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Geographies of collective responsibility: decolonising universities through place-based praxis

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ABSTRACT

This paper asks how can we as geographers, occupying positions of relative privilege but also beholden to institutions entangled with legacies of colonialism and ongoing colonization, find and embody our responsibilities to Indigenous people and nations and contribute to decolonization within and beyond the academy? We begin by reflecting on Doreen Massey's (2004) theorization of geographies of responsibility and critiques of it in the intervening years. We then engage with important considerations including the politics of recognition, relational grammars of settler colonialism and Indigenous notions of relationality. To avoid the traps of recognition politics, which often foreclose the more transformative possibilities of responsibility, we propose ways of taking of decolonial responsibility in our teaching, research and professional service. While we cannot provide simple solutions to the difficult challenge of pursuing decolonization in the academy, we believe that centralizing and prioritizing relationships of responsibility to and through place in support of resurgent Indigenous nationhood is required to avoid the denuding, individualizing process of colonial recognition and superficial performative decolonisation.

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Openings

Universities, as a result of major pressure from Indigenous communities and activists from the wider world, as well as work by Indigenous, Black and similarly racialized staff and students from within, are beginning to engage in discourses about decolonization. As geographers, the challenge of decolonization is especially thorny, given our historical and contemporary entanglements with imperialism and colonialism. In the past, geography and geographers were among the most ardent and successful of the "scientific colonizers", especially through processes of mapping and surveying land for colonization, and through reports on Indigenous and Black peoples that portrayed them as less advanced and therefore less fully human than white Europeans and North Americans. In the present, geography as a discipline is almost incoherently vast, containing at once anticolonial and anarchistic scholars seeking to make social change (Springer et al., 2012), and academics working with and for mining companies, militaries and other corporations

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who are involved in the ongoing destruction of Indigenous territories and displacements of traditional territorial occupants. Our students, in what is considered success, go on to work for these same corporations, or even for environmental NGOs that similarly end up using the language of anticolonialism to essentially hijack Indigenous campaigns (Lee, 2011).

It is from this imperative that we write to fellow geographers around the world, most particularly those who are white or non-Indigenous, to advocate for a concerted response both to institutional failures to decolonize and disciplinary tendencies towards colonial impacts in teaching, research and university processes. We argue that geographers must embrace and explore responsibility with Indigenous communities and work to reshape institutional practices. We further argue that these engagements must be premised on three key points: first, rejecting institutional politics of recognition; second, engaging actively in relationship building with Indigenous, Black and other communities pushing for decolonization; and third, to take up key institutional roles that positions decolonial geographers and Indigenous communities in struggle as a (albeit diverse) collective demanding institutional accounting for colonial relationships. We end by identifying potential practical steps of action. The fundamental question we are exploring is, then, how can we as academics, occupying positions of relative privilege but also beholden to institutions engaging in reconciliation, find and embody our responsibilities to Indigenous people and nations and contribute to decolonization within and beyond the academy? The key here, we argue, is the role of place. There can be no singular strategy towards institutional decolonization, because the strategy must be predicated on connections to lands and places key to Indigenous survivance (Vizenor, 2008) and targeted for occupation, erasure and reconstruction by colonizers (Barker, 2021). While we seek to provide insights here into how decolonization can be pursued, we continue to emphasize the importance of direct relationships to land and place as essential for any application of decolonial concepts.

This paper is rooted in a review and synthesis of two bodies of literature: the first, critical Indigenous studies that both critique contemporary universities and articulate Indigenous knowledge precepts, including relationality which is core to our arguments. The second is literature on settler colonialism, which generally describes the processes of state- and nation-building through dispossession and displacement of Indigenous people, but which we adapt here to focus on universities and other institutions of higher education. It is also based on the combined personal experiences of the authors teaching, researching and performing services in higher education institutions for a combined four decades, during which we have prioritized both understanding and attempting to enact decolonial ethics through our research in Canada and Australia. These place relationships endure and continue to shape our teaching and research, but we currently work in, and are speaking from, the former colonial centre of Britain and are calling for changes in those places of the colonisers just as much as the colonialised. While we have not always been successful – and as we have argued elsewhere, "success" is less important than "radical experimentation" in pursuit of social justice (Author 1) – we have learned a great deal about what is and is not possible within contemporary university structures, including which structures can be used and which must be opposed and resisted. As Eve Tuck, Marcia McKenzie and Kate McCoy succinctly state: "One of the notable characteristics of settler colonial states is the refusal to recognize themselves as such,

requiring a continual disavowal of history, Indigenous peoples' resistance to settlement, Indigenous peoples' claims to stolen land, and how settler colonialism is indeed ongoing, not an event contained in the past" (Tuck et al., 2014, p. 7). We thus target our paper to geographers who benefit from the self-referential processual structure of settler colonialism and are located on stolen lands. Indeed, we include ourselves in these categories and have reflected on our respective limitations and challenges in approaching this work from this position (and from within academia: Sylvestre et al., 2018). We thus attempt to learn from community-grounded and Indigenous scholars such as Hunt and Holmes (2015), Michelle Daigle (2016), Gary Foley (2011), Alex Wilson and Laing (2019), Eve Tuck (2009), Irene Watson (2014), Glen Coulthard (2014), C. F. Black (2010), Tony Birch (2007) and others who emphasize the need for interpersonal and relational decoloniality to be embodied and practiced in our everyday lives, in addition to our community-based research practice. We also approach this topic cautiously, centering de Leeuw and Hunt's (2018) observations on the limits and possibilities of discussing decolonizing theory *and* praxis in academia, especially from complex and contested embodiments and through a discipline steeped in coloniality; as de Leeuw and Hunt have urged geographers: "How can we have conversations about decolonization that begin with a relationship to people and places about which and from which we write?" (de Leeuw & Hunt, 2018, p. 10).

