Article

"Grassy Narrows Blockade: Reworking Relationships between Anishnabe and Non-Indigenous Activists at the Grassroots"

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Abstract

The case example of Grassy Narrows argues that the localized experiences and discourses between Grassy Narrows First Nation 'blockaders' and non-Indigenous 'activists' reflected constrained and emancipatory practices of transforming various forms of asymmetrical power between them. Both a process and an outcome of negotiated understandings, collaboration and trust delineated by solidarity, the case of the Grassy Narrows First Nation (GNFN) blockade offered examples of grassroots practices for wider social change. In this case study, it was the negotiation from a marginalized position too often accorded the ontologies and epistemologies of one group—in this case, GNFN (Anishnabe peoples)—, and repositioning (privileging) it as the centre point of practice and leadership vis-à-vis another group (non-Indigenous activists). The case example asked what could be learned from a grassroots situation where differently situated parties have different privileges/status at the structural (macro) level but choose to attempt to renegotiate these at the local level. It suggested that transforming of larger social relations of power began at the local level through inverting/disabling unequal past practices and that in doing so, offered a counter point to established relations of power.

Résumé

L'exemple de Grassy Narrows soutient que les expériences et discours localisés des « bloqueurs » de la Première Nation Grassy Narrows et ceux des « activistes » non autochtones se reflétaient dans des pratiques limitées et émancipatrices de transformation des différentes formes de pouvoir asymétrique entre eux. Tant dans le processus que dans les résultats des ententes, de la collaboration et de la confiance négociées et définies par la solidarité, le cas du barrage routier de la Première Nation Grassy Narrows a offert des exemples de pratiques populaires de changement social plus vaste. La présente étude de cas portait sur la négociation d'une position marginalisée accordée trop souvent aux

ontologies et épistémologies d'un groupe (en l'espèce, la Première Nation Grassy Narrows – les peuples Anishnabe) à son repositionnement (ou sa préemption) comme point central de la pratique et du leadership par rapport à un autre groupe (des activistes non autochtones). L'exemple de cas s'interrogeait sur les leçons tirées d'une situation où les différentes parties à la base essayent de renégocier, au niveau local, différents privilèges ou statuts qu'elles ont au niveau structurel (macro). Le cas suggère que la transformation des rapports de force sociaux plus vastes a commencé au niveau local par le biais des pratiques inégales d'inversion et d'invalidation dans le passé, ce qui a, par conséquent, apporté un contrepoids aux relations de pouvoir établies.

Introduction

This paper seeks to document an example of community-based relationship building[1] and practices of solidarity between Anishnabe and non-Indigenous activists at Grassy Narrows (Ontario, Canada).[2] A key site of this complex interplay was the GNFN's blockade (2002-2004) of a logging road into their traditional territory wherein members of the Grassy Narrows community actively asserted their own meaning into a space long dominated by relations of colonialism and state attempts at cultural genocide.

The GNFN's blockade and the ensuing public advocacy campaigns simultaneously initiated a localized grassroots process of relationship building between members of the Grassy Narrows community and non-Indigenous grassroots activists.[3] Both constrained and emancipatory in nature (Foucault; Bourdieu), this grassroots relationship building became a multi-faceted bottom-up process of negotiating meanings, collaboration and trust inside a decolonizing social justice framework of solidarity.

Understood as a complex negotiation and emerging joint dialogue, grassroots relationship building between Grassy Narrows First Nation (GNFN) blockaders[4] and non-Indigenous activists recognized the asymmetrical power relations, and sought to create an alternative relationship of equity embodied in differently structured localized processes and practices. The case of Grassy Narrows highlighted the challenges, tensions and contradictions inherent in an emerging and ongoing process of trust and relationship building.

As the following will show, grassroots relationship building was neither a smooth nor linear process. The voices of various GNFN

community activists ("blockaders") presented their own situated and different ontological, epistemological and ethical frameworks articulated in a parallel and shared space with non-Indigenous Euro-Canadian worldviews held by NGOs/CBOs.[5] The extension of trust, practices of collaboration, and the enactment of solidarity occurred in a context of multiple, and sometimes competing, agendas that existed simultaneously both for GNFN blockaders and with various non-Indigenous activists.[6] Within this, asymmetrical power relations and differing cultural practices arose and needed to be negotiated.

Such a reconfiguring of relations of power involved building relationships between individuals, communities and collective identities; one that went beyond one of instrumentality to a more profound relationship of trust. Trust was at the centre of grassroots relationship building and given the asymmetry of power, a legacy of colonialism and 'cultures of difference'[7], trust needed to be located and understood in the first instance as defined by GNFN and their situation. Hence, trust became a *negotiated process* of reciprocity, participation and equity, as well as *an outcome* of negotiated meanings, emotional knowledge and friendship arising within notions of solidarity.

These processes and outcomes initiated at the community level (grassroots) were understood as contributing to an evolving, albeit slow, cultural trend of decolonization.[8] The experiences of GNFN blockaders and non-Indigenous activists are pertinent for future practices seeking to rework historically problematic communal relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada.[9]

Structure

Using recent field research from Grassy Narrows (Canada), the paper is structured in the following way. The first part of this paper briefly outlines structural issues confronting the GNFN community at the time of the blockade in 2002. The impacts of the macro power relations on the local context are recounted in order to situate the lived experiences of GNFN blockaders and the context into which they and non-Indigenous activists walked.

In the second part, the discussion continues with the diverse, multiple and complex framings by GNFN blockaders and non-Indigenous activists of the conflict itself and links such perspectives to their respective underlying 'geographies of knowledge': socially constructed

collective standpoints situated historically, culturally, ontologically and epistemologically.[10] These standpoints are relevant to understanding the varying knowledges that were at play in negotiating relationship building between Grassy Narrows blockaders and non-Indigenous activists.

The third section argues that key to reworking relations of power and building relationships between GNFN blockaders and non-Indigenous activists was non-Indigenous activists proving themselves as trustworthy. This process of trust building involved reworking the legacy of historical distrust and asymmetrical relations of power through ongoing practices (as both process and outcome) of creating shared experiences, joint dialogue and negotiated meaning/practices with GNFN blockaders.

The fourth part examines the dynamics of trust for GNFN blockaders and the corresponding notion of solidarity that became an active set of guidelines for non-Indigenous activists as they tried to negotiate the complex interplay of power at the local level with GNFN blockaders. Within this, the grassroots process of trust and relationship building contained tensions between emancipatory practices and moments of continued inequality. This was part of an ongoing challenge to negotiate both power and cultural frameworks set within the complexities of locality[11] and the differently situated relations of power (and identity).

The fifth section suggests that the evolving nature of trust and relationship building can be seen in the language GNFN blockaders and non-Indigenous grassroots activists used in attributing common as well as different status to grassroots relationships between them.

The paper concludes by revisiting the themes of transforming relations power at the local between GNFN blockaders and non-Indigenous activists as negotiated discourses and set of practices. In this context, trust and solidarity were essential elements of constructing a decolonizing relationship.

