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Doings with the land and sea: decolonising geographies, Indigeneity, and enacting place-agency

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Abstract

Indigenous and decolonizing geographies should be unsettling and challenging to the ontological foundations of the geographical discipline. Yet despite many scholars recognizing and arguing for the need for these perspectives, indigeneity remains marginal and Indigenous knowledge has been denied academic legitimacy within geography. Using ‘doings’ as an active, emergent, and evolving praxis, this paper examines how we can do Indigenous and settler geographies better. It illustrates how knowledge, emotions, feelings and intuition only come into being through the doings of the body with other bodies, places, and objects, including non-humans. Action and thought is indistinguishable, feeling is knowing, and the world becomes known through doing and movement. In these doings, place – particularly the land and sea – is an active agent in the making of beings and knowledge. By focusing on active doings in place, and acknowledging the temporalities of Indigenous ontologies, geographers are better able to support political and everyday struggles, situate our work in relation to colonialism, recognise and value everyday practices of resurgence, and spend time building relationships. ‘Doing’ geography differently would decentre academics as the source of knowledge production, employ more diverse voices in our teaching and provide embodied and material resistance to colonialism and neoliberal capitalism.

Key words

Indigenous, doings, place, time, ontologies, decolonisation

Introduction

Geography is a discipline with a long, problematic relationship to colonial power. Since the 'critical turn' of the 1970s and 1980s, an increasing number of geographers have attempted to at least analyse, if not confront, these relationships, such that discussions of decolonisation and anticolonial activism are now increasingly common topics of research and debate (Noxolo, 2017a, 2017b; Esson et al., 2017; Daigle and Sunberg, 2017; Radcliffe, 2017a). Geographers have increasingly been open to the understandings of Indigenous people worldwide *and* many geographers are acutely conscious of the disciplines' own complicity in early colonial and imperialist encounters and enclosure (Jazeel, 2017). Indeed much of contemporary geography seeks to make visible not just the history of colonialism but its many on-going implications through the work of critical development studies (Briggs and Sharp, 2004), feminist geographies (Radcliffe, 1994; 2017b), geopolitical research (Mignolo, 2009; Flusty et al., 2008), and critical race studies (Kobayashi and Peake, 2000). Yet there remains a reluctance to fully embrace the decolonialism of geography (Legg, 2017), and to actively de-centre non-Indigenous/ settler/ white privilege (Noxolo, 2017b). Too often colonialism remains understood as a system perpetuated by distant others in times past, rather than an on-going process which has very particular implications for Indigenous peoples (Veracini, 2015; Mignolo, 2009). While many geographers seek to understand colonialism, few commit to supporting decolonisation, to putting their scholarly labour in the service of Indigenous communities resisting the imposition of colonial hegemonies¹ – a crucial and critical leap – despite calls to decolonise geography for over a decade (Johnson et al., 2007; Shaw et al., 2006).

In response to the reluctance cum inability of geography to come to grips with the challenge of decolonisation, we propose a different way of pursuing and producing geographical knowledge. We take up here the concept of 'doings', embodied practices that have significance beyond their material movements and impacts. Doings frame embodied actions as complex, relational (between people, but also with the more-than-human world [Wright, 2015]), and transformative of both self and space. Doings have been used to investigate the importance of a

variety of acts to understanding space and place, including: creative acts of dance, writing, painting and mixed-media artwork (Marston and de Leeuw, 2013; Hawkins, 2011; Nash, 2000); the doings of political identity formation through national musical performances (Wood N, 2012); the way that doings of domestic life overlap with the doings of gender, class and race (Widerberg, 2010); through land-based pedagogies (Johnson, 2012); how knowledge and emotions are embodied (to make meaning from embodied senses) (Askins, 2017); through photography as a participatory and sensuous act (Kind, 2013); and the non-human affordances that enable people to self-build homes (Vannini and Taggart, 2014). We seek to extend this framework of doings in several ways. We assert that a focus on complex, relational, and transformative ways of knowing and being is exactly what is required for geographical practice to effectively engage with the demands of decolonisation. As such, geographers need to reconsider the way that we are 'doing' geography to account for the 'doings' of active, relational and embodied practices. We draw here on a framework rooted in Indigenous knowledge and Indigenous geographies, which centralise relationality in epistemological processes (Wilson, 2015; Ermine 1995), and embodied, phenomenological, and affective approaches to knowledge production (Coombes et al., 2014; Larsen and Johnson, 2012). To be clear, we are not arguing that Indigenous knowledge is 'doing' while Western knowledge is 'thinking' – rather, all knowledge is produced by doing, and we believe that geographers need to more closely examine what our doings are actually creating in terms of relationships to the human and more-than-human world, internal identities, and attachments to powerful political assemblages (see for example: Hunt and Holmes, 2015; Noxolo et al 2011; Watson and Huntington, 2008; Williams and Pierce, 2016).

We assert this framework in the urgent context of ongoing colonial, settler colonial, and capitalist violence and oppression, and the need for settler and non-Indigenous communities to better support Indigenous people and communities in active resistance (Battell Lowman and Barker, 2015; Coulthard, 2014; Mott, 2016; Robertson, 2014; 2015; Simpson, 2017; Sium et al, 2012; Veracini, 2015). We argue that decolonising the discipline of geography requires an

ethical commitment to doing research that actively and explicitly works to deconstruct structures and systems of oppression, which in turn requires an active ‘doing’ of different ways of being in our professional and personal lives. This is about more than employing appropriate methodologies and following university ethical procedures. It is about how we do and practice geography *per se*, and how the academy contributes to ethical and social change. We are at a frustrating but potentially crucial point in the discipline where there is established recognition of the importance of Indigenous ontologies, there are an increasing number (if still far too few) of Indigenous scholars within the discipline (Noxolo, 2017b), and yet we are a very long way away from decolonising geography. What is lacking, we argue, is a clear attempt to connect ‘doings’ of geographers – our embodied, material research practices – to political and ethical imperatives identified by postcolonial and Indigenous geographers with respect to Indigenous peoples and their lands² and territories. Decolonising geographical practice requires attending to what and how we write (the co-production narrative), but more than this, demands a commitment to *doing geography differently*.

