece of property comes up for sale there is tension or a certain vibe that this native family cannot afford to buy it and the kind of resentment that is there. There is tension about private land that is owned by white people, that has an oak stand or basket-picking place that native people want to use and have used in the past and don't have access to. Also, the economic disparities where white people are rich and native people are poor and have nothing.

One specific example is this twenty-six acre property being sold on the Salmon River, for six hundred thousand dollars (<http://humboldtlandman.com/properties/23,9>) that almost no Indigenous Peoples would not be able to afford.

Settler society holds a place physically on the land that supports the persistence of the settler colonial system. Another settler pushes back against centering land as the

major constituent in settler colonialism in a social media conversation, when she says, “giving comes in many forms and to narrow the focus to just land is hard for many of us who serve the people of the area on a daily basis.” To move beyond myths of innocence is to recognize that this collective tension is land-based and many settlers still refuse to recognize this.

An Indigenous friend who works at the local organic market has noticed that there is an increasingly large and steady stream of people that she has never seen before, coming through the store. During the Fall when it is marijuana harvest time the influx of new folks is at a peak. “Trimigrants” is a new terminology used to describe these seasonal pot workers who travel from around the world to Humboldt County in search of work within the Marijuana industry. Most people who have been living in the area for an extended time would attest to the fact that there are an extraordinary number of settlers around these days. Sometimes it is hard to determine which settlers actually live here full time, as so many white folks travel during the winter and throughout the year and come and go from their second homes on the river.

The degree of integration between Indigenous and settler people varies greatly in this area. There are some white people who exist in a completely alternate world from their Indigenous neighbors. Walking by one another in the store or post office might be the extent of their interaction. Settlers who do have relationships and friendships with Indigenous people can more clearly see the negative effects of the settler colonial system on Indigenous peoples lives, and yet thus far, most are not willing or able to push colonization to the fore-front of their consciousness and live with the daily discomfort

and uncertainty that this brings.¹⁶ Naming colonization as the central point from which we must understand and organize all of our work for a better world is a necessary step in effort towards unifying resistance movements. For the white settler, it is also an important act of respect towards Indigenous peoples whose homelands we occupy.

Complications around integration were discussed at a meeting between Unsettling Klamath River and a group of Indigenous community leaders. Speaking to the settlers, one Indigenous woman talked about the many positions in the local schools and other institutions that need reliable workers. She suggested that those of us who did not have a “real” job, might consider getting one. At the same time, she acknowledged that she was having an argument inside of her own head about this. These jobs need filling, but she was hesitant to push for further integration, as the occupation of her homelands and the simultaneous displacement of Indigenous people continues. Her testimony speaks to the complexity of relationship that exists between settler and Indigenous people in this place.

In a social media conversation, one Indigenous woman explains how “there is definitely a competing interest in land/property in the area and it’s unfortunate that local Native people have such a hard time acquiring property on their own ancestral territory because they can’t afford to keep up with rising costs as outside interest in moving to the area increases.” Settlers living in these Indigenous homelands live with a great deal of anxiety, knowing full well that the land we/they occupy is stolen, but are pained to

16. Indigenous people do not have the choice whether to hold colonization at the fore-front of their consciousness because it affects their daily lives in multiple ways.

question our/their entitlement to it. Settler insecurity comes from a dread of acknowledgement that could bring about a loss of land, power, and privilege. Greg is willing to talk about this fear, but only in the context of others. “What they fear is the loss of their ability to manage their land the way they want to—fear of both the possibility of losing property, and the ability to be sovereign.” Haley bravely owns the terror admitting, “I don’t want to give up my ability to live here, it’s the fear of that.”

Renee unpacks some anxieties:

The security of private property is an illusion. Insecurity is feeling like you need a title, or to own it or have it in an external way instead of knowing that you belong here. Our culture is a lot like that, grabby and real clingy to institutions that give a sense of security but ultimately betray a feeling of insecurity that are underlying and really deep.

White settlers rely on a false entitlement in order to justify our/their right to the land. Haley’s description makes this entitlement real, “it feels like individual agency, how myself as an individual has interacted with my own life and my own thinking about what places are open to me. Where I could fit in, where I am free to go as a person. I was raised unlimited. I go where I want.” Renne pushes to a place beyond academic analysis.

I think private property is kind of a security thing. Everybody feels more secure owning a place even if it is a more contrived sense of security. It is kind of manufactured. I might have a piece of paper that says I can live here and that this belongs to me, but the people who have lived here for thousands of years have agreements with the spirit people. And so, the larger ramification of that might be more meaningful.

Many white settlers living amongst these Indigenous communities know deep down that the land cannot be owned and that systems that secure our right to the land are

unstable as they are built upon injustice. This reality exposes settlers as a vulnerable people. There is a great deal of awareness within this settler community of study and at the same time a desperate clinging to the falsehoods and entitlements that secure a future with the good life.

The lines divided, still broke on Karuk and non-Karuk I was really surprised about this...Suddenly when I was chin to chin they looked like they didn't know me. Before being chin to chin my reputation was enough, but here it's not like that. They look through me. The split between Karuk and non- Karuk is unique. In all my life, I haven't seen that before.

Phillip exposes what he deems as a unique set of existing tensions between settler and Indigenous people. He continues on to say, "I think I comprehend why it is necessary, why people divide on Karuk and non-Karuk lines. Why people have to get up in your face if they don't know you, it totally makes sense because those are the people who have been taking Karuk wealth." His last statement expresses an understanding of why settler/Indigenous relationships remain on shaky ground. During this same interview, he reverts back to anger and defensiveness regarding discussions around white responsibility. It is not atypical for settler people to jump from one position to another as we try to process our/their role in colonization. Greg helps to articulate some understanding about why lines are drawn between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people:

Growing up on the river, there were native families up there. I think what was really clear in hindsight is that they knew how to protect themselves from white people, even well-meaning white people, because so much had been taken. You can fish with a native family every day for a whole summer and there are stories they wouldn't tell when white people were there. There was knowledge of how to do things that they had been taught and for good reason they wouldn't share.

Many settlers on the Klamath River push back against being de-centered from conversation regarding the future. However, white people's uneasiness is a small price to pay knowing that the holocaust against Indigenous Peoples continues. "Keep trying, keep an open mind, and hopefully the answers to hard questions as to how we can live in this place as settlers or fifth-wave colonialists will come. How can we be here in a good way and earn our keep?" Settlers can work to return land to Indigenous people. Beyond this, there is no definitive answer to Greg's question but unsettling offers a frame-work from which to proceed.

A Detriment to All Life

In the Indigenous homelands of study, two social structures compete. One has existed since time immemorial and the other has been forced upon the original. Each relies on starkly different value systems. Settler society relies on a capitalist economic system and is founded upon values that reward self-interest and promote individual rights. These value systems largely dictate the quality of life on the Klamath River. The values honored by settler colonial society are unhealthy for all creatures and the natural world on which we depend. Although colonization has negatively affected all life on the Klamath River and Indigenous social infrastructure has been tampered with by settler colonialism and a capitalist economic system, Indigenous value systems still persist (Nelson, 2008). Only systems of oppression make healthy living inaccessible.

In the current sense of “wealth,” white settlers have the most to lose from a decolonized world because we/they “own” the most. Renee ponders the possibility that “other [white] people might have to pay some price and there is still injustice, that can be made more just, but it means you lose some of what you have gained from unjust means.” Repatriation of land to Indigenous Peoples does not mean a transfer of ownership from settler to Indigenous hands or that Indigenous people would then become the oppressors or the overlords of all other people (Tuck and Yang, 2012). However, technologies towards sustainable living have been developed over thousands of years, and Indigenous Peoples are best suited to provide leadership as to how we might proceed as human beings to begin to repair and restore the damage that has been wrought on our world by colonization and capitalism.

Cultural Appropriation

This discussion must clearly delineate between the recognition of Indigenous ideology as imperative to the health of life on earth and the desire to appropriate Indigenous culture and ceremonial ways on the part of non-Indigenous peoples. Settler society has no right to Indigenous spirituality, although the lack of connection to the traditional ways of our own ancestors leaves a typical settler yearning. From the birth of the Back-to-the-Land movement, settler people have turned to Indigenous ways as an inspiration and a guide for the spirituality that is sought. Until the more recent illumination and naming of cultural appropriation, “hippie” society has felt completely free to take what it desires from Native culture and try to claim it for its own (The

Outline, 2017, Michael Tierra, 2000). The settler on the Rivers today is likely to be more cautious about exposing their desire to appropriate, but that is not always the case.

Phillip calls the term cultural appropriation bogus and calls it “an apt step toward the truth.” He weaves a convoluted scenario that ultimately seeks to justify his right to Indigenous spirituality and religion.

Hippies are given a fucking hard time for getting into Indian shit.... When the hippies are on a new continent and they are shedding the fucking traditions of their parents like Christianity...and start to get into Indigenous religion and dress and behavior, then it is oftentimes disrespected by Indigenous people even though if the truth is that this land has spawned those religions, it is because of this land that those religions get their truths, then wouldn't it only make sense that anyone who lives on this land who is seeking the truth and is on the right path is finding those same truths that are similar to those religions?

Another example is the building of sweat houses such as the one that used to exist at Black Bear Ranch. I had never been in a “sweat” before my time at Black Bear. It was a profound and healing experience to feel the connection of singing songs with others in the raging heat of a fire. The lyrics of a foundational sweat song that were taught to me and many of other settlers at Black Bear speak ironically and directly to settler desire and entitlement. “We are always at home wherever we may roam.” I remember how good it felt to join in chorus and sing these words. It brought a deeply desired feeling of belonging into my heart. Today I question if these lyrics help to perpetuate an entitlement to the land which is a pillar of settler colonialism.

Another example, is the appropriation of Navajo “Blessing Ways.” The Blessing Way is a ceremony to honor the mother and child to be in the Navajo tradition. I first attended a “Blessing way” before I came to Black Bear Ranch in 1995. It was in

fact me, who brought this “tradition” to Black Bear Ranch, without any awareness that I did not have any real understanding of what the tradition was, nor did I have and right to be spreading my version of it. Another example is the Black Bear logo, that Cedar who designed it, describes.

The top border of mountains came from the engraving on an old Navajo ring that I have treasured since childhood. It was made near Glen Canyon as a gift to my father when he was 21. It is a traditional Navajo Ring of manhood with a magical stone of petrified wood. The pattern is a bear claw, and as you can see, it was the perfect element for our logo (2000, 111).

All of these examples are problematic on so many levels and are beyond the scope of this paper to explain. Yet, it is still important to be clear that it is not only very disrespectful but it is outright theft when non-Indigenous people attempt to replicate what we perceive of Indigenous traditional and spiritual practices.

INNOCENCE

In North America today, there are distinct cultural myths that deem colonization as a thing of the past and paint the white settler as pure and innocent. The infamous show *Little House on the Prairie* is exemplary of these myths. As explained by Waziyatawin (2006, 67) “Laura Ingalls Wilder crafted a narrative that transformed the horror of white supremacist genocidal thinking and the stealing of Indigenous lands into something noble, virtuous, and absolutely beneficial to human society.” Ma, Pa, Laura and her sisters are cast as innocent hardworking folks just trying to make their way in this new world. While elements of this may be true, the show only tells a fraction of the story. It never tells the story of the Indigenous people who belong to the land-bases being settled. It does not tell of the violence being inflicted upon the Indigenous people who are being displaced at best, and murdered at worst, in order to make room for families like the Ingalls to move in. The real and horrific parts of history are simply omitted, and the narrative of white settler societies innocence is the theme that sticks. The legacy of *Little House on the Prairie* remains today as a veil over the true story of the founding of the United States. These falsehoods are perpetuated not only by television shows but by school curriculum, books and the telling of history and this has seeped into the subconscious of Western society today.

