

Indigeneity and US Settler Colonialism
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As a Neshnabé (Potawatomi), living in the US context, Indigenous persons from elsewhere often ask me: “We hear this crazy idea that whether one is Indigenous where you’re from is measured by blood.” Here, “blood” refers to a racial criterion that the US federal government and some US recognized Indigenous political entities use for the purpose of enrollment. Many persons find the use of blood surprising since it seems to defy Indigenous cultural and political self-determination. For many of the Indigenous peoples in North America have rich systems of membership based on family, clan or other kinship identities, culturally-specific processes for being recognized as a community member, and processes appropriate for the ongoing reality that there has been constant intermingling across different peoples and communities (TallBear 2007). Yet blood seems like so much US colonial baggage.

In the US context, Indigenous identity presents many difficulties in addition to blood, ranging from peculiar census definitions to accusations of identity fraud. I will discuss in this essay a brief outline of my view that these difficulties are oppressive dilemmas and disappearances that are built into those structures of US settler colonialism that seek to erase us in our own homelands. Looking forward, I will appeal to Kim TallBear’s work, which I will interpret in relation to my own work on environmental justice, to suggest at least one possible alternative for addressing issues associated with Indigeneity and settler erasure.

Difficulties with Imposed Indigenous Identities

The issue of whether someone is Indigenous produces many difficulties. Here I will merely gloss a wide range of difficulties in very broad strokes, which means readers should take these examples as merely illustrative and by no means adequate in relation to all the facts, intricacies, interpretations and literatures on the topic. To begin with, when people refer to “degree of Indian blood,” they are usually referring to qualifications needed to enroll in a US federal program or in an Indigenous political entity that are based on someone’s being of the “Indian” or “Native American” race. Yet recognition by an Indigenous political entity, such as a US federally-recognized Tribe (e.g. Citizen Potawatomi Nation or Navajo Nation), or by a US federal program is not necessarily the same as belonging to an Indigenous people. For example, someone could be Potawatomi genetically, self-reportedly or as identified by a community, but not qualify for enrollment in a Tribe or federal program. One reason why this can be the case is that many federally-recognized Tribal governments stem from US policies in particular time periods, such as the 1930s, when the US pressured Tribes to adopt certain governmental structures and membership criteria. The US policies in the 1930s meant to facilitate the leasing of Indigenous homelands to extractive industries, such as oil. Hence, they cannot be considered as attempting to honor the family, cultural or political systems of membership created outside the context of colonialism (Rusco 2000; Taylor 1980; Spruhan 2006). Moreover, methods of documenting someone’s being partly or wholly of the Indian race are often ridiculous, such as historic cases where settlers used visual cues (Spruhan 2006).

Many Tribes since the 1970s are contesting Indian blood criteria and favoring more genealogical forms of “Tribal” blood or lineal descent that rely on a persons’ being able to trace their ancestry to records that are used for determining whether someone is a member of a very particular Indigenous political entity, such as the Citizen Potawatomi Nation or Hannahville

Indian Community (Gover 2008). Again, these genealogical forms of Indigeneity can be problematic given the ultimate origins of some of these political entities are as business enterprises. Indigenous political entities can view membership through the lens of business interests and economic development strategies tied to US colonialism. Today, some Tribes have changed their membership criteria to reduce total members so as to preserve a larger share of economic revenues, hence disenrolling some persons who had been members since birth. But there is also another side of the story. Some Tribes have elected to increase their total membership to take advantage of political, cultural and economic opportunities associated with having larger official citizenries, sometimes seeing the expansion of membership as better honoring traditional or simply more favorable kinship systems (Doerfler 2013). Owing to changes in membership criteria, someone who has always been Indigenous may be enrolled, unenrolled and disenrolled at various times during their life.

Indian blood and membership in a Tribal political entity are both used in a variety of contexts today. Some federal programs, such as Haskell Indian Nations University, require all candidates to be an “enrolled or official member of a Federally recognized tribe eligible for education benefits from the Bureau of Indian Affairs or at least one-fourth total degree Indian blood direct descendant of an enrolled member of a tribe eligible for BIA education benefits.” State programs, such as the Michigan Indian tuition waiver, require Tribes to send letters that “certify that the above named applicant is $\frac{1}{4}$ (one quarter) or more degree of Indian blood quantum according to the available Tribal and/or Federal records. AND... certify that the above named applicant is an enrolled member of this Tribe, which is US Federally Recognized.” In all the forms of membership just described, Indigeneity is related in some way to the structure of US federal or state programs or Indigenous political entities whose systems of governance are deeply

influenced by the US. Controversies often ensue when Tribal membership criteria are systematically harmful to certain populations, such as when the children of women who marry outside of the Tribe cannot enroll, whereas those of out-marrying men can enroll or in the case of Tribes who seek to disenroll descendants of people who the US enslaved and who became Tribal members in the 19th century.