As non-Indigenous and settler academics we are acutely conscious of our problematic positionality as yet more white outsiders talking about Indigeneity. Author 1 identifies as a white Settler Canadian (cis male, with class privilege) from the overlapping territories of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe people, in what is currently called Ontario, Canada. The preoccupation of his research and activism for over fifteen years has been to understand his own complicity in settler colonisation as part of a personal and social process of decolonisation (Author 1, forthcoming; 2009). Author 2 identifies as white English and has lived and worked in Australia intermittently for almost two decades. Her work exploring Indigenous-environmentalist relations in Australia (Western Australia, Victoria and Queensland) has afforded her the opportunity to engage with a variety of Indigenous activists and Indigenous Country, the influence of which we return to below (Author 2, forthcoming; 2009). Both authors, however, are currently based at universities in England and are interested in how we can decolonise geography in places seemingly far from the frontiers of settler colonialism while

explicitly supporting Indigenous geographers and geographies. We feel this is especially important given that England was central to the production of settler-colonialism in Australia and Canada, and continues to benefit from its colonial legacies of violence and expropriation.

Like Radcliffe, we are interested in “the socio-spatial processes and practices whereby Indigenous people and places are determined as distinct (ontologically, epistemologically, culturally, in sovereignty, etc.) to dominant universals” (Radcliffe, 2015: 2) which is best encapsulated as ‘indigeneity’ (while acknowledging that there are important political struggles in how Indigeneity is defined: Radcliffe, 2018; Maddison, 2013). As geographers, we find it impossible to ignore that the various crises that have come to define our times – ecological, financial, militarized – have proliferated along with the devaluation of Indigenous political economies and cultural ecologies, as well as languages, educational systems, spiritual practices and so on. Our work is conducted in an attempt to ethically, critically interrogate our own embodied roles in the production of power and knowledge in the context of pervasive colonialism. The knowledge we produce is partial, situated and delimited, and we write this as a process to think through how to decolonise our work. We are also concerned about the continued ‘whiteness’ of the discipline (Price, 2010; Nash, 2003; McGuinness, 2000) and the urgent need to more assertively centre (and compensate) the work of Indigenous geographers. Keen not to speak on behalf of Indigenous people, our research has deliberately (and differently) sought to engage with understanding settler-Indigenous relationships in attempting to unsettle colonial presumptions and make visible the on-going colonialism of, for example, environmental activists (Author 2, 2009) and radical anticapitalists (Author 1, 2012).

In doing this we must navigate a careful balance between advocating for Indigenous perspectives, and the dangers of appropriation, co-option and further colonisation of Indigenous knowledge (Haig-Brown, 2010; Todd, 2014a; Thomas, 2015; Briggs and Sharp, 2004). Central to this is a need to engage with Indigenous knowledge on a conceptual and ontological level, not simply as a technical or artefactual addition to dominant perspectives. It is

this tension - how to nurture decolonising approaches while objecting to appropriation - that this paper explores. It does this with three further assertions. First, it is not possible to decolonise geography *per se* because we exist in a colonising context, but we can *become decolonising* and focus on how we nourish, create, and mobilise decolonising processes (Bawaka Country et al., 2016a; 2016b; Jazeel, 2017; Shaw, 2006). Second, non-Indigenous academics have a role in centring Indigenous ontologies in geography because Indigenous peoples should not carry the burden of decolonisation by themselves (Miheisah and Cavender Wilson, 2004). As Daigle and Sunberg argue “the discipline of geography will retain its Eurocentricity, coloniality and whiteness unless all geographers begin to do the anti-racist and decolonial work historically done by Indigenous, people of colour, women and queer faculty and students” (2017: 251). However, the ethics and efficacy of these attempts should not be taken for granted, as we discuss. Third, this process of decolonising will likely be uncomfortable, challenging and emotional for non-Indigenous academics because it is an ontological struggle of epic proportions which seeks to fundamentally shift how the world is known, who we are, what the world is and what we do. This shift starts, we argue, with a reconceptualization of place and place-agency. Indigenous concepts of place and the politics of place need to be valued and shared by geographers, but this knowledge also needs to be used to reshape how we ‘do’ geography in more profound ways.

Limited geographies

Calling for a turn to Indigenous knowledges and methodologies is not uncomplicated. Geographers have long embraced postcolonial perspectives (Jacobs, 1996; Gelder and Jacobs, 1998; Sidaway, 2000; Gregory, 2001; Nustad, 2001; Noxolo, 2017b; Willems-Braun, 1997) and feminist approaches (Katz, 1994; Radcliffe, 1994; Mohanty, 1984; McDowell, 1992) to interrogate how knowledge is constructed and how research practices need to be improved. Part of this early debate was a recognition that a core role of geographers was to acknowledge local specificity *and* the important structures and systematic processes (notably colonialism and

capitalism) which link them together (Jones, 2000; Katz, 1994; Mohan and Stokke, 2000; Goss, 1996) and hence the recent interest in 'planetary indigeneity' which engages with the complexities of Indigenous scales and capitalist relations (Sidaway et al., 2014). Doing geography differently (informed by postcolonial and feminist perspectives) was not about simply not speaking of 'others' (which Radcliffe argued would be an "abdication of responsibility" [1994: 28]) but ensuring that work in and from 'other' places is positioned to counter Eurocentric biases (Duncan and Sharp, 1993; Sidaway, 1992) and in acknowledging the unequal and complex power dynamics at play (Mohanty, 1984). Geographers, therefore "inhabit a difficult and inherently unstable *space of betweenness*" (Katz, 1994: 67, italics in original) as they seek to find connections and common ground across difference (Radcliffe, 1994).

Geography still produces 'emotionally toxic material spaces' (Mahtani, 2014) for non-white geographers and commonly excludes black and minority ethnic geographers (Desai, 2017).³ In response, geographers have experimented with participatory approaches that go beyond mere inclusion of research participants in research design, instead seeking to radically reconfigure the purpose and approach of geography, calling for collective action against social injustices (Mrs Kinpaisby, 2008; Wynne-Jones et al., 2015; Russell, 2015; Autonomous Geographies Collective, 2010). Yet as Coombes et al., argue too much of this work risks "reinscrib[ing] placed-based ethnographies" (2014: 847) confining them to the 'local' (Brewer, 2013). What remains missing from much of this work is a consideration of structural racialisation (Akom, 2011), often derived from processes of colonisation, and the assertion that Indigenous research should be Indigenous-led and its methodologies should enable new relational ethics.