The provocation of 'responsibility' in geography

It is not possible to talk of geography and responsibility without first identifying and crediting Doreen Massey's landmark article "Geographies of Responsibility" (Massey, 2004). Now nearly 20 years on, Massey's work remains fundamental to how many geographers think of place and space, especially in a world where "local" and "global" are intensely intertwined (Christophers et al. 2018). Massey's key question was:

> . . . if we take seriously the relational construction of identity, then it poses, first, the question of the geography of those relations through with the identity of London, for example, is established and reproduced. This in turn poses the question of what is the nature of "London's" social and political relationship to those geographies. What is, in a relational imagination and in light of the relational construction of identity, the geography of our social and political responsibility? (6)

Like the example of London in Massey's work, we want to take seriously the co-constitution of universities as they currently stand. Universities, in the neoliberal era, are intensely shaped by global political and economic currents, whether in the need to compete for international students, respond to international research funding regimes, such as the European Research Council, or the push to produce "world-leading research". However, for those of us who identify as geographers and academics, universities are also local sites of personal relationships, specific environments and "structures of feeling" like belonging that keep us attached to universities and working as geographers even as many of us critique the global impacts on our institutions. In this, Massey's work thinking through the local effects and identity attachments of global cities maps neatly onto the communities around neoliberal universities with global ambitions.

However, Massey's work has not escaped critique especially in relation to colonialism and the co-constitution of places in part through invasive restructuring, attempted

elimination of the local populations, massive movements of labouring populations under international regimes of exploitation, and so on. In a 2011 article by Noxolo, Raghuram and Madge, they clearly point out two key limitations of Massey's articulations (and the discourse that followed from them). First, "responsibility" can easily become an "ethical gesture" lacking either material impact or even performative challenge. We see this in the ways that universities in settler states like Canada and the USA regularly start conferences and meetings with land acknowledgements and prayers from Indigenous elders, only to then drop completely the ethical responsibilities that those actions imply going forward (Watts, 2016). The second critique is that responsibility can be co-opted by Global North scholars who can practice various forms of responsibility – to, for example, the environment – that run contrary to the needs and wishes of actual communities in the Global South. We would extend Noxolo et al.'s argument here to note that Global North scholars also coopt responsibility from Indigenous, Black and other communities marginalized by colonialism in the places where they live and work. Controversies about white settler scholars in Canada over-writing the voices and assertions of Indigenous communities in their regions have been rife for years (see, e.g. Carlson, 2017, pp. 511–512). As such, it is important to re-engage Massey's arguments about responsibility, the co-constitution of place, and the multi-scalar nature of identity in light of the interventions of decolonial discourses throughout the academy, and especially in geography.

It is because of these critiques and the growing importance of decolonial thought, practice and ethics that we call for geographers to take responsibility for relationships that already exist between university and Indigenous communities. This form of responsibility follows decolonial discourses in that it is not about creating a new system that is then imposed on top of the existing inequalities in universities, but about acknowledging the existing relationships between geographers and Indigenous people, both locally and around the globe. Once acknowledged, the specific forms of colonisation that operate through those relationships can and must be addressed. This requires professional engagement, material action and political intervention, among other efforts – which is to say that this demand also stands as a critique of the disembodied notions of post-colonial responsibility highlighted by Noxolo, Raghuram & Madge, (2012).

Geography and colonialism

Geography, as a discipline, is entangled with colonialism both specifically and as a consequence of the increasing neocolonial commodification of higher education. Many geographers work in institutions and countries dominated by neoliberalism that actively stifle critical social justice work and political dissent (McCann et al., 2020). Despite lofty public statements and commitments to various forms of racial, gender and other types of equality, these institutions undertake a gestural politics of recognition that centres discussions of equality, diversity and inclusion, while denying the possibility of structural change (Ahmed, 2012), mirroring Noxolo et al.'s critique of gestural responsibility. This is especially true of the structures of settler colonialism which are now well understood and, as we have argued elsewhere, rely on affective and discursive "structures of feeling" (Mackey, 2016) to recruit everyday people into colonizing acts.

Specifically, within the discipline of geography, geographers of all types are influenced, pressured and buffeted by these forces, but we also grapple with our own colonial

histories and the implications of our work on ongoing colonial projects. Historically, geographers (whether called such or under the nom de guerre of "explorers") played crucial roles in opening new frontiers for colonization, from Africa (Driver, 2000/1994) to British Columbia (Cameron, 2010) to Australia (Byrne, 2010). As such, geographical knowledge informed colonial military operations, the location of settlement colonies and the establishment of global systems of capitalist exchange that continue to operate to this day. That these systems are fuelled by the extractive processes of "resource development", a very common field of expertise for contemporary geographers, is also key: as many scholars have pointed out, "development" itself tends to be code for the exploitation of marginalized, Indigenous and Global South communities in support of capitalist extraction (Radcliffe, 2005). These critiques implicate geographers working in physical geography and spatial sciences like GIS and remote sensing, but also human geography which has a tendency to obscure both historical and ongoing colonization, whether by emphasizing overly broad concepts of race and ethnicity that decentre colonial analysis (as in the case of geographical engagements with Chicana/o identity and subjectivity: Pulido, 2017) or by carelessly re-embedding colonial representations and narratives within our educational work (as in the way that geography teaching about Caribbean nations frequently represents these places as "backward" and under-developed: Mains, 2004, pp. 218–220). While geography as a discipline has made some efforts to address these issues, "there remains a tendency in both student constructions and the geographical literature to create an Indigenous/non-Indigenous binary" that leads to romanticism, obscuring of colonialism (historical and contemporary), and stereotyping of and racism towards Indigenous people, including those who may well be parts of our departments and programs (Carter & Hollinsworth, 2017, p. 182). As Kwakwaka'wak geographer, Sarah Hunt, describes in her landmark article "Ontologies of Indigeneity: the politics of embodying a concept" (Hunt 2014), the very act of coming to know the world as an Indigenous person still runs counter to many fundamental geographical understandings of place and space, self and community, and the importance of relationships of all kinds to making sense of the world.