Moves to Innocence

Acknowledging that settler colonialism is an ongoing structure and trying to discern the ways that settlers perpetuate and benefit from this system at the cost of Indigenous peoples, challenges the settler identity of innocence. There are a series of “moves to innocence” that white settlers have learned to depend on in order to dodge the fear and personal pain that arise when new and more truthful stories about settler colonialism begin to unfold (Tuck and Yang, 2012). Some of these moves to innocence can be observed across settler culture, and there are some that have emerged in specific to circumstances here in the Karuk, Konomihu, Shasta and New River Shasta homelands. These “moves to innocence” work to allow the white settler to remain complicit and to evade the responsibility that we have as the primary beneficiaries of the settler colonial system. Settlers in this place look around and see Indigenous peoples who, despite the burden that they carry as a result of colonization, are truly connected to place. To be rooted in the land is one of the greatest desires of the Back-to-the-Lander and relates to many settler’s inward desire to be Indigenous. This longing is interwoven and underlying most of the “moves to innocence” discussed in this chapter. They are as follows: Settler Clean/ Indigenous Dirty, Doing My Best as an Individual, People Have Always Migrated Around, The Land Welcomes Us, My People Are Refugees, It’s the Tone/ Not the Message, Racism Goes Both Ways and One Love/ One People.

Settler Clean/ Indigenous Dirty

Greg has a lifetime of experience being exposed to negative myths about Indigenous people. He candidly speaks to the inner thoughts of some settlers when he describes how, “A lot of white people think Indians are people who don’t work, people who just get money handed to them, people who do lots of drugs. So, stereotypical.” Ray’s wife, articulates these negative myths succinctly and she also illuminates the overlap in “moves to innocence” as she simultaneously argues that Indigenous people are lazy and that they are also not really “Indian” anymore either. She says,

This is Indian. Hey where did they get their money? Government grants and they just sluff it off. A lot of them don’t do much work they just sit around. If an Indian applies for that job they get it, even if they are not really qualified they get the job. Now that is really wrong. Yeah, it’s an Indian community but hey those Indians, most of them are white or half white, so what the big thing about being Indian.

Sally describes, “I have heard people mocking Native ceremonies, they latch on to anything bad that happens. I do remember certain white folks in town kind seized on to that to make racist comments...it seems to get seized upon to perpetuate drunk, freeloading Indian stereotypes.”

Settlers hold onto negative narratives about Indigenous people to shield themselves from the reality of what it means to be a settler person living on stolen land. Sally explains this saying, “there are a lot of white folks I feel that really like to trash the tribal government and kind of trash native values because they feel defensive about their own values.” As Renee points out “when you are secure in your own identity, you don’t

have to say someone else is bad.” Sally speaks to the facts she has observed, “as if there aren't drunk, drug addicted white people around here... There are plenty of clear cut 100% American white folks out here who are totally drunk and who are a part of a larger culture that is accepting of alcoholism and drunk driving but despite that, the drunken Indian stereotype is alive and well here.”

These myths are convenient and they can be used excuse the settler from the actuality that white people have historically been the violent ones. The irony is thick. Greg outlines some of the many complexities around continued settler violence that is masked behind these false narratives. “Local white people have stock placed in owning guns and being ready to defend something. Is it violence when “others” die? Hippies with guns and pit bulls see their guns as a practical necessity because they live in a rough neighborhood.” Renne tries to put myths about violence into perspective when she says,

you can be peace loving and project an image of it but it is also not having to be violent not having the resistance, to what? It comes down to white privilege, culturally not having to struggle so hard or be so tough. That is an important part of having to fight for your lives.

The principal purveyor of violence against people in these homelands is continually being denied access to the land. Renee describes this well. “When you think about it, it’s not a metaphor to say that the earth is our mother it’s not a figure of speech, it’s really true. A lot of people are really connected to that in a really alive way. And to be forcefully separated from that is really violent.” The settler today carries this legacy of violence (Waziyatawin, 2008). Many settlers will hold fast to the idea that they did not commit the past atrocities or there is not “blood on their hands.” This fails to recognize the

continuing violence being inflicted upon Indigenous Peoples today and that settler society remains complicit within this system.

Many white settlers want to pass the buck and continue to blame Indigenous people for the effects of colonization. In moments of denial settlers will call on just about anything to cast a negative picture and to deem Indigenous people not worthy. Phillip begins by remarking that, “many Indians perpetuate systems more than I do. Karuks have Christmas trees.” He then refers to “people who are Indigenous, growing pot and using chemicals.”¹⁷ A palpable tension is felt in the room as he simultaneously attacks and defends. He says, “it gets complicated for me personally. 'My bloodline says I am twenty-five or fifty percent Karuk and you are not, so you should get the fuck out of here'. But watching what they do to the people around them, that it doesn't seem right to me because they do fucked up things to the people around them.” Phillip goes so far as to claim that “all males have been in prison or are dead,” in reference to Indigenous men. It is important to understand that Phillip is a person who truly cares for the well-being of his Indigenous friends and neighbors. He has shown a great deal of generosity towards Indigenous people throughout the time that I have known him by extending his home and resources. But when asked to view our/them/selves as settlers living on stolen lands, the response of settlers in this place is many times to hide, defend or attack.

Another justification myth includes the underlying implication that Indigenous Peoples are not responsible and therefore settlers are better stewards of the land. Sally

17. See Appendix C for Unsettling Pot Stance (Unsettling Klamath River, 2017)

states “people who are from here and their place is filled with cars and dirt. These are things I have a problem with.” Again, the irony is thick. Indigenous people have been the caretakers of this land base since time immemorial. Without access to most of their land and with a heavy boot on their heads, Indigenous people have continued to take responsibility for this place. Sally describes these myths saying, “It is a way of writing people off, we don't want to have to think about this problem or we want peoples stuff, this stereotype is a way to do that.” These narratives are so cavernous that even when facts regarding settler violence and conquest are known, the settler comes out “clean” and the Indigenous “dirty.” The perpetuation of such myths directly relates to settlers’ insecurity with the unjust position we/they occupy on the land.

Doing My Best as an Individual

I have observed a common sentiment that the power to effect change lies in individual action, and this lack of reliance on collective societal responsibilities is debilitating to efforts to creating social change. Over and over throughout this course of study I have heard settler people come back to this move to innocence. The sentiments of Sally show how individualism leaves the settler somewhat paralyzed in a state of complicity. “Going back to just trying to do your best, to be a good person as an individual to the other individuals around you, I don’t know what the hell else to do.”

She further unpacks this trope:

It is not a question that has an easy answer. Things get weird if you think about it too hard. Sometimes my philosophy is I just need to think about it less, do my best to be a decent person as an individual and not get so caught up in the larger system. Some people can change the world, but I don’t really see myself that way.

You can only onyx about it for so long before it becomes a hamster wheel of navel gazing inside your brain.

Renee too struggles with the convoluted reality of the morally conscious white settler who strives to be a good person but fears inside that it is not enough. She explains “in some ways a person can compare myself with other people and say, I feel like have been pretty benign and respectful of the landscape. I like to think that, but that is probably just a justification, which is ok, I think. That is what we all come to terms with or don’t think about.” The settler is like a beast that survives off of individualism (Snellgorve, 2013). A collective settler-hood that refuses to be complicit must be created. Snellgrove (2013) explains how,

we can, and we must, cultivate a certain ethos – a prefiguration, if you will, of the ethical relations to come. This ethos will aid the construction of a ‘we,’ triggering the beast’s, starvation and the destruction of the sovereign self, enabling us to cut off *our* own heads, allowing ethical relations to rise and an alternative, *decolonial* ‘we’ to emerge.

Relatedly, the “beast” of individualism arrives when a settler on social media asserts that “Indians can’t just blame the system, people got to be responsible for themselves.” Here the burden is placed on individual responsibility and systems of oppression are not named or targeted as the adversary needing to be addressed. Back-to-the-landers are seeking to become a new people and in order to accomplish this we/they must work to change structures of oppression (Smith, 2013).

People Have Always Migrated Around

The migration narrative is a common response deployed when settlers want to escape the mark of a settler identity. As Phillip articulates, “It could be argued that at one point that Karuk were not here anyhow, science says people migrated here, so how is it different than the modern migration?” Sally explains her understanding that, “the whole human race is a settler. It is kind of interesting to read about human mass migration.” She further analyzes saying, “I don't know how to become native to a place, it's such a fuzzy thing. As groups a population can become native to a place. Everyone has done that to a certain extent. Whether it was 100 years ago or 10,000 years ago that your ancestors arrived in a spot everyone's ancestors at some point moved from somewhere else.”

Hurwitz and Bourque (8, 2014) explain how,

in this move to innocence settlers use a historical 'out' describing how people have always migrated around the planet and how Indigenous Peoples themselves migrated here. What this fails to take into account—besides Indigenous accounts of their own origin—is the vast time that Indigenous Peoples have inhabited, managed, and coexisted with their homelands (not to mention the silencing of violence that has displaced Indigenous Peoples).

The Land Welcomes Us

In this move to innocence the land “speaks,” showing acceptance and welcoming the settler to be here. Experiencing the beauty of the mountains, the abundant water and witnessing the connection between Indigenous people and this place has been a profound experience for myself and other settlers. We can too easily conflate our desire to belong to a people and a place with the assumption that we must be somehow meant to be here

simply because it feels so right. Phillip's directive articulates this "move to innocence" succinctly. "Return focus of the truth to the place and not the people. Truth comes from the land if you are respecting it you will have a piece of the truth." Rachael questions "what is the land saying to us?" Both Phillip and Rachael are attempting to understand themselves in a broader context in relationship to land. This is both important for the settler to do and it is also a slippery slope. There remains important learning for the settler, that occurs by paying attention to the natural environment. Yet, it remains problematic for white settler people to determine what the land is saying to us because it can then be used to justify an entitlement to it. Phillip describes how, "the place is the teacher.... the land is teaching the lessons." The idea that we can interpret our own truth from the land and determine what we believe or desire the land to be saying can absolve the settler from becoming accountable to what Indigenous are have been saying since invasion began.

My People Are Refugees

Being Jewish, I have a personal relationship to the "move to innocence" that argues, "my ancestors came here to escape persecution." Phillip refers to his own family as, "people seeking that truth with no leadership. What are they supposed to do? My family was oppressed, and in America it is free roads paved with gold, invested in one way ticket. We were lied to, can't go back." Ray exclaims, "Jews had people mistreat them, the Chinese, the Japanese and the Irish did. All of them have had really bad things happen to them. But you know what? You can't keep holding grudges, if you did you

will make your-self miserable.” Settler colonialism was created to replace Indigenous people with settlers on the land and settlers are benefit at the cost of Indigenous society complicit in this system despite historical oppression.