Relationality is key to working with Indigenous peoples and knowledges. Indigenous research requires *collaboration* with research participants, working *with* others through partnerships where benefits are outlined and agreed, and research is done for the benefit of Indigenous communities. Research is ideally a process of interaction, not extraction, a commitment to a place and people that is always *being done* and never taken for granted or viewed from a

position of academic hierarchy and superiority (Coombes et al., 2014). In reality, this process is complex and difficult and despite many examples of good practice, damaging research and inappropriate methodologies still persist. Even well intentioned and knowledgeable academics can fall into traps of applying 'western' theory onto Indigenous ontologies, or fail to adequately include Indigenous voices and fail to value (or give credit for) Indigenous knowledge (Todd, 2014b; Hunt, 2014). Author 1, for example, has repeatedly failed to act effectively – as an academic with social capital, as an engaged activist, and even just as a friend and community support – in relation to Indigenous people and movements, leading to the argument (adapted from Halberstam) that acknowledging decolonial politics of failure is a necessary approach for would-be decolonising settler people (Author 1, 2013: 331-346; Author 1 and co-author, 2016).

Radcliffe's recent progress report has called for a "critical geography of indigeneity, a reorientation of Indigenous geographies towards thinking through how indigeneity is made as such" (2017b: 9). This is a call to move away from describing and defending Indigenous geographies as such, a practice that risks exoticizing and essentialising Indigenous place-relationships, towards understanding how Indigenous space is 'done'. That is, Radcliffe's interests are what sort of things Indigenous people do *in* and *with* the world that produces indigeneity and Indigenous spaces. This parallels Haiven and Khasnabish's (2014) call for social movement researchers to move away from describing or advocating for social movements, to interacting with and creating time and space for action. This is significant given our stated interest in bringing geographical practice in closer alignment with an ethic of decolonisation as well as indigeneity: the doing in and with the world that Indigenous peoples undertake is in constant opposition to conditions of displacement, dispossession, and elimination (Radcliffe, 2018; Simpson, 2017; Coulthard, 2014; Tuck and Yang, 2012; Wolfe, 2006)⁴.

There are also limitations in the ways in which academics can seek to theorise Indigenous geographies. Vanessa Watts (2013) critiques a common spatial tool of critical geographers – actor network theory – for failing to meet the complexity of interconnection and 'agency' of land,

sea and place represented by Indigenous spatial knowledge⁵. There are risks in using theories such as more-than-representational approaches that can appear apolitical, ignoring the ongoing context of colonialism (Todd, 2016; 2014b). There is also a problem, as Howitt (2002) argues, in seeking to abstract specific knowledges into universalised understandings of place (among other concepts) that then overwrite the specificity of Indigenous places. Indigenous geographical knowledge should not be equivocated – while Indigenous and other spatial knowledge may be ‘versions’ of similar ‘stories’ about place, there is a need to foreground difference and specificity of Indigenous place-thought. Academics can struggle with these research and knowledge processes, and there is complexity in ensuring research benefits Indigenous communities while also meeting academic requirements.

Despite some engagement with Indigenous geographical ideas in the discipline of geography, it cannot yet claim to be a ‘safe space’ for Indigenous geographers. University structures have a long history of intellectual complicity with colonial conquest, dispossession and genocide (Miheshua and Wilson, 2005; Smith, 1999), and geography has a central role in these processes. As Sarah Hunt’s brilliant article demonstrates through her reflection on attending the Association of American Geographers annual conference and finding it hostile to Kwakwaka’wakw ways of knowing and communicating:

Indigenous knowledge is rarely seen as legitimate on its own terms, but must be negotiated in relation to pre-established modes of inquiry. The heterogeneity of Indigenous voices and worldviews can easily become lost in efforts to understand Indigeneity in ways that fix Indigenous knowledge, suppressing its dynamic nature. (2014: 3)

Working with Indigenous communities demands a double-consciousness of academics: while the exigencies of academic funding requirements and limitations of employment duties must be attended to, they must never distract from the ethics of community engagement across the ‘colonial difference’ (Mignolo, 2009).

Despite significant work in the last few decades in reconfiguring geographical knowledge and in altering how we *do* geography, there remains a reluctance to de-centre “white and otherwise privileged groups in the global architecture of knowledge production” (Esson et al., 2017: 384). This, for Jazeel (2017), is a crucial difference between postcolonial theory and decolonial scholarship. A decolonial and Indigenous-centred framing requires radical conceptual shifts in the discipline, being led by the work of black and Indigenous scholars (Noxolo, 2017b; Johnson et al., 2007), and crucially, an unsettling of existing structures, institutions and praxis to facilitate Indigenous self-expression (Esson et al., 2017). As Jazeel reminds us “geography has a way to go before it can claim to have transcended its imperial histories” (2017: 334). One way of contributing to this process is through doings with the agency of place.

Ways of doing

‘Doings’ as a concept requires us to remember that research and scholarship are more than ways of referring to intellectual exercises: they are forms of embodied labour that, through the magnifying power of academic institutions, can have immense impacts on the lived realities of many peoples. As such, if we are to take a critical perspective on geographical practice, we need frameworks that centralize the role of activity and dynamism in place-making and the production of social space. Many methodologies employed by geographers, such as actor-network theory and nexus thinking, assume action, but here we examine two very different frameworks that allow us to focus on ‘doings’ as a way to decolonize the academy: Indigenous ways of doing and more-than-representational theory. Although theoretically they might appear to overlap, and more-than-representation theory has been used to describe the relational ontologies of Indigenous ways of doing (Robertson, 2016; Ingold, 2000; Thomas, 2015), we seek to avoid amalgamating these approaches. Rather, we wish to hold these influences apart out of respect for the uniqueness of Indigenous worldviews, to avoid rearticulating Indigenous knowledge through a prism of ‘western science’ and to hear Indigenous voices first⁶ (West, 2000; Rigney, 2006). We draw from each inspiration to argue why it is necessary and

productive to examine how we *do* geography, and thus how we could be doing geography differently.

Indigenous cosmologies obviously vary enormously between places and nations. Yet there is communality in ways of knowing, being and doing, even if there is great heterogeneity in what is known, by whom and how that knowledge is shown (Rigney, 1999). That commonality is expressed in many ways, but among them is the importance of interaction and relationship with the wider world as a key element of knowledge production. Martin and Mirraboopa (2003) argue that, in Australia, Indigenous knowledge needs to be understood through an Indigenist theoretical framework that differentiates between the Ways of Knowing, Ways of Being and Ways of Doing. Central to all three is an acknowledgement of the Entities that constitute the world, and of “nature as sentient, as something that can see, hear, walk and escape” (Carolan, 2009: 8). For the Quandamooka people that Martin and Mirraboopa belong to, “we believe that Country is not only the Land and People, but it is also the Entities of Waterways, Animals, Plants, Climate, Skies and Spirits ... People are no more or less important than the other Entities” (Martin and Mirraboopa 2003: 207, capitals in original). This interdependence (and relational ontology) of humans and non-humans is then taught, shared and roles assigned as Ways of Knowing. The reciprocal relationships between these Entities are expressed through Ways of Being. Finally, the knowing and being are synthesized, articulated and enacted through Ways of Doing, so that “we become tangible proof of our ontology ... we are able to show (Do), respectfully and rightfully (Being) what we know (Knowing)” (Martin and Mirraboopa 2003: 210). These doings “are seen in our language, art, imagery, technology, traditions and ceremonies, land management practices, social organization and social control” (Martin and Mirraboopa 2003: 210). Mindful of the great variety of Indigenous knowledges and cosmologies, it is important to also draw connections, and here the Haudenosaunee nations of the Great Lakes region of Turtle Island demonstrate these principles in action. Haudenosaunee beliefs, while far too complex and rich to even summarize here, are predicated on the fundamental relationship between humans and the rest of creation through the story of Sky Woman, a