Context for Grassy Narrows First Nation and the Blockade

To begin, the GNFN blockade and subsequent collaborations with non-Indigenous activists need to be situated within a struggle of decolonization nationally and locally.[12]

On the one hand, the structural and cultural violence faced by GNFN stretched back to at least 1873[13] and extended into the present

through government sanctioned hydro electric flooding, physical displacement, economic underdevelopment,[14] residential schooling, and mercury poisoning.[15] These deep-seated impacts on GNFN were further exacerbated by their loss of control over natural resources, specifically the widespread development of (non-Indigenous) commercial logging in the 1980s and its clear-cutting practices[16] resulting in roughly 50% of the community's traditional territory[17] having been logged to date.[18] On the other hand, GNFN is part of a powerful ongoing decolonization struggle in Canada involving the resurgence of collective identities, knowledges, self-determination (economic, political, cultural control and decision making), community development and healing. It is within this dual context of decolonization that a number of GNFN community members began (December 2002 to the present) a blockade of a newly constructed forestry logging road entering into their traditional territory as part of asserting their self-determination.[19]

The GNFN blockade also had the effect of initiating a localized grassroots process of relationship building between themselves and various non-Indigenous activists.[20] In particular, the blockade by GNFN community members was the beginning of a physical presence and substantial support by external non-Indigenous NGOs/CBOs in a myriad of ways: active accompaniment and violence prevention at the blockade site itself, media relations, pubic education and campaigning, legal advocacy, as well as access to different grassroots networks and constituencies nationally and internationally.[21] These strategies and actions at the grassroots level were understood by both GNFN blockaders and non-Indigenous activists as actively supporting GNFN in preventing logging in their traditional areas, as well as enabling their (GNFN) reworking of an asymmetrical power relations in the larger context by expanding the material, strategic and political means at their disposal.

Negotiating Standpoints

Importantly, the blockade process of grassroots collaboration and relationship building also involved recognizing the different and situated 'geopolitics of knowledge'[22] of both GNFN blockaders and non-Indigenous activists. One of the challenges then of grassroots relationship building was to negotiate interests, strategies and collaborative practices emanating from their sometimes divergent collective worldviews, values and motivations. Such negotiations were deeply embedded in the complexities of power, particularly epistemological. In turn, the negotiation of trust and

solidarity—central to relationship building—required non-Indigenous activists to recognize and support the differentiated framings, meanings and interests inherent in the perspective of GNFN community members, specifically people engaged as 'blockaders'.

In particular, the voices of these Grassy Narrows blockaders presented aspects of a different ontological, epistemological and ethical framework occurring in a shared space with non-Indigenous Euro-Canadian worldviews.[23] Two elements were important in the GNFN blockaders framing of the conflict, extension of trust and any practices of solidarity: one, the totality of the colonial experience and second, their collective identity as intrinsically linked to the land. As such, for non-Indigenous activists to understand GNFN blockaders' motivations behind collaboration, relationship building and contestation was to comprehend the significance of those differently situated frameworks.

To this end, GNFN blockaders narrated the situation in the following ways.[24] First, all of the GNFN blockaders interviewed actively asserted that the conflict and the blockade were to be understood in terms of their collective experience of colonialism (a lived experience of structural and cultural violence) and their challenging its ongoing impact by retaking control through the blockade over their local space and re-asserting their Anishnabe identities, individually and collectively.[25]

It was the totality of the colonial experience and its impact on GNFN that led one of the blockaders to say, "[i]t's [a blockade] about everything": family, identity, culture, colonial history, genocide and recovery (GLL:21).[26] Specifically, this experience of (post) colonialism became framed in a number of conjoining ways.

GNFN blockaders spoke about the conflict as a history of internment and underdevelopment, "… confined in these ghettos they call reserves. Look around the reserves, there is absolutely a lot of poverty out there" (GKK:21).

Further, it was posited as a situation of asymmetrical power manifesting itself through a complex contemporary mixture of racist government policies and alliances with industry, "[a]nd we have the government and industry on one side and us on the other side, so it wasn't fair right in the beginning. So that's why I'm saying the government is making sure white people have jobs." (GKK:445)

Similarly, the conflict and the blockade were situated within a context of cultural violence stemming from unfulfilled treaty promises and broken understandings, "… [i]t does become a treaty issue, because … the promises that weren't kept. I think we kept our end of the bargain … I don't think that they should take everything. When you look at the blockade itself, it is about our treaty rights. But it's also our way of life." (GVV:29)

Second, the GMFN blockaders' ontological worldview linked their identity to the land and its relationship as intrinsic to their cultural survival. Grassy Narrows blockaders spoke about the land and its implications in a symbiotic way; there was no division between themselves and the land. As one GNFN blockader put it, "for us our fight is to protect the land because that's part of our Creator-given responsibility and because also the land is like who we are. … Everything about us is the land" (GJJ:11).

Third, GNFN blockaders' articulation of their own situated standpoint served as their basis from which to challenge the asymmetry in relationships with both larger external institutions and non-Indigenous activists. In the context of such structural and cultural violence, the blockade for GNFN blockaders was about many things: recouping and asserting a way of life, language and culture, reclaiming space and territory, strengthening community cohesion, celebrating, gathering and reflecting, "[i]t's almost like the blockade is where you realize who you really are, you know." (GPP:222)

Trust

Given that grassroots relationship building was relational in character and embodied in practices and negotiated localized/situated knowledges, the essence of equitable local practices and solidarity was understood as the reconstitution of trust and power in relationships, particularly from the GNFN' blockaders standpoint. The status and strength of any relationship building could be seen in identifying key requisite constitutive elements of a new decolonizing relationship. For GNFN blockaders, transforming relations of power at the local level required non-Indigenous activists to prove that they could extend respect and be trusted, both in words and practice.

It was recognized by GNFN blockaders and non-Indigenous activists that the legacy of Canadian-Indigenous relations and racism had left a profound sense of disappointment and distrust from Indigenous peoples

towards Euro-Canadians. In this milieu, both GNFN blockaders and non-Indigenous activists were negotiating a contemporary trust with the ultimate evaluation of such trust resting with GNFN. There was a mutual recognition that the local space was more than contestation; it was a space of alternative practices, knowledges and relationships that put solidarity into lived experiences.

Trust was a deeply problematic area as explicitly stated by GNFN members.[27] As one community member/blockader put it, "you know, because you've been mistreated for so long by these people, how are you supposed to trust these people even though they come there as your activists, or allies?" (GQQ: 176)

In this context, for GNFN blockaders, transforming the historical mistrust required ongoing shared experiences and understandings between themselves and non-Indigenous people as lived proof. Trust (and solidarity) was not just a word but a number of actions sought from non-Indigenous activists that included six (6) categories: direct experience of GNFN cultural existence on the land, commitment and participation in the blockade, exhibiting a sense of shared values and contextual understanding, communicating with honour and honesty, not usurping GNFN leadership role, and proactive participation in GNFN ceremonies.

As the following GNFN blockader narrative illustrates, trust was negotiated by the way (actions) non-Indigenous activists pro-actively participated alongside the GNFN community, experienced its way of life, and exhibited a lived empathy:

> These were people that actually did things with you. Some of them even lived at the blockade, on the reserves with the people. They went hunting with you, they went fishing with you, they did all of the things with you that you were trying to protect. These were people that you know, actually living the lifestyle you're living. These were people that slept out in -40C weather in January and February and knowing, the things you have to go through. (GQQ: 196)

Another facet of trust for a GNFN blockader was the level of non-Indigenous commitment and participation in the blockade, indicative of respect:

> … I mentioned there was a lot of people coming and going, and because the people from Grassy was always there at the blockade, and with all these people coming and going, that's where this trust issue came. We have these people here, where do these people come

from? Who are they? Sometimes these questions were brought up, because like there were so many people coming and going and that's where this trust issue came from … (GQQ: 224-228)

Similarly, the Christian Peacemakers Team (CPT) work was acknowledged by a GNFN blockader as specifically deserving of trust:

[L]ike what I said with the CPT, they were there from the very beginning when the blockade went up and right till the end. To me anyways, they were the people I could trust. They were the ones I could develop a close relationship to as friends. … They weren't people who were just there one day and gone in the morning (GQQ: 224-228).