There are many understandings of what Indigeneity could mean that cannot be systematized because they correspond to understandings of Tribal identity that are not tied to US colonial criteria or to that of a specific Indigenous political entity. Consider some examples. Being Indigenous could have to do with being from a particular parentage that identifies with a particular Tribal band, clan or set of families. These bands, clans or families are not constitutive of any political entity and the individuals in them are not formally enrolled. Being Indigenous could stem from being part of an urban community in which one was identified as Native American by both outsiders based on visual interpretation and/or by others who identify as Native American in relation to their involvement in an urban Indian center. People sometimes use the expression “phenotypically white” or “phenotypically black,” and so on, to describe persons who are Indigenous but who strangers interpret visually as belonging to another group.

Being Indigenous could also be based on knowing that one was adopted but not knowing from what Tribe, and hence being unable to enroll in any particular Indigenous political entity. Or, one’s family could have practiced certain customs in a particular area for some time, but no family members are enrolled. Persons may not have any customary knowledge of their specific Indigenous groups, although they grew up in a reservation area with many American Indians. There are ways that Indigenous people relate to each other that are understood as Indigenous but that are not historically customary, such as a certain sense of humor and way of speaking, Pan-

Indian powwow culture or a more recently adopted religion such as the Native American Church or Big Drum. Or someone may base their Indian identity on having been identified visually by others as Indigenous their entire lives, whether they grew up on reservations, were adopted, or were raised in areas with few Indigenous persons or communities. Some people simply identify as belonging to their particular community or nation (e.g. Potawatomi), instead of as “American Indian” or “Indigenous,” which often pays respect to the colonial idea that so many different peoples are constantly lumped into one. Yet for others, “indigenous” is empowering because it denotes shared experiences of a common form of oppression.

At the United Nations, since the 1970s Indigenous peoples have established a Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues, an Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, a Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and numerous caucuses, reports and declarations. These institutions and discourses have established definitions of “Indigenous” that are voluntary and refer to a particular social situation that many groups in the world face. Indigenous peoples are typically defined as societies whose self-governance precedes a period of invasion, colonialization, or settlement by other groups and who now live in territories—now controlled by nation states—in which they are the nondominant societies. Indigenous peoples often seek to continue to exercise self-determination, both culturally and politically, in the midst of the power wielded by such nation states.

There are further distinctions in the U.S regarding Indigenous political entities. A person can have membership, based on some criterion, in a state-recognized Tribal government or an unrecognized Tribal government that seeks to be recognized by the US federal government or a US state. Unrecognized and state-recognized Tribes may fail to have the documentation needed to qualify for US federal recognition simply because they were historically trying to remain

underneath the radar of settler populations or did not interact through treaties or in other ways with the US settler state. Switching to transnational issues, a person might identify as Potawatomi, for example, but live on the Canadian side of the international border, on Bkejwanong Territory (Walpole Island First Nation). The Potawatomi do not respect the significance of the US/Canadian border because they did not consent to that border as a divider between Potawatomi peoples. Yet I am aware of cases I at least find deeply disturbing, such as one in which a federally recognized Tribe sought to reduce membership by excluding “blood from Canada.”

Native Hawaiians are Indigenous peoples who do not share the same US government status as “mainland” federally-recognized Tribes and there is an active discussion among Native Hawaiians regarding the best way to interact with the US settler state (Van Dyke 1998). There are also differences with wide ranging ramifications between Native Americans and Alaska Natives that are due, again, to US policies. Hispano acequia communities in the Southwest US have water use rights (e.g. the state of Colorado’s Acequia Recognition Law of 2009) through the acequia system (irrigation for agriculture), which raises comparable issues to American Indian rights that preexist the formation of the US or statehood in those regions (Hicks and Peña 2003). Such political distinctions go on *ad infinitum*. These political distinctions, from federally recognized Tribes to Native Hawaiians, make it difficult for certain kinds of Indigenous political solidarity to form since the different Indigenous political entities negotiate different US structures and institutions.