relationship that requires humans to express their thankfulness and respect in an active way that maintains balance or 'peace'. To that effect, the Haudenosaunee have as a central social process the Thanksgiving Address, in which all of the elements of creation, from the food plants, medicine plants, and trees, to birds, mammals, and fish which serve as clan symbols, to the spirits, the Thunderers, and the ancestors, are acknowledged publicly for their role in creation. This Address is meant to be said every time three or more people meet to discuss important issues, a 'doing' intended to bring their minds into alignment, both with each other and with all of creation, a state known as 'the Good Mind' (Hill, 2017: 15-16; see also: Watts, 2013).

It is the act of doing that enables the emergence of the knowing and the being. This doing is a form of engagement, a sensory embodied experience (or sensual positioning [Carolan, 2009]), through which the world can become known. Kombumerri and Munaljahlai scholar C F Black describes, "it is only by walking and singing the land that it is possible to truly know a law and in turn the people who emanate from that land" (2011: 19). As Bawaka Country *et al.* (2015) argue, this "embodied engagement fosters knowing – specifically, a form of knowing that is based on a recognition (perhaps conceptual, perhaps sensory) of more-than-human agency" (9). Such knowledge is co-constituted by the human doing and the agency of the place or non-human entity, a process that Bawaka Country *et al.* conceptualise as 'co-becoming.' In Bawaka Country, this co-becoming is described through the practice of digging for yams together and which underscores the need to do things together on the land and sea as part of knowledge production in Indigenous contexts. As Robertson (2016: 4) argues "Indigenous knowledge also arrives through action from within the world ... epistemology is a practical doing in and with the environment. Epistemology and ontology therefore involve all manner of participations with (non)humans, as well as 'feelings *in*' (emotions) and the 'feel *of*' place (affect and intuition)". Action and thought are thus indistinguishable, feeling is knowing, and the world becomes known through doing and movement. Indigenous knowledge is "'verb-based' ... [and] conceived as something that you *do*" in "relationships with the land" (McGregor, 2004: 78). It is this acting

with non-human entities that distinguishes indigeneity and Indigenous knowledge-making from non-Indigenous theory (Hall, 2014). These doings are vital for the health of a variety of human and more-than-human ecologies, in “the important knowledge that these doing bodies possess. And all point to the types of knowledge that would be lost if these doings fail to endure” (Carolan, 2009: 10). This has consequences for all research in that we need methods that facilitate interacting and knowing other entities.

From here, we turn to a second framework to make sense of geographical ‘doings’: more-than-representational theory. Ingold (2000) has long called for a more active engagement with our environmental surroundings. His work examines the need to *inhabit* place in order to know it, and that this requires acknowledging our co-constitution with non-humans, animate and inanimate. Ingold uses an example of the Pintupi of the Gibson Desert of Western Australia to argue that landscape “is not an external background or platform for life” rather “the movement of social life is itself a movement *in* (not *on*) a landscape” (Ingold, 2000: 54, italics in original). These relations and knowledge are generated through doings, so that “knowledge is gained by moving about in it, exploring it, attending to it, ever alert to the signs by which it is revealed” (Ingold, 2000: 55). Engagement with the world can produce more skill in perceiving the world, and with such attunement the “boundaries between person and place, or between self and the landscape, dissolve altogether” (Ingold, 2000: 56). There is an indissolubility between people and place that is enacted by doings.

Common to the different interventions that position doings as a way to understand world-making is an understanding of ‘doings’ as social “practices *at the moment of their doing*” (Wood, 2012: 201, italics in original). This requires examining embodied, emotional processes and entanglements in particular spaces and times. As Carolan argues, “it is time to nurture alternative ways to know, recognise and understand nature. And where better to begin than with the body” (2009: 15). It also necessitates valuing and acknowledging the roles, affordances, emergence and collaborations of animate and inanimate non-humans. The temporalities of

doings are just as important as their spatialities. Doings are practices and processes that continuously renew, are ongoing, moving, evolving new relations and generating new forms of the world (Vannini and Taggart, 2014). Doings are subtly different to makings, which tend to explore the creation of new materialities and objects as outcomes of skills and craft (Carr and Gibson, 2016). Instead doings are broader and encompass vastly different contexts such as how landscapes are made, and how we operate within the academy and what we hope our work achieves (or does). This focus on embodied practices is explicitly drawn from Indigenous scholarship, including work by Hunt (2014), Hunt and Holmes (2015), Johnson (2012), Cornthassel and Bryce (2012), Smith (1999) and Todd (2014a), who have all articulated the vital interconnectivity of embodied politics and Indigenous resurgence. Regardless of the different origins and ownerships of these approaches, they both call for us to attend to what we do in the world, the politics of our doings, the emotional, embodied practices of doings, the temporalities of acts and, crucially, to the inability for us to ever know all about the world. In answer to Berry's question: 'how does one act well – sensitively, compassionately, without irreparable damage – on the basis of partial knowledge?' (2000: 149), we answer: by understanding our doings with the land and sea.

