

Stringing moments into *a* process of decolonial solidarity: Working through settler complicities
in moments of collaboration with Kahnawa'kehró:non and interactions with one settler

by

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English Abstract

In the last six years, I have been involved in relationships with three women in Kahnawà:ke. We have developed an education research ethics policy, a community-based project that has been a high priority for Kahnawà:ke's Education Center. This collaborative context informs this research. What does it mean to support decolonization, as a settler, in account of the fact that projects of resistance like the research ethics policy aim to defy the colonial relation and uplift the self-determination of the people of Kahnawà:ke ? Part of this research offers an examination of the *pressure points* that have impinged on relationship-building processes within and beyond this formal collaboration. By revisiting specific moments of tension with three women from Kahnawà:ke, I aim to unearth how I have perpetrated modalities of conquest that might appear to be insignificant because of our overall positive collaborative experience. Yet, in this research, I argue that these subtle forms of *settler complicity* can call settler people to account for the mundane and systemic ways in which our understandings and intentions might be disconnected from our discursive practices in real time. I examine my own discursive practices to name and work through these contradictory gaps and, in this way, *model a practice of working through settler complicities*. I also invite a settler male who is part of my everyday life to revisit moments of contention where we have individually and collectively perpetrated modalities of conquest *while* getting away from having to examine this complicity given our settler privilege. I consider that my commitment to support the self-determination of Kahnawa'kehrónon through formal collaborations requires me to reverse-the-gaze on myself and my own community of settlers, and ask: how do colonial modalities of conquest take root in our settler ways of being and knowing? Thus, by also revisiting moments of contention with one settler, I examine our discursive practices to unearth how we co-enable each other to reproduce modalities of conquest that inform dispossession—even when we aim to be critical of white supremacy. Ultimately, I show how, if processes of dispossession are active always and everywhere—in structural and mundane ways—settlers must engage in processes of **decolonial solidarity** that are *continuous* across time and space, and not just when Indigenous peoples are watching us.

French Abstract

Au cours des six dernières années, j'ai participé au développement d'une relation avec trois femmes à Kahnawà:ke. Nous avons élaboré une politique d'éthique concernant la recherche en éducation, un projet communautaire qui a été une grande priorité pour le centre d'éducation de Kahnawà:ke. Ce contexte collaboratif informe cette recherche. Que signifie soutenir la décolonisation, en tant que colon, compte tenu du fait que des projets de résistance comme cette politique d'éthique visent à défier la relation coloniale et à élever l'autodétermination du peuple de Kahnawà:ke ? Une partie de cette recherche propose une investigation **des points de pression** qui ont empiété sur l'établissement de relations au sein et au-delà de cette collaboration formelle. En revisitant des moments de tension spécifiques avec trois femmes de Kahnawà:ke, je vise à découvrir comment j'ai perpétré des **modalités de conquête** qui pourraient sembler insignifiantes en raison de notre expérience collaborative globalement positive. Pourtant, dans cette recherche, je soutiens que ces formes subtiles de **complicité des colons** peuvent amener les colons à rendre compte des manières banales et systémiques par lesquelles nos compréhensions et nos intentions pourraient être déconnectées de nos pratiques en temps réel. J'examine mes propres pratiques

pour nommer et travailler à travers ces lacunes contradictoires et, de cette manière, **modéliser une pratique travers laquelle travailler à travers les complicités des colons**. J'invite également un homme colon qui fait partie de mon quotidien à revisiter des moments de discorde où nous avons perpétré individuellement et collectivement des modalités de conquête tout en s'évitant d'avoir à examiner cette complicité compte tenu de notre privilège. Je considère que mon engagement à soutenir l'autodétermination de Kahnawa'kehró: non par des collaborations formelles m'oblige à inverser le regard sur moi-même et sur ma propre communauté de colons, et à me demander : comment les modalités coloniales de conquête s'enracinent-elles dans notre manières d'être et de savoir des colons ? Ainsi, en revisitant également les moments de discorde avec un colon, j'examine nos pratiques pour découvrir comment nous nous permettons mutuellement de reproduire des modalités de conquête qui informent la dépossession - même lorsque nous visons à critiquer la suprématie blanche. En fin de compte, je montre comment, si les processus de dépossession sont actifs toujours et partout - de manière structurelle et banale - les colons doivent s'engager dans des processus de **solidarité décoloniale** qui sont **continus** à travers le temps et l'espace, et pas seulement lorsque les peuples autochtones nous regardent.

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First and foremost, I acknowledge Kahtehrón:ni Stacey for her friendship across the last six years. Thank you for your openness from the very first day and for inspiring conversations that you always rooted in the well-being of your community. Thank you for caring about my interests, for always having a way of leaving things open, to see where they take us. Where we are now, it could not have happened without you.

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I acknowledge Sandra-Lynn Léclaire for being a critical voice in the ideas that I was trying to understand. In formal and informal talks, you have always had a natural pedagogical touch, asking tough questions with so much depth. Thank you for your patience and involvement in our “intellectual exercises”, for your openness in discussing terms and questions that I know bring out different stakes for the two of us.

I acknowledge Adrianna Poulette for coming in with the gift of “words in a few sentences”. Since you came in to advise us on the organization, language, and length of the research ethics policy, you have inspired me to think about the audience of this work more than you know. Thank you for your support as the Education Research Coordinator for some time, before Wahéhshon followed in your steps.

I acknowledge many more people in Kahnawà:ke, particularly in Kahnawà:ke’s Education Center. Whenever we have crossed paths, although you have not participated in this research formally, I recognize the small conversations and moments that we spent together.

I acknowledge my husband, Mark Yeramian, who has literally been my shadow throughout this work. Thank you for always reminding me of the importance of this work, and for telling me to take the time that I needed to do it well. I appreciate your openness to hold hands in this journey and for agreeing to participate in this research. You will never know how crucial you have been.

I acknowledge my Supervisor, Mela Sarkar, for agreeing to guide me in this journey. Thank you for your patience and kind way of saying, “shorten this and remove that”. Thank you for your openness in supporting a project that I know was confusing and ever-changing.

I acknowledge Dr. Philip Howard and Dr. Louellyn White for agreeing to be a part of my Supervisory Committee. Philip, you have been a teacher to me, from the moment I took your Critical Race Theory Course to today, thank you for your thoughtful feedback, for modelling the value in trying to see complexity in the work that we do. Louellyn, thank you for our work outside of this context, for agreeing to continue our relationship in this way, for coming in and saying, “where are the grounding pieces throughout the writing?”.

I acknowledge my mamá and papá: Gracias por su amor tan enorme, el cual siempre he visto reflejado en mi interior, en la necesidad de hacer las cosas bien siguiendo el ejemplo de Jesús quien me ha acompañado a través de todo.

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I acknowledge my mother and mother-in-law for taking the time to read my dissertation, for calling me with questions and poignant thoughts, for helping me prepare for the defence. I admire your commitment to grapple with this work and for thinking about our/your responsibilities in decolonial solidarity.

And finally, to my little daughter, Grace. For coming towards the end of the writing process and giving me new energy to go on. From the womb, you have been with me in the last stretches.

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Dedication

Para el nonnino, Toni D'Amico, quien amó escribir cuentos del Oso Bianco para sus nietos. Y para la nonnina, Ofelia Cantón, quien siempre ha continuado la magia del nonno en su caridad.

Trigger warning

As the settler who authors this work, I have written this work thinking of settlers like me—the intended audience for this dissertation. However, I acknowledge that this work might be read by Indigenous peoples and non-settler peoples (a term that I unpack throughout this work). Thus, I would like to acknowledge that this dissertation holds sensitive content that, through my privileged position, I have been able to engage and write without the emotional and material frictions underlying the singular experiences of Indigenous peoples and non-settler peoples. I acknowledge that this work can have varied effects on diversely positioned readers and that although this understanding has also informed methodical decisions throughout the writing, I recognize that this work is inherently rooted in frictions. I acknowledge that my understanding of settler colonialism and developing stance on key concepts—such as conquest, “the settler”, decolonial solidarity, and settler complicities—can interpellate people distinctly. My hope is that this work will continue to pave the way for ongoing conversations that can yield robust understandings of settler peoples’ responsibilities to Indigenous peoples in formal contexts of collaboration, but also across everyday life where land theft and dispossession are ongoing.

I also wish to acknowledge that in addition to benefitting from the guidance of my Supervisory Committee at McGill, I have benefitted from the guidance of four women from Kahnawà:ke (three of whom are also participants in this work). These women have guided my choice of local terminology, and I will indicate an explanation of such terminology in footnotes wherever needed. While these women’s ongoing feedback has helped shape this work, I am the one who takes responsibility for the ideas presented here. Finally, to any community members from Kahnawà:ke who might come across this work, I want to acknowledge that I do not claim a totalizing description of community dynamics and that, when this topic is part of my discussion, I root the conversation in the relationships that have informed the writing. Always, I will remain open to being contacted by anyone who desires to reach out.

Chapter 1: The roots of this work

1.1 Pressure points and gaps

“When mentioned in many Indigenous contexts, [the word research] stirs up silence, it conjures up bad memories, it raises a smile that is knowing and distrustful” (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2021, p.1).

In her most recent book edition, Linda Tuhiwai-Smith (2021) writes that one of the most quoted ideas of her book *Decolonizing Methodologies* is that research is “one of the dirtiest words” for Indigenous peoples (see p. xi). It is an idea that conveys how knowledge and knowledge-producing dynamics have been used as tools of conquest to misrepresent Indigenous peoples, as well as their histories, knowledges, and relationship-based ways of living with the Natural world and with each other¹. As a settler, I have contemplated how to approach research alongside Indigenous peoples in non-extractive ways. Settler researchers who have come before me have illustrated their efforts at sustaining respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples and communities (e.g., Brophey, 2011; Brophey & Raptis, 2016; Peters, 2017). They have inspired me to think about research as an activity wherein to slow things down—or rather, slow down academic timelines—to make space for relationship-building, and to let that process guide the research, whatever it may be, if research is the desired outcome. This important guiding point has also spoken to me when I have read the work of Indigenous scholars whose voices echo in my head as difficult questions. I have specifically reflected about how to meaningfully respond to their relational-based approaches in research and in life (Absolon, 2011) while remaining

¹ Shawn Wilson (2008) traces the history of research and knowledge to the physical dispossession of Indigenous peoples in chapter three of his book *Research is Ceremony*. For example, he writes that settler anthropologists “hacked away” information about Indigenous life, which served to misinform colonial policies of assimilation: “...behind each policy and program with which Indians are plagued, if traced completely back to its origin, stands the anthropologist” (p. 81).

grounded in my responsibility to mirror back a practice of grappling: grappling with the gaps that exist in my intentions of relationality and decolonial solidarity and the ways in which I still will go on to reproduce modes of colonization. Leanne Simpson (2017) explains that recognition in Nishnaabewin is about looking at oneself while reflecting back to others who they are (pp. 180-181). Looking in the mirror and mirroring back is about “working to see the energy they put into the universe through their interactions with the land, themselves, their family, and their community” (p. 181). This recognition is seen in the reciprocity conveyed in the idea that, “in hearing others speak, we must also share of ourselves and of our stories” (Kovach, 2022, p. 99). But the tension that persists for me is reflected in the understanding that, as a settler, I cannot simply adopt Indigenous practices and protocols and presume that I am doing better than former researchers whose practices reflected a sheer disregard for Indigenous ways of being and knowing. Simpson seems to be pointing out to the ways in which her people, as other Indigenous peoples do in their own ways, engage in mutual forms of recognition as a way of nurturing and strengthening wherever and whatever might need nurturing and strengthening *because colonization is ongoing*. So, as a settler, my way of engaging in respectful recognition with Indigenous peoples is by acknowledging and following their leadership in our collaborations but while mirroring back a practice of grappling: of grappling with the structural and idiosyncratic ways in which a *multidimensional* settler colonial order might take root in my discourses and practices, despite knowing better, despite my intentions, and irrespective of the consent-based relationships in which Indigenous peoples and I might engage.

How might settlers variously become tempted to forget the larger context of settler colonialism and “focus on the equality” that we experience “in the working relationship” (Heart, Rowe, Straka, 2016, p. 11)? How is this form of forgetting connected to settler subjectivities and

emotions that reflect guilt and shame about our settler positionings? How and when does a privileged lens become manifested as power and dominance in settler practices and discourses? In what ways do settler ways of being and knowing clash with Indigenous peoples' ways of being and knowing? Do these clashings register for settlers? And when they do, how do we respond in ways that reflect depth and complexity rather than hasty resolutions rooted in a need for emotional stability? Can we aspire to aim for the former without the latter shortcomings?

These questions reflect *pressure points* that can be exhausting to look for, entertain, and examine. Part of the exhaustion is the result of just how complexly enmeshed settler ways of being, knowing, understanding, thinking, feeling, experiencing are with the structural but also mundane nature of settler colonial conquest, dispossession, racism, patriarchy, capitalism, exploitation. The entanglement is itself experienced as a tension, a pressure point, when settler people have the intention and knowledge of how important it is to invest in relationship-building with Indigenous peoples and yet feel, at the same time, our own limitations at responding with consistent and *purely decolonial* practices of accountability. Can we aspire to articulate pure forms of decolonial solidarity? And if we know we cannot, are we not responsible for grappling with this limitation (see Levine-Rasky, 2012, 2016)? What can this form of grappling do in terms of bringing about structural and relational depths to the ways in which we search to name how and why we reproduce power and dominance despite knowing better than, despite wanting to support the defiance of colonization alongside Indigenous peoples? These questions are important especially today, because today is an era of *mirages*. In the context of reconciliation and decolonization, when it comes to showing our material commitments to working with and under the leadership of Indigenous peoples, how many of us, settlers, do not presume that we can demonstrate such commitments by staying out of the way, following local protocols, supporting

community-based projects, and ensuring a positive material outcome for Indigenous peoples? As important as these cornerstones are, I think that they can become mirages to the deeper and much more difficult work of acknowledging that, because of ongoing colonization, the collaborative space is unlevelled and, as such, our experiences in those spaces might be filtered by our strong desires to do better. And yet, even when we feel like we are invested in meaningful relationships with Indigenous peoples, what *pressure points* might we be looking away from? What *pressure points* might be felt and experienced by our Indigenous partners and friends? And if we were to zoom into specific moments and engage in a relational back-and-forth dialogue with them, what can an examination of some of those pressure points reveal about the entanglement of our discourses and practices in conquest?

I have had the opportunity to think about these gaps and pressure points throughout a six-year relationship in Kahnawà:ke, a Kanien'kehá:ka² (Mohawk) community, where I have specifically collaborated in a community-based project with three Kanien'kehá:ka women within the authority of Kahnawà:ke's Education Center³. Part of this research is centered around a revisitation of moments spanning this collaboration and relationship-building processes with Kahtehrón:ni Stacey, Wahéhshon Whitebean, and Sandra-Lynn Leclaire. The aim of this revisitation is to create a conversational space wherein *pressure points* can surface, inviting us to unpack them collaboratively, thus bringing to the fore our differences of experience⁴ and

² Mohawk is the name that European colonizers gave Kanien'kehá:ka, a people who are members of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. In the Kanien'kéha language, Kanien'kehá:ka means "the people of the flint".

³ The Education Center is one of the organizations that represents the Education Community of Kahnawà:ke. For an overview of the histories of struggles through which Kahnawà:ke has obtained Education Sovereignty, see Wahéhshon Whitebean (2019) and Kahtehrón:ni Stacey (2016).

⁴ I draw from the coloniality of being (Maldonado-Torres, 2007a, 2007b; Mignolo, 2007; Wynter, 2013) to define "difference of experience" as a persisting outcome and reality that is shaped by ongoing conquest and where, because of conquest's embeddedness in whiteness as a system of dominance and power, everyday experiences register distinctly for peoples whose humanity is defined against markers of difference—primarily race, and race as embedded with coloniality, capitalism, and patriarchy.

affective registers in moments of tension. The pressure points are useful cues for examining how the settler colonial relation impinges on our relationship, and my aim is to, more specifically, attend to the ways in which my ways of being and knowing take root in this settler colonial relation, leading me into forms of *settler complicity* that have nothing to do with my intentions and consciousness. Naming settler complicities does not, on its own, lead to structural and relational changes in the way power is distributed in the relationship, nor in the way in which settler colonial gravitational pressures might dissipate. The aim is not to arrive at an ideal understanding of what *decolonial solidarity* can look like in spaces of collaboration. My interest is in exposing a form of vulnerability in the way I recognize that despite having consent-based relationships, intentions to support the education strategic goals of Kanien'kehá:ka, and an understanding of settler colonization, the lens through which I operate in spaces of collaboration is always regulated by my settler subjectivity. This “exposure exercise” is articulated through *a practice of working through settler complicities*, and it involves more than just naming what those complicities are. Indeed, *working through settler complicities* requires a de-layering of the ideas, understandings, and language that makeup conversations with three women from Kahnawà:ke—Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéhshon, and Sandra-Lynn—in order to unpack how settler colonial modalities operate in reflexive modes of reasoning and relating where our desired outcome is accountability. Basically, working through settler complicities in relational ways requires a humility in knowing that, as a settler, *I know better than, and yet I still do the thing*, because the effort to latch on to the awareness and intentionality of knowing is in itself contradictory.