Despite this, as geographers we the authors remain committed to exploring the possibilities for social justice in and beyond the academy while working at (state-funded) higher education institutions. Yet we are concerned by the ways in which decolonizing work has become performative, all too often collapsed into "diversity" efforts, emplacing the Black and Indigenous aesthetic without actually changing structures to accommodate or support Black and Indigenous scholars within our institutions (Hamilton, 2020). We focus here on exploring Indigenous and settler colonial relations to explore how this can be done, but suggest that similar work and relational dynamics could be possible in response to several of these crises that we collectively face, particularly that of racism (see also: Puttick & Murrey, 2020). This paper, then, asks how can we as geographers, occupying positions of relative privilege but also beholden to institutions engaging in recognition politics, find and embody our responsibilities to Indigenous people and nations and contribute to decolonization within and beyond the academy?

We find ourselves pursuing this inquiry in a very difficult environment. By and large, decolonization has become an empty signifier for institutions, referenced frequently with respect to everything from eliminating jobs in Medieval History (Regan, 2021), to awareness-raising around racism and colonial history (Tuck & Yang, 2012, pp. 17–22).

There is a particular need for academics living on Indigenous lands to be conscious of obligations to, and requirements of, Indigenous nations and communities, but we also assert that many of us who do not live in settler countries also have responsibilities to colonized lands through the historical and ongoing complicity of our institutions and imperialist nations. However, decolonization exists in tension with larger institutional goals and frameworks and, despite good intentions, can often be turned to colonial ends (Noxolo, 2017; Noxolo, Raghuram & Madge 2012), with settler colonial social discourses shaping the "limits of settler reconciliation" (Maddison et al., 2016) with Indigenous peoples. This creates a pressing need to better understand how we, as settlers and other complicit peoples, can truly "be responsible" in relation to movements of decolonization and Indigenous resurgence while still entrenched in systems that actively work to prevent this. To the extent that universities are setting up committees, developing educational materials for staff and holding seminars and webinars, much of this is being done by a small number of largely Indigenous, Black and people of colour scholars in the hopes of making a difference and in spite of endemic lack of support for these efforts. This comes on top of the burden placed on the same staff members who are frequently sought to comment on or participate in indigenization and decolonization events even when these events are well outside of their areas of expertise – placing the burden on to speak as an "ethnic minority" rather than the expert that they are paid to be (De Leeuw et al., 2013). In this context, it is essential for non-Indigenous and settler colleagues to take up the work of engaging with the institution to push for decolonial change in areas far beyond research and methods. Every discipline has specific challenges for decolonizing its approach, and different limitations with respect to their institutional entanglements. Geography can and should be an area from which it is possible to push for decolonial change given the recent focus on discipline, though it would seem that our institutional engagements lag behind our research practices and goals.

This paper is therefore a result of seeking to be in relation to Indigenous communities that have patiently and assertively told us to work to dismantle and consider coloniality in our daily lives, despite the barriers posed by structures of contemporary academic work and the colonial implications of the discipline of geography specifically. We do so with Cree scholar Alex Wilson's words on "decolonization" in mind: that although "decolonization" may be a "useful and valuable term that describes well what [Indigenous scholars especially] are doing" it risks defining Indigenous Nations resurgence – what Wilson understands as "ways in which [Indigenous peoples are] bringing to the surface and making room for the deep knowledge that we already have in us" – as always "defined by colonization" (Wilson & Laing, 2019, p. 135). Wilson continues, explaining that "If we describe ourselves as 'decolonizers,' it implies that colonization is what defines us" (Wilson & Laing, 2019, p. 135). We thus attempt to foreground Tuck *et al.*'s call that "when we theorize settler colonialism, we must attend to it as both an ongoing and incomplete project, with internal contradictions, cracks and fissures through which Indigenous life and knowledge have persisted and thrived despite settlement" (2015, 8). Our focus on coloniality is not intended to add power to colonialism or settlers, but rather to refocus on where power too often emulates and is not reflected back, while learning from Indigenous scholars (e.g. Atleo, 2004; Corntassel, 2012; Daigle, 2016, 2018; Hunt, 2014; Watson, 2007, 2014; Million, 2018; LB Simpson, 2017). In this way, we start from Kwagiulth scholar Sarah Hunt's call to use theorizations of colonial

politics of recognition "as a jumping off point to imagine what else might be possible in the rejection of state recognition as we suture together the realms through which we move as political and legal actors, using our love and anger to resist state violence on all political fronts" Hunt (2015, p. 9). We are therefore exploring settler geographies of responsibilities to change the ways that we relate to one another, to knowledge and to lands/country/waters (Tuck et al., 2014).

The politics of recognition

Indigenous people have never passively accepted the imposition of colonial regimes in settler colonies like Canada and Australia, and increasingly their resistances are forcing changes in settler colonial systems. Assertions of Indigenous nationhood and sovereignty – or "resurgence" (LB Simpson, 2017) – are self-conscious attempts to live and demonstrate the validity and power of Indigenous ways of being. Settler colonialism, however, cannot tolerate assertions of Indigenous sovereignty, and the state and other institutions constantly reform themselves in response to Indigenous resistance and in pursuit of settler hegemony. It is in this context of shapeshifting, responsive and relentless settler colonialism, we argue, that the politics of recognition are best understood. Both Canada and Australia can be said to have adopted "recognition" as the fundamental framework through which the states are willing to engage with Indigenous rights and nationhood and this pattern extends to Higher Education institutions.