Place, place-agency and placing-time

The importance of place⁷, as a concept, has been well established, debated, critiqued, and developed in a myriad of nuanced ways (see for example: Cresswell, 2014). Nevertheless, place, and the agency and personality of place, should be engaged with on the terms advocated by Indigenous geographers and scholars. Indigenous scholars (geographers and otherwise) and knowledge keepers have frequently asserted that place, in an Indigenous context, is very different than the concept developed in academic geography discourses. Place in Indigenous contexts is not an object of study but an ever-present member of a wider, more-than-human community, with wants and needs of its own and dynamic and unknowable aspects beyond human comprehension. As Cree geographer Michelle Daigle argues in her examination of the

importance of place and homeland to the Achikamaw community, the discipline of geography “requires more dialogue on the ontological underpinnings of place, geographies of responsibility, and land as an animate being imbued with political agency” because, for Indigenous communities, “place has meaning precisely because of the agency that lives within our ancestral lands, including animal and plant nations” (2016: 268). Place is not just important; place is powerful. Place is a conscious being and calls for humans to act in certain ways, it speaks, creates and teaches (Johnson et al., 2016). Place is often articulated as having agency in stories of the ancestors, the spirits and Indigenous cosmologies which act as guardians and custodians of relations to the land and sea – the life force of powerful non-humans is evoked in place. This is why acting differently in and with place is central to the imperatives of decolonisation. As Battell Lowman and Barker have argued, settler colonialism is “always all about the land” (2015, 48-68), materialised in processes that transform landscapes to benefit colonisers while erasing Indigenous peoples and histories. Doings on the land that centre the agency of place decentre the assumed superiority of ‘civilised’ (read: racist colonial) societies, and fracture the seeming ‘inevitability’ of colonial conquest (Strakosch and Macoun, 2012).

Indigenous ontologies require us to heed the call of place and to understand the different ways of being in place. Place is dynamic, emergent, and, amidst many forces in cooperation and contention, place works on people and determines something of human actions and social conditions – and it is this agency that place exerts with respect to people that many geographers and mainstream scholars more widely have failed to grasp (Watts, 2013). In Indigenous place based practices, “more-than-humans and humans co-become as place/space, in deep relation to all the diverse co-becomings that also constitute it. Space/place is its doings, its beings, its knowings, its co-becomings” (Bawaka Country et al., 2015). Bawaka Country *et al.* go on to describe the dynamism of place in relation to mobility and embodiment:

[P]lace/space may be understood as more than living with(in) the physical landscape, it has a certain mobility; it is embodied and thus

travels with the academic researchers as they return home (through their kinship relations and thus enduring emplacement within the Yolngu landscape) and it reaches out to incorporate distant stars and space. (2015: 11)

An intensely localised co-becoming links the learner/doer into vast networks across place and space, and also time. Given these connections across space-time, a call for 'localised' engagements with Indigenous place knowledge should not be confused with a call for 'limited' engagements. Rather, engagements with place-agency and placing-time in Indigenous knowledge open up new possibilities for geographical theory and practice.

As in Watts' critique of ANT, mentioned above, systems of Indigenous thought often have very different ways of describing, perceiving, and analysing the power of place from those taken for granted in the academy. Geographers should grapple with the complexities of concepts like the 'personality' of place described by Vine Deloria and Daniel Wildcat (2001). As they describe, the specific features of a place, including the landscape and topography, plants and animal life (including humans), and spirits and ancestors, are imbued with and connected through a fundamental 'power' – the animating force of the world – that together give rise to a personality, a distinct identity of place that can be related to and known. While humans are radically decentered in this construction of place, they are not absent or lacking importance. Rather, consider the articulation of place in Blackfoot cosmology, as related by scholar and elder Leroy Little Bear (2004). He describes the metaphysics of the Blackfoot universe through reference to energy waves that interact to create complex patterns, which in turn are what humans perceive as the physical universe. All life and action contributes to the wave patterns, like a shower of pebbles dropped in a pond. There are certain actions – what Little Bear describes as 'rituals of renewal' – which must be repeated in particular places in order to ensure that the patterns that form the world will reoccur. Place thus shapes human action and is shaped by it in a dynamic,

relational way that underpins Indigenous knowledge and practices, and the gap between this approach to place and that of much of geographical scholarship should be taken seriously.

Drawing from the living and dynamic framework of Deloria and Wildcat, and Little Bear, among others,⁸ it is easy to understand why 'doings' are so important: without interactive and sustained relationships with place, it is not possible to 'know' or understand the world. Knowledge generation is dependent on journeys of ontological discovery⁹ to further understand a living, dynamic, changing environment – a task made even more urgent now that human activity has created disruptions and rapid shifts in many environments (Swamp, 2010: 20; Wildcat, 2005).

Returning to Bawaka Country (2015), they focus on the act of doing in place together – through the example of digging *ganguri* (yams) – as a way of forming relationships with each other and with the mutually-produced place that results from these doings: their 'co-becoming.' The authors, among whom are both non-Indigenous and Indigenous Australians, attempted as much as possible to let the Country 'speak' for itself, including listing the land, Bawaka Country, as the lead author of the piece. This attempt calls for an embodied phenomenological engagement with place that centres Indigeneity in deeply ethical ways. This trend includes pieces such as Larsen and Johnson's (2012) exhortation towards phenomenological methods that clearly draws from experiential, situated epistemologies. By arguing that "cognition, existence, and, indeed, all things present first depend on place as the situated but universal happening, or disclosure, required for the world – natural and human – to appear" (641), their engagement indicates that it is, in fact, possible to approach something like Indigenous ideas of land and place through relational, embodied engagements with place as a crucial foundation of knowledge production. Similarly, but specifically rooted in Indigenous perspectives, Tuck and Mackenzie argue that 'critical place inquiry' needs to be a core methodological practice across the social sciences:

[Critical] place inquiry puts Indigenous theories, methodologies, and methods at the center, not on the periphery. It does this not by simply

pasting on Indigenous work, as is often done in liberal multicultural discourse. Instead, it engages Indigenous work on its own terms, in adherence to its own commitments and conditions. A task of critical place inquiry is to organize itself around commitments to Indigenous social and political theory—including Indigenous sovereignty, refusal, and the non-abstraction of land—not as peripheral points or extra considerations, but as foundational to its praxis. (2015: 4)

This grounding of praxis in Indigenous understandings of the centrality of land, sea and place is an inspirational but also daunting challenge.

We also need to attend to the more-than-human agencies of time, and the temporailities of Indigenous ontologies. Nowhere might this be more evident than for Bawaka Country, which co-becomes with ancestral spirits, stories and knowledge developed over countless generations (of people, of ants, of wind), linking the doer with all previous doers and all those who will come, human and non-human. It is impossible to talk of Bawaka Country and the relationships therein without recognizing time as a dynamic yet constant and familiar companion. In Bawaka Country (2015), messages are generated through material shifts in Country, which both mark time's passage and reproduce times past and future through the evocation of knowledges and practices. Here, time is multiple and non-linear, has its own agency (time tells itself through its materialisation), is nourished and is sustained. Therefore time is communicative, active, relational and agential. All times are always with us and contain all times. However, these Indigenous temporalities are tied up with Indigenous cosmologies and metaphysics, which has often led geographers and other academics to dismiss their relevance.