My ancestors are Jewish. My great, great Aunt Rachael and all of her children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren were murdered in the Nazi ghettos of Vilno, Lithuania. The Jewish Holocaust was a great tragedy in the story of humankind and thankfully it was put to an end. The attempted Holocaust against Indigenous people continues. Historical trauma in settler history is all the more reason to carve a new path for the future and avoid history repeating itself.

Knowing who we are and how we are positioned within a struggle is imperative to learning how to become accountable and this looks different depending upon who we are. For example, a non-Indigenous person of color has a very different position than I do as a white person (Unsettling Minnesota, 2009). Although to differing degrees, as a whole, white people benefit the most from the settler colonial system. Until we find ways to collectively refuse it, we will continue to be place-holders for its continuation. Gina Crosley-Corcoran (2016) who grew up very poor and white explains, “there are a million ways I experience privilege, and some that I certainly don’t. But thankfully, intersectionality allows us to examine these varying dimensions and degrees of discrimination while raising awareness of the results of multiple systems of oppression at work.

It's the Tone/ Not the Message

Unsettling Klamath River has learned that responsibility begins with acknowledgement and this means pointing out the elephant in the room. “We are settlers living on stolen land.” This alone is very difficult for settler people, as it commonly sends people into a tailspin of fear and defensiveness. For some, it is hard to get past the initial assumptions that we are being asked to immediately return all of our land and get on a boat to Europe.¹⁸ As one settler questions in a social media dialogue, “where and when do we all go? What about my need as a human to connect to land anywhere...why does it have to be about race or tribe?” One thing that is known is that decolonization requires the complete destruction of settler societal ways (Snellgrove, 2013). It is also known that we must expand our imaginings beyond that of private property (Mackey, 2016; Smith, 2014; Tuck and Yang, 2012). Because we do not know what a decolonized world will look like until we get there, white settlers working to decolonize must accept that being uncertain is a necessary step in our process as settler people (Mackey, 2016). Here presents a healing opportunity, but it is also very difficult and painful as white settler society is clinging to an unstable foundation.

Settler people doing this work we have been met by Indigenous people with a degree of patience and thoughtfulness that has been a learning experience and is a role model towards the restitution of all humanity. All of the challenges and complexities of

18. Here I refer to returning-and not giving back- the land as we cannot “give back” what is not ours to give.

the settler situation has resulted in myself and others who have engaged intimately with the work of unsettling, facing a great deal of personal opposition from other settlers. I have lived in this place for twenty-two years and have friendships that are decades old. I have lost both relationships and social standing within settler communities because of my dedication to this work. Even white, social and environmental activists refuse to engage with *Unsettling Klamath River* some attest, because of our approach to the work, or our tone.

It is important to note that unless we hold a hard line against institutionalized systems of oppression, we will inadvertently be recreating them. Beverly Tatum Daniels (1997), uses a metaphor about racism that can easily be applied to settler colonialism. She describes how institutionalized oppression is like a moving walkway and that unless people walk faster in the opposite direction then we are inadvertently re-creating the system by our complicity. Continuing on with our lives as settler people without actively confronting and fighting against the settler colonial system is irresponsible and this allows the system to continue.

One settler friend who is in a band refused to play at an event we were planning, specifically because she did not like the words anti-colonial in the invitation. Settler people are threatened by a direct stance against colonialism because it creates feelings of fear and uncertainty and disrupts the tranquility many have become accustomed to. I purport that it is the content and not the delivery that is the most significant obstruction in people engaging with the work of unsettling. Attacking the tone of the messages instead

of the content itself, is yet another move to innocence configured to give white settlers clemency from their responsibilities.

Racism Goes Both Ways

Prejudice, is looking down upon another for their membership in a specific group. It is many times based upon unfair stereotypes or pre-conceived notions. Any group or individual can be prejudiced against another. Racism is another matter, and requires power to operate. Racism can be defined simply, as prejudice plus power. It is many times described as institutionalized, to show how it has been made into an established system.

It is common for the white settler to claim that “racism works both ways.” As Sally states, “I have heard racist comments basically, that go both ways.” If Sally had chosen to say that prejudice works both ways she would have been correct as there are negative stereotypes and assumptions that do go both ways. The distinction between the two is important. Sally also contended that “there is a certain amount of inherent racism ...certainly white people do not have some kind of monopoly on racism.” Yes, racism exists in non-white societies such as Rwanda and China. But as DiAngelo explains,

in the West-Europe, Canada and the United States-whites are the racial group holding long-term historical institutional power over people of color. And since that is where I am situated as I write this book, that is the context that I am addressing. I assume that my readers are also situated in the United states or other western contexts, and that they, too should be addressing their own context (2016, 271).

I concur with DiAngelo that rebutting that racism is working both ways “blocks self-reflection and derails the discussion” and this is the function of the many moves to innocence. However, dialogue around institutionalized racism asserts that people should become racially literate (an important task), while assuming that this will occur in an unchallenged settler society. Without a clear analysis of colonialism at the fore-front of the conversation there is an assumption that these changes will occur within a settler colonial, capitalist society, which is an impossible task.

One Love/ One People

On the Klamath River, Indigenous Peoples have remained in place and traditional ways are practiced to the full extent possible within a settler colonial system. At an unsettling gathering one settler observed that “in this place settler colonialism has been largely a failure.” Yet, for settlers, public discourse around Indigenous Peoples as a “thing of the past” still lends itself to a color-blind approach to innocence. This appeared as a pattern when talking with settlers on the Klamath. A common adaptation asserts that race is a construct. Sally describes how “there is the matter of who is white and who is Indian exactly. Most Indians have some European ancestry and most of the white people have someone native in their background.” Ray articulates this move saying: “when we came in the 1950s people were part Indian, there are very few pure whites and very few pure Indians. I love it, American stir fry.”

I went to school with Indian kids in a little one room school house and we were never taught anything about any prejudice, that was something we didn't know anything about it, they happened to be a different color of skin but they were still people just like we are. We are all people.

It is revealing that Ray can claim that no-one was prejudice when speaking about Indigenous children who were just beginning to return from boarding schools. Clearly the experiences of Indigenous Peoples at that time in history were riddled with oppression and starkly different then the false narrative that Ray is holding onto. The settler might say all people are the same, but underneath this statement is an indoctrinated belief that they are more deserving of the land otherwise the settler would have to admit that the land is stolen and this could eventually lead to giving up land, power and privilege.

Many non-Indigenous residents of the Klamath River region seek accord with Indigenous people. It is a commonly known hippie value to believe that all people are one. The ideal that says that all people are ultimately brothers and sisters is core to my own value system and has been an attractant for me, to alternative Hippie culture. Like many others, I truly do seek unity with all people. Leslie explains this heartfelt feeling well, “the idea of one love, one people. It’s the spiritual evolution that we need for the world to be a better place, for this shit to not happen again.” Ryan McMahon counters this, when he explains that “I would argue that before reconciliation, we really need to look at decolonization. Decolonization starts with land. It starts with the question of land. Do indigenous people have the ability to live freely on and with relationship to the land, as we did prior to confederation? And the answer right now is no” (CBC Radio, Red Man Laughing, 2017). One settler astutely breaks this move to innocence down in a social media conversation;

Though we'd all like to think of humanity as 'all one', the truth is that we are not all equal in our opportunities and life experience. It's easy to dismiss as "bullshit" when you don't *personally* see the problems associated with race. It's very much an issue that many people don't have the privilege to ignore

Sally's analysis reveals the struggle of the settler trying to grapple with decolonization.

She says,

On some level, I feel like maybe we out to move on and try and form some kind of future as a community that recognizes just being of mixed race or mixed culture at the same time it's kind of very dismissive. On the one hand, white folks haven't committed the atrocities these are not things that we have personally done to other people.... but it's not like there aren't people around who haven't felt their affects (boarding schools).

One common assertion by settlers opposed to unsettling ideas, is that the work is divisive and that openly delineating between settler and Indigenous people is furthering the divide between us. I argue that the fracture has always existed and while some healing has been accomplished by the relationships that have been formed and the collective efforts that have been made to towards ecological restoration, there remains a festering wound. People suggest that the work of unsettling is creating social tensions when in actuality, it is exposing them. "Sweeping claims of unity let the settler off the hook and fail to acknowledge the ramifications of systems of oppression" (Hurwitz & Bourque, 2014).

The ability to claim innocence in the face of a situation that clearly calls for responsibility is afforded in particular, to the white settler. In short, whiteness matters. The next chapter will delve into an in-depth analysis of whiteness and it will unpack why

it is important to understand how whiteness interacts with settlers and our/their role in the settler colonial system.

FACING WHITENESS

My entire life I have only seen a handful of white people actually sort through their colonizer history and settler mentality to become real, genuine allies to Indigenous peoples. The process that these people have undergone was so time consuming, so grueling and oftentimes incredibly painful. It was amazing that they hadn't stopped where most other people did, convincing themselves of their own white-savior/pan-Indian-ally mentality, entitled to our meetings, ceremonies and spaces. We do not need any more of those, and their creation was and remains a real danger in beginning to educate anyone on Indigenous issues (Wicanhpi Iyotan Win, 2009, 6).

I was born in Detroit, Michigan, a child of two teachers who were dedicated to social justice. Martin Luther King Jr. was our family hero, and my understandings about oppression were within the context of black and white people. As a young teen, I was trained as an anti-racist youth facilitator. While I was aware that I had a specific responsibility as a white person, this responsibility was to black people. I did not have any idea what settler colonialism was.¹⁹ In fact, Indigenous people were completely invisible in my childhood community.

While anti-racist work is important, it falls short of addressing some of the larger systematic problems we are faced with as a human society today. We must expand our analysis to understand that racism cannot be abolished without the dismantling of overarching systems of oppression such as settler colonialism, capitalism and border imperialism.²⁰ We must reject the assumption that battling racism alone will stop the

19. I did not grow up understanding that black people were the labor force in the same settler colonial project that was profiting from the theft of Indigenous land.

20. Harsha Walia, 2013.

persecution of people of color. It is easy to observe that as a collective entity, people of color around the world are fighting at full force in a battle for basic human rights. White people as a whole are not even working at half of our potential in this struggle for humanities collective liberation.

Facing whiteness and taking responsibility is not an easy thing to do. This has become clearly observable given the reactions and push back from the community of white settlers that I am connected to here in this place. As my analysis, around interwoven systems of oppression have developed, I have been able to clearly see how whiteness benefits those with white skin to varying degrees depending on many factors including, but not limited to class, gender, sexual orientation and ability. Attempts by Back-to-the Land people to view our position here on the land within a colonial context has been reviled by those that refuse to see themselves as a perpetuator and beneficiary of settler colonialism and has been painful and challenging for those who have been willing to acknowledge. Subjects of this study have fluctuated in their willingness and ability to engage with the content.

This chapter will look closely at why whiteness matters and expose some of the major hurdles that are faced within local efforts to create a white settler ethic of responsibility. It will begin by showing how white settler fragility prevents most white people from being able to fully grasp what settler colonialism is, let alone becoming accountable. Next, this chapter will share an analysis of white guilt and imagine what might be possible beyond this state of being. Then, this chapter will define white supremacy and make observable how it is operating in this place. The final section

will conclude with an explanation and illumination of the white savior complex and the “Dances with Wolves” syndrome.