Fraudulent claims to Indigeneity is another longstanding issue affecting many Native communities. For example, in the late 19th century in Indian Territory (now the US state of Oklahoma and home to 39 Tribes), many settler Americans identified as members of particular

Tribes so that that they could live in areas that were designated mainly for Indians (Debo 1972). There are also historical trends of settler populations “playing Indian,” or taking on Indian identities that were otherwise uncommon in their everyday lives (Deloria 1998). These “imposters” have, in some cases, been able to purchase and control traditional lands, with ensuing bad relations with nearby Tribes who have rejected their claims to Indigeneity.

There are recent controversies about pointing out that people, especially scholars, activists and politicians, who have identified as Native American, have no claim to Indigenous identity in *any* of the senses described earlier. Here I choose not to name any particular people or cases out of respect for the complexity of these cases. Suffice it to say that in many cases, people have claimed to be enrolled in Tribes in which they were not enrolled. Or they have claimed to be Native American in the other senses described earlier, but friends and colleagues remember a time when they identified as white, black or another racial identity. Or, some people have parents, grandparents and siblings who identify as something else, such as Latino or white, but one person identifies as Indian publically. Ethically thorny issues arise when people who identify fraudulently often have no connections with the communities that they claim to represent and are often considered to be taking opportunities for representation from others with social connections to particular communities or who have been chosen legitimately by those communities as representatives.

There are in addition widespread problems with how census surveyors and scientists identify Indigenous persons. In the US census, there is complexity relating to whether people who check boxes really count as Indigenous, if they are doing so only because they have a tenuous family story of American Indian heritage. Reviewing the 2010 US Census, philosopher Sean Valles argues that Indigenous identity is classified in US using inconsistent and

burdensome standards. The federal demographic standards for who qualifies as “American Indian” are different from all other racial categories. While every racial category is based on one’s “origins” in certain “peoples” (e.g. white is defined by “having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa”), only “American Indian or Alaska Native” has the additional requirement that one also “maintains tribal affiliation or community attachment,” a social component more appropriate for an ethnicity classification than a race classification. This two-factor standard can conflict with Indian or Tribal blood standards used to determine Indigenous identity in many Tribal or federal contexts. It also has troubling implications for those it excludes: for example, a person born of two American Indian parents, but raised without any social or psychological connections to American Indian communities, does not qualify for *any* of the federal census race classifications (aside from “Other”). Meanwhile, Native Hawaiians are put into a separate racial grouping, splitting the indigenous US population (For a partial discussion of this view, see Valles, Bhopal, and Aspinall 2015; Humes, Jones, and Ramirez 2011).

Scientists have often defined Indigenous groups as historic societies that are no longer in existence and whose genetic diversity is dying out. There can be political controversy based on how various scientific definitions can serve to sever contemporary Indigenous peoples from their lands and ancestors. Much is at stake if Indigenous peoples cannot exercise rights to territories, resources, human remains, burial locations, archeological sites, cultural artifacts, and so on, that are still connected to their contemporary cultural expressions, projects of cultural reconstruction and political sovereignty (TallBear 2013) .

Indigeneity and Settler Erasure

The difficulties described above can be understood as so many dilemmas and disappearances that Indigenous persons face when we attempt to define ourselves in relation to US colonialism. I will define dilemma and disappearance later in this section as forms of erasure tied to settler colonialism. I will suggest that we can begin to solve these problems once we recognize that some of the most vicious conflicts are products of settler colonialism as a structure of oppression against Indigenous peoples (Lefevre 2015). That is, these dilemmas and disappearances are not primarily philosophically puzzling; more significantly, their continued existence serves to advance settler colonial oppression.

Indigenous peoples in the US sphere face a particular form of oppression that I will refer to as *industrial settler colonialism*. To understand this form of oppression, I will need to start with a few claims about the history of Indigenous self-governance in North America. Indigenous peoples practiced a wide range of governance systems and adapted to many changes over the course of many hundreds of years in North America. Indigenous self-governance differed greatly from European political traditions. For example, Anishinaabe peoples (including Ojibwe, Ottawa and Potawatomi societies) practiced a seasonal round system of self-governance, in which structures of political authority changed throughout the year depending on what people believed to be the best way to steward ecosystems for optimal harvesting of plants and animals, with multispecies forms of responsibility connected to clan and family systems (Davidson-Hunt and Berkes 2003; Benton-Benai 1988). These systems of government were part of what made North America a homeland for many Indigenous peoples. Europeans who came to North America did not intend *only* to extract resources to their metropolises and then leave. Rather, many of the Europeans intended to stay, and to make North America their homeland. For this reason, the term “settler colonialism” best applies to what happens here in the US sphere. Indigenous peoples not

only negotiate the struggle to control “natural resources.” Rather, they have to negotiate the struggle of another people coming to make a homeland for themselves within Indigenous homelands.