A third component of trust, as expressed by a community member, was knowing that a non-Indigenous supporter shared a corresponding set of values and beliefs about the context and political situation of GNFN:

[A]nd to me, in order for me to trust someone, I have to get to know them, I have to be in the same like, knowing what my beliefs are and what my rights are, I have to know if that other person agrees with what I believe in or at least is at the same level of what I believe in (GQQ: 180).

For another, a fourth area of trust was honour and speaking the truth about representing GNFN:

Yes! I expect everybody that's involved in the struggle to be as honest as us. To be truly honest … They cannot exaggerate. They cannot lie about our struggle. They have to speak the truth (GKK: 157).

Fifth, the theme of non-interference and autonomy was an important GNFN cultural and political value for trust. Set within a context of colonialism and asymmetry, respecting the role of GNFN's leadership at the blockade was pivotal for trust. Taken up later under the theme of tensions at the blockade, one specific example highlighted the erasing of trust when GNFN's lead role was displaced by a non-Indigenous activist. As one blockader put it:

What we kind of got from XXX and YYY [NGOs] was that they kind of used us for their own publicity (GLL: 237) … And in the end I see that s/he was there for his/her own glory. And I could never trust her/him, and s/he knows that (GLL: 262).

Sixth, another major dimension of negotiating trust was non-Indigenous activists' participation in Anishnabe ceremonies[28] as a key cultural aspect of GNFN relationship building. Their participation was understood by GNFN a blockader as representing a desire to understand Anishnabe and come together in a relationship of equals (GLL):

> A lot of times, what I've seen, they [non-Indigenous activists] wanted to be a part of what was going on. They wanted to learn, they wanted to be there to experience, and in order for them to experience that they had to participate. It was their choice. (GQQ: 220)

In the case of GNFN, the *politics of trust* were such that GNFN community members, though welcoming of external activists, were also wary; historical experiences had not been reassuring. GNFN blockaders articulated trust as evidenced by actions, shared understanding and a reciprocity of learning. Trust in this context was a process (reciprocity, action, participation) and outcome (friendship, emotional knowledge, negotiated meanings) located at the centre of local grassroots relationship building as a foundation for any vision and practice beyond instrumentality.

Solidarity and Negotiating Practices of Trust

Non-Indigenous activists were aware of this GNFN blockaders' discourse around trust and their participation in differently situated Anishnabe ceremonies and cultural communication was a recognition that local space was more than contestation; it was a *performative*[29] space of alternative practices, knowledges and relationships.[30] Hence, one of the chief frameworks informing non-Indigenous activists' own situated knowledges and constructing practices of trust at the local level was the concept of solidarity.

In a general sense, solidarity was defined by one non-Indigenous activist as, "[d]oing our best to make their struggle our struggle, to lend support" (CC: 148). Solidarity was a recognition by non-Indigenous activists of a relationship that was about becoming supportive allies in a struggle that was defined and framed by the community one was seeking to support--in this case GNFN.

More specifically, solidarity was a discourse for non-Indigenous activists that acted as a measure to compare theory, practice and purposes. First, it entailed a conceptual discourse and set of self-reflective political-ethical guidelines for reworking relations of power between themselves

and Indigenous peoples (in this case with GNFN blockaders). One CPT member spoke about the inherent difference in power between themselves (and other ENGOs) and GNFN, both as place-based urban environmentalists and as situated in a larger social hierarchy:

> In the position that I find myself in relation to Grassy and other Indigenous communities in general I think, is so easy for 'allies with privilege' from the mainstream to alter and run the local agenda. If so easy to decide that that is 'oh, that is an environmental issue, so I want to see Grassy Narrows declared a park'. … That the urban activists are in a position to determine what alternatives to clearcutting, it becomes just another form of colonization. (CC: 20)

Those solidarity guidelines involved supporting GNFN community self-determination, including prioritizing GNFN's framing of the conflict and respecting the primacy of GNFN in leading their own struggle. As another non-Indigenous activist echoed, solidarity efforts involved changing the authority of narratives:

> But it's not for me to decide what happens there. It's not for me to dictate. Its for me to do what I am asked to do and certainly provide any advice that I'm asked for but what people do with that is not up to me (DD: 594).

Similarly, as part of solidarity and strategically supporting GNFN blockaders, non-Indigenous activists made reference to respecting the specialized roles that each could play in a way that respected differences, emphasized respective strengths and avoided reproducing subordination. Hence, renegotiating power at the local level entailed non-Indigenous activists being able to understand their role not as key leaders but as components of a GNFN strategy. Two non-Indigenous activists put it this way:

> And it's not uncommon to people to come in to Grassy, especially white folk, who say 'I've got this project that's going to save your community' and try to be outsiders who have all the solutions and who try to start bossing people around in a way that's really not respectful of the work that's being done there. (BB: 21)

> Frankly, I think you should be a component. I think you should be a component. I don't think that taking this paternalistic approach to communities is appropriate. (DD: 109)

Second, the non-Indigenous activists' praxis of solidarity constructed itself in alternative local processes between GNFN blockaders and non-Indigenous activists around three elements: collaborative processes of consultation and decolonizing decision making; actively developing overlapping agendas and strategies that included community, social justice and environmental concerns; and lastly, providing material and political support.

For other non-Indigenous activists, solidarity, as a practice of reorganizing power between themselves and GNFN also involved consultation and collaborative (and decolonizing) decision making. In particular, as recounted by one non-Indigenous activists, it was a process of "generating ideas, fleshing them out based on our knowledge of how those systems work" then "bringing them to Grassy Narrows … and see which ones they want to give us the go-ahead to work on" (TT: 92).

In the same way, solidarity and negotiating power relationships also involved developing overlapping (not identical) agendas that respected differences while supporting similar interests between GNFN and other non-Indigenous agendas. This approach produced a synergy and system of parallel beliefs that reinforced their common understanding to protecting the land and the people, as recounted by a non-Indigenous activist and Grassy Narrows blockader respectively:

> And I think for YYY [an NGO]—and me within YYY—is about connecting to and seeing that struggle. And the overlap is that neither of us want that land destroyed by industrial development—be it for future generations or historical genocide and present genocide, or ecological values. (RR: 48)

> I think what was important for me was that people had the same beliefs as we did, and that they believed in what they were doing. (GVV: 198)

Just as processes of consultation countered and positioned alternate locations of decision making, so too solidarity involved strategies, collaborative and independent of each other, that actively looked to expand the power and influence of GNFN materially and politically. There were two main foci: blockade support and wider strategic actions.[31]

Third, as exemplified by CPT, solidarity as praxis constituted various practices geared towards building alternate relations of equity at the grassroots. The process of consulting and decision making with