But because colonization is ongoing and unbounded, I have also reflected on whether it is possible for me to want to articulate a practice of *settler responsibility*—in the way of working

through settler complicities—by solely focusing on grappling with the contradictions of knowing and still moving to complicity in those formal interactions and contexts of collaboration with Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéhshon, and Sandra-Lynn.

The past six years have been rewarding in the friendships and working partnerships that have unfolded between the four of us. I feel grateful for the opportunity to have co-written and helped launch the first research policy and code of ethics of the Education system in Kahnawà:ke⁵. I recognize a feeling of satisfaction in knowing that this collaboration was grounded in the self-determination and leadership of community members, and that it served as a place-making space where Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéhshon, Sandra-Lynn, and I got to deepen our relationships as researchers, peers, students, collaborators—and within and across the contextual complexities of a resulting commitment to be with each other despite the gravitational pressures of settler colonization. And yet, against this feeling of satisfaction, I have also become attuned to the transitioning movements of being in conversations about decolonial resistance with them and of being submerged in everyday life spaces where I am a benefactor of the systems, practices, and discourses that secure dispossession. Can I support community-based projects of resistance, like the education research ethics policy, without also working through the ways in which I become complicit with dispossession in everyday life? Leanne Simpson says that all of Canada is premised on processes of dispossession that have no limits, that all of Canada is Indigenous

⁵ Community members have continued to work and refine the policy. An updated document will be available sometime in late 2022 or early 2023. For now, interested readers can access it here: [https://campussuite-storage.s3.amazonaws.com/prod/1071440/916e95dd-3436-11e7-9e05-124f7febbf4a/2309974/78b872f8-0c19-11ec-bc59-0e0f3950a543/file/KEC%20EducationResearchPolicyCodeofResearchEthics ApprovedFeb2021.pdf](https://campussuite-storage.s3.amazonaws.com/prod/1071440/916e95dd-3436-11e7-9e05-124f7febbf4a/2309974/78b872f8-0c19-11ec-bc59-0e0f3950a543/file/KEC%20EducationResearchPolicyCodeofResearchEthics%20ApprovedFeb2021.pdf)

land⁶. This means that, regardless of whether Indigenous peoples are directly present, the mechanisms of conquest that inform dispossession are always operative (Steinman, 2021, p. 560). Yet, often, settler narratives about relationship-building with Indigenous peoples are exclusive of narratives about how our everyday life contexts become the background against which we live off of and enable dispossession *mundanely* (see Rifkin, 2013). Our narratives tend to be reflective of our experiences in formal spaces of collaboration, but these do not include a reflection of the *pressure points* of everyday life where insight could be derived about our complicities with dispossession despite having meaningful relationships with Indigenous peoples.

In light of these difficulties and important complexities, which I argue underlie questions of *decolonial solidarity*, the practice of working through settler complicities that I model in this work emerges from a revisitation of moments of interaction with three women from Kahnawà:ke—Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéhshon, and Sandra-Lynn—but also with my life partner, a settler male, Mark.

If settler colonialism is mundane and multidimensional, then questions about how settlers might support decolonization across formal contexts of settler-Indigenous collaborations must also be paired with questions about how this commitment can include looking towards the ways in which personal and structural aspects of our everyday settler life take root in the colonial relation. The moments of interaction that I revisit with Mark represent *pressure points* in the way

⁶ This will be a recurring idea across this work, and it is embedded into a conversation with Glen Coulthard that can be accessed here: <https://decolonization.wordpress.com/2014/11/26/leanne-simpson-and-glen-coulthard-on-dechinta-bush-university-indigenous-land-based-education-and-embodied-resurgence/>

we have engaged in discursive practices that are enrooted and reproduce various modalities of conquest. In those moments of complicity, because of our privilege, we have not had to examine how we perpetuate conquest and much less how we benefit from it, and even much less how varying forms of complicity enable dispossession. We have not had to think about how our lives are structured to animate *the struggle for land* in the way settler colonial nation-states are ordered to benefit a particular kind of settler across systems and structures of society and politics by variously dehumanizing peoples who have been racialized and colonized—and who continue to undergo settler democracies as a mirage (Dei, 2017; Byrd, 2011; Lowe, 2015; Patel, 2018; Robinson, 2019; Walcott, 2014a, 2014b). This democratic mirage requires the dehumanization of these variously positioned peoples to further the logic of Indigenous erasure through other dehumanization, coercive, and genocidal mechanisms⁷. This is one reason why Indigenous scholars refuse multiculturalism (e.g., Grande, 2013; St-Denis, 2011) and argue that race analyses can reduce indigeneity to an appearance or quality, eliding the ways in which colonization seeks to alienate Indigenous peoples from their land-based relationships *because* indigeneity is a way of being that is—and comes to be—in relation to land (Byrd, 2019, pp. 208-209; Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Moreton-Robinson, 2015, pp. 9-11). But at the same time, these concerns are useful in the articulation of a *practice of working through settler complicities*, for they do not nullify the importance of examining settler colonialism as a *multidimensional* order that therefore interpellates settler people into forms of complicity that are so variously rooted in

⁷ This is one reason why Indigenous scholars refuse multiculturalism (e.g., Grande, 2013; St-Denis, 2011) and argue that race analyses can reduce indigeneity to an appearance or quality, eliding the ways in which colonization seeks to alienate Indigenous peoples from their land-based relationships *because* indigeneity is a way of being that is—and comes to be—in relation to land (Byrd, 2011; Moreton-Robinson, 2015, pp. 9-11).

conquest and that, because of this variability, might not seem to be related to the struggle for land. But they always are.

The intrinsic connections across modes of conquest that inform dispossession resonates with Simpson's words, "all of Canada is Indigenous land" and "the same processes of dispossession operate in all parts of the territory". To think alongside Byrd, but in the context of settler responsibility, this question comes up: how can I, alongside my life partner, think about the various geographies, histories, and struggles that inform settler colonialism, settler privilege, and settler complicities, without reproducing an "aphasia" of the conquest of Indigenous peoples (Byrd, 2011, p. xxvi)? How can Mark and I zoom into mundane interactions of the past to name *and unearth* how and why our complicity in the perpetuation of varying modalities of conquest foments the background against which processes of dispossession go on—and go on to be naturalized and normalized *within settler experience*?

The difficulty is to unearth how *modalities of conquest* connect the settler colonial order and the settler individual whose humanity is fully acknowledged and uplifted within this order. It is a difficulty because of a settler instinctive tendency to want to recover an "insulated environment" of comfort (DiAngelo, 2018) when we come to face to face with the ways in which we are, to varying degrees, conditions of possibility in the perpetual coming together of settler colonial capitalist nation-states. The full implications for understanding and responding with accountability to the ways in which this structural and idiosyncratic relationality of dominance perpetuates anti-Indigeneity for the benefit of the settler requires a careful consideration of how anti-Blackness, racism, patriarchy, exploitation and labor hierarchies, islamophobia, immigration, citizenship, mobility, gender, caste systems—and more—are necessary conditions for the establishment of a settler colonial capitalist society where "land" is

treated as settler property (Lowe, 2015; Byrd, 2019). Part of my argument is that if settlers always just pay attention to tangible instances of anti-Indigenous racism and land struggles, we will bypass our responsibility to see and acknowledge that land theft is dependent on these and other modalities of conquest. We will bypass the difficulties that are intrinsic to our efforts at supporting decolonial solidarity alongside Indigenous peoples, but also in everyday life, as we mundanely experience a social and political nation-state whose background is dispossession. The moments of interaction that Mark and I revisit do not touch on all these complexities and modalities of conquest, but the point is to demonstrate that *processes of decolonial solidarity* have to be continuous, *across time and space* and not just when Indigenous peoples are watching, because dispossession is always and everywhere ongoing.

My way of sharing my accountability to Kahnawa'kehró:non is to examine *pressure points* in our own interactions, and to work through my own complicities, while continuing this exercise into intimate spaces of my everyday life where, along with my husband, we grapple with how the multidimensional modalities of conquest inhabit our practices in personal and structural ways. I want to model *a practice of working through settler complicities* that is *continuous* across formal contexts of interaction and collaboration with Kahnawa'kehró:non and across mundane moments of life with my life partner. This *practice of working through settler complicities* is how I commit to showing myself naming personal complicities and de-layering their roots in modes of conquest so that I can bring into salience how a struggle for land is imminent and ongoing in an era of mirages—as I call the present liberal multicultural and so-called post-colonial and post-racial order.

1.2 My first understandings of settler as a positioning

I am a settler in Tiohtià:ke and across various territories, lands, places, and spaces on Turtle Island where diverse Indigenous peoples, Communities, and Nations have had long-standing relationships. I use Tiohtià:ke to refer to Montreal as a way of recognizing the original custodians of the lands and waters, the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation, who have, and continue to stand as the original stewards of a place I have called home since I was eleven years old. I use Turtle Island to acknowledge their Creation Story, and to acknowledge my relationship with Kanien'kehá:ka and, specifically through this work, with Kahnawa'kehró:non. Kahnawà:ke is home to about 8,000 Kahnawa'kehró:non live today (Stacey, 2016, p. 8).

My relationship to questions of land across Turtle Island⁸, which in some cases has referred to Canada, the United States, and Latin America (Palmater, 2017, p. 74) while in other cases just to North America (e.g., as told by Kay Olan, a Kanien'kehá:ka storyteller), is complicated through my family history—a history of settlers. On my maternal side, my grandfather settled in Mexico during the Second World War, while my grandmother was born in Merida (in Mexico's state "Yucatán") after her parents left Europe. On my paternal side, my grandmother left for Mexico given her father's position as the Ambassador of Austria in Mexico City. My paternal grandfather was born in Mexico after his parents left Germany. As a result of these settler histories, I was born and raised in Mexico, in a modest town north of Mexico City called Querétaro. Since leaving this place to settle in Tiohtià:ke at the age of eleven, Querétaro remains the place that I have called home all these years. Part of my complicity in the erasure of

⁸ I use the term Turtle Island since the Kanien'kehá:ka Creation Story illustrates a woman, Sky Woman, falling from the sky and landing on the back of a turtle where she then creates the world. Apart from referring just to North America or to all of America, Turtle Island can also refer to the Earth, to Mother Earth. Using this name is a way of recognizing the sovereignty and self-determination of the people with whom I hold relationships in Kahnawà:ke.

Indigenous peoples is that, until recently, I had not invested time in naming the originals, the Indigenous peoples of the land, mountains, and waters that make up what I have known as Querétaro. The hñähñü (or “otomíes” in Spanish) are situated throughout the State of Querétaro, specifically in areas now known as Amealco, Ezequiel Montes, Cadereyta, and Toliman. The hñähñü named Querétaro—the name given by Spanish conquistadores—“Mxei”, which means, “the place where we play ball”—a name given to reflect the landscape of canyons that gave it the appearance of a gaming field⁹.

When I was growing up, my father (Carlos Birlain) and mother (Tiziana D’Amico) looked to immigrate to Canada, Australia, or the United States. In the end, they chose Canada. Over the years, my father reminded my siblings and I that we were living in one of the best countries in the world—a narrative that is commonly represented in the experiences of immigrants given the ostensibly multicultural and benevolent representation of Canada internationally (see Howard & James, 2021; McKittrick, 2013; Thobani, 2007; Walcott, 2014a). My older sister, younger brother and I were placed in a French private school situated in the West Island of Tiohtià:ke, and a few years later, our youngest brother was born. Our family dynamic was simple since we had no other relatives, and we were busy learning the French language as required by Bill 101 (and later learned English). As for many immigrants, for us, becoming fluent in these official languages was a sign of prestige, and to this extent, we contributed to the erasure of Indigenous histories and languages.

History was my favourite topic in high school and in accordance with Quebec’s program, I studied Quebec/Canadian history until Grade 10. In retrospect, it is clear that I did not learn the

⁹ There are not as many written documents on the histories of the hñähñü, and since I have not consulted with the people of this Nation, the information provided here comes from a study done in 2002 by public institutions. <https://www.aacademica.org/salomon.nahmad.sitton/67.pdf>

real history of violence that underlies Canada as a settler society. In a course that I recently taught in the Department of Integrated Studies at McGill, a settler student shared the book that she was instructed to use to teach history at the elementary level. With some of the content as seen in the following, I was reminded of the damage-centered lens (Tuck, 2009) that had underlined my history education in high school:

The missionaries lived among Aboriginal people in the hope of converting them to Catholicism. In this way, the missionaries also learned Aboriginal language and customs...*Without realizing it, the missionaries also passed on European diseases. Aboriginal people had no antibodies to fight these diseases, so many people died...The Iroquois Wars also brought danger to the missionaries' lives. Some of them were captured, tortured, and even killed by the Iroquois*¹⁰.

The italicized portions draw attention to the lies told in Quebec's Education System—lies that are meant to situate Indigenous peoples as weak and “savage” while concealing the violence with which settler peoples established their sovereignty (Paul, 2011). For variously positioned non-Indigenous students, this history, which places European settlers as naturally superior, is naturalized as *the* history of Canada. Indigenous peoples are made to appear as vanishing, or as already vanished through “the settler colonial curricular project of replacement” (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013, pp. 75-77). Through this curricular project, as evidenced in this textbook from Quebec's Ministry of Education, schools have acted as an “instrument of settlement” by portraying the replacement of Indigenous peoples as not only inevitable (given their falsely portrayed weaker natures in response to diseases brought by Europeans) but also as a moral endeavour (p. 76). The reality—that diseases were purposefully brought to eliminate

¹⁰ The textbook is: Cormier, E. B. (2021). Waypoints 3. London: Pearson Education, pp. 117-118.

Indigenous peoples (e.g., Wilson, 2008, pp. 43-45), and that missionaries and religion were moulded into the shape of settler conquest by misusing the name of God (e.g., Bedford & Workman, 2012, p. 25; Wynter, 2003)—is replaced with ideologies of settler benevolence and superiority that now underlie a secular, multicultural, settler colonial Canadian project.

I only started to read about the real history of settler colonization in university, during my first year of graduate studies at McGill. After graduating from an education program, I felt unprepared to enter the workforce as a teacher. I wanted to better understand why some students were pushed out of school more than others, a phenomenon that I had observed as a student teacher in the way lower class income and students racialized as non-white became disengaged disproportionately from learning. When I started in the MA program, my aim was to investigate the causes of this issue, which I now better understand as being structural in that, as a tool of settlement, schools are rooted in the myth of meritocracy and colorblindness (Zamudio et al., 2011). Schools are spaces where students racialized as white, with abled bodies, and middle-class backgrounds, among other markers of difference, make it by and through with significantly less friction (Ahmed, 2019, pp.103-140). What I also learned in that first semester is that Indigenous children and youth are overrepresented in the demographic of students who are pushed out of school¹¹.

In the past, when I have been asked to share how or why I looked for opportunities to develop relationships in Kahnawà:ke, I have recounted this event as an “awakening”, a moment when I realized that my entire education had been purposefully crafted to implicate me in the

¹¹ For readers not acquainted with the term “push out”, you can look up George Sefa Dei, Gloria Ladson-Billings, and Eve Tuck, a few of the scholars who have rejected the commonly used term “drop out”. Drop out places the blame on individual students—i.e., “they are too lazy”, “they don’t want to learn”, “they lack discipline”—instead of examining the brokenness of the education system that forces some students, more than others, to leave school. It is the system itself that pushes them out.

reproduction of the lie that colonization had been inevitable, completed, and moral. “It was shocking to learn that Indigenous youth are the highest demographic represented in school pushouts”, I would often share with others to highlight the lies told in school. I also recounted an earlier event of my junior college years where, in the context of a research methods course, two peers and I drove through Kahnawà:ke, filmed the landscape and produced a mini documentary on the economic role of tobacco. As we had done this without consent from the people of Kahnawà:ke, when I began learning about the history of extractive research by settler anthropologists, I saw myself reflected in that complicity. I realized that I had trespassed and re/perpetrated a very tangible dynamic of colonialism, and when I saw Indigenous youth’s overrepresentation in school pushouts, I acknowledged that colonization is ongoing, and recognizing my settler privilege, I felt compelled to return to Kahnawà:ke and “do better”. This is the narrative that I normally told those who asked me why and how I had ended up doing a PhD where, in part, I reflect on my experiences of collaboration with people from Kahnawà:ke.