We have engaged here with Indigenous place-based ontologies in order to underscore the richness of this tradition and to challenge non-Indigenous geographers to take these systems of knowledge seriously. Many geographers and scholars are already doing so. Larsen and Johnson (2012) discuss how Indigenous knowledge allows for the recognition and co-existence of

different world-views (pluriverses) and Noxolo argues “decolonialisation is a process of building towards the pluriversality of knowledge” (2017b: 318). The ‘Decolonizing Cascadia’ conference (2013) was organized around the principle of taking Indigenous place-relationships seriously, including the imperative to critically deconstruct the claims of the settler Canadian state to control and define the territory of ‘British Columbia’. As the organising committee relate in their article reviewing the conference, they faced a number of challenges in defining ‘decolonization’ and in convincing colleagues that such a descriptor would not foreclose the possibility of open and dynamic learning and sharing of knowledge. However, rooting the conference in the disputed territories of the Pacific Northwest and inviting conference participants to become part of a discourse about and in that place, the end result was a larger, more vibrant and challenging conference than previous iterations (Conference organizing committee, ‘Decolonizing Cascadia?’, 2014: 509-603). An emerging group of Indigenous geographers is also making a concerted effort to assert Indigenous knowledge through geographical practice with some truly excellent results (see for example: Langton, 1998; 2003; 2011; Langton et al., 2005; Johnson, 2012, Coombes et al., 2012; 2013; 2014; Bawaka Country et al., 2015; 2016a; 2016b; Daigle, 2016; Hunt, 2016; 2014). But the discipline as a whole still requires a shift in how our theory and practice connect, especially when our theoretical analyses have strong political implications.

In practice, doings with the land and sea has meant different things for us. Author 2 has had the privilege of being invited onto Indigenous Australian Country to hear creation stories, learn to harvest bush foods, fish, make paint, and sit and discuss politics. These experiences have resulted from requests for interviews about contentious environmental campaigns in particular places and Indigenous desire to show why their Country matters in ways settler environmentalists often appear to be ignoring. In Author 2’s engagements with Goolarabooloo and Jabirr Jabirr activists on Dampier Peninsula (Kimberley, Western Australia), she was often unable to understand Indigenous spatial instructions. Despite being provided with ‘mud maps’ and verbal directions she invariably got lost, to the astonishment and amusement of her hosts.

The Indigenous activists had to teach her to re-read the land, notice the different details and look beyond vehicle tracks. These experiences also taught Author 2 that the scales at which she had initially conceived her research projects - to encompass whole regions (like the Kimberley or Cape York) - were deeply inappropriate given the heterogeneity of Indigenous relations to place, diverse responsibilities to Country, and variety of language groups. It has been in these embodied acts of being taught how life is lived on Country that land and sea have been reconceived for Author 2 as living entities, in ways normally invisible through the white lens of non-Indigenous knowledge. All these encounters have, however, been temporary, partial and fragmented over different places and times. It is the inadequacy of these engagements with land and sea that motivates this paper.

For Author 1, a focus on doings has been a key part of moving past the seductive but simplistic “Manichean binaries” of ‘settler’ and ‘indigenous’ as categories that represent more the colonial perception of subjectivities than the lived realities of any people on the land (Byrd, 2011: xxix). As a person born and raised in the overlapping territories of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and Anishinaabe nations, and taught and mentored in higher education by Haudenosaunee scholars like Dawn Martin Hill and Rick Monture (McMaster University), it was perhaps inevitable that it would be the practice of a land-based Haudenosaunee ceremony that began his process of unpacking the grand narratives of political theory on which his early scholarship relied in favour of a more active and relational approach. Writing with his partner, fellow Settler Canadian [scholar], Author 1 has described how participation in a ceremonial entry to Haudenosaunee territory generated a powerful affective moment of learning on, with, and from the land alongside Indigenous and settler people of several nations (Author 1 and co-author, 2016). This ceremony, in which those who approach a Haudenosaunee village alert the residents by lighting a smoke signal at the edge of a large clearing, is drawn from traditional forms of Haudenosaunee settlement: a palisaded village surrounded by a cleared area in what is an otherwise densely wooded environment. This village construction is itself a reflection of Haudenosaunee relationships to land – as farming peoples, as peoples organised into clans

represented by members of the non-human animal community (deer, snipe, wolf and others), as communities that changed village sites in rhythm with the need to replenish the earth and the woods – and the ceremonial entrance inscribed in the participants the need to work cooperatively and collaboratively with each other and with all the elements of creation.¹⁰ The ceremonial entrance is designed explicitly to ensure that all those who come together do so with a ‘good mind,’ a key principle of Haudenosaunee thought that speaks to the need for harmony among difference, both between people and between human society and the much larger more-than-human society in which humans are only a part. Participating in the ceremony did not make him and his partner ‘Indigenous’ by any means – rather, it demonstrated that being non-Indigenous was no barrier to engaging with Haudenosaunee people and places. It did, however, make explicit to all participants that they must be clear among themselves and with their hosts how they fit into the larger web of relationships being referenced, a fundamental challenge for Settler scholars whose thinking had largely been abstracted through theory and disembodied, displaced academic processes. For Author 1, the most challenging part of engaging in the ceremony was not the enactment of an Indigenous ceremony in settler colonial occupied lands, but the internal struggle to understand his own place on that land in relation to that community as both a settler coloniser and an individual who wished to be otherwise.

Decolonising geography

Geographers need *do more* than recognize and celebrate place alone, or indeed to acknowledge relational ontologies with non-humans. There is a risk that such discussions of place, particularly when using more-than-representational approaches, are apolitical (Blaser, 2014; Thomas, 2015). In seeking to understand an Indigenous ontology of place through an academic lens it is possible to ignore broader contextual struggles or overlook how academic knowledge is produced and reified. While there is, of course, a question about whether it is always productive to locate Indigenous ontologies within a colonial dialectic with settler colonialism

and imperialism, we argue that geographers' work should remain assertively political precisely because of this context.

There is not a single way to engage with Indigenous knowledge. Yet while we have already recognized the plurality of Indigenous thought and theory, we must also raise the persistent tendency in the academy to 'cherry pick' from Indigenous thought "without engaging directly in (or unambiguously acknowledging) the political situation, agency and relationality of both Indigenous people and scholars" (Todd, 2014a: no page). It is precisely the links between politics and relationality that concern this paper: the politics of relating to place in a context of colonial struggle must matter for how geographers do our practice. This approach seeks to understand how knowledge, emotions, feelings and intuition only come into being through the doings of the body with other bodies, places, and objects, including non-humans. It is all too easy to align our work with anti-racism or environmental NGOs and be falsely confident of ethical practice without ever actually understanding the material reality of lives in struggle against colonialism (Lee, 2011).