White Settler Fragility

As Indigenous cultural revitalization strengthens, white people living on the Rivers today have an increasingly harder time demonizing Indigenous people or erasing them from our consciousness. Especially with the rise of social media, many white people in this place cannot help but notice examples of what Indigenous society is dedicated to. The baskets that are being woven, the children growing up learning their own languages and attending ceremony, or efforts to bring traditional foods and storytelling into the public schools. Herein lies a shift in paradigm. While institutions such as, private property may appear indisputable on the surface, beneath this assumption is a growing awareness by white settlers that we are living on stolen land in a place where Indigenous people remain. Indigenous people never left this place and cultural ways stand strong.

Yet, during the multitude of times that I have engaged with other settlers about these issues there has been a consistent pattern of obstruction that occurs. Settler society as a whole remains paralyzed by the gravity of the historical crimes that have been committed, let alone being able to accept the current role that we/they play in the continuation of the settler colonial system. Thus, there is a significant barrier that stands in the way of a collective assuming of white responsibility. Finding a balance between meeting settler people where they are and trying to push settler society out of a long time

dysfunctional entitlement is a challenging endeavor as white folks expect to be comfortable and to be certain.

Rachael illuminated this predicament in the very early stages of this movements formation when she asked, “how are you going to hook people? If it starts off in this uncomfortable way, how are you going to get the hook in?” She explains white fragility when she describes, “I try to approach it with a curiosity so I don't turn them off... coming about it so gently, because it's so urgent, but if I come about it in the wrong nuanced way I see people snap shut, because of the potential for talking about something painful or the discomfort of it.” As Robin DiAngelo (2016, 252) explains, “white fragility works to punish the person giving the feedback and essentially bully them back into silence. It also maintains white solidarity-the tacit agreement that we will protect white privilege and not hold each other accountable for our racism” (or our role in settler colonialism). Renee describes how, “inherent admitting that your r doing something that is not benevolent nobody wants to do that, it is hard. You can have good intentions also but once you admit that it makes you vulnerable.” Greg addresses his own struggle with white fragility and asks some important questions of settler society.

How do we as a community acknowledge our history our future and how our two societies interrelate? A lot of people want to ignore, want to avoid, a lot of people want to engage but don't know how. There is such a vast array of levels of understanding around these issues. Continue to engage although it's painful and can't find the words. Dig deeper and accept that our eco groovy, kind rainbow organic garden, hurt nobody Buddhist lifestyle has an impact. When you look at the details then you see what it is. Do you choose to feel the pain of someone who is experiencing the fallout of historical and contemporary colonialism? Do you choose to help or hide? Times that I help and times that I run and hide.

Fragility is a very useful term towards understanding the state of white people when faced with truth telling about our function within systems of oppression. Fragility defines a delicacy, weakness, vulnerability and break ability, all of which articulately describe the identity of entitlement carried by the white settler. Many times, white people will cling to our entitlement knowing that it is tenuous and will easily shatter. Unfortunately, at this time whiteness still allows a choice of whether or not to engage (Jensen, 2005).

Leslie speaks honestly and candidly to her own fragility,

Each individual person is kind of a reflection of the system that we are in right now, and so here I am this one person who knows what has happened has awareness, has felt into it, but it is too painful. I am not far enough along in my process to grieve and hold that in the way that it needs to, in order to move through it.

Haley questions how to,

constructively address the defense that so many of us settlers/white people have when being confronted with our relationship to white supremacy- the defense of 'but this isn't my fault'. How to accept responsibility without collapsing? How to handle without just defending being wrong about things we have learned, things we have believed? How to live with ourselves while realizing that we are not innocent bystanders?

I argue that it is necessary to push colonization to the forefront of white settler's consciousness, no matter how painful (Snellgrove, 2013). White settlers carry pain due to our own alienation and longing and we also feel a distant but real pain for what our Indigenous neighbors have and continue to endure on a daily basis. It is imperative that white people begin to grasp our ability to hold pain in the context of colonization.

This paper has made a conscious effort not to refer to graphic stories of violence inflicted upon Indigenous Peoples, as a white person asking Indigenous people to re-visit these realities is wrong. However, the following is being written to create important perspective for settler people struggling to deal with our own pain around assuming responsibility. One Indigenous friend explained to me, the cruel reality of pain. She told the story of her own aunts and great-grandmothers being raped and killed. She spoke of women having their live babies literally cut out of their bellies. This is a reality from the not too distant past, here in this place. The magnitude and horror of this actuality is so tremendous, that it creates an important scale of understanding on which the white settler can measure our own capacity to manage pain.

Beyond Guilt and Towards Responsibility

To this population of study, whiteness is not something to be proud of. In fact, those that tout white pride are detested by this group of peoples, most of whom have at some time felt guilt or shame as a result of being white. While this guilt may inwardly eat away at the white settler, most remain static as how to combat the institutionalized systems of oppression that continue to benefit white people. Harsha Walia (2012) speaks to this problem. “While guilt is often a sign of a much-needed shift in consciousness, in itself it does nothing to motivate the responsibility necessary to actively dismantle entrenched systems of oppression.” Greg describes it as a process and outlines some difficulties:

you start with denial and then you move to guilt and then hopefully you move from guilt to action and hopefully that action isn't based on what you've have

cooked up in your own brain as what needs to happen but by the action is what's been crafted by listening and understanding and looking inside and questioning all of the things that we were taught but perhaps were not taught correctly.

I argue that unsettling is a process that will help white settler society move towards responsibility I also acknowledge that this is easier said than done. In his article *Death to Settler Society*, Bourque describes that his friend Michael Yellowbird explains the process of unsettling settlers, as akin to a death. Bourque (2015) believes that this “cuts to the heart of the defiance we often come across.” He refers to Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, and her famous book *On Death and Dying*. She describes the five stages of grief as: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. I have observed that through attempts to unsettle, white people will come and go from these stages but that coming to acceptance is not easily achieved.

Here lies another contradiction. These subjects know very well that Indigenous oppression is ongoing, because what we see with our own eyes is indisputable. Yet still, there is a commonplace denial, or lack of understanding for the settler person that the settler colonial system continues today. The words of this settler, during a heated a social media dialogue articulate this gap in knowledge and illuminates how easily one can slip into the safety of denial. He says “the reality is that colonization happened, yes, it was terrible, shameful, and all should be aware of it. However, this does not mean that all white people should feel shame for eternity, or that natives have a right to shame whites.” Greg speaks to this denial saying, “ultimately that is when we get heart to heart with other white friends who live here. That is where they balk, that there is any debt to

repay.” He further explains, “as far as the white guilt, I think people need a framework to put it in to deal, in a positive way. A lot of people think what do I owe, I didn’t cause this scene I just came to this place.” I suggest that the long and arduous process of unsettling is a way out of the guilty sludge and onto a path towards responsibility and that becoming accountable will eventual lead to an identity that the white settler can feel genuine pride and security in.

White Supremacism

Narratives that demean and demonize people of color and discourse that assumes the superiority of whites are infused into the human psyche from birth, through children’s books, schools, social discourse and the media (Kivel,2011). These myths uphold current day systems that deny those with brown and black skin basic human rights. Dr. Michael's Yellow Bird rhetorical questioning brings these injustices to light.

Are you savage? Are you a member of a people that are/were considered to be primitive, uncivilized, brutal, and fierce? Have your people been accused of being an obstacle to progress? And have they been killed, marginalized, brutalized, removed, oppressed, denied their rights, their lands, language, children, and religion because they were considered savages? Do you feel like you and your people are outside the norms, history, beliefs, and values of this nation, this empire? And do you feel that the rights, liberties, and freedoms of this nation and its people do not apply to you or your people? Perhaps you’re a savage (conference work, 2015).

This poisonous system dictates that those who are not white, in this case, Indigenous Peoples are creating their own problems, not the system that blatantly seeks to destroy them. The settler colonial system is justified through a white supremacist, hegemonic discourse, which dehumanizes the “other” while systematically denying those with brown

skin their right to life. It is an inhumane world that accepts this state of affairs and a negligent white society that does not speak out against and struggle to dismantle these systems.

When asked to define white supremacy, settlers had no trouble finding articulate words to explain. Greg says,

That feeling of entitlement is white supremacy. It's the manifest destiny that I was taught in high school. To me personally, manifest destiny wasn't a bad thing it was just the way it was. It was that we were god's chosen people. To them U.S. history was the history of dead white presidents, whose pictures lined the walls all the way around the classroom. It was very clear in high school, white is right. Might is right. We are better because we can kill other people better than everyone else.

Rachael describes how, "I know I can be upfront. I will step up to speak. I am comfortable doing that I was raised to do that, it's my place to do that. A feeling of entitlement. It exists in concentric circles. Like racism, it is so in me. It's how what I was raised in a system, it is so the norm." One settler described it as, "not messing with the privileges that white people have. White supremacy is something that is discredited as not existing, people think of it as KKK." Another settler describes how "it has been in the fields of our society for so long, that idea that the white race is superior that we do all hold that a little bit to varying degrees. It is unconscious we might not admit it. But being raised in America you are steeped in racism and white supremacy. We hold that as part of the collective unconsciousness." Derek describes it as,

this permeating idea that has been seeped into us. It's how we think. The trickiest thing is that when people say white supremacy, it's posed as this extreme thing. People think that white is better, lighter skin gets treated better. White is better everywhere. It is what makes it ok. It is what justifies things,

why white people think they are going to help Indians. Whites are smarter have more knowledge.

However, forthright dialogue that recognizes the role of white settlers undermines white supremacy and challenges settler entitlement to the land. For those that benefit, engaging with this reality is not easy or comfortable and there is an unwillingness by many white people, as has been shown throughout this paper. White supremacy is a way to name and understand the ways in which white people continue to benefit and at the same time hide from our/their role in the continuing persecution of brown and black people around the world. Describing white supremacy is one thing, but holding one another accountable as white people is a much more difficult endeavor. It is easier and more common to distinguish the overt ways that white supremacy operates such as hate crimes and neo-Nazis, but it is equally important to realize that there are many more covert ways that this system is operating.²¹

In the center of Orleans, a town in the Karuk Ancestral Territory, there is a park where some Indigenous people gather to hang out. This parcel of land was purchased through a collective effort amongst settler and Indigenous people, to come together around issues of food justice and food security, and to create a common “space of encounter” for people. This place is named Amayav which literally means “almost as good as salmon” in Karuk.

21. For more examples please see the pyramid on White Supremacy in appendix (unknown internet source).

At this point in time, many of the people that frequent Amayav suffer from drug and alcohol addiction. When the project first began, those founding it tried to create a drug and alcohol-free space. Being that this parcel is smack in the middle of downtown and that this area is next to the only store in town (which is a called a “grocery” store but in actuality makes all of its profits off of liquor, lottery tickets and cigarettes) many of the people who might commonly be referred to as “the drunks” hang out around the store. Although it was not the original intention, Amayav has become a place of respite for people who are usually outcast from society. As one Indigenous friend who suffers from addiction explained, “we do not have anywhere to go, we do not have anywhere to be. Nobody wants us anywhere. Where are we supposed to exist?”

Despite popular predictions and expected outcomes, over time “the drunks” have become the caretakers of the park. They clean up the trash, weed whack the grass during the summer months, fall trees that are dangerous or rotting, plant flowers, vegetables and trees and have come to take pride and feel a sense of ownership (in the sense of responsibility) and belonging to the place. The small amount of dignity afforded to people at Amayav has gone a long way in proving that people will rise to the occasion when given the chance.