However, as my understanding of settler colonization has deepened since starting graduate school, I have learned that *not knowing* and *now knowing* are not only implausible claims, but also claims that reassert the innocence of settlers like me (see Simpson, 2016). Not knowing better implies *now knowing*, which “leaves an earlier rightness unchallenged” by imposing a settler logic of time on the techniques of dispossession that are always at play (Simpson, 2016, pp. 438-439). This claim is implausible in that, as much as the nature of settler colonization is to overcome and erase Indigenous people to complete itself (Wolfe, 2013a, p. 257), this logic of elimination is relentlessly met with various forms of Indigenous resistance. The meeting of Indigenous resistance(s) and of settler colonial dynamics create clashing or “gravitational pressures” (Rifkin, 2017, pp. 96-97) that let settler people know, despite our

claims of not knowing, that Indigenous peoples continue to refuse to fade into history. Looking through this critical nuance means that white settlers *refuse to see*, instead of failing to see, the truth (Lethabo-King, 2019, pp. 43-44). To this extent, part of self-positioning as a settler on stolen Indigenous lands requires me to recalibrate the narrative that I tell of the “why and how” of this work. My graduate education has given me the *language* to speak about settler colonization and my own involvement in its reproduction, and this is starkly different from claiming to have “discovered” a truth that, as Cedric Robinson (2019) would say, is visible everywhere—in the decay of settler capitalist societies and neocolonial globalization¹².

1.3 Storying evolving and grounding pieces of this work

When I decided to “return” to Kahnawà:ke, I was also in the process of fast-tracking to the PhD program at McGill. I was also beginning a relationship with Kahtehrón:ni Stacey, a Kanien’kehá:ka woman from the Turtle Clan whose home is Kahnawà:ke. We met in January 2017 at a conference talk that she presented through McGill’s Belonging, Identity, Language and Diversity group, a speaker series presided over by my current supervisor, Mela Sarkar. Kahtehrón:ni spoke about her master’s work, which she had completed at the University of Victoria, in the area of Indigenous Language Revitalization, with a specific focus on Kanien’kéha, the language of her community. Shortly after, we met in her office at the Education Center in Kahnawà:ke and that marked the beginning of a relational back-and-forth dynamic that guided our interactions for the next six years.

I learned early on of a gap in the way researchers still came and went, accessing Kahnawà:ke’s education community in schools and perpetrating extractivism even when a partnership had been established between the researchers and the education community. There

¹² I come back to the specific essay where he talks about the decay of settler democracies in chapters five and seven.

were also instances when researchers would call Kahtehrón:ni to get a quote for their research, which at that point had already been done but no relationships had been established. Margaret Kovach (2005) would examine these recolonizing research dynamics and argue that in an era where increasing attention is given to Indigenous ways of researching, the white gaze that still lurks in the academy can, to some, feel distant—soaked under shifting research practices compared to overt extractive research practices (p. 23). As a teacher, I did not give these conversations much attention. I was most interested in the possibility of working alongside students and teachers, and when Kahtehrón:ni shared a curriculum review based on a Tsi Niiionkwarihò:ten framework—that is, a curriculum based on Kanien’kehá:ka culture—I imagined ways of supporting their education objectives and strategies. I never imagined that an exploration of knowledge producing dynamics would become so central in this research and in my own practices of working through settler complicities. I became involved in the development of Kahnawà:ke’s first education research ethics policy, a community-based project that had been discussed internally for years before I came into the picture.

In summer 2018, I met with others from Kahnawà:ke’s Education Center (KEC), and I expressed my interest of using the scope of my PhD studies to support a project based on needs already determined by them. I was invited to develop a proposal for the development of the education research ethics policy, but my anxieties about mistepping and burdening community members paralyzed me. Even though the partnership had been based on a relational process of consent, I struggled with simple tasks like requesting meetings to discuss the logistics or to unpack foreseeable *pressure points* related to local protocols and knowledge about how “things are done” in Kahnawà:ke. I was not responsive to the relational aspects of the partnership, and I think that this was partly a result of my own internal feelings of shame and guilt, of wanting to

tread so carefully that I centered my fears of being perceived as a “bad” settler over the consent that founded my relationship with community members. The development of the education research ethics policy was then turned into a community-based initiative, and I was a collaborator in its development. I worked closely with Kahtehrón:ni and another Kanien’kehá:ka woman from the Wolf Clan in Kahnawà:ke, Wahéhshon Whitebean. I also got to deepen my relationship with Sandra-Lynn, who resides in Kahnawà:ke because of her paternal Kanien’kehá:ka lineage but is also Mi’kmaw from her mother’s side. She played a role in the developing phases of the policy, but also in my research plans.

This tension is an example of the more or less tangible *pressure points* that were a part of relationship-building processes with Sandra-Lynn, Kahtehrón:ni, and Wahéhshon. It is a pressure point that I could name because of my own affective experiences in the moments that shaped my own paralysis and impasse around asking for time and space to discuss how to proceed with the proposal writing. But I know that based on who we are, there are pressure points that have not registered affectively and/or consciously as they might have for Sandra-Lynn, Kahtehrón:ni, and Wahéhshon. These are pressure points that can arguably be overlooked since, in the end, they were never overpowering of the consent and friendship that kept us engaged and committed to work together and deepen our relationships. Yet, I did not want to look away from these pressure points because I felt that examining them in conversation with Sandra-Lynn, Kahtehrón:ni, and Wahéhshon could be a valuable way of de-layering how my own subjective processes are connected to the structural and systematic aspects of colonization.

When it came to move on from my collaborative role in the development of the first draft of the education research ethics policy, we discussed the possibility of sharing my own personal account from the time when Kahtehrón:ni and I started a relationship, to the aspects of

relationship-building that had led to our partnership in the development of the education research ethics policy. The rationale behind this idea was that, as a personal narrative representing the point of view of a settler, it could then be transformed into a resource or annex to the ethics policy and support future settler researchers in their own pathways of collaboration with the KEC. This initial idea was groomed into this research where my aim is not to tell a positive or linear story of relationship-building but to carve out space for a revisitation of sporadic moments across the last six years. These moments are mired in *pressure points* that, in real time, I have not examined but that can reveal how my ways of being and knowing operate in more or less structural ways within colonial logics and modalities of conquest. This is an important task because it is rooted in the understanding that there is a difference of experience in relationship-building processes, and that this difference deserves to be acknowledged through relational examinations of how moments of tension might have registered distinctly for Sandra-Lynn, Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéhshon, and me. In my work, I position *pressure points* as rabbit-hole opportunities to grapple with the ways in which settler consciousness and intentions clash into discursive contradictions with varying effects, thus revealing the layered complexities that underlie *decolonial solidarity* in contexts of collaboration with Indigenous peoples.

But at the same time, as I thought about decolonial solidarity as a process of relational pressure points that can deepen partnerships when examined, I thought of my experiences of logging on and off meetings with Sandra-Lynn, Kahtehrón:ni, and Wahéhshon. In the “logging on spaces” that resulted from the global pandemic of SARS-CoV-2, we discussed terminology and ideas as much as the actual research processes that now makeup the education ethics policy. Every aspect of our conversations and writing was rooted in *strategic resistance*, which built from years of self-determination through which Kahnawa’kehró:n non secured education

sovereignty in Kahnawà:ke. Implicitly, I noticed the centrality of land-based relationships. As other education initiatives rooted in Kanien'kehá:ka worldview to empower all students and ensure the well-being of those yet to come, the education research ethics policy explicitly privileged a structure that would bring out “the intellectual knowledge of our ancestors as we understood our ecological environment, food systems, and pathways to resiliency” (KEC education research ethics policy, 2021, p. 6). Whenever we discussed the importance of centering Kanien'kehá:ka voices in the policy's writing to ensure that it was written *by them and for them*, I thought about what I was doing alongside my own community of settlers to ensure and promote accountability to Indigenous peoples, and specifically, to show continuity in my commitment to Kahnawa'kehró:n. Logging off felt like another pressure point. It was a stark *spatial transition* from a space of solidarity and collaboration to a space of comfort—marked my everyday life contexts—where I could also log off from having to think about my commitment to Kahnawa'kehró:n in terms of how I *continued* to challenge colonialism.

I consciously articulated to Mark this experience of signing off after participating in conversations about resistance and solidarity and feeling like I “re-entered” my everyday life without a consistent commitment to problematize my/our ways of being and knowing. I kept hearing Leanne Simpson's words, which, in a conversation with Glen Coulthard, read: *all land is Indigenous land and processes of dispossession are active all the time, everywhere*¹³. If all land is Indigenous land, and if all processes of dispossession are always already active, how is it that, as settlers, we often conceptualize decolonial solidarity as a process mattering only in formal

¹³ These words come from a conversation with Glen Coulthard on land-based pedagogies and Dechinta Bush University. The entire conversation can be accessed here: <https://decolonization.wordpress.com/2014/11/26/leanne-simpson-and-glen-coulthard-on-dechinta-bush-university-indigenous-land-based-education-and-embodied-resurgence/>

contexts of collaboration with Indigenous peoples (see for example Steinman, 2020)? What about the informal contexts; those contexts of settler everyday life where, as settlers, we get to opt out of our commitments only to reproduce modalities of conquest that are harmful to Indigenous peoples, particularly by way of reproducing the logics of conquest that inform ongoing land theft? I wondered about my six years of relationship-building in Kahnawà:ke, and I looked to my collaboration on the research ethics policy. Beyond this contextual frame, what was I doing to examine my own practices and discourses in everyday life? What was I doing to bring into salience and take action for the ways in which I, *along with my community of settlers*, reproduce the colonial relation *mundanely*?

1.3.1 Decolonial Solidarity Across Time and Space

Sitting with these questions, I looked to moments in my everyday life when I had been noticing the complicities of settlers in settler-settler conversations regarding Canadian society and politics. In these moments, Glen Coulthard's words resonated with me, as when he wrote, in his book *Red Skins White Masks* (2014), that the politics of recognition exist on a "discursive plane" that articulates a false transitory period from before and after 1969—the year that settler States proclaimed to have marked the end of colonial assimilation and launched an era of "mutual recognition" (p. 3). In reality, recognition is a discursive technique useful to settler States, for it conceals the settler need for more dispossession while "reconciling" Indigenous nationhood with settler sovereignties. In his account of this, Coulthard asserts that settler colonialism is premised on uneven power relations that are seen in the form of "discursive and non-discursive facets of economic, gendered, racial and state power" (p. 7). To conceal the workings of settler colonial power, forms of lip service (discursive in nature) must be paired with

non-action, something that Pamela Palmater (2017) has characterized as denial, deflection, and deferral (p. 76). To this extent, Coulthard argues that,

Given the resilience of these...*modalities of power*...any strategy geared toward authentic decolonization must directly ... account for the *multifarious ways* in which capitalism, patriarchy, white supremacy, and the totalizing character of state power **interact with one another** to form the constellation of power relations that sustain colonial patterns... *[to] facilitate the dispossession of lands and self-determination capacities [of Indigenous peoples]* (pp. 14-15, my emphasis).

This is such an important piece of writing because it reveals that settler colonialism is multidimensional and that, by virtue of this characteristic, even when land is not directly evoked by settler states in settler discourses, practices, and systems, land is always pursued as a colonial capitalist commodity. The settler colonial order requires land to exist, and for this, logics of dispossession and Indigenous erasure are crucial. But as Coulthard says, there are multifarious modalities of power—like patriarchy, capitalism, white supremacy—that interlock to inform settler colonialism. This means that in order to account for the complicated ways in which settler sovereignties are legitimized and land theft secured, it is important to examine how modalities of power find diverse modes of expression alongside distinct peoples who, through colonial conquest, have been forced into contentious encounters. “Any strategy geared toward authentic decolonization”, writes Coulthard, must grapple with the complex modalities through which dispossession is possible still today. And so, for settlers like me, this begs the question of how, at the same time that we grapple with relational pressure points in collaborations with Indigenous peoples, we might look to the pressure points of everyday life interactions with settlers that,

when examined, can unearth how we benefit from and reproduce the multifarious modalities of power that are necessary in settler colonial orders.

To illustrate what such an examination can look like, I can recall a family conversation around the dinner table about the state of the real estate market. “It is virtually impossible for young people to afford a home”, one person said. “It’s because of the large influx of Chinese investors who purchase homes and do not even inhabit them”, someone else added. The conversation went on with speculations of “best” neighborhoods to live in: “I’m not racist but I would want my children to grow up in the right place”. Another time, at the apex of Prime Minister Justin Trudeau’s scandal on having worn Black and Brown face multiple times, someone said, “He apologized, what’s the big deal?”, and another person remarked, “We dressed up for Halloween when we were younger, and we never meant it as an offence. People are too sensitive”. On their own, these discourses deserve to be brought into question because of their inherently anti-Black and anti-Asian nature. But if we follow Coulthard’s analysis of how dispossession is informed, then it is important to ask and unpack what anti-Blackness and anti-Asian racism have to do with land theft and dispossession. It is important to ask what settler people have to gain, whether we intend to benefit from it or not, from these modalities of power, and it is important to de-layer what and how these modalities of power are *needed* to conceal an ongoing struggle for Indigenous lands. Although I cannot unpack the remarks stated here with detail¹⁴, for the purpose of showing how *all* aspects of settler life are interrelated in issues of

¹⁴ However, see Philip Howard’s pieces on why Blackface is only a symptom of anti-Blackness: <https://theconversation.com/if-youre-thinking-of-doing-blackface-for-halloween-just-dont-105620> <https://theconversation.com/trudeau-in-blackface-a-symptom-of-canadas-widespread-anti-black-racism-123889> <https://theconversation.com/the-problem-with-blackface-97987> and Day’s book (2016) *Alien capital: Asian racialization and the logic of settler colonial capitalism*, as well as Walcott’s article (2014a) on Canada’s multiculturalism.

power and injustice that further colonization, it suffices for me to point out that Chinese people have long served as a scapegoat through whom settlers disavow responsibility for the coming together of settler states—particularly of the concept of citizenship—while Black people have been dehumanized through a system of anti-Blackness that gives whiteness sole attributes of humanity. If settlers only associate decolonial solidarity to formal contexts of collaboration with Indigenous peoples, and if we only respond with accountability when land is directly evoked and threatened, how can we account for “the constellation of power relations that sustain colonial patterns... [to] facilitate the dispossession of lands and self-determination capacities [of Indigenous peoples]” (Coulthard, 2014, p. 15)? How can I speak of my commitment to support Kahnawa’kehró:non in their community-based articulations of resistance if I do not *extend this commitment* into an exploration of how the fabric of my everyday life and ways of being and knowing take root in various modalities of conquest that are needed to inform dispossession processes?

1.4 This Research in a Nutshell and Next Chapters

This research is premised on an exploration of how settlers, in this case through my own experiences as a settler, can engage in processes of decolonial solidarity *with continuity*, across time and space, in account of the fact that dispossession happens everywhere and all the time through the *multidimensional* nature of settler colonialism. Specifically, this research includes two interconnected contexts: while looking to share on relationship-building and collaboration through my experiences in Kahnawà:ke, I also look to examine how this commitment to support Kahnawa’kehró:non resistance could extend into a robust analysis of (my) everyday settler life. By including these two contexts in this research, my interest lies in revisiting moments of tension of the past years with three Kanien’kehá:ka women from Kahnawà:ke (Kahtehrón:ni, Sandra-

Lynn, and Wahéhshon), but also with my husband, a settler (Mark). Since my aim is to exceed descriptive accounts of said moments and to instead show myself grappling with the pressure points and contentions that indicate *forms of settler complicity*, in this work, I set out to develop a *practice of working through settler complicities*—that is, a practice through which I will be looking to name and unpack the varied ways in which I have perpetrated modalities of conquest in my relationships in Kahnawà:ke, but also in settler-settler life interactions. To this end, the research questions are: **(1)** How might revisiting key moments of settler/Kahnawa'kehró:non collaboration and settler/settler everyday interactions enable me, a settler, to *work through **settler complicity***? **(2)** What might “*working through*” look like when settlers such as myself examine those key moments to de-layer settler complicity from within the structural constraints of our **settler positioning**? **(3)** How might working through settler complicity across time and space, in settler/Kahnawa'kehró:non direct collaborations and in settler-settler everyday life interactions, elucidate a process of **decolonial solidarity** that accounts for the fact that dispossession is always at play?

The bolded concepts in these research questions will be defined in chapter two where I also continue to root this work within my relationships with Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéhshon, Sandra-Lynn and Mark—the participants of this work. Continuing to story the relational pieces of this work in chapter two will help me illustrate how our back-and-forth will inform my methodology and method of inquiry.

In chapter three, I present a review of the field of settler colonial studies where I challenge the binarism of the field and suggest *reinserting historical density* in the way settler scholars define our settlerness (the concept of “the settler”).

Chapter four is the core conceptual framework of this work. It is where I describe the multidimensional nature of settler colonialism and use this historical analysis to define *settler complicity*, this work's main unit of analysis based on my *practice of working through settler complicities*.