Sundberg relates one attempt to take Indigenous imperatives around movement and anticolonialism in research seriously. She explores the possibilities opened up by the Zapatistas' use of terms and concepts related to walking. An active 'doing,' walking implies "taking steps – moving, engaging, reflecting – to enact decolonizing practices, understanding that decolonization is something to be aspired to and enacted rather than a state of being that may be claimed" (2014: 40). Walking, in the sense it is deployed by the Zapatistas does imply physical movement, but also more than that: it implies the ways that knowing and action are inseparable, and that the action must have a destination – decolonization, the destination that may never be reached but has a definite direction and location. While our embodied actions on the land are also part of decolonising scholarship, we must struggle to continue to walk with Indigenous communities even from a distance. We must 'do' this kind of walking in how we talk, the language we write in, how we teach (and where), and how we write about place. This

includes citational justice (Ahmed, 2006; Mott and Cockayne, 2017): if we write and teach about Indigenous peoples and their cultures, societies, or politics, we need to ensure we are referencing and putting in front of our students the voices and works of Indigenous authors, intellectuals, artists, activists, elders, and historical figures.

Engaging with Indigenous geographies requires understanding that they are always geographies produced through and in struggle. As Hunt and Holmes argue, “Indigenous peoples’ resistance to colonialism has unfolded in daily acts of embodying and living Indigeneity ... While large-scale actions ... are frequently acknowledged as sites of resistance, the daily actions undertaken by individual Indigenous people, families, and communities often go unacknowledged but are no less vital” (2015: 157-158). Thus Indigenous spaces, including domestic spaces, are intimately linked to processes of resistance. These resistances have their own traditions and tactics that geographers must be aware of and should seek to support and ‘do’ with. Many of these involve acts of spatial (and temporal) ‘transgression’ as Indigenous bodies disrupt the assumptions of settler colonial societies that see them as inevitably ‘over there’ or ‘in the past’ (Bruyneel, 2007). Geographers working on borders, migration, and technology should all see immediate space to engage with these Indigenized assertions of sovereignty.

Decolonisation must be considered alongside articulations of active, dynamic Indigenous resurgence, two aspects of the same line of critical argumentation that has emerged especially from within the field of Indigenous studies (Coulthard, 2014; Daigle, 2016; 2015; Foley, 2000; Foley et al., 2013; Langton, 2011; Simpson, 2011; 2017; Tuck and Yang, 2012). Decolonisation demands no less than the dismantling of imperial, settler colonial, and capitalist systems of domination and the restoration of Indigenous nationhood. Indigenous resurgence refers to the specific strategies and tactics by which Indigenous peoples pursue both immediate and long term goals of ‘being Indigenous’ (Alfred and Corntassel, 2005) – the ‘vital’ activity of daily practices and also the larger political projects that Hunt and Holmes (2015) describe. As Leanne

Simpson (2011) argues, there is no one correct way to struggle for resurgence. It is a collective project that must be pursued individually, experienced differently by everyone who engages with the process. It is an open-ended and transformative discourse, rather than an end-goal. The two are related: while it would be incorrect to say that decolonisation is the goal of Indigenous resurgence, decolonization remains a necessary outcome of resurgent Indigeneity. Non-Indigenous scholars who engage with Indigenous geographies should work to support resurgent Indigeneity through active, embodied participation in locally-situated, Indigenous-directed 'co-becoming' through struggle. Geographers must 'spend time in place' with Indigenous communities in order to understand how their work can support local decolonization and resurgence (similar to our discussion of social movement activists: Author 1 and 2, 2012).

However, remembering that 'doings' must be specific to individual Indigenous nations and communities, these engagements must be pursued with the clear understanding that they will not always unfold how non-Indigenous geographers expect. What a geographer can offer through doing may not be what a community needs, and the limitations of funding bodies and university codes may limit the ability of a geographer to respond to the complex requirements of would-be partners. Moreover, any Indigenous community may at any time decide they do not wish to work with a particular scholar – or any scholar – and this refusal of co-becoming is an absolutely vital aspect of resurgent Indigenous nationhood (Simpson, 2016; 2007). Lest this paper be seen to speak from a reified position of flawless critique, we would note here that the authors themselves have repeatedly failed to uphold this principle in their work. In 2016, Author 1 became aware of the opportunity to obtain research funding; thinking this could create an opportunity for relational doings, he reached out to his network of friends and professional contacts proposing a research partnership on an issue of known importance: the ongoing dispute between Settler Canadian cottage owners who value 'pristine' lake front property, and Anishinaabe communities wishing to undertake traditional wide rice production (see: Taylor, 2015). While some contacts responded positively, others rejected the call because

not enough work had not been done to build consensus and consent around what was required. The imperative of meeting a deadline for spending research funding meant that any relationship that followed would be forced into the institutional timeline rather than following the needs and protocols of the community on the ground. This was a clear miscalculation on Author 1's part, and along with his inability to create an avenue for restorative apology and a rebuilding of trust, it broke longstanding relationships between him and a number of friends and community contacts. It did not matter that some members of the community received the proposal positively; the principle of centring Indigenous consent had not been adhered to and as a result damage was done that cannot now be undone.

Finally, drawing from this example, we need to further consider time, process, and change in place-based relationship building. A focus on 'doing' emphasizes the importance of action, being and doing beyond the academy and outside of the routines of academic life, which can include spent time doing what might appear to be the everyday and banal activities of place. But time spent in this way is not time lost to the banal but rather generative time, time spent building networks of support, communication, understanding, and solidarity. Haiven and Khasnabish (2014) argue that the one of the most important things that academics seeking to work in solidarity with social movements can do is to shift their focus from making 'shared space' to making 'shared time'. Given that neo-liberal capital and mechanisms of 'efficiency' monopolize the time of researchers, this must be seen as an act of radical resistance to the structuring of the contemporary university and to regimes of 'work' more generally (Mbembe, 2016; Bastian, 2014). Researchers can contribute to Indigenous resurgence in part by helping to forward community research agendas, and to insist upon challenging the work-time rhythm of most research by privileging Indigenous temporalities. As a corollary to Little Bear's 'rituals of renewal', geographers must approach place-based relationships with Indigenous geographies through rituals of return (and departure). Time can be 'made' through repeated rituals that evoke past moments of co-becoming, like the ritual of announcing one's presence through place-specific protocols of arrival for guests. These 'rituals of return', similar to Brewer's concept of

“iterated inquiry” (2013: 333-334; also Williams and Pierce, 2016) help to shape the relational spaces between researchers and communities, to evoke past encounters, both positive and problematic, and serve to layer moments of relationality upon each other into a thickly-laminated relationship. The important point is that time, like space, must be woven around particular embodied acts – particular doings which are meant to be seen and experienced, meant to communicate and relate across difference and distance – in order to link past, present and future. These rituals of return may be difficult to learn but the concerted act of ‘doing’ time, not time to work on a ‘successful project,’ but time to be, to be seen, to be engaged with when and if desired, is an embodied and material resistance to colonialism and neo-liberal capitalism (Mbembe, 2016: 42-43).