Unfortunately, the "recognition" of Indigenous rights by the state is not an unequivocal good. As Yellowknives Dene political theorist Glen Coulthard has established, settler colonial states attempt to cover the ongoing and expanding claims of Indigenous sovereignty and nationhood by "recognizing" and celebrating "difference" Coulthard (2014). Coulthard describes a process by which states shift the wider social discourse around indigeneity, such that being an Indigenous person no longer implies being a member of an Indigenous nation or community, with specific political rights and responsibilities to and through that nation, but rather occupies the position of an "ethnic minority" in society. This "recognition" of indigeneity only as heritage or minority ethnic status, rather than larger and more profound lived experiences of being Indigenous is, as Coulthard warns, a colonial continuity that foregrounds individual differences while erasing larger collective assertions of sovereignty. Tanganekald and Meintangk scholar Irene Watson (2007) argues that recognition without Indigenous sovereignty achieves little.

In these contexts, Indigenous communities are increasingly wary of if, how and to what extent projects rooted in recognizing Indigenous presence without seriously engaging with Indigenous sovereignty can actually help Indigenous communities. A prime example has been the interpretation and uptake of the recommendations of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) on Residential Schools in Canada, which released its final report on years of study and community testimony in 2015. The government of Canada made very pointed and emotive statements in support of the TRC report and its calls to action, and has since plastered "indigenized" messaging everywhere, but not only have they refused to take significant material action, the state has actually continued to fight against being compelled to take even basic steps to ensure Indigenous bodily and community autonomy. Police violence in Australia and Canada against Indigenous

people continues as it ever has, largely unchanged despite the "recognition" of Indigenous people in police training and community messaging. All of this leads to the declaration that reconciliation is dead or actually a form of ongoing colonization under the guise of reconciliation, a very much metaphorical approach to decolonization and one evident in many university EDI initiatives.

Recognition does not dismantle logics, structures, violence and relationalities of coloniality. Quite the opposite, recognition is displacing, that is to say, it centres on the settler state and displaces Indigenous peoples to a homogenised margin. Recognition is the opposite of place-based because it abstracts the relationships between Indigenous peoples and formerly or currently colonial societies away from the lands under contestation and into the realm of law and policy. Even if recognition as an ideal is accepted, as Yawuru activist and scholar Patrick Dodson argues, "recent debacles in the Indigenous affairs arena have bought into focus the dissonance between the rhetoric of 'recognition' and the disempowering effect of paternalistic, top-down policy" (Dodson 2016, p. 185). Viewed in this light, Coulthard observes that Indigenous peoples "*righteous resentment*" at not accepting state apologies as a form of recognition "is actually a sign of our *critical consciousness*, our sense of justice and injustice, and of our awareness of and unwillingness to *reconcile* ourselves with a structural and symbolic violence that is still very much present in our lives" (Coulthard, 2014, p. 126).

Recognition politics may originate in the halls of state power and in Higher Education institutions, as a response to "unruly" minoritarian populations, but they are easily taken up and mirrored by settler people's own understandings of Indigenous-settler relations. Thus, we have legal and structural processes that identify (or target) Indigenous peoples, and a tacit settler acceptance of the fact they "we and they" are different (Carter & Hollinsworth, 2017). This separation of positionalities means that many settler people "recognize" that Indigenous people face particular challenges, but they remain reluctant to see themselves as part of the ongoing problem or the potential future solution – rather they are abstract observers. Settlers in Australia have demonstrated "assumptions that they are not the most apt to be asked the questions [about Indigenous people's demands and needs] – either because they do not consider themselves informed enough or because they do not see themselves concerned about the issue" (Stastny et al., 2016, p. 168).

State mechanisms used to recognize coloniality for the purposes of redress in Canada and Australia simultaneously work to ensure settler futurity. As Yiman and Bidjara scholar Marcia Langton notes "legal reform with respect to Indigenous people in Australia may be limited" because "the Australian courts … turned to nineteenth-century concepts to justify denial of common-law rights" (2004: 30–31). This is to say any land rights recognized by the state are fundamentally rooted in settler colonial frameworks of title and property, which do not protect many aspects of "Land" as Indigenous communities would, and which are open to capture by capital, especially natural resource extraction. As Koori activist and scholar Gary Foley and Tim Anderson argue, the Australian Native Title system "offers a weak form of title to some communities, but the 'extinguishment' of claims for the vast majority" (Foley & Anderson, 2006, p. 83). Moreover, Indigenous rights that may be sanctioned have been subsequently removed in other ways, such as the threatened closure of "remote" Indigenous communities in Australia (Howitt & McLean, 2015; Langton, 2016). Although the Australian state has progressed from its early acts of genocide into assimilation and "practical"

reconciliation, its contemporary policies of "mutual obligation" and "humanitarian intervention" are just as woven into the eradication of Indigenous voices, bodies, and cultures as earlier forms of colonialism (Foley, 2011; Watson, 1996, 2007).

Colonialism is not just ongoing but entrenched and there remains a disjuncture between Indigenous strategies for self-determination and the institutional structures attempting to implement them without ceding any sovereignty (Gibson, 1999). Indigenous Australians have been set up to fail and for that failure to be intergenerational (Watson, 1996). The government then takes this as a license to make humanitarian interventions in order to "protect" Indigenous people from themselves (Watson, 2014), thereby repeating earlier assimilatory acts (Miller, 1985). At no point in these circular policy failures are the broader frameworks of colonialisation, the colonial past, the centrality of land, or Indigenous sovereignty allowed to be made visible.

Responsibilities for decolonization

Recognition allows settlers to avoid taking personal and collective responsibility – or being held accountable – in, and for, colonial logics (Sloan Morgan, 2018). For settlers in Australia and Canada, complicity in colonial logics are processes that have implanted settlers on land and placed settlers within particular relational logics to the land and Indigenous people (Watson, 2007). Recognition does not require settlers to fundamentally change or shift their practices or power relations:

> What our present condition does demand, however, is that we begin to approach our engagements ... with a degree of critical self-reflection, skepticism, and caution that has to date been largely absent in our efforts. It also demands that we begin to shift our attention away from the largely rights-based/recognition orientation that has emerged as hegemonic over the last four decades, to a resurgent politics of recognition that seeks to practice decolonial, gender-emancipatory, and economically nonexploitative alternative structures of law and sovereign authority grounded on a critical refashioning of the best of Indigenous legal and political traditions. (Coulthard, 2014, p. 179)

Grounded in Indigenous legal and political orders and moulded by land-based practices, Coulthard's framing of resurgence does not avoid recognition completely. What is necessary, however, is that a politics of recognition be engaged with critically, encouraging alternatives that differ from processes that have, as Coulthard frames, "rendered [Indigenous peoples] a radical minority in our own homelands" (Coulthard, 2014, p. 179). Similarly, in Australia, although there is ongoing advocacy for constitutional reform and recognition (Davis & Williams, 2015; Langton, 2016), this is not done at the expense of simultaneous attempts for Indigenous sovereignty through asserting Indigenous Law (Black, 2010), calls for a treaty and settlement process (Dodson, 2016) and other forms of resurgence.