GNFN blockaders (and the larger community) was fundamental to the development of a relationship of equity. All eleven of the GNFN blockaders interviewed praised CPT for their approach to collaborating and creating respectful decision making with Grassy. As one GNFN blockader said:

> Christian peacemakers' teams … did a really good job with communication between us and them and other groups … we made decisions for the community but they never tried to persuade us to look at things another way. They're sort of like two bodies working together, two groups working together. Decisions were made by us and the Christian Peacemakers Teams just flew right into the plan. (GKK: 181)

A CPT activist described the process they used at the blockade:

> In some ways when CPT wanted feedback from people, we would organize our meetings at the blockade so off-reserve and out of prison.[32] We would arrange transportation for people who couldn't make it, who didn't have a way of getting there …. We would cook a bunch of chilli usually and invite people to bring other things. And we would clean the roundhouse out and light two fires. Then we would all eat together, chat and just hang out for a couple of hours. Then we would have a sharing circle. That was our format generally. And we might have a couple of questions we wanted people to respond to. Or, just say "what's on your mind about CPT these days?" So that was the mechanism that we employed. … The other one I have already mentioned which is sort of more one-to-one chats in the bush or at the store or fishing. (CC:105-106)

The example of CPT was indicative of what a successful version of solidarity could look like at the community level and its implications for longer-term relationship building. CPT approach and actions showed the possibilities of a consistent relationship at the grassroots built on concepts and practices of solidarity and the way it engendered trust, longer-term relationships, and developed empowering approaches based on social transformation. As representatives of the dominant (white Euro-Canadian) culture, CPT's approach of solidarity and grassroots relationship building became a complex process of renegotiating meanings, collaboration and trust inside a social justice framework.[33]

In sum, there were three main elements concerning the importance of *solidarity as praxis* as a basis for re-negotiating the larger historical asymmetrical relationship between themselves as representatives of the

dominant Euro-Canadian culture and Indigenous peoples, specifically GNFN. First, solidarity was about the envisioned nature and alternative practices associated with developing a transformed relationship of equity between non-Indigenous activists and GNFN, driven in part by constructing overlapping agendas. Second, solidarity was a discourse based upon an explicit recognition that practices of decision-making and strategizing were intimately connected to collective issues of power. Third, solidarity was enabling GNFN to direct their own campaigns though extending political and material support.

Reproductive and Emancipatory Practices

The case of Grassy Narrows also revealed the numerous challenges, tensions and contradictions inherent in an emerging and ongoing process of trust and relationship building. Grassroots relationship building both for GNFN blockaders and non-Indigenous activists was neither a smooth nor a linear process. Rather, it involved moments of both reproductive and emancipatory practices that needed to be negotiated across a spectrum of different locations, understandings, and strategies.

There were four main categories of tension for GNFN blockaders towards non-Indigenous activists: non-Indigenous NGO attitudes and behaviours that reproduced the larger social relations of inequity; external [non-Indigenous] practices of decision making and organizing that clashed with community practices; mistrust over activists' motivations and commitment to relationship building; and a positioning of voice, framing and authority that subordinated GNFN' sovereignty.

The GNFN blockaders discourse about tensions referred to non-Indigenous activists' attitudes and behaviours that emulated historical relations of colonialism. This came in the form of the ill-informed understandings of community's sophistication as expressed by two separate blockaders:

> […] sometimes there still is that superiority … attitude that comes through at some point, you know …" (GPP: 506)

> And they [particular NGOs] seemed to be interested in … giving us ideas about how to move the community forward a little bit. It [was] almost like they thought we were ten years behind or something. (GHH: 245)

A second area of tension for GNFN blockaders were non-Indigenous NGOs' organizing and decision-making processes that ran counter to GNFN community approaches that valued informality and time differently. As a consequence certain non-Indigenous NGO processes and meetings were seen as undermining GNFN collaboration and community participation.[34] A GNFN community member expressed this concern in the following manner:

> Like when they [non-Indigenous NGOs] say, "You have to develop a needs assessment" … it's such like a rigid format … so sometimes you know we have to step in and say, "Stop, you know, that's not working for us." And they're starting to know that. We do things differently. And our time is slower … we do things slower. We need to check. We need to observe and see, you know, where things are going. It could take years, you know, for us to come up with a comfortable room where we can say this way or that way about something, you know. (GPP: 248)

Third, the tensions that arose in those practices had larger ramifications in reproducing feelings of disempowerment, colonialism and mistrust. For example, one key GNFN blockader disagreed with a particular NGO's organizing process. The process in question left her / him feeling that the GNFN community had been disempowered, that it had lost control, and that it had not been given the choice to participate:

> [T]hey [certain NGOs] wanted to keep it quiet that we were going to be blocking … like really hush-hush. I feel like from the very beginning we never had anything to hide. … I felt like they were doing what we were fighting against—not giving these people their own choice if they wanted to be involved or not. … I felt like that made us look like we weren't in control [rather] that they were. (GLL: 323)

Fourth, the power asymmetry of representation was seen as reproducing itself in the process of communication between the protestors (Anishnabe and external NGOs) and the police whereby Grassy Narrows people were relegated to the back. That positioning of voice had the consequence of media coverage centring on the NGO message in spite it having been a GNFN-led issue. This had the effect reducing the opportunities for GNFN community members to be empowered and control the process, a sense of their having being used, and ultimately, undermining a sense of trust so key to negotiating future joint collaboration. In the words of one blockader:

> What we kind of got from XXX and YYY [NGOs] was that they
> kind of used us this summer for their own publicity. That's how I see
> it because all over the papers it was like XXX was led …. It wasn't
> Grassy Narrows (GLL: 237).

Indicative of differently situated non-Indigenous cultural ontologies, NGO imperatives, organisational and cultural patterns of organizing, and larger relations of situated power, GNFN blockaders' discourses on tensions positioned certain non-Indigenous activists' attitudes, behaviours, processes and actions as fundamentally disempowering, disrespectful and inducing distrust.

Conversely, there were five broad areas of challenge for non-Indigenous activists that impacted on building relationships and strategies that, similar to GNFN blockaders, were reflective of differently situated 'geographies of knowledge', cultural practices and lived realities. As one non-Indigenous activist said, "There's been lots of challenges" (TT: 97).

The first challenge stemmed from the different GNFN community decision-making processes and criteria based on starkly different ontological and epistemological references than those of non-Indigenous activists. For example, as another non-Indigenous activist experienced, there were different social processes of community decision-making that were not necessarily visible to non-Indigenous activists:

> I actually always feel like we don't have a good window into the
> thought processes behind the organization of the blockade. …
> Because from our point of view, the planning period was very
> brief. Things were just appeared to be spontaneously happening but
> clearly—although they were improvised—people knew each other
> for generations. They were not organizing with strangers. So they
> have a way of doing things that just gelled and coalesced without
> needing to articulate all the ground rules or common understanding.
> That was already in place and invisible to me. (CC: 100-103)

Moreover, whereas the GNFN blockaders' cultural notions of time focussed on long-term priorities and conflict transformation frameworks that spanned hundreds of years, an NGO campaign was set within a sense of shorter term urgency while mediating internal organisational priorities and resources. According to one NGO representation:

> People from Grassy Narrows recognize clearly that this is a 400 year
> old issue, that it's been going on their whole life and will continue,
> whereas people at XXX [NGO] have a need to show results to their

funders, to motivate their activists, to show that they're making progress and not just blowing against the wind. A five-year time horizon is probably the furthest XXX could think ahead. … And that obviously affects approaches and decisions and how they're going to be made. (TT: 108)

These situated frameworks translated into practices of decision making that were organizationally and culturally different. This presented a challenge for a non-Indigenous NGO wanting to plan with predictable and precise time frames for specific campaign actions, as stated by an activist:

I think you could say there's been more western style of decision making that's viewed as rational where you can collect pieces of info that need to go into it, the parameters of what we're trying to influence, what resources we have at our disposal and make the best decision. The decision is made in advance of the action taken and then it's followed through on. Whereas at Grassy Narrows I think—at least with a lot of the people whom I work with—emotion plays a much stronger role. People want to make a decision they feel good about, which is not necessarily made with the rational weighing of objective factors. (TT: 106)

At the same time,

[t]here's often a spiritual factor in the decision, so dreams can affect the decision, visions, experiences in your day that have personal significance, and always people do what feels right at that time—they don't decide the day before what they're going to do tomorrow, they don't say a week in advance 'we will go block this road in a week.' Even on a speaking tour they don't take notes in advance or write a script. They get up and say what comes to their heart. (TT: 107)

A third domain of tension and negotiation for non-Indigenous activists was the lived reality of GNFN community members—a reserve community[35] where daily survival and limited resources were enmeshed in historical structural violence. The structural challenge of material poverty and daily demands of community members' lives resulted in a limited capacity to feed into the functional approach of external NGOs, and in the words of one activist:

On the time one, we're used to working with people who are chained to their desks—other NGO works or people in the corporate world

or students who have internet access multiple times a day, cell phones, landlines—from whom we expect responses to inquires in a day or two, and of whom we expect that if we leave two emails or messages and they aren't returned, that we're being spurned. But in Grassy Narrows, some people don't have a phone in their home. If they do have a phone, you might be leaving a message with their niece or who knows who and who knows if it got to them, and even if it does get to them, the core people at Grassy Narrows are parents, grandparents, traditional land-users, holding down regular jobs, running an activist campaign on a wide range of issues, dealing with crisis management, having all kinds of things on their plate—so they may or may not get back to you that month. (TT: 99-100)

Consequently, non-Indigenous activists were required to rethink their expectations:

To expect that you're going to get a lot of proactive community involvement beyond a handful of people I think it's unrealistic when people are dealing with these kind of daily struggles. It's just not going to happen. (DD: 220)

A third tension and challenge emanated from within the non-Indigenous organisations and their internal organisational processes. Organisational priorities, planning and campaign cycles, hierarchal decision-making structures, and funding issues at times led to miscommunication, gaps and dysfunctional approaches towards GNFN. For instance, non-Indigenous organisational structures and hierarchical decision-making processes created challenges and gaps in working with GNFN. This could be seen to impact on trust and relationship building. Not only were the NGO organisational practices unfamiliar to members of the GNFN community but given that trust was highly relational, the relationship of an individual non-Indigenous activist with GNFN could be challenged by the organisational demands. According to one NGO spokesperson:

Any kind of project requires a different kind of timeline and approach to deadlines and to flow than what is usual at a non-profit. Also, in terms of decision-making structures, it's a challenge for me in that I'm the person they know and see and have a relationship with, and yet I don't have ultimate authority in my dealings with them—I often have to say "I have to take that back to my boss or to my team to discuss". A lot of the factors that go into decision making—things like budgeting, the need to fundraise, accountability to the board and members, public perceptions of our organisation and our

work—aren't factors that folks at Grassy Narrows are used to taking into account. (TT: 101)

The fourth challenge stemmed from the actual fissures and breakdowns in knowledge that reflected a cultural and organisational disconnect and *spaces of detachment*. One such area for non-Indigenous activists were their own personal gaps in understanding the lived experience and impacts of asymmetrical power relations for GNFN. There became a breach in meaning and practices that was difficult to imagine ever overcoming, essentially constituting a "*cultural breakdown*" (RR: 46) in knowledge where, as one activist put it, "I think I constantly gain awareness but it is not my experience, is not my history and I am an outsider on that" (RR: 46).

The fifth area of tension for non-Indigenous activists, who were not cognizant of the historical asymmetry of power was the uncomfortable space of inter-identity organizing and an NGO practice of wanting to avoid usurping Indigenous leadership or direction giving. NGOs subordinated some of their own initiatives and actions in trying to mediate those relations of power and historical asymmetry with GNFN. It became a *tension-space* of negotiating new balances, spaces of leadership and decision making. In this uncharted context, non-Indigenous activists were exploring those boundaries of power, as one stated:

> We tried to take a lot of direction from the community. But sometimes it didn't work out. … There were times when some of the key blockaders were giving us the impression that 'you guys don't always have to wait for us to initiate things.' Which was good to hear, because it shows a level of trust, but I think it may have been frustrating to them at time because we were too reluctant to initiate things on our end—we didn't want to step on toes or hijack what they'd begun. (BB: 23)

What appeared in these localized practices were tensions, gaps and diverse challenges for GNFN blockaders and non-Indigenous activists related to power, culture and organisational structures. GNFN blockaders and other GNFN community members expressed the tensions and challenges in terms of non-Indigenous perspectives, actions and processes that reproduced existent asymmetrical power and/or disempowering processes that undermined community approaches, sovereignty and tentative levels of trust.

Similarly, there were tensions, challenges and limitations articulated by non-Indigenous activists related to their own NGO processes and organisational requisites, the lived realities on a reserve, together with different cultural paradigms and disconnects of experience between Grassy Narrows community members and non-Indigenous grassroots activists.

Language

Given the contexts and practices, both emancipatory and reproductive, what were some of the ways that Grassy Narrows blockaders and non-Indigenous NGO/CBOs conceptualized their overall relationship? Was it one of partners, allies, activists or friends? What did any of these discursive designations indicate about the status of relationship building between them?

The differently structured GNFN blockaders and non-Indigenous activists frameworks, criteria and practices at the local level reflected a complex negotiation structure and a somewhat ambiguous status of relationship building between and amongst them. This was reflected in a spectrum of terminologies and designations by both GNFN and non-Indigenous activists to represent the status and meaning of their collaborative work: 'activists, friends, partners, friendly relations'. Lacking in any unanimity, their discourses were nevertheless indicative of a relationship building that mixed organisational, professional and personal elements while recognizing the cultural and power relations therein.

For example, some members of GNFN referred to external non-Indigenous individuals or organisations as "activists" (GHH: 286; GHH: 10) but hardly ever as partners, allies or members of a coalition (GKK: 202). On the rare occasion when someone did use the word 'ally', it did not imply a deep relationship or any evolving nature, but more of an understanding and respect. One blockader stated:

> I think the closest word in English would probably be 'allies' eh?! People that are just like … they understand what you're up against and they respect what you're doing. Yeah … I don't think they're —they're not partners, you know. I don't think the word partner describes them (GPP: 134).