Chapter five presents the methodology and method of inquiry based on the practice of working through and the back-and-forth dynamic that I will describe in chapter two. I evoke the game of string figures to show how I will analyze the conversations through chapters six to eight and where I will model what a practice of *working through settler complicities* can look like.

The final chapter, chapter nine, brings together the analyses of earlier chapters by centering my third research question—a question where I juxtapose the contexts, *pressure points* and complicities across this work's conversations to think about how *working through settler complicities* might guide processes of decolonial solidarity *across time and space*.

Chapter 2: The Back-and-Forth of Relationships and Defining Concepts of this Work

2.1 Painting a relational back-and-forth dynamic

I characterize the overall dynamic of relationship-building in Kahnawà:ke as a “back-and-forth” because, for a several months, my sole contact was Kahtehrón:ni. In that time, we shared several interactions because we were also PhD students in the same cohort. When I think of our relationship, I see us in class, at her office, grabbing lunch, and writing to each other. I imagine a relational back-and-forth response to each other across different but overlapping contexts, and I think of the asynchronous and non-linear rhythms that sometimes made me experience our process of relationship-building with uncertainty. This uncertainty shaped, not just my own personal experience, but it also registered as a tension for Kahtehrón:ni because I constantly worried about mistepping and this “settler anxiety” sometimes contributed to a depersonalization of our interactions. My first email to her is a relevant example of how my anxieties—what DiAngelo (2018) calls “white fragility”—became manifested in the language of that communication. I wrote her that while I was “perhaps too ambitious”, I “honestly” believed that “something is really wrong with Quebec’s education system” and that, as I “continued to read Indigenous works” hoping to “feel more ready...humbler...more something”, I was “reaching out” to say: “I want to be an ally, how can I help?”. The language and ideas quoted reveal a sense of discomfort on my part, which is likely aligned with feelings of shame and guilt that are common when settler people come face-to-face with the ongoing effects of colonization that inform life as we know it (Kizuk, 2019). These feelings were heightened because reaching out to Kahtehrón:ni brought me to confront the limits of my presumed innocence and of my (internal) desires to become redeemed by behaving ethically alongside her (see Slater, 2018, pp. 1-3). In that struggle to communicate my intentions for goodness, a form of complicity is seen in

the way I frame the anti-Indigenous and colonizing state of mainstream education as a “discovery”—as if Kahtehrón:ni did not know or needed to be made aware of it by a settler. The email is tokenizing and insensitive, and although this was not my intention when I wrote it, there is contention in thinking about the many instances when settler people might cite damage as an aid to communicating our intent in collaborating with Indigenous peoples meaningfully (Tuck, 2009). Damage filters the more critical and accountable ask of: Is help even desired and/or needed?

Despite the layered complicities of this first communication, Kahtehrón:ni focused on the intentionality poorly reflected in my email. And so she wrote back:

Hi Daniella,

Yes, I do remember you from the BILD presentation. Thank you for your detailed email, it sounds like you are looking to embark on some really meaningful work! I am willing to meet up with you for coffee and look forward to hearing your ideas and answering any questions you may have. Your email gives me lots to think about, so I sincerely hope I can be of help...

Years after this early interaction, I pause to think about the details of her writing, the words that collide to bring out her agency: *I am willing to meet up with you* and *I sincerely hope I can be of help*. I am captured by my own realization, or shift in perspective from then and now, for if her email once made me feel good for reaching out, and if I thought that I would be the one helping out, the phrases that I highlight correct this narrative of settler benevolence by shifting the distribution of power. It is Kahtehrón:ni who is *willing* to meet me and see if she can *help*—perhaps help discern if to welcome me into formal collaborations? The meaning of “help” is difficult to pinpoint without discussing it with Kahtehrón:ni, so my goal is to acknowledge that if Kahtehrón:ni experienced *pressure points* when she read my email, I can see how her response speaks back to my presumptions about allyship and about helping *to fix what is wrong with*

Quebec's Education System. In thinking through what belies my assumptions when I initially read her response, I am thinking of Linda Tuhiwai-Smith's assertion that Indigenous peoples have been talking and researching back as a way of "becoming self-determining" and "take back control of their destinies" (2021, p. 163). And so, perhaps, our initial dialogue can stand as an example of how a back-and-forth dynamic informed ways of *working through pressure points* and *settler complicities* since the very beginning of our relationship. This is an example of a moment that Kahtehrón:ni and I could have revisited and unpacked with care for this research. Even though we did not examine this moment in detail, we did touch on the overall feeling of being involved in a back-and-forth relational dynamic from the start of our relationship.

Kahtehrón:ni: So when I first met you...you were more about introducing yourself...And at that time, you didn't know exactly what you wanted to do. You just wanted to start with an introduction...I was watching you challenge yourself or struggle with some of the ideas you were having. [And] I felt like I was struggling along with you. Our interactions as PhD students, researchers, and friends served as dialectical spaces wherein we both worked through challenges that went beyond the fact that Kahtehrón:ni was a community member in Kahnawà:ke and I was an outsider. In other words, whereas I often focused on our differences along the lines of my settler positioning and her location as Kahnawa'kehró:non, I bracketed out the expansive realities of settler colonialism that we both experienced differently whether we were together or apart. This self-centered way of dismissing Kahtehrón:ni's own struggles by focusing on mine is another example of a *pressure point*, and although I feel my own limitations in pinpointing and describing this pressure point, I can see it revealing a move to innocence (Tuck & Yang, 2012). The move to innocence is that I can recognize culpability for systems of domination that inform dispossession by tokenizing

Kahtehrón:ni as holding the key to decolonization, and this recognition can then become a way of removing myself from settler colonization by virtue of my closeness to Kahtehrón:ni in our relationship. I can see how my own underlying desires for innocence informed in some ways the asynchronous rhythms in our relationship, because the fear of messing up showed in *how* I listened and went along the flow of things.

A clear example of the implications of self-centering my struggles and anxieties is seen when Kahtehrón:ni invited me to meet with the Director of Education so I could express my interest in collaboration. Our trail of email exchanges has been a useful aid in pinpointing the settler complicities that sometimes underlined *pressure points* that, at the time, I attributed to the difficult nature of relationship-building but not to the ways in which I self-imposed to ostensibly control how I conducted myself as a thoughtful settler. In our research conversation, I opened up to Kahtehrón:ni about having felt instability in our relationship because “I could feel a tension from putting a burden or a pressure on you since you were my main contact in Kahnawà:ke, and I was constantly following up”. I did not want to misstep by asking her to meet with me to the point where I would be adding to her workload, and perhaps even drag her away from her commitments. But at the same time, whenever she offered to introduce me to others like the Director of Education, I would postpone it to a time when I would be better prepared.

Kahtehrón:ni: I’m happy to hear that your ideas and interests regarding your research have been evolving. At this point, do you feel comfortable with me relaying your interest to do research in community with my director?

Daniella: Do you think it would be a good time to meet with your community director? Or do you think that we should meet one more time and talk a bit more?

In the beginning, for a time, Kahtehrón:ni was the Kanien'kehá:ka Curriculum Consultant¹⁵. Her role was to assess what students from her community were learning through a Kanien'kehá:ka perspective. I got to engage in conversations with Kahtehrón:ni about the strategic goals that the Education Center, in communication with the education community, established to ensure that Kahnawa'kehró:non youth have access to a culturally relevant education. I was aware of the literature around culturally relevant pedagogies, but years later, I see that the education sovereignty that Kahnawa'kehró:non have fought for is not simply to engage students in their education by making their learning experiences more meaningful. Learning through a Kanien'kehá:ka perspective is a matter of survivance in terms of how children and youth from the community might become empowered to feel proud of who they are as they reclaim ancestral knowledges and re/connect with each other and the land in healthy and reciprocal ways. The teacher in me imagined a collaboration where I would work directly with Kahnawa'kehró:non youth and teachers, and I see that this presumption was so prevalent that I might have dismissed the importance of meeting others from the Education Center to figure out if that was a desired pathway of collaboration. It was not something that Kahtehrón:ni would decide on her own, because there is a structure of accountability in place to ensure that any decisions that can impact Kahnawa'kehró:non youth, teachers and parents are assessed collectively. And so, when I think of my response to Kahtehrón:ni and focus on the part about *talking more before taking that next step*, I want to question whether I expected to have an articulate proposal prior to meeting with the Director of Education. Still, rather than suggesting with certainty that this was indeed the rationale, I would like to complicate this possible conclusion by also mentioning that when I did meet with the Director of Education and with others, I was explicitly invited to propose ideas for

¹⁵ Kahtehrón:ni has since become the Curriculum Coordinator.

project collaborations. In fact, it was a day when a few other outsider researchers were invited to pitch their ideas for collaboration. Nevertheless, on that day, I tiptoed around the ideas that I had and would have wanted to work on. Instead, I talked about my commitment to work on a project that *they* determined to have relevance and urgency rather than to pitch them my ideas. The approach was appreciated because it was different from the usual top-down approach, but the point of importance is to show that delaying earlier meetings with the Director of Education was not about having an articulate proposal to share with her and others. The delays that I incurred are, rather, the outcome of not wanting to misstep. While treading carefully is a form of accountability that settler researchers have commonly shared as an outcome of their own relationship-building experiences with Indigenous peoples, for me at least, this form of care became a monopolizing tool in the way I imposed rhythms on the relationship that reflected my own settler anxieties.

These anxieties carried through. After this meeting, I was formally invited to collaborate on the development of Kahnawà:ke's first education research ethics policy. It was an invitation to use the space of my PhD studies to develop a proposal for how the actual writing and implementation of this policy would take place when led by community members. And yet, even with this formal invitation, I had trouble letting go of the habit of centering my anxieties about mistepping to calculate my actions. Instead of embracing the relational contexts that were offered as support for me to develop this proposal, I over-theorized the risks of mistepping and centered, yet again, my experiences of fragility and desire for redemption, which in this case, translated into paralysis. I am thinking of Memmi's analysis (through Howard, 2006, pp. 46-47) who helps understand how political paralysis results in the reification of power and dominance. In this case, the anxieties that carried over into my practice reflect a settler obsession with treading so

carefully so as to avoid mistepping—what I call over-theorizing the relationships—that the actual contexts of relationality are monopolized, or re/colonized by a re-centering of my own desired benevolence. The impasse eventually resulted in a shift: the development of the education research ethics policy became a community-based initiative, led specifically by community members. To this end, Kahtehrón:ni gathered a few people from Kahnawà:ke (some from the Education Center) to form an Advisory Committee whose members would help frame the initial thoughts around the policy, and I became a collaborator in this initiative.

As a collaborator, one of my initial tasks was to plan the agenda for our first meeting with the Advisory Committee. I had conceptualized a prototype for the kinds of protocols that could be developed to support community researchers, Indigenous researchers from outside the community, and non-Indigenous researchers. The aim of this prototype was to give context for our discussion and, as part of the preparatory process, Kahtehrón:ni invited me to come in to share and edit these initial ideas before our meeting with the Advisory Committee. Meeting with Kahtehrón:ni has a central place in my memory, because it stands as the event when I first met Wahéhshon Whitebean, a member of the Wolfe Clan and community member in Kahnawà:ke.

At the time, Wahéhshon was working as a research assistant alongside Kahtehrón:ni, and she had also recently completed her MA at Concordia University. She worked with Louellyn White, a Kanien'kehá:ka woman from Akwesasne, and a scholar who is also a member of my Supervisory Committee. Wahéhshon based her research on the stories of Kanien'kehá:ka that attended Indian Day Schools in Kahnawà:ke—work that she continues now as a PhD student at McGill University. Wahéhshon's involvement in the development of the research ethics policy started through her role as a member of the Advisory Committee, but she also played a central role in its writing. Together with Kahtehrón:ni, the three of us worked on developing the first

draft of the policy over Fall 2019 and Winter 2019. Throughout this collaborative relationship, the relational back-and-forth dynamic that had started with Kahtehrón:ni became expanded to include layered relationalities across the three of us and between us. Through this collaboration, Wahéhshon and I became friends, and we bonded over our struggles as graduate students.

Wahéhshon: you didn't just join us in doing this [work]. [The education research ethics policy is] an important initiative for the system and for our community. But then we also support each other in other levels as students. We also did like writing groups to move along our own projects and gave each other advice. We socializes on whatever levels we could in the pandemic. And so layers to the relationship that I don't see very often with other researchers...

The relational contexts that brought Wahéhshon and I together beyond our roles as collaborators have, over time, become a cushion of trust that has been useful in moments of tension. These relational contexts supported practices of *working through* that were not always engaged by the three of us in collaborative ways, especially not in real time, as tensions arose. Yet, in our conversations, as we revisit moments of the past years, there is an opportunity to work through *pressure points* collaboratively. The relational back-and-forth dynamic that guides our interactions bring out our differences of experience and an opportunity to create spaces of solidarity that are mired in structural, relational, and ontological complexities.

With Sandra-Lynn, the relationship always felt different, because we mostly interacted informally such as when I would come by the Education Center or when we would engage on social media. Sandra-Lynn is an avid reader, a historian. For her master's degree, she did historical archive research on the Indigenous oral history surrounding the Beothuk of Newfoundland. With Sandra-Lynn, I have gotten to discuss some of the most controversial

topics around settlerness (i.e., how we use the concept of the settler), as well as on the historical relations between and across Indigenous and Black communities—relationships that have not always been devoid of mutual harm. We have also spoken about the concept of “decolonization”, and she has raised questions around its applicability in a reality that is fundamentally mired in white supremacy. For instance, she has asked: How do we decolonize if there is no structure to decolonize? On one occasion, while she was planning to attend an online talk by Kim Tallbear, she extended the invitation to me. After the conference, she helped me draft an email to Tallbear, asking her about the intersections of settlerness and whiteness, and we then discussed Tallbear’s response.

These types of critical conversations happened unexpectedly. One time, I came to the Education Center to meet with another person who was looking to develop a bibliography for outsider researchers. I was asked to offer ideas of the texts that I had read, so I organized a tool with different themes, beginning with the multidimensional nature of settler colonialism, as well as touching on the concept of the settler, and finally, on the practical aspects of relationship-building. Sandra-Lynn was at that meeting because she shared office space with the person with whom I was meeting. We engaged in difficult discussions about anti-Blackness, and again, thought about its relatedness to settler colonization. Through these conversations, Sandra-Lynn has been a key player in my thought process. She has pushed me to think and rethink ideas, and she has recurrently shared texts that have further sparked my thought. When she has read parts of my work, she has said that I should have done a PhD in history. We bond over our discussions about history, and we have even attempted to organize a reading club to read philosophy.

When I was in the process of deciding what to do for my PhD, in the time when I was working on the development of the research ethics policy, Sandra-Lynn offered her time to meet

and discuss ideas, and so did Wahéshon and Kahtehrón:ni. Around this time, I was transitioning from my role as a collaborator in the writing and implementation of Kahnawà:ke's Education research ethics policy and into my role as a graduate researcher. The transition was timely since I got to benefit from the education research ethics policy and underwent the process as any other researcher would. Certainly, the fact that I knew Wahéshon, Kahtehrón:ni and Sandra-Lynn eased the process. My experience is likely distinct from that of other outsider researchers who might begin a relationship in Kahnawà:ke at the same time that they might be submitting their intent to collaborate on research. This difference is what makes the work that I present here meaningful: the space of this doctorate work is meant to bring into salience points of contention that might appear to be insignificant to settlers—and might even be overlooked as a result of our privilege. But *pressure points* can reveal the many relational complexities that require practices of *working through* to name and understand how and why settler colonization takes root in spaces of collaboration—as it does everywhere, all the time—but without overdetermining what becomes of our relationships. As Wahéshon puts it, “what’s important, too, [about your work] is to show people that the all the good that can come out of these kinds of collaborations doesn't mean that there's never going to be harms...”.

Because of the asynchronous and overlapping back-and-forth dynamics that have been foundational in our relationships, I have decided to think about how a relational back-and-forth pattern—or relationality—can act as the methodology and method of inquiry for this work. This relational dynamic has also been important in my interactions with Mark.

Mark and I have been involved for over seven years. When we started dating, I was graduating from my teaching degree, and I was just beginning my journey as a graduate student. He has followed me through this journey and has seen me evolve with the changing aspects of

this work. Early in our relationship, Mark modelled openness and self-criticality in ways that I did not. He loves hip-hop music, and his favourite artist is J Cole (Jermaine Lamar Cole), a Black rapper. Although over the years Mark has learned to question his role as a consumer (and spectator) of the intimate life experiences that J Cole raps about for Black peoples, in the beginning years of our relationship, he did not question his “white gaze” (hooks, 1992). Neither did I. In fact, my conception of rap music was implicated in overt forms of anti-Blackness. I constantly dismissed the art of this music, as well as the rappers’ communication of real life experiences of anti-Black racism that Black people experience daily. At the time, Mark did not have the language to call me out on my anti-Blackness, nor did he understand his own involvement in it. But he spoke up and challenged my views.