Responsibility is a useful concept here to critically consider the many ways in which coloniality influences our everyday interactions. The ethics of care as articulated in recent geographical literature has the potential to be useful, but we introduce it cautiously. The concept of geographies of responsibility explored by Massey (2004), Popke (2007), Mitchell (2007) and Lawson (2007), among others, began important conversations about *individuals*' responsibility to (often distant) others. The need for such responsibility was most commonly articulated as enacted through global supply chains, such as

the shipping and purchase of food (Jackson et al., 2009) or flowers from Kenya (Hughes et al., 2008). However, from a postcolonial or decolonial perspective there were significant limitations with such an approach (Jazeel & McFarlane, 2010; Noxolo, Raghuram & Madge 2012; Raghuram et al., 2009). In response to this, there has been a shift to geographies of collective care (McEwan & Goodman, 2010).

Care understood as a collective act, a responsibility for others and ourselves, enables useful conceptualisations of how to generate care, scale up care and radically reconceive what care entails (Editorial Committee, 2016). Entering into relation with Indigenous-led and shared understandings of land and place – particularly care as country (Black, 2010) – is the need to *care for place* as a process which is scalar, spatial and a form of settler responsibility. Land and place are, of course, central to many Indigenous demands – where legal-orders are rooted – and a resurgent politics of recognition itself is grounded. While respecting that care for place by Indigenous peoples differs significantly from settler conceptions (see also Johnson, 2012; Larsen & Johnson, 2016), if we start from a grounded-place, we can reconceive new ways of caring for place *and* relations with one another in anti-colonial ways (Jazeel & McFarlane, 2010; McLean et al., 2016).

Our conception of caring for place puts onus on settlers to themselves enter into a process of decolonization, answering to Indigenous legal orders as grounded in traditional territories. As Gumbainggir descendent Gary Foley points out,

> The real problem that confronts Indigenous peoples is one which exists in the white community. Racism is only a problem that can be overcome by people who are part of the community in which it festers … You should be daily challenging the ignorance and fear that constitute the greatest obstacle to Koori self-determination and independence … it is up to you to change your society, not ours. (2000: 85)

Situating oneself in relation to coloniality in settler colonial contexts requires keen attention to the temporality of dispossession, and the violence systemically enacted as a result. Rather than start with the state and attempt to change the formalized nature of Indigenous and settler relations, we deliberately start the process elsewhere (Coulthard & Simpson, 2016; LB; Simpson, 2017). We view responsibility and caring for place as settlers in a collective space as an important possibility for taking action more immediately and in the institutions in which we work.

Relationship building between self-consciously decolonial settler and non-Indigenous scholars and Indigenous academics, knowledge keepers and communities is essential; in the absence of these relationships disembodied "anonymous" care predominates (Stevenson, 2012). Much of this is for obvious reasons – correcting the silencing of Indigenous and Black voices by and within the academy, listening directly to the lived experiences of those disaffected by settler colonialism, and other ethical practices that we know are important. But there is also a strategic element here that should not be overlooked. As focus group studies in both Canada (De Costa & Clark, 2016 and Australia (Stastny et al., 2016) have shown, there is a strong tendency among non-Indigenous peoples confronted with Indigenous challenges to accept the existence of dual "Indigenous" and "non-Indigenous" identities and to occupy a vaguely defined "non-Indigenous" self.[1] This gives rise to a grammar of "us" and "them", though crucially not a discourse of "us AND them", but rather oppositional discourses of "us versus them"

or "us dominating them" (Stastny et al., 2016, pp. 164–6). This is, as the research demonstrates, not a conscious move but rather a widespread trend across longer-term settlers and newer arrivals and across ethnicity and gender. This agonistic binary is key to many individual and institutional responses to calls for reconciliation or decolonization.

Responsibility as a concept can help us navigate this complex settler colonial grammar. Responsibility implies a response; it demands an ongoing dialogue and is thus ever changing and ongoing. We have argued above that recognition often rushes in here where responsibility could have more transformative potential. There is no "answer" or singular form of settler responsibilities – conversations of social transformation are occurring in and across social movements, especially between peoples of colour and Indigenous communities, in nuanced and productive ways (e.g. Byrd, 2011; Kidane & Martineau, 2013; Pulido, 2015; Ramírez in; Naylor et al., 2018; Walia, 2013). Common across these multiple and diverse conversations is that processes of responsibility are being built iteratively from the grassroots into a multitude of ways of being, all of which are rooted in place and Indigenous legal orders.

It is therefore important to develop relationships of trust and mutual obligation in order to assert a decolonial "us AND them" that unsettles the assumed division between Indigenous and settler, and instead places it between ongoing colonizers and those who would decolonize. For example, take the Two Row Wampum (bead) treaty belt and the Friendship Treaty Belt. These belts are material representations of the Haudenosaunee treaty relationship pursued with European and, later, settler governments. The visual of the Two Row belt is of equal partners – the Iroquoian canoe and the Dutch ship, in the original articulation – travelling in parallel lines together down the river of life. Neither is predominant, neither interferes with the other, but both are conjoined by friendship, "good mind" (or mutual understanding) and peace.