In a general sense, such GNFN distinctions between the designations were judged with reference to the actions and understandings exhibited by non-Indigenous activists in terms of the length and quality of time invested in getting to know the community, the degree to which there seemed to be elements of a shared understanding, and finally, the depth of trust and any personal relationship that had developed during the process of collaborating through that process. The following statements illustrate this finding:

> I think for me, I don't know if they are allies or friends or activists. You name it—they are here to help us. We've had … I guess a relationship, not a business relationship. It's a friendly relationship. (GKK: 105)

> I guess it depends; there are some people that come along where I kind of get to know the person where I would call them or friends. I mainly just call them activists. There are a few people that I've become good friends with. (GLL: 36)

The designations by GNFN members suggested there was a spectrum of evolving relationships with non-Indigenous activists being constructed at the local level. The notion of relationship building as an evolving process was also understood by various non-Indigenous activists; irrespective of the terms used, relationship building went beyond the notion of instrumental allies, and extended into the political configurations of power and emotional domain of the personal.

A number of non-Indigenous activists spoke of the dual facet of this relationship as an ally organizationally, on the one hand, and as having a personal relationship, on the other, pointing to a relationship larger than just ally work. It was an "ongoing, serious and committed" (TT: 123) relationship that people built at the blockade and one that "is not the end of the story" (AA: 45). As one non-Indigenous activist said:

> I think I would generally use the word 'ally' to describe both CPT's positioning with respect to Grassy and my own involvement with the issues that they are confronting. On another level because I spent a significant amount of time there and have close relationships with people. … [T]here are times when I feel like I am doing ally work, and times I feel we are just hanging out. (CC: 12)

Similar to the diversity of designations used by GNFN blockaders, non-Indigenous activists fundamentally distinguished the status of their relationship by its level of friendship and commitment. One activist

commented, "[i]s it an ally, a supporter, a partner, does it make a difference to you? I think of myself as a friend, I like the name Friends. Friends for me means they can walk into my house without knocking, I can walk in theirs without knocking, its a face-to-face relationship. They know they can rely on me" (EE: 41).

At the same time, the relationship with GNFN was clearly understood in terms of an asymmetry of power. One activist's discourse used both 'ally' and 'partner' to describe the differently situated consequence of the struggle for GNFN:

> Ally is a good term. I think I like it because, for me at least, it has some of the connotations of the Anishnabe word 'partner' does. But also the idea that maybe Grassy has more at stake right now and CPT or I do in the struggle. So it has to be respected that they are the protagonist and we take the initiative. That is our prerogative to do so but we are taking our lead and cues from them. That is why I would describe us as allies. You could say partners too. (CC: 13)

The spectrum of terms and designations used by both GNFN and non-Indigenous activists pointed to the status and nature of relationship building in this context; the shared sense that relationships could be moved beyond the instrumental and professional level into a closer relationship of trust and/or friendship. Their discourse was reflective of the degree to which tensions and challenges were negotiated, a discourse connected to the varying degrees of trust experienced at the local level.

Conclusion

The paper began with evidence that the community of GNFN was contending with an asymmetrical series of relations of power between themselves, the State and the dominant Canadian society. The paper argued that such unequal relations of power were more fluid and open to greater degrees of negotiation at the local level between GNFN blockaders and non-Indigenous CBO/NGO activists. The field research consisting of highly local and contexutalized interviews with members of GNFN community (mostly blockaders) and non-Indigenous activists from six community-based NGOs can be understood as an emerging joint dialogue and negotiation. Their discourses offered evidence of an ongoing process of mutual learning, negotiation and transformative change: cultural, political and social.

On the one hand, their discourses explicitly acknowledged the existence of larger asymmetrical power relations and their practices sought to create an alternative relationship of equity embodied in differently structured localized processes and approaches. On the other hand, as an evolving collaboration, such local experiences involved a constant negotiation of meanings and practices that created more emancipatory relations of power in certain instances, and reproductive relations and tensions in others.

What undeniably happened was a form of relationship building. Beset by various tensions, relationship building was both a discursive and material practice of reframing power. It involved a conscious reworking of historical distrust through a process-driven outcome that sought to invert the marginalization of GNFN in the large social hierarchy as well as build personal/organisational relations at the local level. Trust was engendered by a transparency of actions, ongoing commitment, cultural engagement, and a collaboration that was both professional and personal.

One of the main frameworks for understanding the dynamics and transformative potential of grassroots collaboration in this case scenario was the interlinking of relationship building, trust and power. Power was key because it was the historical relationship of colonial subordination that was being challenged and reworked in the daily interactions, roles, processes and strategies between GNFN blockaders and non-Indigenous activists. Trust was important because of its role as a criteria and signifier of change; it was both a basis and an outcome of working together at the grassroots community level. Relationship building was an essential rubric, discursively and materially, in terms of new practices of participation, development and equity between GNFN blockaders and non-Indigenous activists.

The case of GNFN pointed to the centrality of trust in this grassroots relationship building. Given the asymmetry of power, trust needed to be located and understood, in the first instance, as defined by GNFN blockaders and their situated experiences. From this perspective, trust became a process of reciprocity, participation and equity as well as an outcome of negotiated meanings, emotional knowledge and friendship. For relationships to be sustainable and equitable, trust needed to be part of the process and practice.

Equally important was GNFN's process of asserting their own epistemology and cultural knowledge as a basis for organizing internally and externally. Their discourses were themselves a counter-hegemonic

practice of negotiating relations of power, knowledge, trust, processes and actions at the local level. In the specific local context, it concerned a demarcation of a leadership role for GNFN as well as an assertion and recognition of its situated knowledge, experiences and cultural values. Simultaneously, the local context contested the hierarchies of knowledge and privileges inherently invested in non-Indigenous activists, in part by disabling those standpoints and processes of dominance, and replacing those with a space encouraging both autonomous and collaborative actions.

Guiding non-Indigenous activists were conceptual frameworks of solidarity that by their very nature sought to create support for GNFN's goal of decolonisation and self-determination. The self-reflective discourse of non-Indigenous activists, embodied in solidarity, was an important part of renegotiating the larger historical asymmetrical relationship between themselves as representatives of the dominant Euro-Canadian culture and Indigenous peoples, specifically GNFN.

First, solidarity was about the envisioned nature and alternative material practices associated with developing a transformed relationship of equity with GNFN. Second, solidarity was a discourse based upon an explicit recognition that processes of decision making and strategizing were intimately connected to collective issues of power. Third, solidarity was about creating overlapping agendas and interests that supported GNFN to direct their own campaigns through the extension of political and material support. Lastly, solidarity was understood as a collaborative process where GNFN' leadership and community self-determination were central to building wider relationships for social change.

Within these larger themes of knowledge/power, trust and relationship building, there existed multiple and complex situated standpoints: ontologically and epistemologically. These conceptual understandings pointed to the fundamentally different worldviews and values that anchored dichotomous collective frameworks and interests between Indigenous peoples and the dominant Canadian society nationally; culturally, politically and economically. At the grassroots level in Canada, the case pointed to the different relations of power being tentatively negotiated between GNFN community members and non-Indigenous activists. Evident in the discourse and practices, the local community was challenging both itself and larger structural relations. In that sense, community based relationship-building can be seen as an 'ontology of becoming' engaged in a practice of reorganizing power. It is

an intertwining of reciprocity, trust, and knowledge embodying alternate paradigms of collective relationships and solidarity within asymmetrical conflicts.