One should not underestimate the physicality and scale of the US settler homeland creation process. Europeans, and eventually US Americans, had to physically shape the lands and waters to reflect their future aspirations and fears, economic systems, cultures, ways of life and heritages. They literally had to carve out, or inscribe, a homeland for themselves, within a territory whose ecosystems were already coupled with the social, political and cultural institutions of different populations (e.g. the Anishinaabe seasonal round system). Moreover, for many people who want a territory to be a homeland for themselves, they have to be able to claim it as a place. That is, they have to make themselves believe that they are the “Indigenous” inhabitants of that region. So the homeland process involves the creation or adaptation of stories, customs, histories, and so on, that justify settlers’ own desires to have the right to live there and to make their occupation an inevitable part of their heritage and future trajectory.

The “industrial” aspect of this process has involved and continues to involve the ways that capitalism and other economic forms exploit natural and human resources as part of the support-system for settler homeland inscription, maintenance, and development. Lacking long-term knowledge of the ecosystem and applying their own understandings from elsewhere to the land, they established large-scale industrial agriculture, factories, transportation systems, and hydro-technologies such as dams. These technological systems replaced Indigenous technological systems, altering the ecosystems through clearing land, pollution and the construction of barriers and arteries (e.g. roads, pipelines and dams). At the same time, industrial processes gradually distanced many settlers from an awareness of how their societies were based

on these forms of natural, animal and human resource exploitation. For many industrial processes take place on lands where the predominate populations are Indigenous or people of color, or the labor required for certain industries, such as large agriculture, stems from migrant populations. Industrial settler colonialism, hence, obscures its own support systems.

In this sense, settler colonialism is not fundamentally a discursive construct or mental state (Tuck and Yang 2012). Rather, industrial settler colonialism is a physical, material and ecological excavation that can ground and provide evidence for the discursive constructs and mental states of settlers. For example, discourses such as US agrarian myths, with obligations to till the land, find their value when one clears the land for agriculture from another's land that has not been used that way. When we fly over large parts of the United States, the land is visible as the ongoing quest to fulfill a specific agricultural vision. The patchwork of fields, farms, and small towns is often considered to be "beautiful" by many settlers or emblematic of something else of value, such as "feeding the world" or "growth." Someone once told me that the only way to see "real America" was to take back highways through small towns in the "breadbasket" of the US and "New England." We can compare, at least using our imagination, how the "patchwork" sections of North America would have looked like from an airplane angle when they were under Indigenous systems of self-government—for example, for Anishinaabe seasonal round system of self-governance.

The form of oppression, then, associated with industrial settler colonialism is that settler societies seek to *erase* Indigenous peoples, and in a number of ways: physically, "ecosystemically," discursively, culturally, and so forth. When one views the land today, one no longer sees very many signs of Indigenous peoples. Instead, one sees the physical manifestations of US settler society, whether that includes miles and miles of industrial agriculture in the

Midwest or urban neighborhoods dotted with coffee shops and restaurants or massive military industrial or petrochemical complexes that stretch out over miles in order to manufacture weapons or produce fuel. Settler colonialism is not confined to the first generation of settlers; rather, it is the people today too—and of nearly all political leanings—who continue to shape the physical landscape to make the land their homeland—and in the process erase Indigenous peoples.

One of the key structural features of industrial settler colonialism is to facilitate erasure through the establishment of dilemmas and disappearances. Disappearances are direct productions of ignorance that render Indigenous peoples invisible in their own homelands. One can locate these disappearances in technologies of disappearing themselves. For example, the US public school curriculum typically does not feature any material on Indigenous peoples. In cases where it does, they are often discriminatory, such as the California “missions” assignment that students in California often do in 4th grade that involves visiting a Spanish mission. In this assignment, they become acquainted with religious and philanthropic efforts to “develop” the region for settlement. This notion of “development” is a technology of disappearing that disappears the already existing and thriving Indigenous peoples in the land and the implication of some of the missions in genocide for the sake of centering settler discourses.