Conclusions

We need to radically rethink how we understand the world, what we privilege within it, how we relate to place and time, and how we do geography. There are important contributions that geographers can make to decolonisation and Indigenous resurgence but the needs and exigencies of professional scholarship must take a backseat to community ways of knowing and research priorities. Geographers must understand that the university is not the only site of knowledge production, the Indigenous geographies described above were real, present, and powerful long before any scholars (including us) wrote about them in an academic context. Mindful of this, academics must strive against the tendencies of the neoliberal and extractive university and focus on working *with*, rather than at the expense of, Indigenous communities. We must begin by learning from decolonising scholarship that focuses on doings on the land, whether pulling invasive species as a sign of Coast Salish sovereignty and to restore local ecosystems and food security (Corntassel and Bryce, 2012), digging yams to learn and grow together with the land (Bawaka Country et al, 2015), or making space for ceremony on and with the land as part of decolonising scholarship. Doing Indigenized geographies is, above all, an active and co-operative process.

Using 'doings' signals that we need to change existing geography in far more fundamental ways than simply improving ethics, considering impact or by co-producing publications. These are sound advancements over the openly exploitative practices that Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) identified as pervasive in the academy over a decade and a half ago, but they are not solutions to the problem of asymmetrical power in research with Indigenous communities. Partially, what is missing from these simple reforms is the centering of place. In some ways, ethics codes and impact statements are an academic corollary to state-based 'politics of recognition' that Coulthard (2014) has so ably critiqued as a new form of soft colonial power. More fundamentally, geographers must change how we interact with the world, in all the diverse ways that we act. This includes rethinking our epistemology, methodology, pedagogy, community, and political commitments. It includes 'doing' our teaching differently, thinking carefully about which names we use for places (see Rose-Redwood, 2016), citational justice, and spending time building relations in place. Such an approach is not only necessary for scholars working in Indigenous geographies or those exploring colonialism but is also crucial and beneficial for the decolonization of the discipline as a whole. By focusing on 'doings' in place geography can be done in ways that generate an embodied and material resistance to colonialism and neoliberal capitalism.

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Endnotes

¹ The literature on decolonisation, itself an evolving discourse, is extensive. We suggest that decolonisation can be best understood through an Indigenous framework built on the landmark article 'Decolonization is not a metaphor' by Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang (2012), the work of Anishnaabe scholar Leanne Simpson (2017; 2011), Dene scholar Glen Coulthard (2014), Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson (2014), and complementary non-Indigenous articulations such as those of white Settler Canadians Emma Battell Lowman and Barker (2015: 108-123) and migrant justice and Indigenous solidarity community organizer, Harsha Walia (2013). For previous discussions of decolonization, as well as anticolonialism and indigenization, in relation to geography, to which this paper is heavily indebted, see in particular: Wendy Shaw (2006; Shaw et al, 2006); Chris Gibson (2006); Klaus and Howitt (2012); Johnson et al (2007); and Hodge and Lester (2006)

² Land is taken here to also include seas. In Australia Indigenous people use the term 'Country' to denote their responsibility for land and sea.

³ For more on critical geographies of race and the challenge of and for the discipline, see: Kobayashi and Peake (2000); Radcliffe (1994); Bonnett (1997); Jackson (1998); Sparke (1994); Anderson and Taylor (2005); Anderson (2000, 2002); Pulido (2002); Price (2010); Nash (2003); and McGuinness (2000).

⁴ We see some scholars grappling with this challenge in an attempt to focus on interactions, relationships, and place-based ways of 'doing' in very different ways. For example Robertson (2016) has used a relational approach that valued non-humans and particularly land in the constitution of Indigenous identity. Greenwood, Cameron and de Leeuw (2012) have explored the ways that friendship, storytelling, and more-than-human relationships are linked to individual and social health in Shuswap communities. Nancy Turner, working in the field of Environmental Studies, has developed close relationships with Indigenous community leaders and knowledge keepers such as Marianne Boelscher Ignace and Ronald Ignace to document and explore the traditional ecological knowledge and wisdom (TEKW) of Indigenous people in British Columbia (Turner, Boelscher Ignace & Ignace, 2000), much of which is currently under threat of being lost either due to environmental change or generational shifts as elders pass away.

⁵ The authors of 'Co-Becoming Bawaka' also attempt to reframe ANT in a way that is positively aligned with Indigenous thought, creating a seeming-paradox with Watts' critique of ANT as insufficient for engaging with Indigenous place-thought. We argue that ongoing tensions of this sort are not problems to be solved, but rather are indicative of the vitality and diversity of Indigenous geographical knowledge production.

⁶ It is important not to understand Indigenous worldviews through colonial abstraction. Indigenous knowledge is place specific so care needs to be taken to avoid making it appear general which erases the lived experiences of Indigenous people.

⁷ There is some confusion in usage between the academic use of the term 'place' and Indigenous articulations of 'Land'. Indigenous knowledge keepers and scholars often use 'land' to refer to far more than the physical, material landscape. Rather, land is an integrated concept: it includes both literal land (terra firma) as well as water and sky, plants and animals, spirits and people, and layers of meaning, story, and memory - in other words, all the complex, dynamic components of what geographers would call 'place' and then some (see for example: Swamp 2010). Part of our work here is to consider these ideas of place and land as convergent in some respects, even as particular Indigenous constructions of land/place remain distinct.

⁸ See for example: Anne Waters' edited volume *American Indian Thought* (2004), and Gregory Cajete's *Native Science* (2000).

⁹ For more on this, see Jojola (2003).

¹⁰ There is a large and growing body of community-oriented and scholarly literature on Haudenosaunee lifeways that both assert the specificity and complexity of Haudenosaunee social and cultural practices,

while critiquing the parodied, racist, or simply ignorant portrayals of these practices by non-Indigenous (white settler) scholars. Of particular note here is *The Clay We Are Made Of*, Susan Hill's brilliant rearticulation of the history of Haudenosaunee settlement at Six Nations of the Grand River (2017). Her history positions the Haudenosaunee as literally of the land – commensurate with it, dependent upon it, responsible to it.