When I started to study critical race theory in graduate school, I became more critical of my own practices, but also of his life practices. He was the only settler person with whom I dared to share about my learning, as well as get into heated discussions about our complicities. My approach with Mark was often unproductive, for since he was the person in my life I trusted most, I did not regulate my tone, nor did I examine how much space I was taking in our conversation. This frustrated Mark, and at family gatherings, whenever discussions enmeshed in settler complicity would come up, he would be the one speaking up—doing his best to articulate ideas that I had been studying and had shared with him only in conversation. After those family gatherings, on our way home, I often complained about the dynamics of the conversation, focusing on the lack of criticality amongst our settler friends and family. “So, why don’t you speak up?”, Mark would say. Mark was critical of my passivity in ways that frustrated me, but in retrospect, he is fundamentally the person who has pushed me to reverse-the-gaze on myself.

And this is also a point of contention that grounds my conversation with Sandra-Lynn (chapter eight).

At the same time, Mark also lived through his contradictions and sometimes refused to be challenged beyond his comfort zone. The conversation that Mark and I revisit in this research, seen in chapter seven, took an unexpected spin in that he was expecting to have an improved understanding of a moment when we had been complicit with racism towards a Brown Latina woman who I will call Maite. I say “Brown Latina woman” because the spectrum of Latinx American identity is varied given colonization. For example, I am Latina, but I am white, and I am a settler. The conversation was challenging for me as well, for it was difficult to engage in a relational pedagogical process of learning rather than a top-down approach where I self-situate as somehow less complicit than Mark. Despite the pressure points of that conversation, Mark has continued to agree to be a part of this research, and to reveal his identity. He understands that it is important to put ourselves out there, to take accountability for our own structural limitations—this is what makes solidarity work a difficult process.

The back-and-forth dynamic that I have described so far and that underlies this work’s method of inquiry is also present in my relationship with Mark. Without his engagement in a back-and-forth process throughout my graduate school, a large part of this work would have been impossible. Mark could have been a supportive quiet partner in these years, but he chose to get involved through and through. He chose to work through his own complicities, and in that way, Mark has informed this research’s core as well.

I want to highlight that this relational back-and-forth dynamic guides interactions with Mark, Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéhshon, and Sandra-Lynn in this research, because it has been guiding relationship-building for several years. The back-and-forth dynamic paints a picture of giving

and receiving, of contributing and of listening. It is an ethic that becomes the motor for practices of *working through settler complicities*, which means that the back-and-forth is not just a superficial dynamic that frames discursive exchanges so that we can balance our input with being truly receptive to someone else's contributions. The back-and-forth dynamic frames interactions with Mark, Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéhshon, and Sandra-Lynn but also the "rabbit-hole" analyzes that are important towards naming relational pressure points *and* de-layering them in order to understand *how and why* settler colonial dynamics and settler colonial complicities take root in mundane and multidimensional ways—across relationship-building, and in my own settler efforts at being critical of conquest. Through this relational back-and-forth dynamic, the goal is to also bring into salience connections and disconnections that exist in contexts of interaction with settlers like Mark, and in interactions with Kahnawa'kehró:non such as with Sandra-Lynn, Wahéhshon, and Kahtehrón:ni. The connections and disconnections are useful in highlighting the structural, contextual, and idiosyncratic ways in which settler colonialism operates through modalities of conquest that inform dispossession. And so, the intent behind revisiting moments of interaction with Mark, in the context of everyday life where our complicities might not directly appear to be connected to dispossession and land theft, is to, precisely, struggle to unearth how settler complicities are *multidimensional* in nature *because the struggle for land operates through modes of conquest that bring into contact uneven struggles, peoples, histories, and geographies*. The intent behind revisiting moments of interaction with Sandra-Lynn, Wahéhshon, and Kahtehrón:ni is to create spaces where *pressure points* can emerge as cues through which to understand the layered complexities that underlie relationship-building between us, but also the specific ways in which my ways of being and knowing might take root—and reproduce—modes of conquest in apparently mundane ways. In this research's conversation, the

revisitation of moments across these two contexts is meant to, on the one hand, respond to the fact that, if dispossession is always and everywhere at play, so should decolonial solidarities extend into practices of working through that span across time and space. On the other hand, and specific to this work, it is to model my own struggles at responding to gaps that are always possible in the way I join Kahnawa'kehró:non in community-based resistances and yet go on to live settler life as usual. How can I articulate a commitment to *decolonial solidarity* that is *continuous* when I am with Kahnawa'kehró:non and when I am not with them? And how can this commitment be modelled as an imperfect process of decolonial solidarity that is limited and regulated by the structural, contextual, and idiosyncratic dimensions of settler being—in this case, of my own settler positioning?

2.2 Defining Concepts

In order to contextualize this work in the knowledges that have informed my conceptualization and use of key concepts like **settler, working through settler complicities, and decolonial solidarity**, I offer a succinct review of scholarship around decolonization, working through whiteness, and settler, non-settler, and “arrivant(s)”.

2.2.1 Decolonial Solidarity

I often think about moments when Kahtehrón:ni and Wahéhshon have shared their thoughts about ways in which settler academics use Indigenous knowledges to build research that appears, or tries, to respond to decolonization. Sometimes, they have given examples of settler academics who might move into innocence exactly in the way in which Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang (2012) describe “playing Indian” as a settler fantasy and as a tool of Indigenous erasure (pp. 7-8). This move to innocence is mired in the contradictory reality of settler

colonialism—one that seeks to erase Indigenous peoples as Indigenous peoples so that they do not “make a priory claims to land and ways of being”—while wanting to become/claim indigeneity to be made innocent (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 8). When I started graduate school, I did not question the practice of building from Indigenous paradigms and methodologies to engage in research that de-centered settler/western paradigms. It seemed that, if Indigenous methodologies are rooted in decolonization, then what better way of demonstrating a commitment to Indigenous peoples than to privilege and center their knowledges in research? But over time, I have returned to do re/readings of Indigenous methodologies and research paradigms, and I have found useful *pressure points* in terms of forcing me to question who should develop an Indigenous methodology (Steinhauer, 2002), if Indigenous methodologies are within the “reality of the lived Indigenous experiences...of real persons as individual and social beings, *and not on the world of ideas*” (Weber-Pillwax, 2003, cited in Wilson, 2003, p. 174). Indigenous methodologies and knowledges are not only so deeply embedded into Indigenous ways of being and knowing, but they are also examples of Indigenous self-determination to “...no longer allow others to speak in their place” (Wilson, 2008, p. 51). In my understanding, Indigenous methodologies and knowledges are decolonizing because they are informed by “the few parts of ourselves [Indigenous peoples] that the West cannot decipher, cannot understand, cannot control...” (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2021, p. 143), and so, how can I write about or conceptualize a practice of decolonization as a settler?

I build from these pressure points to define decolonial solidarity in relation to decolonization *but not as* decolonization. This distinction is to emphasize that settler positioning matters a great deal. For, even when settlers want to defy colonialism, our settlerness and membership in a settler colonial order structurally limits the reach of our actions and

commitments, and to this extent, settlers cannot bracket out the systematic and everyday ways in which we become complicit in the reproduction of dispossession (e.g., Rifkin, 2013, pp. 323, 326). In my work, decolonial solidarity is explored as a contradictory task that is embedded in the difficulties of *working through settler complicities* knowing that this exercise will be regulated by my own settler lens, dominance, and positioning.

In defining decolonial solidarity *in relation* to decolonization, my objective is to also account for the historical and political genealogies of decolonial frameworks, noticing that they have belonged to variously positioned Indigenous peoples around the globe. To this extent, the relationality that I establish between solidarity and decolonization is meant to account for the difference(s) of experience across communities of peoples variously racialized as non-white or as white. Being mindful of the fact that colonization is not racialization—but that, rather, these two processes of conquest inform each other—the idea of race is central in my exploration of the ontological difficulties embedded in exercises of *working through settler complicities*. The idea of race is not meant to reduce whiteness to phenotypical differences, but it is defined in relation to whiteness as a system of power and dominance that has required, for centuries before the so-called discovery of the New World, multiple forms of conquest to define the conqueror as human. It is with this in mind that I also define my use of *settler and of non-settler people*.

Decolonization exceeds settler contexts like Canada and can be traced to “the colonial encounter” of 1492 (Mignolo, 2007). At least since the so-called discovery of the Americas, decolonization has undergone three major “turns” that spanned across the globe among communities of people affected by the ravages of world colonization (e.g., Maldonado-Torres,

2016, 2020; Soler, 2019, pp. 33-36)¹⁶. The first movement was led by Afro-Caribbean and Indigenous peoples from the Americas, while the second one, not necessarily connected to the one in the Americas, was a response against the British and French Empires in Africa and Asia (Soler, 2019, pp. 33-34). After World War II, there was a deep “disenchantment” with Europe, and it was here that “Third World thinkers” articulated decoloniality as a critical contestation of imperialism, conquest, capitalism, and racism (Maldonado-Torres, 2016, pp. 440-443). Early thinkers can be traced to “Césaire and Fanon in the Caribbean, Europe and North Africa...Dussel in Latin America...Linda Tuhiwai Smith...in New Zealand and Chela Sandoval in the United States” (Maldonado-Torres, 2016, p. 443). Before them, the first known precursors of decolonial thought and action in the West include Guaman Poma de Ayala (Quechua), Quobna Ottobah Cugoana (African), and W. E. B. DuBois (Maldonado-Torres, 2016, p. 443; Mignolo, 2007, p. 28). At present, it is still diverse communities of peoples racialized as non-white¹⁷ who use their knowledge and presence in nation-states to defy the colonial capitalist order (Maldonado-Torres, 2008, p. 63).

The diverse genealogy of frameworks of decolonization affirms that settler and capitalist orders are premised on the violence of original colonial encounters, which continues through modernity and forces diverse Indigenous, and Black and peoples of color “live through oppression” (Simpson, 2017, p. 163). In my work, I use the term **non-settler peoples**¹⁸ to recognize the white supremacist nature of settler colonial orders upon which racially privileged

¹⁶ Tuck & Yang (2018) also acknowledge that “decolonization has always been happening, since the advent of a Western imperial worldview equated with modernity that took hold around 1492” (p.10). They say the same about “abolition”.

¹⁷ I use the formulation “**racialized as non-white**” to reflect the fact that race is a socially constructed idea for empire-making and, in this way, avoid essentializing skin and peoples’ varied identities to a system of racialization.

¹⁸ Because non-settler peoples can be Indigenous to various other places (other than Turtle Island), I wanted to refrain from using the term **non-settler peoples**. This decision is to recognize the modalities of conquest that force diverse peoples to leave their homes in the contemporary moment, but also to acknowledge the histories of slavery that dispossessed African Indigenous peoples from their Lands.

settler people benefit from colonization. I also choose this terminology to highlight that, in my work, I will primarily attend to the articulations of decolonization by Indigenous communities and peoples who lived in what is now North America/the Americas. In this context, Indigenous scholars agree that decolonization is a “material struggle for land” (Coulthard, 2014, p. 13, paraphrased), and not “a swappable term for other things we want to do to improve our societies...” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 3). It could be said, then, that decolonization is uninterested in inclusion but rather searches for an elsewhere, outside of the colonial relation (Grande, 2013, p. 371; Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 3). Crucially, if decolonization searches for the rematriation of land and life to Indigenous peoples, in our practices of solidarity, as settlers, we have to interrogate how our settlerness is defined from within settler property (Tuck & Yang, 2018, p. 6). The interrogation of settler property requires a *multidimensional* examination of *settler colonialism*—that brings into salience the interrelation between whiteness, concepts of the human, and processes of imperial conquest (Tuck & Yang, 2018, p. 6). Thus, practices of decolonial solidarity require settler people to study the formation of settler colonial states with *historical density*, which means understanding how dispossession and theft of Indigenous lands persists through interlocking modalities of conquest that precede the beginning of settler colonization—a point that will be weaved through a review of the field of settler colonial studies (chapter 3).

2.2.2 The Settler

I have also thought about ways in which the practice of self-positioning¹⁹ has perhaps replaced the critical task of thinking about settler positioning as a location of power and

¹⁹ By which I mean self-situating in academic spaces by explicitly stating how we come to think and produce knowledge.

dominance that is not just continually made and re/made, but that is made and re/made within a very specific context of settler colonization—one that is multidimensional rather than a simple binary structure. With Kahtehrón:ni and Wahéhshon, I have had limited opportunities to discuss the use of settler/non-Indigenous terminology. For the education research ethics policy, we have used Kahnawa'kehró:non and non-Kahnawa'kehró:non. This is a strategic choice of terminology because the primary goal of this policy is to further the Education Sovereignty of Kahnawà:ke by ensuring that all education activities are rooted in, and can serve, the strategic education goals of the community. But because of the way in which I am wanting to think about *decolonial solidarity*—as a process that spans across time and space that brings into salience points of pressure wherein complicities can be seen emerging—it is crucial to think through the varied complexities that, now more than ever, demand a disaggregated and historically specific use of “the settler”. If I am going to model *working through settler complicities* through moments of contention with Kahnawa'kehró:non and with a settler, and if my aim is to bring into salience how the struggle for land is ever present across modes of conquest, then defining *settler* is a central part of this work.

I am defining “settleness” (or *the concept of the settler*) through a careful examination of the idea of race and processes of racialization that have violently and variously dehumanized non-settler and Indigenous peoples, across centuries of conquest, to give whiteness the attributes of full humanity. This decision is meant to reflect my efforts at hearing the voices of Indigenous and non-settler scholars who have been grappling with the terminology around *settleness* in critical and relational ways. Through this effort, I do not claim that my decision to use *settleness*—to refer to *racially privileged peoples*—and *non-settler peoples*—to refer to peoples racialized as non-white—is devoid of tensions. However, as I elaborate these terms in chapters

three and four, my aim is to bring into salience the debates and contentions around this topic while showing that my stance stems from three considerations. First, I will show that the application of settlerness to all non-Indigenous peoples is itself anti-Indigenous, for it only reifies the liberal multicultural order upon which settler sovereignties are dependent (Byrd, 2011, see her use of “arrivants”; Dei, 2017; Maynard & Simpson, 2020, 2021; Patel, 2018; Tuck & Walcott, 2017, episode 17; Tuck & Tallbear, 2016, episode 4; Tuck & Yang, 2018; Walcott, 2014b). Second, I aim to show that my commitment to support Indigenous peoples in their varied articulations of decolonization is necessarily dependent on a disaggregated understanding of settlerness in relation to whiteness²⁰—this is important for, how can settlers stand in solidarity to Indigenous peoples while Black peoples are dehumanized *and* discursively made settlers (see Patel’s 2018 recent argument on “non-settler non-Black people” versus settler and Walcott, 2014b, p. 96), or while variously positioned peoples of color are expected to support the colonial order but always as “other” (e.g., Dei, 2017, p. 96; Hudson, 2017, pp. 9-10)? Third, in unpacking these points, I wish to show myself grappling with my own settler positioning, and in this way, call on other settlers to engage in a multidimensional study of settler colonialism rather than a binary one through which we naturalize, problematically, our sovereignties on Indigenous land.

2.2.3 Settler Complicity

Settler complicity is a concept that comes out of the realization that, even when relationship-building has been a shared positive experience by Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéshon, Sandra-Lynn and me, there are points of contention that emerge and create different affective experiences that register more or less consciously because of who we are and how we come into

²⁰ Again, I use whiteness to define racial privilege only insofar as whiteness is a system of power and dominance that requires uneven and distinct peoples and struggles to inform colonization.

relationships that are never detached from the gravitational pressures of settler colonization. My responses to these gravitational pressures are rooted in my own ontological limitations in that my ways of being and knowing take root in the colonial order (and vice-versa) in systematic and idiosyncratic ways. These responses are, in other words, settler complicities. They reveal a gap in “knowing better than and still proceeding to do thing”, which can have re/colonizing effects that bring out different stakes for Sandra-Lynn, Wahéhshon, and Kahtehrón:ni than for me. This gap is also prevalent in my interactions with settlers like Mark, especially when we strive to be critical of our power and dominance and yet proceed, in that same exercise, to self-distance from the thing we try to be critical of. In my work, settler complicities are defined in relation to a knowledge-practice gap that results because of how settler thoughts and actions are regulated by a multidimensional structure of settler colonization that is informed by, and therefore operates through, modes of conquest that are rooted in white supremacy and dispossession.