Drugs and alcohol are problems across racial lines in these communities but nevertheless Indigenous people and particularly the youth that frequent this space are cast solely as problems to society. Discourse, largely from the settler community and from some Indigenous people as well, assumes that they are “up to no good” and refers to them

largely as criminals. Waziyatawin writes about de-problematizing Indigenous youth; She explains how settler society is the problem and not the young people themselves.

Colonizing society uses approaches that serve to blame the youth, parents, communities or Indigenous nations rather than identifying these issues as a direct consequence of the colonization of our people. We cannot solve these social circumstances while the root causes – all the systems and institutions of colonialism-remain in place (Waziyatawin, 2012,126).

Another glaring example of the blame that is cast upon Indigenous people, even in the most blatant of circumstances is explained in a story told by a Karuk elder, Mavis McCovey (2009). She writes about the death of her son Daypay, who was only sixteen years old. Daypay was shot five times with an Uzi submachine gun by a settler marijuana farmer in Orleans in 1981. The man who shot him confused him for his friend, who had accidentally walked up on the man's marijuana patch. The night of the shooting, police protected the murderer and his house from retaliation as McCovey explains:

You're talking about a bunch of kids in this town and one of them had been shot dead. Do you think that they would go back over there? ...You don't think any of them would go back over there now, do you? We're not gangs up here. We're not used to this kind of violence (McCovey & Salter, 257).

As McCovey points out, police often back white violence, which is an articulation of white supremacy and false narratives that deem white settlers, innocent and Indigenous Peoples guilty. People on the Klamath River must begin to participate in attacking the real problems, the oppressive structures, and not Indigenous Peoples.

A look at local efforts by NGO's and Tribes to work collaboratively on restoration projects such as fisheries, returning fire to the landscape, noxious weeds eradication and

dam removal, is telling of how even the most well intentioned, cutting edge attempts to work together are affected by the underlying power dynamics of white supremacy.

Universities such as Humboldt State and Berkeley are turning to Traditional Ecological Knowledge as an expert source on environmental and ecological issues. The idea that science and traditional ways need to merge and work together has become prevalent in local restoration efforts. Greg talks about his struggle to do right within this problematic situation:

I battle with what my perception of what the tribe wants and the reality of what the tribe wants and needs are tainted by our upbringing and tainted by the privilege that we have been granted by default. Especially me as a white male, it's a lot easier for me to get resources or navigate this life effectively up here.

He breaks it down further,

There is no "the tribe"... so what do we do, listen to the person who tells you what you want to hear? Those are the tricky decisions. It's really hard to navigate what is the best course of action, there are no easy answers ...I realize that maybe I was searching for the answer I wanted. I asked the right person to give me that answer. Which is the embodiment of the how the white culture has exacted what it wanted from the tribe is to empower the people who told them it was ok.

He gives a specific example of a situation involving "two powerful Indian women, and when the Forest Service asked the tribe is it ok? ... said no and ... said yes. They listened to ... and overrode ... because she didn't tell them what they want, and cut her out of meetings." He continues, "it's a human condition but it definitely plays a really key role in this area as to how white people selectively listen to the native people that give them answers that benefit them. Give them more lea-way or access or rights to develop or

harvest something all those things. It's pretty insidious." Indigenous Action Media describes this process as colonial posturing (2017).

This is the realm of the fascism of settler/white ally-ship, it is in actuality anti-Indigenous. This form of radical posturing craves its validation so much that it aggressively seeks those that are agreeable, and when it finds them it objectifies and capitalizes off of their participation. This is no form of solidarity, it is viciously exploitative. This is where the false ally-ship of settler colonizers intersects with capitalism. To be clear, anti-colonial posturing upholds white supremacy and capitalism

This can be observed locally on the Rivers as white controlled NGO's solicit "token" Indigenous people to sit on their board of directors. I have personally born witness to this situation and heard directly from numerous Indigenous people about their experiences as board members to these organizations. People have eventually resigned or stopped attending meetings when their voices were not heard and they were not able to effect policy change. Although there are settler people who recognize how the white supremacist, settler colonial systems are working and are doing their best to support Indigenous sovereignty in the ways that they can, the system of white supremacy leaves an overriding amount of power in the hands of the white, male dominated elite.

White Savior Complex

Many settler people and organizations carry a belief that they have the power or ability to help or "save" Indigenous communities. White people have been taught that our societal ways represent what is deemed to be "normal." Even those who are conscious of this must actively fight against these myths in order to keep them from guiding our thoughts and actions (Flaherty, 2016). Settler societies value systems remain

dominant to this day and this is reflected in the underlying belief that white people know what is best for “others.” The words of Phillip are telltale of this theme. “The future of place depends on collaboration between Karuk and non-Karuk. He further contends that “what it will take for success is a collaboration between people but it’s going to take more acceptance of non- Indigenous...the only way it will happen is Indigenous embracing of the non- Indigenous in this area.”

Greg has a more nuanced critique suggesting that “we have to change white culture. Trying to help indigenous people is dangerous, it’s easy to see what help you think they need.” Derek speaks about his experience in relationship to the desire of white settler people to “help or save” Indigenous people or what we might call the “white savior complex.” He also speaks to his own self-interest in this struggle.

Once I figured out where I was and what was going on, that there were native people here that are still here and their food source was being destroyed and this was happening now. It was from a white liberal thing of wanting to help people, that’s how I got involved. I wanted to help. You can call it solidarity and anarchism. Settlers are so in the wind and not grounded in place. Now I want to do activism to help myself and survive, not selfishly, but I see my own stake in it more now. It has been a process of understanding.

We do not challenge settler colonialism solely to forward Indigenous liberation—we do so also, admittedly, to aid in our own survival.

“Dances With Wolves” Syndrome

To the white settler who is aware of the injustices being inflicted upon Indigenous people around them, working side by side with Indigenous people can alleviate feelings of guilt and help us to feel better about ourselves. White activists

striving to be allies to Indigenous people really want to be respected, affiliated or “down” with Indigenous Peoples. It is common within activist circles to place the utmost importance on relationship building. Relationship building is crucial, but will not on its own succeed in dismantling systems of oppression. To complicate matters further it can be observed that white activists value their relationships with Indigenous people far above their relationships with other white activists.

Having a shared analysis between Indigenous and settler communities about colonization and decolonization is imperative. Indigenous people do not frequently have extra time to educate white people about the struggles that are rooted in colonialism. There is a group of white settlers along the Klamath River who have been dedicated to studying the canon of written work around decolonization and actively listening to Indigenous people around us, some of us for as long as seven years now. Together we have determined that unsettling is a big part of what white people can do to participate in the broader decolonization movement. We have worked very hard inter-personally and as a group to develop creative and loving spaces for settlers to gather amongst ourselves and to create spaces to come together with Indigenous people when they are willing and able.

The “Dances With Wolves” syndrome, can be described as an elevated desire by white folks to feel special and important in regards to Indigenous people. Like the movie that this syndrome earns its title from, the “star” is so connected to Indigenous people that he eventually learns their ways, marrying into the tribe and essentially becomes Indigenous. This white person many times ends up appearing more suitable for the role

of the Indigenous person then the Indigenous people themselves. While situations do not always manifest to such an extreme degree, there are common tendencies among this population of white people to desire Indigeneity, and consequently to play out this narrative in one form or another. This relates directly to underlying white supremacist and white savior patterns that white people must be vigilant about fighting against at every turn.

This white settler will work very hard to solidify their position and role as ally to Indigenous people, but does not seek out ally-ship with their fellow white activists in nearly the same manner. This is problematic in many ways, including the way it limits the potential that we have as white people to work with one another to create decolonizing change. This can be witnessed in meetings and collaborations where white folks want to talk to and work with Indigenous people and not with other white people. It is true that in order to understand Indigenous issues, white people learn best when hearing directly from Indigenous people. However, it remains problematic that there is not a greater care a focus placed on solidarity amongst white people who seek to do unsettling and decolonizing work.

Continuous and adaptable efforts have been made by a small group of white settlers to build a collective movement aimed at white responsibility. This author questions whether the day will come when white settlers in this place will hold one another accountable for our role, face our whiteness and collectively contribute to the dismantling of settler colonialism and the healing and liberation of humanity?

CONCLUSION: KILL THE SETTLER, SAVE THE [HU]MAN²²



Figure 4. Sprouting Tan Oak Acorn

Settler Colonialism is not a thing of the past. Today this system continues working towards its end goal, of erasing Indigenous Peoples and replacing them with settlers on the land (Wolfe, 1999). In the Karuk, Konomihu, Shasta and New River Shasta Homelands this structure has been incredibly destructive to Indigenous Peoples` and yet, in many ways it has been a failure. Indigenous people have never left this place. All the atrocious attempts at removal, relocation and genocide were ultimately defeated

22. Thanks to Chook-chook Hillman for the concluding title.

and, the well of time tested, place-based knowledge runs deep. Here, Indigenous Peoples strive every day to strengthen traditional ways of living, gathering, managing the land and recovery of their languages (Pamu'araaras Nupikyav: Making It Better for Our People, 2017).

And still, it is largely settler colonial value systems that preside over of all of the human inhabitants of this place. Settler society continues to occupy the land along the Klamath and Salmon Rivers and much of the private land is “owned” by settlers. The trouble is not that individual settler people are wrong or bad. The real problem lies in the existing structures and values of settler society. This society is a detriment to all that lives (Nelson, 2008, Waziyatawin, 2009) and the time for white people to step up and assume our/their collective responsibility is long overdue.

A settler colonial culture built upon slavery and genocide cannot be reformed, it cannot be fixed. It must be decolonized. While there are many different ways that Indigenous Peoples have defined decolonization, there is consensus in the understanding that decolonization demands material change and literally means the repatriation of Indigenous lands (Tuck and Yang, Waziyatawin, 2008). It is also clear that decolonization is a process in which the outcome will not be known until we get there (Fanon 1963, YellowBird, 2012).

This paper has attempted to illuminate the current moment in time for white settler society and our process of unsettling along the Klamath and Salmon Rivers. Unsettling is a way to describe the responsibility of white people within the broader decolonization movement, that is led by Indigenous people. White settler responsibility

is determined by our/their position as the primary beneficiaries and perpetrators of the settler colonial system. Unsettling requires settler people to be self-organizing, while continuously checking in with Indigenous individuals and groups for guidance and feedback. Settler colonialism and white supremacy benefit white people the most and yet, settler society is also incredibly damaged by this system (Ward Churchill, 1997).

In the Karuk, Konomihu, Shasta and New River Shasta homelands realities about settler colonialism and the role that is played by white settler people are undeniably apparent. Efforts to unsettle have resulted in a shifting of false narratives and a veil of illusion being lifted. Most white settlers in this place will never again be able to completely bury our/their heads in the sand. However, as a whole white settler society remains in a state of complicit silence. This paper is an attempt to break the silence. It is a call out to white people to come together and to become accountable.

The concluding chapter will first identify some of the major obstacles that white settlers face in our efforts to unsettle. The following section will outline potential steps towards responsibility that have been illuminated or attempted during the course of this research project.