Boarding schools, which in the US functioned in the 19th and 20th centuries, and forced relocation, such as US sponsored Indian removal in the 19th century and urban relocation in the 20th century, are another such technology. They sought to strip Indigenous peoples of their languages, cultures, and ways of life. The failure of many settlers to see Tribes as sovereigns with legitimate Tribal police and courts having jurisdiction over their actions is another technology. For example, this issue has put Native women at great risk of being raped with

impunity by non-Tribal members (Deer 2004). All of these things, and many more besides, are technologies of disappearance that feed into settler erasure of Indigenous persons.

Dilemmas involve impositions of choices on Indigenous peoples in which each decision option will produce erasure. Consider what some call the cultural dilemma in Tribal environmental governance. Since the mid-1970s, the US created a policy establishing that the US will respect Tribal governments' environmental regulation of their lands in the same way that US states do, by developing regulatory agencies that take over federal programs, such as clean air or clean water. For Tribes who have struggled to protect their lands in ways that are appropriate to their communities, this policy provides an opportunity to advance political self-determination in ways that are enforceable. Yet, Tribes must qualify for certain standards set by states in order to achieve the status of being able to have their own agencies. This creates a choice for many Tribes, between doing things their own ways, but not having any enforceable regulatory authority, or having enforceable regulatory authority but following the standards of the US. Either way represents problems that lead to the erasure of Indigenous peoples, whether they retain distinct forms of government, or adapt to governments the US recognizes. Resistance can spell great hardship for governments the US subsequently fails to recognize; conformity destroys distinct Indigenous forms of government, homogenizing them with Western bureaucratic structures that may not be best for addressing key social, health, cultural, environmental and other issues that Indigenous peoples face uniquely (Ranco et al. 2011)

While I cannot go into detail at all, it should at least be apparent that the difficulties with Indigenous identity can be looked at as disappearances and dilemmas too that contribute to settler erasure. Consider the topic of racial definitions of Indigeneity taken up earlier. These definitions of Indian blood disappear the social, cultural, and political (sovereign) aspects of

Indigenous peoples, thereby erasing Indigenous collective life and self-governance in the US. Historically, degree of Indian blood was used to exclude Indigenous peoples from having civil rights during the 1700s. The federal government privileged Indians with more white blood with rights, such as having “wardship” restrictions removed or being able to sell property (Spruhan 2006). One can imagine the dilemma this put people in regarding the consequences of how they sought to identify themselves.

In other cases, census and scientific definitions of Indigeneity disappear connections between Native Americans and Native Hawaiians or exclude Indigenous histories of their connections to their own ancestors. Due to technologies of disappearing, people who misrepresent their Indigenous identity are often able to succeed in doing so because academic, political and other institutions are not accountable to Indigenous peoples. Many Indigenous political identities, such as US federally-recognized Tribal governments, are torn over whether to establish membership eligibility at $\frac{1}{4}$ Tribal blood or lineal descent Tribal blood (descent from a single ancestor on a base roll often going as far back as 80-100 years). As Tribes must abide by the US imposed rule that one cannot be a member of more than one federally-recognized Tribe, then eligibility at $\frac{1}{4}$ Tribal blood threatens to reduce the Tribe to few members; yet lineal descent could authorize people as bona fide and voting Tribal members who never identified as Indigenous their entire lives. At the same time, some Indigenous peoples may find it not worth making certain tradeoffs or simply impractical to reestablish traditional forms of community and political membership. For these forms may not be respected politically by the US (which, suffice to say here for readers unfamiliar with this issue, can have multiple harmful cultural, political and economic consequences) and the cultural and environmental conditions needed for their

performance may be compromised through settler tactics such as assimilation through boarding schools and forced relocation.

Indigeneity

The debates, conflicts, and misuses of concepts of Indigeneity described earlier serve to erase us as Indigenous peoples in our own homelands, but there are alternatives, one of which I will sketch here in the concluding section that is inspired by Kim TallBear's work. While I cannot explore all of the philosophical issues of this way of thinking about Indigeneity, I do want provide some general gestures showing why this is a potential alternative.

Kim TallBear writes that “Indigenous peoples themselves also privilege biological connection to ancestors (alongside connection to land), but they have evolved a more multifaceted definition of ‘indigenous’ that entangles political self-determination and mutual networking for survival in a global world” (TallBear 2013, 2). For TallBear, Indigeneity is a complex project geared toward responding to the situations that particular groups face in exercising self-governance in a settler landscape—though biology is not excluded as a significant criterion. She goes on to state that “in many countries... greater numbers claim that identity category because it captures their social relationships to place, to settler or more powerful states, and to one another.” Land, or the environment, is particularly important in TallBear's analysis: “For indigenous peoples, location is not simply an aid to tracking the movements of human bodies and relationships of markers. Rather, indigenous peoples understand themselves to have emerged as coherent groups and cultures in intimate relationship with particular places, especially living and sacred landscapes” (TallBear 2013, 2).