I draw primarily from George Dei Sefa’s chapter *Blackness and Colonial Settlerhood: A Purposeful Provocation* (2017) to root my use of settler complicities in the literature around *the concept of the settler*. I draw from him because he is among the authors who have more clearly articulated a stance on the use of “the settler” while situating the discussion within its complexities. After attending Kim Tallbear’s online talk with Sandra-Lynn (mentioned above), we exchanged emails, and she noted that because all citizens of a settler state can “shore up” settler colonial power, she prefers focusing on the functionality of “state power” rather than on the concept of the settler at an individual level. Part of the argument that Dei puts forward, and which I agree with, is that when settlerness is diluted to mean anyone and everyone, the real settlers get off the hook. For example, if we say that all Canadians are responsible for the destruction of the Earth, there is no need for settlers to engage in a disaggregated analysis of how

peoples' implication in this structural issue—which directly impacts Indigenous Life—is very much regulated by racial capitalism and patriarchy, two modalities of white supremacy that benefit “the settler” *unevenly*, and that also intersect to erase Indigenous sovereignties. In this way, settlers can get off the hook by looking away from our *complicities*. Dei’s work is useful in my thinking because while he considers points like the one made by Tallbear, he states that *being implicated* in the perpetration of modalities of conquest that facilitate dispossession is not the same as being *complicit*. This differentiation does not mean that settlers *and* non-settler peoples do not have responsibilities to support Indigenous activism, but it means that while responsibility is collective, it is also particular in relation to horizontal relations of power (see also Byrd, 2011 on vertical versus horizontal power). Thus, settler complicity is related to my theorization of “the settler”, which is itself related to my study of settler colonialism as a multidimensional structure of conquest. *Settler complicity refers to the multimodal ways in which settler people live everyday life through discourses and practices that are already configured to reproduce the colonial order and secure dispossession—even when these everyday discourses and practices appear to have nothing to do with Indigenous sovereignties and questions of land.* In chapter three, I fully unpack this conversation, but for now, I briefly draw on Tuck & Yang’s ethic of incommensurability to further contextualize why a differentiation between implication and complicity can be valuable within the context of decolonization and, most importantly for this work, in relation to settlers’ engagement of *decolonial solidarity*.

2.2.3.1 An Ethic of Incommensurability. Non-settler peoples have been critiqued for developing anti-racist responses to white supremacy that are viewed as "furthering colonial agendas", which is why Black peoples and peoples of color have been charged with settler complicity (Lawrence and Dua, 2005 in Dei, 2017, pp. 86-87). For example, because Black thinkers have been labelled as anti-racist but not anti-colonial, there is an inherent assumption that, because of "occupation" is framed as a binary, "Black thought can...inform and inspire, but not orient indigenous politics" (Sexton, 2016, pp. 588, 594). This kind of "squashing" (Tuck & Yang, 2018) dehumanizes Black people and other peoples racialized as non-white, while also limiting solidarities across these groups (Dei, 2017, p. 86). Division is productive to the colonial order, for unity across Indigenous and non-settler peoples can reveal the settler colonial myth, and thus, challenge settler people to face up our complicities (Hudson, 2017, p. 8).

The theorization of "the settler" that I am proposing in this work can be useful in terms of contextualizing roles and responsibilities according to the *uneven* complex configurations of power, thus bringing together Indigenous and non-settler peoples who wish to defy the colonial capitalist apparatus (Hudson, 2019, p. 12; Simpson & Maynard, 2020, p. 75). In this way, the responsibility of settler people in practices of decolonial solidarity can be fine-tuned to require our robust considerations of recent and ongoing conversations across communities of Indigenous scholars and non-settler scholars (e.g., Maynard, 2012; Simpson & Maynard, 2020; Palmater, 2020; Patel, 2012, 2018, Walcott, 2014a) who engage with each other despite the "incommensurabilities" of their experiences under the colonial relation (Hudson, 2017; Simpson, 2017, pp. 162-163; Tuck & Yang, 2018). Leanne Simpson puts it this way: "If Dionne Brand or Fred Moten speaks to my heart as an Nishnaabekwe, as both do, then Nishnaabeg intelligence compels me to learn, share, and embody everything I can from every teacher that presents

themselves to me in a mutually ethical, consensual, and reciprocal way” (p. 162). In this thought, as when she writes that “Nishnaabeg intelligence is diversity”, she is not just talking about diverse “engagements with the struggle of nation building” (such as physical and intellectual), she is also noting that “all kinds of knowledge are important and necessary” to pursue decolonization (pp. 162-163). Incommensurability means that in cross-solidarities, “sameness” is *not* the aim; rather, engagements across Indigenous, Black and peoples of color are guided to unfold through difference (Tuck & Yang, 2018, p. 2).

The terminology of settler and non-settler, as well as of complicity and implication, are guided by this ethic; incommensurability informs practices of settler accountability by bringing settlers to center difference in our analyses and practices of solidarity. For instance, we can see that what colonized and racialized peoples have in common is their “indigeneity”, and that “indigeneity” is not homogenous as a category (Dei, 2017, p. 101). Diverse Indigenous peoples respond to settler colonialism and to the matrix of power more broadly differently, according to their collective and individual experiences (Mignolo, 2020, p. 613). For Black people, “the question of alienation” is much more important because “indigeneity” cannot always account for “the deep ruptures of the passage” (Walcott in Tuck & Walcott, episode 13, *the Henceforward*). But at the same time, when Black people are told that they can search to belong but not articulate their indigeneity because they are not Indigenous to places made settler colonial, there is a perpetration of anti-Blackness that ultimately benefits settlers, for as Tuck asserts, belonging is a settler obsession (Tuck & Walcott, episode 13, *the Henceforward*). Centering difference in our analyses and practices, as settlers, works as an ethic but also as a critical lens through which to de-layer the elements of our personal complicities that reify the colonial order.

For me, the work of Shaista Patel has been particularly important in modelling what contingency can do to uphold “complexity”. She acknowledges that “the Americas” is first and foremost stolen land” where Indigenous peoples are continuously dispossessed and Black people’s humanity negated (Patel, 2018, p. 6). This kind of layered criticality does not make insignificant the fact that “non-Black people of color”, per Patel’s wording, are also displaced by ongoing global imperialism and “colonial entanglements of race, caste, religion, gender and tribal politics” among other systems of power (Patel, 2018, p. 8). Rather, as more recently said by BIPOC²¹, “contingent collaborations” across these communities are important to account for the “intersecting” logics of conquest that inform settler colonial orders (Hudson, 2017, p. 12; Simpson & Maynard, 2020; Tuck & Yang, 2018). Incommensurability says that all differences considered, it is the ongoing violence of conquest that is commonly contested by Indigenous and Black peoples, and peoples of color who “refuse routes to justice” under the “apparatuses of the nation-state” (Tuck & Yang, 2018, p. 2, 9).

Thus, incommensurability centers an element of “radicality”, a “no” to anything coming from the colonial capitalist apparatus. By and large, that element of “radicality” forces settlers to deal with the contingency of our own positionings, and this helps settlers de-layer complicity rather than “conclude” with unilateral, reductive how-to frameworks to decolonial solidarity. This is an important characteristic in terms of how I think of *working through settler complicities*, an exercise that begins with naming *points of pressure* in moments of interaction with Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéhshon, Sandra-Lynn, and Mark in order to unearth how and why settler modalities of conquest take root in spaces of relationality and in my own ways of being and knowing—despite my individual and our collective efforts at deepening critical and accountable

²¹ Black, Indigenous and peoples of color.

relationships. This contradiction is not necessarily reconcilable—and neither is reconciliation the aim—since *working through settler complicities* across these two contexts is about grappling with the ways in which processes of dispossession are active always and everywhere through diverse modes of conquest.

2.3 The motor of “Working Through”

Working through centers the responsibility of settler people by demanding that we do our own work, but while asking: “...how are whites to do this work while *inviting* such tensions as integral to the process?” (Levine-Rasky, 2012, pp. 1-2, emphasis on original). Because whiteness cannot be studied as an object devoid of the relationships of power and dominance that benefit racially privileged people, Levine-Rasky writes that “the work [of working through whiteness] is best conceptualized as organized in tension”, and the task of scholars in her edited book is to bring into salience those contradictions (p. 2). Her work is valuable, for in wanting to bring into salience the effects of whiteness, she examines the structural elements of her being, as a white scholar, that regulate those efforts (p. 18).

I build from this framework but also from Tuck & Yang’s (2018) ethics of incommensurability, as seen above, to engage in an examination of this research’s conversations towards (1) naming the elements of my complicities in key moments related to relationship-building in Kahnawà:ke and to conversations about structural inequities with one settler and (2) de-layering these forms of complicity by bringing into salience the co-constitutive nature of settler privilege and being to the modalities of conquest that secure Indigenous lands for settlers.

The method of inquiry based on string figures is useful—in fact it is the motor of this practice of *working through* because the aim is not resolution of relational *pressure points* that Kahtehrón:ni, Mark, Wahéhshon, Sandra-Lynn, and I might revisit. The aim is to explore these

pressure points in relation to the question of how settler colonization regulates relationship-building efforts and, more specifically, how the colonial relation informs my own ways of being and knowing in those relational spaces of attempted criticality and accountability. String figures paint a vivid picture of this relational back-and-forth method and methodology, because, as a game of two or more participants, but also of one participant, patterns of giving-and-receiving are required to manipulate the strings to enable the game to move—and not in any direction. String figures can be linear or non-linear; they can be straightforward when players are experienced and have a specific end in mind. But even when these conditions underlie games of string figures, players often stumble and drop the threads, only to recommence. Sometimes, objects are needed, more than human hands, to make certain string figures. These are relational patterns that inform how I will model working through settler complicities: at times engaging with Kahtehrón:ni, Mark, Wahéhshon, and Sandra-Lynn, but other times engaging in relational readings and responses of theories that I have learned to see as standing for the real voices of Indigenous, Black, and peoples of color. The theoretical relational back-and-forth that I will model is meant to show that, to do this kind of work, settler people are highly dependent on centering the voices of those who have embodied and intellectual experiences related to conquest in ways that we do not—because of who we are in relation to conquest.

Having defined this work's main concepts and established a context for the relationships that underlie this work, I will now proceed with the theoretical portions. In chapter three, I begin with a review of the field of settler colonial studies and look at the concept of the settler. In chapter four, I continue the discussion by examining settler colonialism as a multidimensional formation that is co-constitutive with settler being through settler complicities.

Chapter 3: The Theoretical Foundations of the Field of Settler Colonial Studies and the Issue of “Binarism”

3.1 Preamble

My research questions are framed around the concept of the settler:

- How might revisiting key moments of settler/Kahnawa’kehró:non collaboration and settler/settler everyday interactions enable me, **a settler**, to work through **settler complicity**?
- What might “working through” look like when **settlers such as myself** examine those key moments to de-layer settler complicity from within the structural constraints of our **settler positioning**?
- How might working through settler complicity across time and space, in **settler/Kahnawa’kehró:non** direct collaborations and in **settler-settler everyday life interactions**, elucidate *a* process of decolonial solidarity that accounts for the fact that dispossession is always at play?

I am fully aware of the debates around this terminology²², and in this chapter, I offer a review and a critique of the field of settler colonial studies to articulate how and why I advocate for a disaggregated use of the concept of the settler—rather than for one that relies on a settler/Indigenous and Indigenous/non-Indigenous binary. This chapter can be seen as a steppingstone to my own efforts at self-positioning as a settler in relation to the fact that settler colonialism is informed by and requires interlocking modes of conquest that bring different peoples, struggles, histories, geographies, and experiences onto settler society to benefit a very

²² See footnote 4.

particular type of settler. In order to name and unpack *pressure points* in relationship-building with Kahnawa'kehró:non and with settlers, I have to establish a framework through which to pinpoint *settler complicities* that are diverse in nature and always connected to struggles for land—even when tangible terms like land, land struggle(s), Indigenous sovereignties, decolonization are not directly evoked in settler discourse and practice.

My proposed use of “the settler” is not informed by the views of Kahnawa'kehró:non, because in my conversations with Kahtehrón:ni and Wahéhshon, we have not explicitly discussed frictions around this terminology. These discussions would require an ethical process that is distinct from the one that has guided this research, and our interactions in it. Sandra-Lynn has helped me understand that conversations around settler colonialism *and* settlerness are variously difficult for Indigenous peoples because the historical baggage is unevenly experienced amongst them. At the same time, I also think of the contexts of struggle to gain and maintain Education Sovereignty in Kahnawà:ke, and I realize that in our writing of the education research ethics policy, the protocols that we developed address Kahnawa'kehró:non and non-Kahnawa'kehró:non researchers. Wahéhshon explained that academic terminology—like “Settler”—is disconnected from local registers. For example, in Kahnawà:ke, people refer to settlers as “white people” because of colonization, and so, when local initiatives are developed, they need to account for the language so people get on board with emerging initiatives. *Non-Kahnawa'kehró:non* reflects diverse positionings but it ultimately reflects the idea that, ultimately, education research must be rooted in local protocols and build from the strategic needs and goals that community members have determined.

Kahnawà:ke is situated close to Montreal, and it is one of the eight Kanien'kehá:ka communities that makeup the Kanien'kehá:ka Nation (Stacey, 2016a, p. 8). The Kanien'kehá:ka Nation is part of the Rotinonhsión:ni (Iroquois) Confederacy, which is formed of the Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, Seneca, and Tuscarora Nations (Reid, 2017, pp. 32-33; Whitebean, 2019, p. 14). To other Onkwehón:we (Indigenous people), Kahnawà:ke is known as a leader in language revitalization²³. Like when Bill 101 was passed in 1978 (Stacey, 2016a, p. 10), with Quebec's recent passing of Bill 93, Kahnawà:kehró:non have organized to contest and challenge these colonial structures that profoundly affect resistance work. After the passing of Bill 101, immersion programs were launched in Kahnawà:ke, and in 2000, Kanien'kéha was declared the official language of Kahnawà:ke (Stacey, 2016a, p. 13). The strong activism found in Kahnawà:ke is also seen in the sovereignty of the Education Center, which is responsible for three community schools and for a post-secondary program. The importance of grounding Kanien'kehá:ka youth in their worldview is also seen in the development of Kanien'kehá:ka Tsi Niionkwarihò:ten Curriculum, a program meant to center foundational teachings of who they are as Kanien'kehá:ka (Stacey, 2016b, p. 4).

The Education Sovereignty seen in the community of Kahnawà:ke speaks to the resilience of Kanien'kehá:ka, for education has been tied to the histories of violence connected to Residential Schools and Indian Day Schools (Whitebean, 2019, p. 3). As people of the Longhouse, the people of Kahnawà:ke are guided by Rotinonhsión:ni worldview, but this does not mean that community members understand and experience this worldview in the same way

²³ I learned about this when I attended a job talk with Kahtehrón:ni and Wahéhshon on language revitalization at McGill University.

(Whitebean, 2019, p. 13). Kahnawa'kehró:non are strong minded people who “refuse stop being themselves” and who are invested in various resistance practices towards exerting their self-determination over their lands and territories (Simpson, 2015, p. 2). After processes of forced displacement, assimilation, enclosure, and genocide, “The very survival of Kahnawà:ke ... is testament to the ultimate failure of the Canadian state to impose its will, but also of the strength and resilience of this and other Indigenous communities in the face of tremendous pressure to cooperate, assimilate, and disappear” (Rück, 2014, p. 380).

When I transitioned to my role as a researcher, I was among the first outsider researchers to try out the protocols of the ethics policy that I had helped develop alongside Wahéhshon and Kahtehrón:ni. One of the first steps required me to submit an initial contact form, and one of the questions on this form asked outsider researchers to share what we know about the Kanien'kehá:ka of Kahnawà:ke. Wahéhshon offered to proofread my draft, and she reminded me that academic knowledge is distinct from local knowledges: “You definitely know a lot about our documented (colonial) history but it shows that you are not familiar with community dynamics & cultural practices. Don't change or correct this though, you aren't necessarily supposed to know these things as an outsider”, she added on the margin of my draft. I offer this brief background of Kahnawà:ke and of Kahnawà:ke's Education Center to emphasize that the analysis and conclusions of this chapter might not represent the views of community members, and that the intent is to grapple with the voices of radical scholars to articulate a use of “the settler” that can then help me think through *pressure points* and *settler complicities* across this work. In a way, then, while this chapter is an attempt at thinking through my settler positioning to articulate a historically dense understanding of *decolonial solidarity* and *settler responsibility*, the ideas and analyses do not, nevertheless, escape a pan-Indigenous form.