Obstacles That Paralyze

To most white settlers, a decolonized world is undesirable and unimaginable at this time. The structures upholding the historical and current day injustices are vast, it feels insurmountable to right the historic and current day wrongs, and the uncertainty and fear that are a necessary part of the unsettling process are tremendously daunting. Even while many white settlers along the Klamath and Salmon Rivers are morally conscious individuals, efforts to create a movement that assumes a collective responsibility have been met largely, by a people who are stuck in a state of paralysis. This section will begin with a brief discussion of specific organizing challenges that have been met, during the unsettling process thus far. Next, some of the major identified obstacles to white settler accountability in this place, will be unpacked. These include; white settler entitlement, fragility, white supremacy and a settler desire to belong.

Analysis vs. Action

Unsettling Klamath River has utilized popular education methods to help organize ourselves and our work. This type of education is not neutral, it either serves the interests of those who hold power or those that are fighting against those powers (Freire, 1970, Barndt, 1989, Zerkel, 1997). It entails a back and forth interplay between analysis and action. Unsettling Klamath River attempted to create a supportive place for white settlers to come together and understand who we are within this struggle. Simultaneously, we tried to take direct action according to our own analyses, as well as what Indigenous people around us were saying was important to address. One struggle was creating a

space that was both nurturing and at the same time did not recreate colonialism by making it all about us, as white people. Some people were inclined to focus on processing the pain that came up as a result of the unsettling work and some settlers wanted to focus on action. Reflecting back, the idea that analysis and action go hand in hand was not clear enough within the group, or transparent enough for the greater settler community to grasp the intended process.

Continuous attempts were made over time to seek input and creative ways to do the work of unsettling and power was shared with a group structure of rotating facilitation and note-taking roles, monthly. Many people came to one or two unsettling gatherings over the years but never made a long-term commitment to the process. Hurdles resulting from the power and privilege that accompany whiteness, continue to obstruct many people's involvement in this movement.

Entitlement

“We stole the land fair and square.”

This is a direct quote from a conversation with a white settler person in which we/they were referred to as settlers living on stolen land. While most settlers will not come right out and say this, underlying assumptions that we/they are entitled to the land are prevalent. This sense of entitlement is a major barrier to white settler responsibility.

It is a tenuous and fragile position to be a settler person living on stolen land and therefore questioning our entitlement to the land produces a deep seeded fear of retaliation.

Most settlers, even those that do acknowledge that the land we live on was stolen, accept the assumption that private property will always exist. Here again we witness white settlers who want to make things right, turning away and simply going back to their lives because the magnitude of structures of oppression are so overwhelming. As Renee states,

I guess I always knew I was doing that. It is a little distasteful, but it is what I am doing. I try to be tactful about it. But for crying out loud...patented this land and I was able to buy it, whereas... his great great-granddaughter wasn't able to. Although I can't necessarily do too much about it. It has always struck me as wrong.

It is all too easy to remain complicit to a structure like private property when it benefits you. What could holding/sharing land look like in a future where institutions of private property no longer existed?

Pressure from Family, Friends and Community Members

Another factor that continues to impede the unsettling movement along the Klamath and Salmon Rivers is the unspoken but firm, expectation from white settler society that we/they will protect white privilege and security, at all costs. Many times, without even consciously making the connection between our/their fear and our/their actions, white settlers will resort to moves to innocence (Tuck and Yang, 2012) and put up a barrier blocking dialogue that challenges our/their entitlement to the land. This state

of white fragility is very difficult to penetrate. (DiAngelo, 2016). White settlers must be strong enough to confront other white people, continually force settler colonialism to the fore-front of our/their consciousness and hold one another accountable, no matter how painful it is to do so.

Members of Unsettling Klamath River have been attacked in person, and on social media, lost long-term friendships and social standing and have even been threatened. We have been forced to strategize what we might do if we were to lose housing or jobs because of our choice to take action in the form of truth-telling and our attempts to create material change. To white settler society I ask, which side of history will you be on?

White Supremacism

There are the people who came here at a time when it was not cool to be a tribal person and the white people still maintained even more power than they do today. Before the tribe was recognized and those factions within the community still feel that the tribes gain in power is a loss. That it is intimidating. That it is something to be feared.

Greg describes an anxiety that is a result of the fragile sense of security that white society rests upon. White people are accustomed to being in a position of power and as we begin to acknowledge realities about our role in settler colonialism, underlying fears that exists for white people today are exposed. This is about power. The power to remain on the land unquestioned with all of our/their resources in tow, while attempted genocide against Indigenous Peoples continues. If white settlers acknowledge that we do not have a right to be here, then our fate and our future appears to be on the line. Tuck and Yang

(2012) make clear that decolonization is not about rescuing settler futurity. If settler people could come to understand that decolonization is to the benefit of all life and that we have a real stake in a decolonized world, perhaps it would help us to handle being de-centering from the conversation. In order to open up possibilities for a healthy, “oppression free society” (Waziyatawin, 2008) settler society and value systems must be destroyed.

Longing to Belong

For the white settler, the road to belonging will remain blocked, until a time when the extreme disparity between Indigenous and settler societies no longer exists.

Complicating the resistance to unsettling work is the unfulfilled desire to connect and to belong. It takes a great deal of self-reflection to recognize in oneself the yearning for connection that is felt as a white settler person in North America today. This manifests as a sometimes hidden, desire to be Indigenous, to have traditional practices that are age old and to truly belong to a people and a place.

When I found the Black Bear Ranch family, I recall the feeling that I had found my “tribe.” While I am very close to my blood family, at 23 years old I was searching for a connection to land that I did not think could not be found in the suburbs of the mid-west. I left my family and found what I believed to be my own true paradise. I reflect on the dysfunctional values of a society that allowed me to move and put down roots so far from them.

One particular line from a chant that many of us learned (and relished) in the Black Bear Ranch sweat lodge, keeps ringing in my head. “Celebrate the new, paradise we found.” How can we/they continue to celebrate a paradise that is built directly upon the destruction of Indigenous societies’ utopia? This can only be but a fleeting illusion of truly belonging. To offer this realization as a conclusion, causes my heart to ache. To truly belong to a people and to a place takes an undetermined length of time (perhaps a time immemorial) and in this case walking a path towards belonging requires white settler society to relinquish power and privilege. It also requires the complete dissolution of settler society. This may not occur within our lifetimes.

Uncertainty and Fear

If a white settler says out-loud, “I am a settler living on stolen land” it produces a seemingly unmanageable amount of terror. Renee explains, “There is a lot of fear there, because then anyone could come and take it back, open season. What would happen?” This question lies at the heart of white settler fear. While the act of truth-telling opens doorways to a future of healing and change, the even harder work of creating substantial material change is yet to follow.

When unsettling dialogue began on the Rivers, prominent members of white settler society expressed how excited they were to be involved in this movement, that they believed would lead us to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. As articulated by Greg: “There is a time of reconciliation that is coming. We’re going to see positive change.” One settler questioned if “it would be helpful to have some kind of reckoning,

some kind of symbolic acknowledgement from the white community that we acknowledge what is happening today?” Settlers cannot help but dream about being pardoned from the ills that we/they know exist.

As a non-Indigenous person who has been tormented by the acceptance of the part she plays in a genocidal system, this researcher recognizes the temptation to hope for resolution. So much harm has been done and there is such an enormous debt to pay that I do not expect that a genuine reconciliation between Indigenous and white settler people will be possible, for many generations to come. The idea of reconciliation as a symbolic measure that white settler people get to feel the satisfaction of in this life-time, is appealing to the white settler. A symbolic gesture is just that, it does nothing to alleviate the ills and disparity of resources that are a result of settler colonialism today. Decolonization requires on the ground material change to structures of power and privilege. “Decolonization must come before reconciliation” (McMahon, 2017).

Recovering from Paralysis

Zapatista knowledge reminds us that “we make the path by walking.” In her 2008 book *What Does Justice Look Like?* Waziyatawin describes four steps that settler society could take towards creating a just world. These steps are truth-telling, taking down the fort (“which applies to all monuments, institutions, place names and texts that continue to celebrate the perpetrators of genocide”), reparations and creating an oppression free society. While she makes clear that it is not intended as a blue print that everyone must follow, her book has provided a useful template from which to consider

how white settler society along the Klamath and Salmon Rivers might move forward out of a state of paralysis and onto a path towards responsibility.

Truth-telling

Taking responsibility begins with truth-telling. Along the Klamath and Salmon Rivers, efforts by Unsettling Klamath River towards truth-telling began with the recognition that we are settlers, and that we are living on stolen land. This alone has taken almost three years to become part of a new and somewhat accepted, narrative in this place. Truth-telling also came in the form of an open letter to Black Bear Ranch (the heart of settler society on the rivers), asking for a continued dialogue, closing of the portal and repatriation of the land base. There has been a great deal of push-back from white settler society as these truths have been thrust forward. Truth-telling demands an admission that we are guests on this land-base and that there is a debt that is owed by white settler society. A debt so tremendous that it appears that it is not possible for it be paid.

In order to even begin to consider how to begin to chip away at this unmanageable debt, there must be a re-framing of our understanding of giving. In settler society when a person who has an abundance of resources gives some of them to a person with less resources, this is understood as a donation or charity. When a white settler contributes money, land or material resources to Indigenous people, what is actually happening is that a payment is being made towards a long-standing debt. Perhaps this way of thinking will help settler people to make payments, and Indigenous people to

receive them. Will settler society in this place begin to pay this debt down, or will it continue to build? Truth-telling is only the starting point and structural change is a necessity for a decolonized future.

Reparations

Working to return land to Indigenous peoples is foremost to white settler responsibility. This doesn't necessarily mean that the white settler has to give up our/their land immediately (if land is owned) and get on a boat to Europe (although it is part of unsettling to consider this). It does mean that settlers are not entitled to the land. It means living with the reality that our/their place here on the land is not certain. It is a purposeful relinquishing of power in exchange for integrity and the possibilities that an unknown future might hold. Repatriation means working to financially and physically support Indigenous people who are in exile from their home-lands being able to return home!

Private property must be challenged as an assumed institution and we must begin to imagine a world without it. For the white settler being a land "owner," is owning a responsibility to the Indigenous people whose home-lands you occupy. What does this look like in terms of direct actions that settlers can take now? If you have a home then work to build someone Indigenous a home. This can be through contributing financial resources, physical labor, materials or providing the land itself to build it on. If you have extra space in your home, on another dwelling on "your land" offer it to someone Indigenous to live in first, before offering it to another settler. If "your" land or land you

know of, is for sale make sure and contact Indigenous people or local tribes first to let them know it is available. Help to finance Indigenous land ownership if you can. Extend yourself to include Indigenous peoples in your life if they will allow you to.

Owning multiple properties is not ethical or acceptable. This is not to say that owning one property (as I do) is admissible either. However, owning multiple properties clearly has that many more times the impact on Indigenous Peoples displacement. If you do own a property or more than one, what can you do to become more accountable to Indigenous People? Sell property to Indigenous people at less than market value if you are able. If not, at least prioritize selling it to an Indigenous family. If you have enough money or resources, repatriate land! Get together with other settler people and organize a system to pay a monthly fee or “back rent” to Indigenous People. Share your car and other resources. If you have multiple resources, give them away.

Do not invite more settlers to come along the Klamath and Salmon Rivers. Major settler portals have been identified as the marijuana industry, the USFS, the Black Bear Ranch commune, farm internships and seemingly ever growing Re-wilding communities. Settlers must work to close all settler portals to these Indigenous homelands.