The Friendship Treaty Belt (Figure 1) shows a Haudenosaunee person and a newcomer connected by an unbroken chain of friendship, as if clasping hands across a distance. According to Haudenosaunee knowledge keepers, Jacob and Yvonne Thomas (1978), the Dutch initially misinterpreted these representations, but the Haudenosaunee quickly caught the error and corrected their grammar:

> The Whiteman said, "I will respect the Onkwehón:we's belief and pronounce him as a son." The Onkwehon:we replied, "I respect you, your belief and what you say; you pronounced

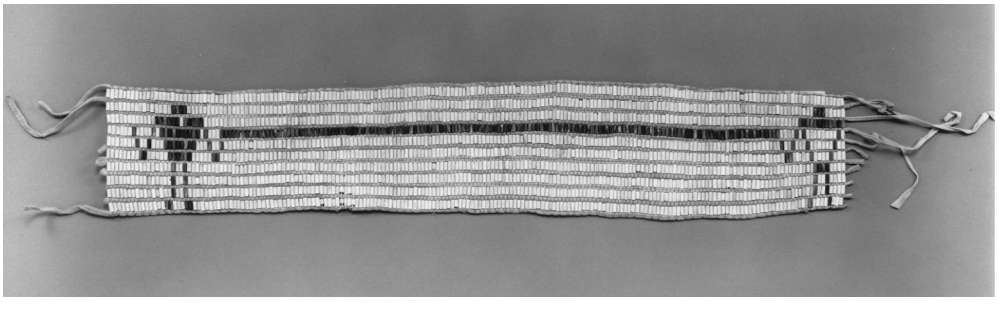

Figure 1. The friendship Belt (tehontatenentsonterontahkhwa), six nations public library digital collections (SNPL000068v00i).

> yourself as my father and this I do not agree because the father can tell his son what to do and also can punish him; I suggest that you pronounce me as your brother." (1)

This demonstrates the very long-standing trend of hierarchical imposition even during supposedly mutual and equal relations, and the immediate reframing by the Indigenous participants through a related but non-dominating metaphor. The Dutch accepted the grammar of relationship but reached for a metaphor that could read as "us over them"; the Haudenosaunee corrected this by countering with a metaphor of "us and them" – different but related; interdependent but not dominating.

It is crucial that settler geographers pursue the creation of these "us and them" relationships with Indigenous scholars and communities. Part of the reason we deploy the example of the Friendship Belt here is because we both – as a settler Canadian and a white British scholar, respectively – have connections to this treaty. This treaty was agreed with the English and British Crowns and remains in a legal sense a key part of Canadian politics.[2] Our societies once agreed to be a part of these treaties – to establish a relationship – and while historically our individual states have not upheld their end of the relationship, we endeavour to do so still. We use examples like this specifically because we are connected to and have a stake in what happens in the places that these treaties were forged – we remain in relationship to the Haudenosaunee among many other Indigenous nations, and we foreground that relationship whenever possible. When the relational discourse is shifted in this way, moving the fault line from interpersonal domination (us vs them) to structural contestation (ongoing colonizers versus a decolonizing coalition), "us and them" actually becomes a new "we" that can speak and act in ways that challenge the responsibility of institutional practice. Over time, these coalitions can and do find innovative ways to pursue "co-becoming" (Sucket-Pearson et al., 2013). One excellent example is the Jindaola "A love of country" curriculum project at the University of Wollongong (Adams et al., 2018; Kennedy et al., 2019), where careful work between Indigenous and settler geographers has revisited and subsequently redesigned the curriculum, especially fieldclasses (Atchison & Kennedy, 2020).

Responsibility as a spatial process is also evident in Indigenous Australians understanding of their responsibilities. Indigenous Australians have a "*sovereign* responsibility" (Birch, 2007, p. 116) to their past, knowledge, culture, land and their future. This responsibility is directly to the lands to which they belong, it is place-based and spatial. It often requires being physically on the land. Kombumerri and Munaljahlai scholar C F Black frames these responsibilities within a series of concentric circles of knowledge (the talngai-gawarima jurisprudence) which "is a legal world drawing me into a relationship that guides me towards understanding my responsibilities to the land" (2011: 12). As Shiri Pasternak has articulated, this is a context in which it is important to raise the concept of Indigenous jurisdiction – not just as a delegated authority within a state, but rather as a process through which authority is asserted over a particular territory (Pasternak, 2014, pp. 148–9). Pasternak goes on to argue that jurisdiction is a useful framework for understanding when and how colonial impositions on sovereign Indigenous authorities has been – or is continuing to be – imposed. We argue here, building on Pasternak's work, that geographers must strive to find and understand the Indigenous jurisdictions – sovereign legal orders – that

exist under and against the obscuring and totalizing settler colonial state. The final section of this paper outlines some suggestions for how this alignment can be achieved.

Settler responsibilities in the colonial academy

At the outset of this paper, we set goals to argue three key points. First, that rejecting politics of recognition at an institutional level is vital. As Pasternak's work indicates, the crux of the difference between the politics of recognition and a lived commitment to supporting Indigenous resurgence and sovereignty, is the willingness to engage with Indigenous people as sovereign actors. In the context of universities, this means prioritizing Indigenous community needs in terms of research subjects, educational programming and the governance of university grounds, properties and materials. This returns to our second key point: that direct relationship building with specific communities in particular places is essential to avoid the sort of "anonymous" care that Lisa Stevenson (2012) described. Geography can and should be an area from which it is possible to push for decolonial change given the recent focus in the discipline, though it would seem that our institutional engagements lag behind our research practices and goals. For that reason, we have argued our third point: that decolonial geographers must take up leading positions in building these community relationships, in pushing institutions to respect the needs of place and be aware of ongoing colonialism, and centre Indigenous needs and place-knowledges in our research and teaching.