3.2 Introduction

This chapter is organized as a review of the field of settler colonial studies, which I place in conversation with key Indigenous works and cross cultural fields that have particularly complicated the field's binarism (e.g., Barker, 2014²⁴, Byrd, 2019, p. 211; Byrd, 2014, p. 151-153; Dei, 2017, pp. 81-117; Kauanui, 2016; Konishi, 2019; Lowe, 2015; Robinson, 2019; Sharma, 2015; Sexton, 2016; Tiffany Lethabo-King, 2019, pp. 10, 18-20, 36-73). The field of settler colonial studies was founded in 2012 (Edmonds & Carey, 2013). While it has become a popular field led by differently positioned scholars, the field has sometimes been referred to as white settler colonial studies (Konishi, 2019, pp. 290-291; Lethabo-King, 2019, pp. 10, 18-20, 36-73) or as a liberal multicultural settler colonial framework (Byrd, 2011, p.XVII). This is because while settler colonialism has been used critically since the end of the 1970s, the voices of Indigenous scholars are often effaced despite representing the earliest contributions (Byrd, 2014, p. 151). Moreover, "[b]efore settler colonialism was established as a field of study, around 2005-2006, robust yet imperfect discussions [about settler formations] were occurring between Black and Indigenous communities" (Lethabo-King, 2019, p. 62). For the most part, the field of Settler Colonial Studies lacks examinations of the way in which settler colonial formations relied in slave trader violence and on Indigenous genocide (p. 62). Yet, the relational interconnections across these modes of violence and the way in which Black and Indigenous peoples were forced into encounters is seen in the way these communities presently organize against the state to abolish it (pp. 62-64). In the field of Settler Colonial Studies, the scope with which scholars grapple with ways in which imperial conquest informs settler colonization is also limited. This

²⁴ See Joanne Barker's critical notes on "settler colonialism", which can be accessed here: <http://mexmigration.blogspot.com/2014/01/decolonize-this-joanne-barkers-critical.html>

limitation points to important considerations in terms of how colonization and indigeneity can be reduced to modes of conquest—like race and white supremacy—therefore rendering indigeneity a racial category rather than an ontological position (e.g., Byrd, 2011; Lawrence & Dua, 2005; Moreton-Robinson, 2005, pp. 1-10). Patrick Wolfe (2013a) also posits that although settler colonial societies are informed by “major differentiations” and “internal complexities”, the nature of a “Native/settler” binary is primary in terms of understanding that settler colonialism is about the absorption, elimination, and assimilation of Indigenous peoples (pp. 257, 260-263). He argues that even though the nature of settler colonial societies has shifted, the binarism (settler/Indigenous and frontier/expansion) that underlies settler colonization has not been transcended because the modes of Indigenous erasure simply shift—as seen in the domestication of tribal organizations and enrolment, concepts of citizenship, allotment and blood quanta (pp. 257-258).

While I do not disagree with the premise that a unique characteristic of settler colonialism is in the imperial intention of making a settler home rather than just taking away resources or labor from Indigenous peoples (Veracini, 2013, p. 7), I also recognize that settler colonial formations depend on complex “economies of dispossession” that variously affect and require Black, Indigenous, and peoples of color (e.g., Lowe, 2015). In my reading of the texts that Patrick Wolfe has published in the field of Settler Colonial Studies, it seems that, in defending the “Settler/Indigenous” binary that underlies settler colonial processes, imperial conquest becomes secondary to the logic of Indigenous elimination. He acknowledges that dispossession and race “mutually compound in social life” to benefit white settlers and he adds, rightfully so, that despite operating in interlocking ways, race and dispossession are distinct (p. 264). The conflation of struggles, histories, geographies, peoples, and experiences across modes of conquest

is a grave risk that radical scholars have more recently acknowledged in their articulation of an “ethic of incommensurability” (Tuck & Yang, 2018). For example, Leanne Simpson and Robin Maynard (2022) write letters to each other in an effort to collaboratively work through the implications of knowing that the impact of colonialism on Indigenous peoples cannot be wholly understood without an understanding of anti-Blackness (and vice versa). “Histories of slavery and settler colonialism and their present realities aren’t identical”, says Maynard, “but they are foundational to this country that we live in” (Maynard & Simpson, 2020, p. 80). These interlocking and yet incommensurable histories of conquest are not, in my view, explored in the field of settler colonial studies in historically consequential ways. When scholars mention and acknowledge these histories, there is a gap in the theoretical discourses that are developed, including in the way practices of responsibility and solidarity to Indigenous peoples are conceptualized. A significant example of a gap is in the way scholars might define, or not, their own historical and structural positionings in the contemporary settler colonial order: Are all non-Indigenous peoples *settlers*? Are there different types of settlers? And are differentiations across types of settlers enough to mirror into our analyses the kinds of complex modes of conquest that inform settler colonial formations by variously subjugating, dehumanizing, and exploiting Black, Indigenous, and peoples of color? I think, for example, of the way in which Wolfe (2014a) notes that the enslavement of Black people is the most compelling case to acknowledge voluntarism versus willingly coming to settle on Indigenous lands yet concludes that this fact “does not alter the structural fact that their presence, however, involuntary, was part of the process of Native dispossession” (p. 263). I pause on his use of *immigrated*—“the fact that enslaved people immigrated against their will”—as he makes the latter point, and I see that he uses this term again when he speaks of indentured Pacific workers to Hawai’i (p. 264). The double use of this

word captivates my attention because it is a minor detail of how Wolfe's argument that settler societies are heterogenous but that this plurality does not alter the binary nature of the "Native/Settler divide" (2013a, pp. 260-264) can center a hierarchy of what struggles and histories are more important to settler colonial orders rather than how these struggles and histories are already in conversation because of the interlocking modes of conquest that inform—and make possible—settler colonization²⁵. In order to engage in a historically dense study of settler colonialism and see how settler colonial dispossession and genocide require diverse and improvised racial terms to institutionalize settler sovereignties and settler humanity, it is important to challenge the hierarchical binarism that appears to underlie settler colonial analyses in the field (Byrd, 2014, pp. 153-154). I want to think through Byrd's question of *how to think of* various geographies, struggles, histories, and experiences without reproducing an "aphasia" of the conquest of Indigenous peoples (Byrd, 2011, p. xxvi).

I therefore unpack the understanding that the binarism of the field is recolonizing in nature, harmful to Indigenous sovereignties and decolonial efforts, because the colonial relation works through modalities of possession and dispossession that bring into conversation multiple histories of conquest (Byrd, 2019, p. 207). Indeed, the Indigenous/settler binary that organizes the field of settler colonialism—what Byrd calls "manichean allegories"—reproduces European logics of conquest whereby Indigenous peoples' ongoing relations with land are overshadowed by simplifying the nature of ongoing conquest (Byrd, 2014, pp. 153-154). In this analysis, I give Patrick Wolfe considerable airtime because he has influenced subsequent scholars, which is seen

²⁵ Within this context, Joanne Barker (2014) questions the terminology *settler colonialism*, suggesting that it elides the long-standing processes and residual practices of imperialism and conquest that inform settler formations in complex ways. Access her commentary here: <http://mexmigration.blogspot.com/2014/01/decolonize-this-joanne-barkers-critical.html>

in the way in which “settler colonialism is a structure, not an event” has been recurrently cited, sometimes leading to an elision of Indigenous voices (Barker, 2014, Byrd, 2019, pp. 209-211; Kauanui, 2016; Konishi, 2019; Snelgrove, Dhamoon & Cornthassel, 2014, p. 4; Tuck & Yang, 2012, pp. 5-6). My aim is not to place blame on him nor to dismiss his contributions, which are invaluable and in many ways allow for those of us who come after him to think through gaps and questions that can, hopefully, attend to the complexities more and more discussed by Black and Indigenous scholars, and scholars of color. The particular focus of this examination is to then look at the ways in which the concept of the settler becomes a one-size fits all term, used by non-Indigenous peoples to self-position in relation to Indigenous peoples, which only serves to fortify the colonial order and “to dilute the meaning of “settler”” (Dei, 2017, p. 92). While Indigenous elimination is a central logic of settler colonialism, there are multiple relations of conquest and “logics of whiteness” that inform and enable dispossession, land encroachment, and settler expansion (e.g., Dei, 2017 Byrd, 2011; Lowe, 2015; Simpson & Maynard, 2020). This multiplicity cannot just impact *how* settler colonialism is studied as a complex structure of conquest, and not as a structure premised on a hierarchical binary (Konishi, 2019, pp. 295-296, see footnote for Barker’s contribution; Byrd, 2011, 2019). Rather, a complex study of settler colonialism needs to also translate into positioning practices through which diverse scholars can contextualize, with historical density, how we come to participate in conversations about settler conquest, decolonial solidarity, and (settler) responsibility to support Indigenous activism, as well as respond to ongoing struggles for land.

3.3 “Settler” is anyone, so it is no one

When I think about settlers, there are those who came over here because their colonial governments back home said, “Hey, there’s all this free land over here if you wanna make

a move, it's a land of opportunity, you can take it up for free or buy it."... I can only give you a finite perspective. But you certainly wouldn't be settlers in the strict sense of the settler term which hinges on your lack of decision versus people who made the decision to settle Canada

– Bob Joseph, Gwawa'enuk Nation

Originally I used a binary wherein settlers were all non-Indigenous peoples. However, that approach is reductive, and in some cases, actively harmful in my opinion. I specifically refer to settlers as "the non-Indigenous peoples living in Canada who form the European-descended sociopolitical majority," aka white people.

-Chelsea Vowel, Métis

Although Patrick Wolfe (2013a) notes that in the early stages of settlement a historical connection between Indigenous people and Black people existed, his work sets the stage for a field of studies where *settler* could be anyone. Wolfe (2013b) even suggests that Indigenous people could become settlers by residing in the territories of other Indigenous peoples because indigently is “place specific” (p. 264). According to Wolfe, when Indigenous people end up on territory that belongs to another Indigenous Nation, they become settlers by using up resources not belonging to them, and so, at the expense of the stewards of those lands (p. 264). This is counter to a basic idea of the field, which is that settler colonialism needs Indigenous peoples to “go away”, thus making colonialism, where “...an original displacement and unequal relations” are vital to exploit Indigenous labor and resources, different from *settler* colonialism (Cavanagh & Veracini, 2013; Veracini, 2013, pp. 1-2). Under settler colonialism, Indigenous peoples are continuously under erasure and have been forced to leave their homes *only because of settlement*. The fact that Indigenous peoples are required to disappear (at least) as Indigenous peoples should suffice to counterargue that, under no circumstances, can Indigenous people be made to bear the status of the settler²⁶. Indeed, settler colonialism is structured to displace Indigenous people

²⁶ A point that has been argued by Indigenous scholars who refuse to be seen as a minority within the settler colonial order, and therefore, possibly as settlers. I will discuss this point further below.

multiple times, and when no more territory is left for expansion, Indigenous peoples are “enclosed” into reserves or forced into assimilation (Senier, 2010, p. 4; Tuck & Yang, 2012). It is surprising that Wolfe would classify Indigenous peoples as settlers under conditions of forced displacement, for he acknowledges this very point when he talks about the logic of the frontier (Wolfe, 2013a). Moreover, the assertion that Indigenous peoples become settlers by taking resources of other Indigenous Nations leaves the real settlers off the hook and overshadows Indigenous peoples’ conceptions of land, which often involved fluidity. For example, before Kahnawá:kehró:non stayed by the St-Lawrence river close to Tiohti:áke, Kanien’kehá:ka were situated in different parts, going on all the way to Albany and central New York and on the other side to Trois-Rivieres (Reid, 2007, pp. 27-28, see Simpson, 2013, p. 3). With the arrival of French and English settlers, *they were forced to relocate*, splitting the Kanien’kehá:ka nation in 1670, and leading to the formation of Kahnawá:ke alongside the riverbanks (Reid, 2007, pp. 25, 32-33).

Wolfe’s argument that Indigenous peoples can become settlers when they leave their “specific place” contributes to historical erasures about the fact that “maps” and “boundaries” are a colonial invention that has helped settlers naturalize settler sovereignties by controlling movement and undermining Indigenous peoples’ non-exploitative relationships *with* land (e.g., see Lucchesi Hetoevèhotohke’e, 2018)²⁷. Although Indigenous peoples had complex social and political systems, European settlers self-imposed a judgement on these pre-colonial ways of

²⁷ The emphasis on maps and boundaries as being “colonial inventions” is meant to bring into salience the violence of settler colonization where the aim was to eliminate Indigenous peoples by normalizing white ways of being *over* the land (for instance, through farming and private property). My aim is not to romanticize Indigenous relationships with each other, across Nations, before colonization. In any case, the details of such conversation are beyond the scope of this chapter, and what is important here is to show that Indigenous peoples had relational knowledges of the Land and were/are through the land.

being and knowing based on colonial notions of progress according to which land was declared empty because, according to settler views, it lacked human “intervention” (Paul, 2011, p. 169). Meanwhile, instead of relationships of proprietorship “over” land (Byrd et al., 2018; Hill, 2017, p. 19), the ways of being and knowing of Indigenous peoples prior to (and through ongoing) colonization reveal a view of their existence within the context of reciprocal relationships “with all the elements of creation” (e.g., Hill, 2017, pp. 17-19; Simpson, 2017, p. 154). For example, Susan Hill (2017) explains that Haudenosaunee do not see Creation as “...something that happened in the long-ago past” but as a “recurring process” that is alive in non-hierarchical relations between people and with the land (p. 17). For many Indigenous Nations, moving through territories has been a part of life, which has been negated through the imposition of colonial boundaries (Palmater, 2020). To this extent, while all of what is claimed as “settler land” is Indigenous land (Simpson in Coulthard & Simpson, 2014), Wolfe’s argument elides the fact that “settler nationhood originates from the denial of and conflict with [Indigenous peoples’] ontological position” with land (Harris, 2019, p. 223), which requires multiple modes of displacement, enclosure, and dispossession. Thus, saying that Indigenous peoples can become settlers denies the structural ravages of settler colonialism, enables the real settlers to get off the hook, and contributes to the logic of Indigenous erasure.

Furthermore, Wolfe’s suggestion that Indigenous peoples can become settlers is counterintuitive since he insists that settler colonialism involves only two kinds of groups: Indigenous people and everyone else who comes to occupy Indigenous lands, hence the conflation of “settler” and “non-Indigenous”. Wolfe (2013b) specifically insists that settler colonialism is a “settler(non-Indigenous)/Indigenous problem”, or in other words, an issue of binarism. When Wolfe has been challenged to reconsider this reductive stance on the historical

formation of settler colonialism, he has sustained his position on the fact that “binarism” best explains settler colonialism because of the logic of Indigenous elimination (Byrd as cited by Barker, 2014; Wolfe, 2013a, p. 257). Even when urged by Hawaiian scholar J. Kēhaulani Kauanui to speak to “whether or not we should discern different kinds of settlers”, Wolfe says,

From the Native point of view²⁸, when it’s a zero-sum contest—you or me, for land, for livelihood, for the places that are special, sacred to you that keep your society alive, culturally, spiritually and every other way as well as your economic subsistence, just putting food on your table—it doesn’t matter if the people are enslaved or coerced, or co-opted, they are still taking your food (Kauanui & Wolfe, 2012, pp. 238-239).

While Wolfe later adds that those who might be enslaved, coerced, or co-opted are not “...settlers in the same sense as the colonizers who coerced them to participate...” (Kauanui & Wolfe, 2012, p. 239; Cavanaugh & Veracini, 2013), he still upholds the idea that settler colonization involves competing interests between Indigenous people and everyone else (Wolfe, 2013b). To be clear, and as I elaborate below, Indigenous scholars have at some points agreed with this declaration insofar as the axes of race, gender, and class have been used to articulate justice projects that reproduce liberal multiculturalism at the expense of Indigenous peoples who want nothing to do with the colonial order (Byrd, 2014; Grande, 2013; Kauanui in Byrd, 2011, p. xxiv; Lawrence & Dua, 2005).

However, as seen in the quotes stated above by Bob Joseph and Chelsea Vowel, some of these Indigenous scholars have also agreed that “settler” involves much more than just “arriving” and being a “stranger” on Indigenous lands (Dei, 2017, p. 93). For instance, Jodi Byrd (2011)

²⁸ “From a native point of view” is a problematic stance to take not only as a settler but also because there is no single “Indigenous point of view”.

prefers “arrivants” as a way of bringing into salience the relationalities across conquest that bring possession and dispossession into being—and so, Black, Indigenous, and peoples of color into uneven forms of contact (see Byrd, 2011, p. xix). This disaggregation is to account for the fact that land theft and resource extraction are settler logics that are rooted in colonial modalities of enslavement, labor relations, capitalism, and indentureship (among others) (e.g., Lowe, 2015; Sexton, 2010; Simpson & Maynard, 2020, 2022). These colonial modalities tell us that it matters how “non-Indigenous peoples” arrive to Indigenous lands (Patel, 2018). While Veracini (2013) reinforces the reductive idea that “settler” is simply about “staying” to make a home (see p. 6), he has also noted that settler colonial violence “attacks” not just Indigenous peoples but also “exogenous alterities” (p. 178).