All of these suggestions feel insufficient in the face of a continuing settler colonial system, but we must find a way to begin. They are small things that have been suggested or attempted thus far in this place. Some of these opportunities to make reparations depend on relationships between settler and Indigenous people. For the white settler, building and strengthening trust and relationships with Indigenous people is

imperative. It is also equally important to recognize that relationships on their own will not dismantle systems of oppression, nor will they succeed in building the better world that many seek. Forming relationships is a base to be built upon and must be utilized to creatively combat injustice and the structures that currently deny our collective liberation.

Creating an Oppression Free Society

Colonization, by its very nature, is antithetical to justice. Complete decolonization is a necessary end-goal in a peaceful and just society. This would entail overturning the institutions, systems, and ideologies of colonialism that continue to every aspect of Indigenous life. In a nut-shell we all must rethink our ways of being and interacting in this world to create a sustainable, healthy, and peaceful co-existence with one another and with the natural world. (Waziyatawin, 2008, 33).

How we think about things can either limit or enhance our potential to create change. An Either/Or binary limits our analysis and our ability to understand. Haley discusses the good/bad dichotomy that exists for white settlers. She explains, “I think the fear is about wanting to be on the ‘good team.’ Am I on the good team? When I talk about it, with whites I am a champion. When I am with Indians, I am not so sure.” Understanding the complexities of society today requires a Both/And way of thinking. We can BOTH be white settlers who are a place-holders in a system that continues attempting to erase Indigenous Peoples AND we can at the same time fight against this structure. Identifying contradictions allows us to illuminate the places that hold potential for social change. Rather than continuing to bury social tensions about colonization, here we begin to face them and utilize them, to create forward social movement.

White settlers need to practice listening and pay attention to what Indigenous people are saying. Settlers must recognize that white society and especially male bodied people are raised to command attention and to speak up. White settlers will benefit from listening more and talking less (Dan Spalding, 2009). Believe that a better world is possible. Imagine structural changes. Do not ride the fence. Circumstances are dire, and people of color are at war for their lives. Take a firm stand and a strong position. If you are neutral and are choosing to let things continue in an unjust manner, this is choosing the side of the oppressor.

Re-defining Wealth

Indigenous people are rich with culture, tradition and a sense of belonging. At the same time, Indigenous Peoples suffer daily from being criminalized and being denied access to their lands. What an Indigenous friend recently told me sums it up, “at least Indigenous people have remembered what wealth is really about.” Renee describes,

the first time I ever saw a demo brush dance, the first time I ever saw a whole compliment of regalia I was pretty taken aback just because of the extravagance of it and the richness of it. It brought home the concept of rich that was so, so, different. It wasn't rich in the way of a pile of miserly gold...it sure put a pile of gold to shame

White settler society is “rich” with privilege, money and land, and at the same time is incredibly lost and desperate for a sense of belonging. Again, Renee has words to explain,

for crying out loud that is kind of pathetic to bring to culture day. Can you imagine a kindergartener? What did you bring to show off your culture? Money, and a capitalist system. I think that the loss makes us act funny like

there is this big grieving wound from not having an intact culture and everybody who has got an intact culture is not suffering in the same way as us, which is ridiculous because when it comes down to it, who is inflicting what on whom? The whole cycle of abuse, we keep passing suffering on.

Naming these contradictions offers white settler society an honest understanding of who we/they are in this moment in time. Understanding contradictions helps to illuminate the tensions that are felt but are most times not acknowledged; these uncomfortable places are actually openings for change.

Be Who You Are

Being a white settler at this time is not something to feel pride in. However, an Indigenous elder recently affirmed to me that, “having people be who they are, and be part of an on-going discussion is vitally important.” Acknowledgment by white settler society that we continue to benefit from settler colonialism at the cost of Indigenous Peoples and finding ways to take steps towards rectifying these current day injustices is no small task

To the white settler: Explore your own ancestral roots. Where do you come from? Remember that you have ancestors too and that they are standing behind you. Try to find out anything about where you come from. If possible, ask family to tell you stories. Accept that Indigenous spirituality is not for you but know that this does not mean that you are without spirit. There are many ways to find spiritual connection without appropriating what does not belong to you.

Part of A Continuum

Recently, I spoke with an Indigenous friend and elder about the difficulties we are having, within settler communities, engaging with the work of unsettling. His understandings help to tell a more expansive story of the societal situation we find ourselves in today. He described how we are a part of a continuum of people that has existed throughout time and that this remains true whether you are the oppressor or the oppressed. We are a part of some things that we have inherited and some things that we will pass on. He explained how thinking inter-generationally is in the DNA of Indigenous Peoples and that white society does not yet have practice in this. Derek speaks to the settler situation through an inter-generational lens. He says, “The best we can be is a bridge to some other world. If we can be that, it is good for somebody’s children’s, children. That any children, at any point will be past this damaged shit.” White settler people must begin to look beyond our own lifetimes in order to create the changes necessary for a better world. What role will white settlers play in this continuum?

Come Together

For the most part, the white back-to-the-land settler in this place is endowed with many resources. White settlers frequently have homes and property and more than one car. We/they many times, have the freedom to travel and create our/their own schedule. A significant number of settlers own multiple properties and/or a second home elsewhere. Continuing to do our best as individuals is no longer enough. This does not, on its own,

challenge structures that currently deny our collective liberation. How can morally conscious people allow this to continue? How can a peaceful utopia be sustained when there is such great disparity between settler and Indigenous communities as a whole and when many Indigenous people are still in exile from their home-lands? And yet, it is Indigenous Peoples who are truly rich with knowledge and a true sense of belonging, the things that the white settler desires the most. Here-in-lies a notable contradiction.

When a handful of settlers along the Rivers first began the process of unsettling I asked an Indigenous elder what he thought of the ideas. One of the things he asked me was, “what’s in it for you guys?” Finding words to respond to this question has been challenging. A number of years have passed since that original conversation. While the work of unsettling is in service of justice for Indigenous Peoples and all life, it is important to be clear that it is not without self-interest that I put this paper forward. This work is on behalf of white people everywhere. As it stands today, white settler society remains on the outside of humanity looking in. The ways in which we benefit from whiteness set us apart in a way that disconnects us from our greater human family. The only way to begin to return to the authentic sense of belonging that so many of us seek in our hearts, is to take responsibility.

White settler society in the Karuk, Konomihu, Shasta and New River Shasta homelands can do so much more than we are currently doing towards the creation of a better world. While it is slow going, we find ourselves at the starting place of a collective movement that could live far beyond us. But we need one another to make it happen! I have experienced a sense of isolation and being cast away from settler friendships and

communities that I have belonged to for the past twenty years, as a repercussion of truth-telling and efforts to re-patriate Indigenous land. White settlers must begin to value solidarity with one another in the same capacity that we/they regard solidarity with Indigenous people. We/they are in the same boat after all.

While the ripples of our actions today may not fully be known for many generations to come, what we do now matters, and will make a difference to future peoples. Can white settlers support one another through the longing, the discomfort and the uncertainty that comes alongside our/their responsibility, in order to become available to the possibilities that could unfold? Can white settlers come together in a collective effort to become responsible and act on behalf of justice? In the words of Vine Deloria Jr., “The future of mankind lies waiting for those who will come to understand their lives and take up their responsibility to all living things” (1983, 292).

With an intensifying white supremacist national climate in what we now call the United States, it is more important than ever to understand whiteness and to define and combat white supremacy. We must break the longstanding silence that allows white settler society to remain complicit and benefitting at the cost of people of color everywhere. Perhaps one day we will all be blessed to live in an oppression free society. In order for this to happen, white settler society and all of its power and privilege must cease to exist. Unsettling is a way to contribute to a collective effort that is being made to heal humanity, and to build a better world.

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APPENDIX A

Unsettling Klamath River Coyuntura

Points of Unity

We are settlers living on stolen land.

Settler Colonialism is a structure that continues today, not just a thing of the past.

As settlers, we benefit from this system.

We are not entitled to be here in the Karuk Homeland.

We want to support Indigenous led material change and Indigenous resurgence.

The state of the world is unsatisfactory due to dominating culture, which has been perpetuated generationally.

We do not have a right to Indigenous knowledge, yet we believe Indigenous knowledge is critical to this place and the survival of life on this planet.

All of our liberation is tied together, no one is free until we all are free.

We believe decolonization is a process, the destination is unknown, it means different things to different people, it is not centered on the future of settlers, and it is ultimately about the repatriation of land.

For white settlers “Unsettling” is a process of facing and destroying a false entitlement and be-heading an identity that affords us a toxic privilege.

Becoming new people will require on the ground material change to power and privilege, we cannot “think” ourselves into a new way of being.

We want to see change in our lifetime and are also dedicated to change for future generations and all life.

APPENDIX B

An Open Letter to the Black Bear Ranch Family

To the residents of Black Bear Ranch, current and former, and to all of the Black Bear Family,

Some of you may have heard of the coming of this letter and/or the group delivering it. Many of you have not and this may come as a surprise to you. We want to acknowledge from the beginning that the group of people we are addressing is a diverse one; from original bears, to current and all in between. As a group, we are also diverse; in our age, gender, background, and in our relationships to all of you and the land we call Black Bear Ranch. Our commonality lies in our love for life and our deep desire to see it continue and thrive. We come to you from our hearts, our love for the land and for each other. This letter is written from the place within us all that begs us to live our lives in a way that supports the healing of all beings and the earth. We would like to share some of the understandings that we have come to thus far in our process. This letter is written with gratitude to the original Bears for your work and for your vision, and the continued efforts of the whole family to create a place like this in the world.

Black Bear Ranch was founded to forge an alternative to the destructive and hollow culture of the United States. We are revolutionaries, artists, healers and troublemakers. Spearheaded by the Diggers movement, the elders of our Black Bear Family created a refuge far from the city and the suburbs where folks could live and learn

different life ways: “free land for free people.” The birth of Black Bear Ranch cannot be separated from the politics of the day. Those that founded BBR passionately fought against the Vietnam War, racism oppressing black people, capitalism, patriarchy and ecological destruction. Bears today continue this work for a better world. Black Bear Ranch, this place we have known and loved, has changed and will continue to change. We as BBR family have the power to keep the momentum moving towards truth, vitality, justice, and love.

From the beginning, it was not lost on those Bears fighting against U.S. colonialism overseas, that the Ranch was located in a largely Indigenous community suffering from and fighting against the same outrages of empire as those abroad. Over the years BBR residents have come and gone, and some of us have made our homes in the river communities surrounding the Bear. We’ve created strong friendships, alliances and family ties with the Indigenous people whose land we inhabit. Those of us who have stayed continue to bear witness to the effects of colonialism on the people and land in this place. The contradiction festers, can it be “free land” if it is stolen land?

Language has been developed to express the continued oppression gripping Indigenous Peoples: this system is called “settler colonialism.” This form of colonialism seeks to erase Indigenous Peoples and cultures and replace them with settlers on the land. *Settler colonialism is an ongoing structure and not an event.* What this means is that colonization did not just happen in the past (like during the gold rush) but is continuing today. All non-Indigenous people living in what is today called the “U.S.” are settlers living on land stolen from Indigenous Peoples. We use the term settler as an observation

of our place in this system, not as judgment. Those of us who are settlers do not all benefit equally from this system. Many people were brought to this country as slaves, indentured servants, or refugees. Race, class and gender greatly affect how and to what extent settlers are privileged by this system. It is important to acknowledge that non-Indigenous People of Color are positioned quite differently than those that are white. White supremacy is a pillar of the U.S. settler colonial system. We hope to move our collective understanding through blocks of guilt to a clear perspective of where we are at in this moment of time, to better stand in solidarity with all people impacted by settler colonialism and white supremacy. Benefiting from and having unfair privileges within these systems, as many of us know, does not necessarily mean we are free from the pain of living in these systems, getting all of our basic human needs met. Each of our stories is unique and is not absent of hardship. While honoring our own stories, let us be strong enough to expand our awareness to acknowledge the bigger picture that Indigenous daughters and sons are actually dying every day as a result of these systems because - Land is life.