Supporting these goals, we wish to identify ongoing and potential practices to enact the decolonial responsibilities we are advocating for. This requires professional engagement, material actions and political interventions. These start deliberately simply, for clarity and ease, acknowledging that as geographers we are all starting from vastly different points, in different places and with different understandings of responsibility. Geographers' positionality of relative privilege, while simultaneously being beholden to institutions engaging in recognition politics, means that building and enacting relational responsibilities with Indigenous communities is slow hard work, and crucially can appear hard to begin, yet we must recognise the agency we have and the possibilities that it provides. Indeed, our caution in suggesting actions stems from our understanding that practices must be grounded-in-place and emerge from the particularities of *from-where* and *with-whom* these relations need to be developed. That said, it is possible to identify some starting points for geographers (and which have already been employed by some geographers) which can then be adapted for particular places. We must emphasize here, however, that this remains a provocation, not a solution. As a place-based praxis, location and connection to place (even across distance) remains key. Every engagement must be undertaken conscious of where we are physically located as academics – are we on Indigenous territories, are we at the heart of a historical empire with specific responsibilities and relationships to Indigenous communities that must be addressed, or somewhere else? If we are on Indigenous territories, are they territories covered by treaties like the Friendship Belt, and if so what do those treaties imply about the necessities and limitations of our engagements? What geographies are appropriate for us to teach from our individual positionalities, and on what subjects are we better advised to seek a community-based voice? All of these are questions that must be answered again and

again, specific to each individual, institution and engagement. It is in the spirit of assisting in these engagements that we offer the following eight suggestions.

An obvious but crucial starting point is to understand and acknowledge the disciplinary and specific institutional histories of colonialism and the specific place-relationships that these imply. Universities are not just free-riders on the coattails of colonial dispossession. Rather, as High Country News revealed in an investigative report from 2020, 52 "land-grab" universities across the United States have been directly involved in the appropriation of 11 million acres of Indigenous territory.[3] It is not difficult to surmise that universities across the world, whether on Indigenous lands or using their resources to influence property and business from afar, are similarly complicit. While some Higher Education institutions, such as Oxford have publicly begun to reckon with their colonial heritage and historically derived colonial privilege, many institutions have not. Those institutions such as ours, on the marginalised edges of a colonising nation, seem keen to keep a low profile in such debates. As geographers, this is a task to which we should be actively contributing, teaching and challenging.

Second, is to identify the myriad of ways that our institutions are complicit in ongoing colonialism and challenge them. As Hunt (2014), Thunig and Jones (2021) and Locke et al (2021, 2022), all identify, Indigenous colleagues are subject to colonising practices in how their research methodologies, knowledge, obligations and writings continue to be governed, shaped and restricted by unjust institutional processes and expectations. Colonising practices persist through peer review, institutional and national research excellence frameworks, journal board composition, funding panels, ethics committees and promotion processes. There are numerous gatekeeping barriers throughout the discipline and institutions, which need to be revealed and challenged (Kuokkanen, 2007). While some of this is structural, there is a collective responsibility to ensure that we are not complicit in the maintenance of these structures. Actions, therefore, include ensuring ethics committees respect and acknowledge Indigenous governance of research protocols, that curriculum reviews generate space for innovative ways of teaching decolonial content and formats, and that peer review is done by those with expertise and that colonial approaches are challenged.

Third, is to teach colonialism as dynamic and ongoing and to change what and how we teach. As an example of how Indigenous knowledge and perspectives could be integrated across geography teaching, including by non-Indigenous academics, we offer an example of a lecture repeated many times from 2010 to 2019, focused on the ongoing and intensifying conflict over the expansion of oil and gas production in the Canadian west. It intentionally speaks to the diverse range of geographical specializations – it begins with a focus on physical geography, explaining what the tar sands are and the mountainous environment of British Columbia through which pipelines must pass. It then turns to political and economic geography, laying out the trade relations between Canada, the USA and China that drive oil and gas production and which make a Pacific port an attractive idea to Canadian governments and corporations. The lecture features updated opinion polls showing Canadian attitudes towards pipelines, oil and gas expansion, environmental protests and Indigenous communities. Finally, the lecture turns to resistance to the pipeline and fracking expansions, with a particular focus on Indigenous peoples. Students are introduced to the basics of "being Indigenous" (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005) in Canada and the earlier subjects of discussion are then revisited

through concepts of kinship and rituals of renewal, the multiplicity of Indigenous nations and histories of colonization and resistance, and an exploration of several Indigenous communities' differences in opinion and approach to these conflicts. The expertise presented comes from Indigenous communities rather than the lecturer or other settler scholars. The lecture relies on multimedia and internet resources to access direct engagements with Indigenous leaders and representations of Indigenous lands, including at-times harrowing and tense confrontations between Indigenous spokespeople and Canadian political and corporate leaders. Scholars do not need to become experts themselves but rather need to connect students with Indigenous experts. It must be pointed out, however, that this example of a teaching project grew out of the author's own relationships to Indigenous people of the Pacific Northwest from 2004 to 2009, and the selection of this topic is based on a sense of responsibility to that place and to those people. In order to avoid extractivism in the teaching relationship with Indigenous experts, they must first be rooted in some kind of place-relationship resulting in a proven frame-alignment (as in Larsen, 2003).

Fourth, through an increasing emphasis on the generation of institutional income through grant funding, and for that funding to often be delivered through collaborations with non-academic entities (including settler states agencies, resource extraction companies, construction and engineering businesses and the military), there are continued risks that perceived financial benefits outweigh ethical concerns. The impact of this valorisation of academic funding is a negation of work which might be social just, ethical and transformative. Decolonial research operates at smaller scales, with unfunded third-sector organisations, and/or with those actively working against state interests which does not secure significant funding and is therefore undervalued in higher education institutions. There is a collective need to advocate for, protect and support decolonial research and to ensure those who do such work are not penalised through a lack of job security, career progression and disciplinary recognition.