Notes

1. My terminology of *Community-based relationship building* draws upon writers in fields of Indigenous studies, conflict resolution and peace studies, cultural anthropology, political studies and my own lived experiences. In particular, writers such as Arturo Escobar, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Janet Conway, Johanne Gultung, Jean-Paul Lederach, Diane Francis highlighting community capacity building and the role of Indigenous/local knowledges as a means of transforming relationships from the "bottom-up".

2. Situated on a 36 square kilometre reserve in north-western Ontario, the Asubpeeshoseewagong Natum Anisnabek (*hereafter referred to by its English name of Grassy Narrows First Nation, or simply GNFN*) is an Anishnabe (Ojibway) community of 800 on reserve and 400 off-reserve.

3. I define 'activist' in this context as individuals, community members and relatively small Non-governmental organisations (NGO)/Community-based organisations (CBOs), situated outside of government structures, whose goals include mobilizing larger public support for implementing particular policies and approaches stemming from a social justice framework.

4. 'Blockaders' was a self-identifying term used by GNFN community members who spent significant amounts of time/effort on the blockade.

5. To a certain degree, the paper's narrative operates within certain aspects of essentialist as in presenting the ontologies and epistemologies of both blockaders and activists. Taking a cue from Spivak (1990, 1988) the strategic use of essentialism means to represent one's self and group identity is an essentialist (or positivist) manner as part of a political struggle. Hence, in representation, (1990: 108) posits two types: *Vertretung* as "political representation and *Darstellung* where represents "yourself and your constituency in the portrait sense". So, in representing a group by proxy (Eg., political spokesperson or representative), one is simultaneously representing them a second time in terms of "portraying them as constituencies" (109). Spivak writes, "[t]he relationship between the two kinds of representation brings in, also, the use of essentialist because no representation can take place—no *Vertretung,* [political or proxy] representation—can take place without essentialism. What it has to take into account is that the "essence" that is being represented is a representation of the other kind, *Darstellung [portrait, portrayal]*"(109). Spivak elaborates further by saying, "I was saying that since it is not possible not to be an essentialist, one can self-consciously use this irreducible moment of essentialism as part of one's strategy" (ibid). The issue of representation is connected to Spivak's 1988 work entitled, "Can the Subaltern Speak?".

6. What it meant was that groups like Amnesty International, Friends of Grassy and Christian Peacemakers Team (CPT) were more informed by a human rights and social justice agenda: ForestEthics in the first instance by an environmental set of priorities; Boreal Forest Network (BFN) and, to some degree, Rain Forest Action Network (RAN) by a dual set of priorities encompassing the other agendas. The community of Grassy Narrows, as well, had it heterogeneous views both on the blockade, and towards the leadership and strategy of the elected Band Council.

7. As recounted by Arturo Escobar (2008:6), "In a nutshell, I argue that people mobilize against the destructive aspects of globalization from the perspective of what they have been and what they are at the present: historical knowledge producers; individuals and collectivities engaged in the play of living in landscapes and with each other in distinctive

ways." Speaking of such regions as the Pacific peoples in Colombia, Escobar says, "people engage in the defence of place from the perspective of the economic, ecological, and cultural differences that their landscapes, cultures, and economies embody in relation to those of more dominant sectors of society" (ibid).

8. As Smith (1999: 98) writes, "[d]ecolonization, once viewed as the formal process of handing over the instruments of government, is now recognized as long-term process involving the bureaucratic, cultural, linguistic and psychological divesting of colonial power".

9. The research was driven by the following questions: how were Anishnabe and non-Indigenous grassroots activists at Grassy Narrows negotiating new relations with each other? In what ways did local processes challenge macro relations of power while simultaneously negotiating and creating space for both difference and commonality? How were efforts at grassroots relationship building altering the possible?

10. 'Geographies of knowledge is taken from Escobar's 'political ecology of difference' (the integrated framework of diverse economies, environment, and cultures) and "reading the world events for difference as part of "practical politics" that weaves together "connections among languages and practices of economic, ecological and cultural difference" (2008: 18) and "projects of decoloniality in and for the present."

11. 'Locality' is the term for place-based geographies of knowledge and situated practices within contested relations of power. It refers to the implicit and explicit negotiating of intersecting and situated 'cultures of difference' and collaboration. Localities are not homogenous sites of epistemologies nor monolithic interests but instead, represent complex, diverse sites of bio-power. The 'local' can be understood in various ways through the works of Foucault, Spivak, and Giroux as the marginalized or subaltern grouping or perspective; a a spatial location where relations of power are differently contested; and/ or as a set of practices/discourses grounded in specific circumstances and resistances against oppressions. Additionally, Denzin (2007:,463) writes, "The local is grounded in the politics, circumstances, and economies of particular moment, particular time and place, and a set of particular set of problems, struggles and desires. A politics of resistance and possibility is embedded in the local. This is the politics that confronts and breaks through local structures of resistance and oppression."

12. On the one hand, the historical and contemporary imposition of structural relationships of power asymmetry nationally in Canada exist and interact with specific local contexts. I understand colonialism in Canada in terms of both an historical and contemporary process of subjugation and dispossession. Originating in an historical European drive for world market and geopolitical dominance, it morphed into a contemporary Canadian form of internal colonialism for Indigenous peoples, one that is intersecting with an increased penetration and dominance of global world capitalist markets, particularly over resources. This process has produced an ongoing conflict characterized by an asymmetry of relations of power as well as structural and cultural violence towards Indigenous peoples.

13. Under the peace and friendship *Treaty of 1873* (also known as *Treaty #3*), Grassy Narrows agreed to share the territories while retaining the right to occupy, sustain and use their traditional territory encompassing more than 6,000 square kilometres.

14. 'Underdevelopment' is used in a neo-marxist sense (Amin, GunderFrank, Wallerstein) to denote colonial policies of undermining and displacing local Indigenous economies, and replacing/subordinating them with a dependency position within a metropolitan economy.

15. This also resulted in various forms of lateral violence within the community itself. See Anastasia M. Shkilnyk. *A Poison Stronger Than Love: The Destruction of an Ojibwa Community*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985. p. 11-49.

16. Clear-cutting is a commercial forestry practice still common in Ontario where large swathes of land are completely deforested and logged, leaving behind empty and devastated environments.

17. The traditional territory of 5000 square kilometres, called the Whiskey Jack and Trout Lake Forest by the province, is relatively untouched Boreal forest. The entire tract of Boreal Forest in Ontario stretches 1000 kilometres east-west and 100 kilometres north-south and includes the Grassy Narrow territory. It is one of the world's few remaining unlogged forests and is threatened by the level of cutting.

18. http://freegrassy.org/learn_more/the_boreal_forest.

19. Initially begun on December 3, 2002 by three young Anishnabe women in Grassy Narrows, they felled a tree across a newly constructed commercial logging road entering into their territory. Set up several kilometres outside the reserve, the blockade has attracted national and international attention, and at any one time had anywhere from half a dozen to well over 150 people participating. The blockade was self-organising and was supported by diverse community members, other Indigenous activists, non-Indigenous individuals and a number of NGOs. This blockade expanded in numbers, size, meaning with continual daily occupation until June, 2004 but is still in place currently.

20. NGOs or community-based support groups included Christian Peacemakers Teams, Friends of Grassy, Boreal Forest Network, ForestEthics, Rainforest Action Network (RAN), and those that lent support at one time or another: KAIROS, Amnesty International, and Sierra Legal Defence Fund. In addition, these groups were often connected to wider support networks and memberships.