For me, as an environmental justice scholar, a key idea in TallBear's theory is that our discussions of Indigenous identity should start with Indigenous self-governance and land. The self-governance aspect involves the idea that Indigeneity is about the collective actions of groups of people to address the problems of industrial settler colonialism, instead of a matter of determining whether a particular individual qualifies as "Indian" based on the criteria valued by, for example, some program. Starting from the environment is important, because industrial settler colonialism physically carves up the land so that it no longer resembles the homelands of people beyond the settler populations. That is, Indigeneity has to be taken up as a project that seeks, in a variety of ways, to challenge the ecological aspects of colonialism and their impact on Indigenous self-determination. Given that industrial settler colonialism is, in a large part, ecological, this way of thinking about Indigenous identity suggests that at least some of the solutions have to be ecological too. For unsettling industrial settler colonialism must change the relationships between humans, plants and animals, physical features of the land and ecosystems.

Yet as an ecological phenomenon, there is also an obstinacy to some forms of industrial-settler colonialism that cannot be simply reversed in the short term or at all. That is, it will be impossible to select some time slice of Indigenous society and re-instantiate that temporal period in the future. This understanding of land-based projects does not exclude the variety of Indigenous persons, from those living on or around reservations, to urban Indians, to LGBTQ communities. All Indigenous persons struggle with issues of space and geography as a product of industrial settler colonialism. So collective actions involving land-based practices that address industrial settler colonialism are not limited to certain types of peoples or communities.

In my own work, for example, I frequently write about cases in which Indigenous peoples seek to define Indigeneity through collective actions that promote self-governance and land-

based practices that aim at restoring genealogical moral connections among people, nonhumans and places. Consider one example briefly. The Little River Band of Odawa Indians (LRBOI) near what is now referred to by most as the US state of Michigan sought restore the sturgeon population in its watershed because the fish is a substantial source of food, an indicator species for monitoring the environment, a clan identity and an integral part of ceremonies. Sturgeon required restoration because industrial settler colonialism, through over-harvesting, dams, stocking rivers with non-native fish species for sport fishing, and land-use change, destroyed the population. The destruction led both to the decline of their own community members living in the region and created long term conflicts with the settler population (Mitchell 2013; Holtgren 2013).

Over a decade ago, LRBOI's Natural Resources Department sought to address settler erasure through designing a restoration project that connects Ottawa traditions of sturgeon, scientific research controlled by the Tribe, the reassertion of Ottawa self-governance over conservation in the watershed, and education of settler populations. For example, annually in September, a collective action in the form of a public ceremony occurs for releasing sturgeon back to the river that involves a pipe ceremony and feast. Each attendee returns young sturgeon in a bucket into the river. Today, this event can attract hundreds of attendees from all over the watershed. The participants, including many children, begin to feel a sense of responsibility for sturgeon restoration and conservation and an appreciation for Ottawa culture and self-governance. This is especially significant in a watershed involving human conflict and where Indigenous persons were beginning to return to live. Winona LaDuke, speaking of sturgeon restoration for her Tribe (White Earth Ojibwe), writes "Maybe the fish will help a diverse set of

people work together to make something right. . . .The fish help us remember all of those relations, and in their own way, help us recover ourselves” (LaDuke 1999: 41–42).

The understanding of Indigeneity in this example goes beyond issues of the ascription of Indigeneity to individual persons and instead engages concepts of Indigeneity through land-based collective actions. While it is true that for many of these Indigenous peoples biological ancestry and other criteria that were discussed earlier will figure in determinations of membership and identity; it is also true that these projects are invested in more expansive objectives of Indigeneity that seek to undermine structures of industrial settler colonialism. Indigenous or other persons who are not members of the particular Tribes mentioned, or members of settler populations, can and are expected to learn from and contribute to these projects—though they do not, of course, somehow become members of the particular Tribes by doing so. This way of thinking about Indigenous identity focuses our attention on addressing the problems of industrial settler colonialism, as opposed to debating who is or is not Indigenous and hence playing into the disappearances and dilemmas of settler erasure. While so much more can be written at this point, I hope to have established in brief that there is at least one good alternative—among possibly many others—to thinking about Indigeneity that can contribute to Indigenous self-determination.

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