Fifth, as geographers we must abandon preconceptions. We must avoid "rushing in" as recognition politics do, and instead work through the complex relational dynamics of "us AND them". This means that we cannot rely on perceptions of "parallel" or "equivalent" politics. In teaching about the environment, geographers often – and rightly – link colonization, Indigenous interests and environmental destruction. As McLean (2013) has demonstrated, geography education that focuses on environmentalism and even that which centres relationships to land as key to ecological protection often erase Indigenous presence, agency and governance. Well-intentioned environmental education often speaks of "pristine" landscapes or "conservation", while ignoring that the environments under discussion have long been occupied and managed by Indigenous peoples, and that Indigenous communities likely have their own hopes and ambitions for how to live on and with the land.

Sixth, is to engage in the places we are in, where we are from and with which we work. This includes contemporary obligations and those generated through historical colonial ties. For some geographers this requires knowing our treaty obligations, for others it is in building new relationalities to communities surrounding our institutions and to those implicated by our institutions acts and for many it is connecting our work in distant places to our everyday responsibilities. This requires understanding how ongoing colonisation is dispersed through and hidden behind global systems of capitalism,

industrialisation and development and building connections that foster ongoing support for those we research with, reducing extractive research practices and generating solidarities.

Seventh, unsettle our knowledge. Geographers must actively stand with Indigenous colleagues and communities in administrative processes without co-opting Indigenous voices or status, teaching and interactions with students must follow this same framework. That is to say, it cannot be the responsibility of Indigenous scholars to do all the teaching on Indigenous topics; non-Indigenous geographers must centralize Indigenous perspectives and knowledge without centring themselves as experts. It must be made clear to students through the instructional performance that there is an "us and them", that being Indigenous involves unique perspectives. An obvious way of doing this is by centralizing Indigenous knowledge, especially local Indigenous knowledge, in geography teaching and research. In our experiences, pushback on this assertion usually comes in the form of pleading a lack of expertise – which, as Stastny et al. (2016) point out, is a common rhetorical move by settlers to distance themselves from engaging with Indigenous people and histories. The former complaint about lack of expertise is often the focus of human geographers, who tend to view themselves as experts in particular places, peoples or systems and who read the push to centralize Indigenous knowledge as a demand to essentially develop an additional field of expertise. This is part of our demands, not as another form of co-optation but in understanding the necessity to expand and alter our current knowledge and enable the challenges to geography that Indigenous ontologies propose to radically reshape how we approach the many crises of climate change, gender inequity, poverty, etc. The latter complaint is more frequently the focus of physical geographers, whose teaching is equated with science or STEM subjects, rooted in math, chemistry, and engagements with landscape rather than people. Both stances misunderstand the demands of decolonial teaching.

Eighth, drawing on Coulthard's (2014) notion of "righteous resentment" we should harness the power of emotions. Colonizers constantly use emotive and evocative arguments – the "end" of the university, the "destruction" of free speech – and then accuse Indigenous people of being overly emotional about their own peoples' survival. We need to bring a righteous resentment into the committee meetings, into staff meetings with colonial colleagues and into the negotiations between our unions and management. We need to reject the traditional academic dichotomy between dispassionate rationalism and emotional irrationality and instead embrace more holistic and robust approaches to both knowledge production and consensus building. Affect and emotion are already ever present in our institutions; foregrounding this and acting accordingly is necessary to push back against the emotional whitewashing of colonialism.

Finally, as decolonisation is not a metaphor, geographers need to actively work towards supporting land back movements, especially where our institutions are on Indigenous lands. Processes of responsibility start with Indigenous peoples demands for transformation and settlers responding to such calls. We recognize the tendency for settlers to appropriate Indigenous legal orders and over-extend calls for solidarity. The processes of learning, imagining and moving forward together requires settler and Indigenous people to work from their situated positions; for settlers, this work involves unsettling in a myriad of ways; "it is not a reconciliation moment; it is one composed of discomfort, fear and grief" (Birch, 2007, p. 114). While discomfort, fear

and grief, as well as guilt may be inevitable by-products of settler and non-Indigenous engagements with decolonization (Battell Lowman & Barker, 2015), they are also not the point. Rather, the responsibilities we explore here are in relation to Indigenous legal orders, which are inherently tied to lands and waters on which we all rely.

Rather than attempting to decolonize academic institutions or disciplines through decentring and displacing recognitions of colonial difference, settler and non-Indigenous scholars need to pursue decolonial agendas constantly and everywhere, but with continual centring of specific relationships to land and place. These agendas must be "us *and* them" agendas, developed in conjunction with Indigenous and Black scholars and communities and designed to support their needs and focus on their priorities but designed to be aware of the very different positionalities, roles and power of settler and Indigenous scholars in universities. Scholars entangled with settler colonialism (which is most of us in Geography) must self-consciously embody their positionality – as colonial, in need of relationship and in struggle with our own institutions – in order to further occupy a responsible position with respect to Indigenous, Black and people of colour, and a position of agonism to the colonial and neoliberal institution. This is slow work, and relations will vary place by place, but it is only through building geographies of collective responsibility that the discipline will move beyond a superficial approach to decolonisation.

Notes

1. This is very different from the self-conscious identification as "Settler" advocated by decolonial settler Canadian scholars, Emma Battell Lowman and Adam J. Barker (2015). Rather, this is an identity which relies on a fundamental disavowal of Indigenous sovereignty even as Indigenous difference from "us" (the self-identifying settler polity) is recognized.
2. The Canadian Constitution, in Section 35, explicitly states that all prior treaties with Aboriginal nations – including peace and friendship treaties, as well as later named and numbered treaties – are affirmed as part of the constitution.
3. This story, "Land-Grab Universities" was published in a variety of formats by High Country News in 2020, with credit to Robert Lee, Tristan Ahtone, Margaret Pearce, Kalen Goodluck, Geoff McGhee, Cody Leff, Katherine Lanpher and Taryn Salinas as authors. It has currently been compiled as a website at https://landgrabu.org. The project specifically traces lands that were dispossessed following the Morrill Act of 1862.

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