21. The first element of collaboration between Grassy Narrows and non-Indigenous activists involved directly supporting the Grassy Narrows at the blockade itself. This involved media relations support, mobilizing international and national networks, supplying materials (food and building supplies), maintaining a continuous physical presence and witnessing as peacekeepers.

    The second element was NGO strategic support and campaigns in the external public arena beyond the blockade: economical, political and educational that included direct action, public advocacy and education, legal and political pressure. One strategy combined fundraising with public education (Friends of Grassy); media via websites, information flow, press releases and capacity-building skills; campaigns to pressure corporations (BFN, RAN) through direct action, access to forestry company officials and targeting forestry product sales; international lobbying and reports (Amnesty International); legal challenges on behalf of trappers (Sierra Legal Defence Fund), and mobilizing networks of support (BFN) to expand the local set of potential allies such as unions and churches (Friends of Grassy); and the use of street theatre and rallies (CPT).

22. See Escobar (2008:3-23) for his writing on modernity/coloniality/decoloniality perspective (MCD).

23. It is worth restating that GNFN is a place-based locality with all of its particularities and specificities. Indigenous communities in Canada are neither internally nor externally homogenous historically, culturally or politically. One might be struck at what might appear as an 'essentialized' representation of Indigenous peoples' spiritual epistemology. While spirituality and any attachment to a particular version is acknowledged as different between and within communities, this was the spiritual narrative of Grassy Narrows blockaders as they spoke it, and as I have tried to understand and present it.

24. The 2007 field research case study was composed of 22 interviews: 11 were members of Grassy Narrows First Nation, almost all having participated in the community blockade; and 11 non-Indigenous key activists from six supportive NGOs, most of whom participated in the blockade and/or in ongoing work alongside Grassy Narrows. The six NGOs included Christian Peacemakers Teams (CPT), Friends of Grassy, Rainforest Action Network (RAN), ForestEthics, Amnesty International, and Boreal Forest Network (BFN). Other NGOs such as KAIROS and Sierra Legal Defence Fund were also engaged in a more limited fashion.

25. These were semi-structured individual conversations, usually 60-90 minutes, that took place in numerous informal sites from kitchens, coffee shops, teepees and wherever people

felt comfortable. Conversations were set as a dialogue and guided by only three basic themes: 'What have been your experiences of the blockade? How was it for you working with non-Indigenous supporters?' What were some of the challenges?'

My methodology was premised upon a social justice approach of research and research methodology as an act of political contestation guided by an ethics of solidarity. Second, I positioned myself within poststructuralist postmodern sensibilities and accepted the contemporary re-problematization of representation, legitimacy and praxis. While I am not an Indigenous scholar nor is my research a community-driven decolonizing Indigenous methodology outlined by Smith (1999), Bishop (1998, 1999, 2005), and Denzin (2007), connect Indigenous discourses and practices to a social justice and solidarity-based Grounded Theory approach (method *and* analysis) combining critical pedagogy, critical theory and the performative politics of resistance in a way that is pertinent to the methodological and epistemological framework I have engaged. As a consequence, I responded with an empirically-grounded theory, auto-ethnographic narrative, self-reflexivity, and an analysis led by a commitment to a critical pedagogy.

26. To respect respondents' anonymity, quotations are identified by random letter combinations I chose. GNFN blockader quotes are preceded by the letter 'G', while non-Indigenous activists are not.

27. 10 of the 11 Grassy Narrows interviews spoke about issues of trust as important. The theme of trust was explicit with references to peoples' experiences stretching historically, personally and with certain NGOs. Examples:

> I guess me, it comes back again with because with going back to the history. Even going back as far as treaties. Maybe even going further back, in the days of Columbus, I think that's where trust was lost along time ago from the Natives towards the non-natives. (GQQ: 172)

> Like I grew up in a residential school … And we learned about them [Euro-Canadians] … but they didn't learn about us because they were too busy trying to assimilate us and civilize us. (GNN: 245, 246)

28. Ceremonies are defined here as spiritual cultural forms of healing, prayer and collective sharing. Drumming, singing, sweats and sharing circles were a few of the ceremonies mentioned in interviews.

29. Performativity is a self-reflective double movement that locates us as actors representing and presenting the world with our audience (our experiences and its connections into the personal, political, local, historical, and cultural) on the one hand while critically inspecting that very same moment in terms of power and meaning on the other. 'Performativity' is an extension of the concept of performance arising from the earlier work of dramaturgy (Goffman, Anderson) that sees the world as social performances where things have meaning, and are reinforced, understood and presented within socially constructed codes/signifiers of understanding and frameworks of interpretation. Denzin (2008) uses 'performativity' to mean the self-reflexive action of agency and critical politico-cultural action (e.g., drama, poetics, writings or any action of [re]presentation) that contests, presents and enacts (performs) the world from within a differently situated perspective and 'politics of resistance'.

30. As one CPT activist said, "Yeah, they [ceremonies] did [play an important role in relationship building]. It wasn't necessarily whether you participated in them or not, when invited or not, but it is how you respond to invitations to participate in ceremonies" (CC: 72).

31. The first element involved directly supporting the Grassy Narrows at the blockade itself. This involved media relations support, mobilizing international and national networks, supplying materials (food, building supplies), maintaining a continuous physical presence and witnessing (CPT) as peacekeepers. The second element was NGO strategic support and campaigns in the external public arena beyond the blockade: economically, politically and educationally that included direct action, public advocacy and education as well as legal

and political pressure. One strategy combined fundraising with public education (Friends of Grassy in Winnipeg), another involves media campaigns (websites, information flow, press releases, capacity building skills), campaigns to pressure corporations (BFN, RAN: banners, access to company officials, targeting sales), international lobbying and reports (Amnesty International); Legal challenges on behalf of trappers (Sierra Legal Defence Fund), mobilizing networks of support (BFN on Action Alerts), trying to expand the local set of potential allies (Fiends of Grassy on meeting with union, CPT and street theatre and local churches). These strategies and actions at the grassroots level were understood as actively supporting Grassy Narrows in the specific of preventing logging in their traditional areas, as well as enabling their reworking of asymmetrical power relations in the larger context by expanding the material, strategic and political means at its disposal.

32. It's not an uncommon in various Indigenous and solidarity circles to refer to reserves as analogous to prisons of colonialism, or in fact as actual prisons.

33. And for a Grassy Narrows community member, part of CPT's practice of solidarity involved reciprocal teaching and learning as part of trust and relationship building:

> That was one of the good things about CPT [Christian Peacemakers Team] and why I felt so comfortable because the learning and the teaching that was happening, it wasn't just Grassy teaching them, it was also them teaching us their values as well, and what they believed in. Its not to say that control, that they were there to control, or for them to say, this is how you do it, it wasn't like that. There was a mutual understanding there. There was a mutual learning there. (GQQ: 200)

34. The dissimilar approaches to organizing highlighted a particular non-Indigenous process that excluded Grassy Narrows community members. A NGO process of fixed times (e.g., 7 a.m. the following morning) and organizing that demanded a different type of mobilization and resources (availability of cars to transport people who often don't have cars) meant that Grassy Narrows people couldn't participate as that was not how they organized themselves.

35. A "Reserve" is a relatively small parcel of land reserved exclusively for the use of an Indigenous community but that is wholly under the Indian Act's jurisdiction and ultimate control.

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