The authors of this letter, calling ourselves Unsettling Klamath River, are an open community collective of settlers, many of us former Black Bear residents, living on the Klamath and Salmon Rivers working to understand and respond to the "elephant in the room": the continued occupation of Karuk, Hoopa, Yurok, Konomihu, Shasta, and Shasta New River homelands. While we understand that the values of settler society are the problem and not necessarily settler people themselves, we recognize that we have a responsibility to face our position as beneficiaries of settler colonialism (even though we

have not intended to benefit in this way). We have been meeting for two years now, starting our efforts with identifying how colonization happened and continues to happen in our communities and re-imagining and taking steps towards material change of colonial structure. Unsettling is a process and in order to hold the complexities and contradictions that exist within systems of oppression, it has helped us to turn away from: either/or, good/bad or black and white ways of understanding, and embrace a both/and way of thinking. We have met, both formally and informally with Indigenous people from the area in our efforts to understand the, ever changing, current moment in time here on the river and how best to take action against the settler colonial system, which we believe is deeply detrimental to all life on earth.

One of the things that many local Indigenous people have expressed to us, is that the number of settlers here on the rivers has gotten out of control over the years and that there are so many of us here now that Indigenous people have literally become “homeless in the homeland.” The institutions and entities that continuously bring settlers to the river have become known as “portals.” Some of these portals are AmeriCorps, farm internships, the pot economy, the Forest Service, and Black Bear Ranch .

A sentiment we have often heard from Indigenous people is that Black Bear has brought good people to the area, who often do amazing work and are real friends. However, often Black Bears get sick of the commune and either have family money, grow weed, or both; and end up buying up more land. We have listened and heard that the revolving door to BBR needs to be closed.

Indeed, thousands of settlers have “discovered” the Salmon and Klamath River region through Black Bear Ranch over the nearly 50 years of the commune. Many of us who came to the river through Black Bear had profound experiences of finding what feels like home. We were moved by the beauty, the people, the place. There is something here that we long for, and it feels so good to experience it. Many of us became deeply attached to this place. From Cecilville to Sawyers Bar to Weitchpec, we found land to live on, or to buy, once we were ready to move on from Black Bear. Many of us have been able to do this with resources that we have from our families, or through growing, trimming or selling pot. Even those of us that do not legally own land contribute to this displacement of Indigenous people, especially in participating in the pot economy. The pot economy came to the river communities largely through the back-to-the-land movement, and this made land prices skyrocket. The small amount of private land left after the large-scale land theft by the Forest Service - including most of the village sites - was now in high demand by this booming population of settlers. Many of the children raised at Black Bear also felt deeply connected to this place and also bought land. We invited our friends, who also bought land. Settlers started “building community” - creating businesses and spaces that reflected our own cultural values. This is exactly what the system of settler colonialism is - a system that erases Indigenous Peoples and their culture, directly replacing them on the land with settlers, settler values and settler institutions. Ultimately, beckoning people “back to the land” is part of the same system that created westward expansion, advertised famously with the promise of “Indian Land for Sale.”

We feel that with respect to the original values of the Black Bear Family, it is our responsibility to honor this request to close the portal of Black Bear Ranch and to help fight against the continued displacement of Indigenous Peoples. We further believe that it would be a beautiful act for this family to *offer* to repatriate—return—the land base we call Black Bear Ranch. We can't say what this will look like, though this is a real conversation happening in these communities. The more voices and creativity that are a part to this conversation, the more powerful and possible this healing process will be. We do know that repatriation is a complete release of ownership and control, so it is important that this action is approached in that spirit, without any contingency on what happens on the land after the transfer. There are emerging ideas amongst Indigenous people about what this land project could become. We feel repatriation would be regenerative, healing and directly responsive to the wounds created by settler colonialism.

This change, or even the idea of this change, could be very painful. For many this was our first and possibly only connection with an intact land base and with communal living. The fact that many want to be laid to rest at Black Bear attests to the roots the family feels. We do not wish to diminish this, but would to like keep this in perspective, remembering Indigenous People have lived in place since time immemorial. Let us look at our pain proportionately on a scale with the experience of attempted genocide and continued occupation lived by Indigenous people. We believe this family can continue to love each other and be in community alongside this regenerative movement. The efforts of the Free Family Union to create new societal structures to care for one another proves

that our connections can endure beyond place. We feel that returning the land will strengthen and not weaken our familial bonds and is a step towards healing for all people.

We want to acknowledge the current residents of the ranch. We value affinity with you. We see the daily care some of you continue to put into that space. We are not a bulldozer and we alone are not the ones who get to decide what happens with Black Bear. We are bringing what we have learned in our time on the rivers. We understand that some of these ideas might feel threatening and that for some people, losing Black Bear could mean legitimate homelessness. We want to reemphasize that this is a slow process and we want it to be inclusive. We by no means intend to blindly displace any one in our attempt to do something we feel is responsible. Living at Black Bear means being involved in a story that is much bigger than any individual, which is both its blessing and its curse.

Many might ask, why is Black Bear the target? There are so many more oppressive institutions on the river: why not address them first? The problem of BBR as a portal is a part of it, and, it is exactly because of the radical consciousness of the Black Bear Family that such an act might be possible. We will continue to work against these other colonizing forces, yet to honestly do so we need take this step that others may not. While it is important to do our best as individuals, we need the power of a collective movement to change these otherwise paralyzing systems of oppression. The repatriation of Black Bear Ranch would build upon the original movement of creating the Black Bear land trust and further chip away at structures of private property and settler colonialism.

By taking this action and returning this land-base to the Indigenous caretakers of this watershed we could truly be a model for the world, in an “on the ground” material way.

We recognize that these are new ideas to some and that no change happens overnight. We are not approaching this process as though we know the answers. We are attempting to bring forth our best ideas, our core truths as we experience them now, and to listen to the needs of Indigenous people and to respond to what we hear. We are all individuals coming to this work in our own way and in our own capacities. We're learning. We want to share what we see and communicate and collaborate together. How can we best invite you to be a part of this conversation? How do we approach this work with inclusivity? We want to make change. What if we, as a society, could respond together to the crises, pain and needs that are felt by our neighbors, and to those experiences that are the effects of colonization?

With this letter, we invite you to engage in this effort to be responsible to this land base and accountable to the Indigenous people who have always lived here. It is in our collective power to close this settler portal and open doors to new possibilities and life ways. Repatriation moves beyond symbolic apologies to real and honest steps towards healing. We hope this inspires participation and continued conversation.

At one time, we were all Indigenous to somewhere. We all seek a connection to people and to place. The current moment in time finds us as beneficiaries of an exponentially destructive culture. Let us take a stand to stop these cycles of greed. We acknowledge that the dominant culture is detrimental to the continuance of life on this planet. We recognize that Indigenous knowledge has been developed and tested over time

immemorial to foster true sustainability. We believe that all life is ultimately bound together in one destiny and that repatriating land to Indigenous people is not just a matter of justice, but is in the best interest of all life on earth.

With love, respect, and to life,

Unsettling Klamath River

unsettlingklamathriver@riseup.net

unsettlingklamathriver.wordpress.com

facebook.com/unsettlingklamathriver/

APPENDIX C

Unsettling Klamath River Stance on the Cannabis Economy

In order to work in solidarity with Indigenous people of the Klamath River, we must take a stand against settler-imposed violence, and currently a major form of violence against Native People comes in the form of gentrification and ecological devastation due to the cannabis industry. This is a difficult and complex issue facing our community, and we recognize that there is no miracle cure to the problem.

The pot economy primarily benefits settlers, and by raising property and rent costs, it is harder for Native People to keep their homes. The runoff of water from pot farms contributes to the already dangerously high levels of toxic algae in the watershed (1). The commercial cultivation of cannabis also consumes appalling amounts of water, destroying habitat of native food sources such as salmon (2). Irrigation is one of the larger issues facing the health of this watershed. The importation of soil, amendments and laborers for grow operations has been linked to the rapid spread of sudden oak death, which is killing tanoak oak trees, another culturally significant food source (3). The use of pesticides (herbicides, rodenticides, insecticides, fungicides) by some growers unleashes unknown quantities of hazardous toxic chemicals into the water air and soil. These are only a few of the many damaging impacts of this industry. We have no way to predict the longer-term implications of the damage imposed on the landscape by weed farmers, but the signs aren't looking good.

It is not lost on us the hypocrisy of our statements. As a group, most of us have benefited in some way or another from the weed economy, and continue to do so. We don't have any right to point fingers and cast blame towards each other when we are benefiting from the same system. The reality is that any one of us can find an example of someone doing a "worse" job than ourselves personally, but doing that doesn't fix the problem. We must examine ourselves and ask "How am I a part of the problem and what can I do to fix that?" We hold a collective responsibility as settlers to hold ourselves/each other accountable for these injustices. We must phase out of the cannabis industry, as well as industrial capitalism/agriculture in general, and nobody can do that alone, we all need to work together.

When faced with these truths, settlers will often try to avoid taking responsibility by saying "Natives grow weed too". This is true: some Native people do grow pot. However, this does not lessen from the overall destructiveness of the pot industry and pot growing. Some Native people have also participated in other destructive economies, including logging and mining. For one, Native people are not monolithic and like all people, have a wide diversity of perspectives and values. More importantly, however, the contexts of Native people and settlers participating in boom to bust exploitative economies that have come to the region is different and must be considered differently. The War on drugs has been disproportionately targeting people of color, making the risk far less for white settlers. New economies imposed by settlers that require environmental exploitation put enormous pressure on Native people to adapt in order to feed their children and survive. We believe that Indigenous survival in native homelands by any

means necessary amidst the invasion that seeks to eradicate Indigenous people is an act of resistance in itself. That being said, most of the resistance to logging, mining and the weed industry has originated from Indigenous voices, and those voices need to be centered now to face environmental issues. Native people are the creators of the only truly sustainable way of life that has ever existed in this region, a way of life that lasted for eons, rather than a single generation.

What was started with the intention of supporting an escape from the greater capitalistic society, has become another aspect of its resource extraction, impoverishing the disadvantaged to the benefit the privileged. Like the timber and mining industries before it, the marijuana economy has begun to eat its own tail. Its inability to stay within sustainable limits, or respect the land-base it exploits has become obvious. It is time to open ourselves to truly learn from the Indigenous people of this region, rather than simply paying lip service to doing so.

There are so many questions, and so many potential outcomes. How are we going to build a future where everybody is treated with dignity, respect and given a real opportunity to live a healthy life. How do our personal aspirations of financial gain stand in the way of that future? What do we need to let go of in order to create a healthier future for everyone? Now that we understand more of the consequences of cannabis farming, we are at a crossroads with the process of legalization and compliance, are you disentangling and phasing out the pot industry? Or are your aspirations for financial gain going to get in the way of taking responsibility for your actions?

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