The binarism of settler colonialism described here enables settlers—racially privileged people who have unparalleled privileges in relation to race, property rights, and citizenship—to claim moral commitments to end colonialism while reproducing the terms that enable its reproduction (see Macoun & Strakosch, 2013). This reproduction does not have cancel out the genuine efforts of settler scholars to challenge colonization; rather, along with these efforts, the binarism that underlies conceptions of settler colonization ensures that settler scholars participate in the study of settler colonialism without needing to think about our settler positionings *with specificity*. Through this dilution of our settler positioning, then, how can we articulate responsibilities to Indigenous peoples if we sidestep the complex relationalities of conquest through which we acquire unearned privileges on stolen Indigenous lands? Next, I continue to problematize the field’s binarism, but in relation to land.

3.4 On the Question of Land

In this section, the argument that I aim to unpack is that the field's settler/Indigenous binary so far discussed situates competing questions of land—as delineated by settler sovereignties and Indigenous sovereignties—outside of the modalities of conquest that interlock to inform dispossession and land theft of Indigenous lands. By overshadowing the intersecting modalities of conquest that remain at play and are integral to the colonial relation, it could be difficult for settler scholars to grapple with the varied ways in which we are positioned to naturalize our illegal settlement on stolen Indigenous lands.

One reason for Byrd's choice of "arrivant" and "arrivant colonialisms" is that through, Robin D.G. Kelley's response to Wolfe's text "The rest of us", she agrees that settler colonization happened through a complex racial hierarchy that brought together various forms of labor to inform processes of Indigenous dispossession, enslavement and exploitation (in Byrd, 2019, pp. 209-210; see also Krautwurst in Patel, 2018, p. 2; Quijano, 2000, p. 533). To this extent, she argues that decolonial frameworks envisioning Indigenous futures *outside of the colonial relation* requires settler peoples to pursue "decolonial solidarities that account for disparate histories and geographies" through which "registers of possession and dispossession" intimately interlock to enable settler capitalism and settler privilege (Byrd, 2019, p. 207). In account of this, my aim in this section is to examine one of Wolfe's text to bring into salience some of the ideas that have informed subsequent views of settler colonialism and land-related questions under the binarism that he situates as *the* sole driving force of dispossession. Yet, as I see here, understanding the settler colonial project as embedded in multiculturalism and capitalism reveals, rather than reaffirm the field's binarism, that multiple racial and colonial modalities of conquest are needed to inform settler States and settler privilege.

3.4.1 The implications of Wolfe's binarism

3.4.1.1 The Settler Colonial Project is Also Multicultural. In *Recuperating Binarism*, Patrick Wolfe (2013a) argues that settler society continues to secure its supremacy through the inclusion and exclusion of Indigenous peoples and that, therefore, settler colonialism remains a binary formation despite changes in the character of settler societies. He overlooks that the logic of elimination could be informed by other modalities of conquest involving the coercion of peoples of color and the enslavement of Black peoples. To defend his position, he argues that the logic of the frontier continues in contemporary settler societies through assimilation tools that are vested under liberal promises of Indigenous inclusion. While this point is true (Coulthard, 2014), the essentializing binarism that he proposes as the determinant force of settler colonization smooths out the historical and contemporary complexities that inform questions of land—specifically in how settler scholars think through them. But what is the frontier logic?

Originally, the frontier logic was premised on the exclusion of Indigenous people from white settler spaces, which required the continual displacement of Indigenous peoples so that the boundaries of settler societies could be expanded. However, Wolfe (2013b) writes that geographical removal was only temporary, for “...sooner or later, the frontier caught up with the new tribal boundaries and the process had to start all over again” (p. 13). Geographical removal was ineffective in relation to the logic of Indigenous elimination because “...the Natives stayed Natives, only somewhere else...” (p. 13). Eventually, the frontier logic evolved into a more conciliatory approach, the aim being to introduce Indigenous peoples into “the pathway of

citizenship” by teaching them to be landowners (p. 21)²⁹. Blood quanta and general allotment were among these post-frontier techniques. But because under this more conciliatory form of assimilation the aim—to eliminate Indigenous people—remains unchanged and only the means shift, Wolfe (2013a) argues that the original settler/Indigenous binarism from the frontier has not been overcome (p. 257). In his view, the multicultural character of settler societies does not alter the fact that settler societies still depend on the “internaliz[ation][of] the Native problem” to be completed (p. 259).

Wolfe is not wrong to emphasize that, even under multiculturalism, settler colonialism still requires Indigenous people to “go away”, to disappear as Indigenous people (Veracini, 2013). After all, the positioning of settlers as the legitimate founders of settler societies requires the logic of Indigenous elimination, for at the core of settler dominance is the question of settlers’ possession over Indigenous lands (Dei, 2017, p. 108). However, even after multiculturalism changed the character of settler states in appearance, settler people have continued to use concepts and practices of ownership, *as well as of racial privilege* (Robinson-Moreton, 2015, p. 4), to resolve tensions around land—tensions that reveal our illegal settlement on Indigenous lands (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 9). This suggests that settler colonialism is multidimensional in nature—informed by multiple interlocking colonial and racial modalities of conquest—and not, as implied by Wolfe, a binary formation.

Importantly, while racism and colonialism should not be conflated since this equivalence can problematically misplace Indigenous peoples as a another minority in a so-called

²⁹ Daniel Rück’s text *Commons, Enclosure, and Resistance in Kahnawá:ke Mohawk Territory, 1850-1900* offers a historical view on how settler Canadian land laws affected Kahnawá’kehró:nón’s relations to land and wood (p. 359-360), as well as how “location tickets” (access to land) was dependent on the ability of Kahnawá’kehró:nón males to own land “properly” (p. 361-362).

multicultural settler state (Byrd, 2011, pp.xxiii-xxvi), racial privilege, which requires multiple logics of racialization, has positioned settlers as “...the norm and measure for identifying who could belong” while displacing Indigenous sovereignties (Mackey, 2014, pp. 233, 236; Robinson-Moreton, 2015, p. 5; Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 8). The need of settler states and people to prove our natural affinity on Indigenous lands is managed, precisely, by coercing variously positioned Black and peoples of color to live with proximity to whiteness but never as “the settler” (e.g., Dei, 2017; Walcott, 2014b). The multicultural character of settler states, most notably of Canada, in fact stands as a demonstration of the partial success of the settler colonial project (Howard & James, 2021). This is because multiculturalism paints a false picture of harmony, one that is ostensibly post-racial and post-colonial, by eliding the histories of conquest that continue to inform settler formations and settler being at the expense of Indigenous peoples’ self-determination (Byrd, 2014, pp. 153-154).

Under these considerations, it is important to note that the binarism of the field can inform techniques of disavowal such as when settlers construct myths about the hardworking pioneer who, from nothing, built everything on (empty) Indigenous land (Mackey, 2012; McLean, 2018; Robinson-Moreton, 2015, p. 2-4). This myth erases the histories of enslavement and indenturedship, for instance, that enabled white settlers to build settler empires (Lowe, 2015). Moreover, as Wolfe rightfully states, a central mechanism of elimination is seen in settler efforts to “lift...” Indigenous peoples “out of prehistory” and “insert” them into a settler colonial rule wherein they may no longer exist *as Indigenous people* (2013b, 23, paraphrased)—and this, so that their relationships with their territories and lands would be severed through murder (i.e., infecting them with diseases and subjecting them to wars), cultural genocide (i.e., residential schools) and assimilation (i.e., the “Indian Act”). For example, noting that Nishnaabeg

intelligence is deeply connected to land-based pedagogies, Leanne Simpson (2017) recounts this process of elimination as follows (p. 159):

Nishnaabeg intelligence has been violently under attack *since* the beginning days of colonialism through processes that remove Indigenous peoples from our homelands, whether those processes are education in residential and other forms of state-run schools, outright dispossession, the destruction of land through resource extraction and environmental contamination, imposed poverty, heteropatriarchy, or colonial gendered violence.

As “since” denotes in this excerpt, it is imperative to privilege a historically dense study of settler colonialism to see that, while Canadian multiculturalism attempts post-colonialism, there are ongoing colonial and racial modalities of conquest that, under the multicultural settler-colonial project, *continue to* operate to inform settler privilege and settler state formations at the expense of Indigenous peoples (Coulthard & Simpson, 2016, p. 254). What about capitalism?

3.4.1.2 The Settler Colonial Project is Also Capitalist. In Wolfe’s articulation of settler colonial mechanisms of elimination, there seems to be a lapse *in the way* in which he centers capitalism *and* colonization through imperial conquest (for this, see again Joanne Barker, 2014). Along with Lloyd, another settler scholar, Wolfe has reiterated (2014) that, if capitalism is relevant to settler colonialism, capitalism results *from* settler colonialism. This linearity results from the positioning of settler colonialism as a “zero-point” (Lloyd & Wolfe, 2014) to capitalism (and all neo-colonialisms) or as a “laboratory” as subsequent scholars have suggested (Veracini, 2015, p. 174). Under this chronological framework, the field of settler colonial studies insufficiently accounts for the longstanding imperial dialectics of free and unfree that have structured questions of struggle, living, and being in what is now known as “America” by

continuing previous Euro-colonial articulations of conquest (Lowe, 2015; Maldonado-Torres, 2015; Quijano, 2000). In chapter four, I will describe these previous Euro-colonial articulations of conquest, but here, what is important to note, is that situating settler colonialism as the point from which capitalism unfolds leads to the reductive binarism of the field that I have so far problematized.

As I acknowledge above, there is clearly a danger of further Indigenous erasure when settler violence is measured upon lines of race, gender, sexuality, and class differences (Byrd, 2011, p. xxvi). For, although capitalism, slavery, indentureship, exploitation and dehumanization remain realities of settler states, the continent where these various struggles are situated is “ground” for Indigenous peoples; it is where Indigenous peoples access knowledge about who they are in the present, past, and future (Byrd, 2019, p. 209). While a recognition for the long-standing imperial roots of conquest that inform settler colonization is needed, it is also important to tread carefully in consideration of how a more complex study of settler colonialism can further erase Indigenous histories, presence(s), and sovereignties. Thus, in light of these complexities, the more critical question that I believe should be centered in settler colonial studies is *how to think* of various geographies, struggles, histories, and experiences without reproducing an “aphasia” of the conquest of Indigenous peoples (Byrd, 2011, p. xxvi).

As difficult as this question is, it is worth struggling with it, for as Leanne Simpson writes to Robin Maynard, “There is no justice in Land Back if it is not in concert with the destruction of **racial capitalism**, and if Black people remain landless...just as there is no justice if Black liberation is framed through the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous peoples” (2022, n.p.). Shaista Patel (2018) also agrees with the latter point, adding that ignoring “the global imperial and colonial entanglements of race, caste, religion, gender and tribal politics” that force peoples

from around the globe to arrive to the Global North is reductive in a recolonizing way (p. 8). We need to remember that settler colonialism is inherently capitalist by virtue of seeing Indigenous lands only for their external value; but as well, we must recall that this capitalist exploitation is informed by registers of possession and dispossession that force Indigenous peoples, Black peoples, and peoples of color into *singular but interlocking* forms of labor and human exploitation (Byrd, 2019, p. 207). Glen Coulthard (2014) describes the anti-Indigenous nature of settler colonialism by highlighting its capitalist nature:

The struggle for land is not only *for* land in the material sense, but [is] also deeply *informed* by what the land *as system of reciprocal relations and obligations* can teach us [Indigenous peoples] about living our lives in relation to one another and the natural world **in nondominating and nonexploitative terms...** (p. 13, emphasis on original).

Because of this, along with Leanne Simpson, Coulthard describes decolonization as a framework informed by “...a fierce and loving mobilization...” through which Indigenous people oppose capitalism (Coulthard & Simpson, 2016, p. 254).

For settler scholars, the implications of studying settler colonialism’s relationship to capitalism (and vice versa) requires us to consider questions of land under the full scope of imperial relations of conquest. Indigenous land theft is not enacted in a singular fashion—that is, only through the logic of Indigenous elimination. Rather, land theft is also informed by other “logics” of conquest that are essential to state formations and are premised on whiteness (Hudson, 2017; Simpson & Maynard, 2020). This is because the concepts and practices of ownership that fuel settler capitalism were established in relation to racial privilege (Robinson-Moreton, 2015, p. 4) and established in opposition to Indigenous ways of being and knowing with their territories and lands, thus requiring their elimination *as Indigenous people* (Harris,

2019, p. 233). Through the establishment of racial privilege, settler people relied on processes of enslavement and indenturship to establish a white society through which wealth could be accumulated for the normative *settler* “white body” (Robinson-Moreton, 2015, p. 5). For example, as “[t]here was colonial work that was seen to be unfit for white colonizers, such as agriculture and housework”, “...Black people... were dispossessed from their lands and *forced to work for settlers*” (Hudson, 2017, p. 2, 6, my emphasis). Rather than a binary formation, settler colonial capitalist nation-states are informed by multidimensional modalities of conquest. For, indeed, as writes Philip S.S. Howard (2020), “settler-colonial nation-states...are established, *and only able to persist*, through *originary and ongoing* racist-colonial violence that dispossesses and “disappears” Indigenous peoples, dehumanizes Black people, and exploits all racialized people within the broader context of neo-liberal capitalism” (p. 40, my emphasis).

Having established how the field’s binarism can smooth out the historical geographies and histories that enable settler states to secure land for settlers, I want to illustrate how capitalism and multiculturalism can serve settler people to advocate for justice, equality, and fairness under the ideals of settler democracies—another system of conquest that enables settler states to “overdetermine” its false sovereignty over Indigenous lands (Dei, 2017, p. 95). I do this through an examination of Occupy Wall Street, an organized movement arguing for equal distribution of wealth. Racially privileged leaders frame the movement as a space for common struggles of economic injustice, which erases colonial histories and the fact that Occupy is already occupied Indigenous land (Tuck & Yang, 2012), as well dilutes important questions about how Black people and peoples of color “arrive” to settler contexts given diverse “colonial entanglements” of conquest (Patel, 2018, p. 8). To center Indigenous concerns about how colonization, race, and capitalism might further erase Indigenous peoples, I frame this discussion

by drawing from Sandy Grande's own analysis of Occupy Wall Street. My aim is to address such concerns by demonstrating how a historically complex understanding of settler colonialism can shed light on why disaggregated uses of "the settler" are important in terms of supporting Indigenous futurities.

3.4.2 Why it Matters How People End Up on Indigenous Territory

I have selected Sandy Grande's analysis of Occupy Wall Street³⁰ to address concerns held by Indigenous scholars regarding the "dissolution" of colonialism into capitalism when "race" is used in the study of settler colonialism (e.g., Byrd, 2011, p. xxiii; Grande, 2013, p. 370; Lawrence & Dua, 2015). One of the feared outcomes of a race analysis is that people of color might self-position as "...innocent in the colonization of Indigenous peoples" or that the settler state might reduce Indigenous peoples to "...small groups of racially and culturally defined...individuals...in a sea of settlers" fighting to have their land claims validated (Grande, 2013, p. 369; Lawrence & Dua, 2005, pp. 123-124, 126, 132; St-Denis, 2011, p. 311). The claim that even racialized individuals are settlers because they still occupy and settle on Indigenous land (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 7) has "hurt" Black peoples and peoples of color (Dei, 2017, p. 87). Because this response also ends up hurting Indigenous rights to self-determination, Indigenous scholars, Black peoples, and scholars of color have more recently upheld "explicit" analyses of race/racism, capitalism, colonialism among other relations of conquest (e.g., Byrd, et al., 2018; Byrd, 2011, see her introduction, 2019; Coulthard, 2014; Howard, 2020; Jamil, 2020; Palmater, 2020; Maynard & Simpson, 2020, p. 83; Maynard, 2017; Simpson, 2017; Simpson & Coulthard, 2014; Patel, 2012, 2018; Walcott, 2014b). These analyses say that empire, and more specifically

³⁰ For context, Occupy Wall Street tends to be seen as the largest movement to contest economic inequality in American society where "the 99%" of people living in America gathered to contest the wealth of "the 1%".

conquest, informs settler colonialism. As seen so far in this chapter, for settlers like me, the deeper engagements of settler colonialism cannot be seen without understanding how empires were made to function by variously “placing” Indigenous, Black peoples and peoples of color “in those workings” (see Patel, 2018, p. 49)—something that I fully unpack in chapter four.

Ignoring the racialized and capitalist dynamics that inform settlement foments the grounds upon which the real settlers can disavow responsibility and uphold settler privilege while the relations of conquest that inform Indigenous dispossession and land theft go unabated. This problematic can be seen in the philosophy of “Occupy Wall Street”, where, as seen here, racially privileged people reassert dominance by erasing Indigenous sovereignties in the way they equate their class struggles with diverse struggles of conquest:

Occupy Wall Street is a leaderless resistance movement with people of many color, genders, and political persuasions. The one thing that we have in coming is that We Are The 99% that will no longer tolerate the greed and corruption of the 1%...As one people, formerly divided by the color of our skin, we acknowledge the reality: that there is only one race, the human race.

As Grande argues, “occupy” dismisses Indigenous calls to “un-occupy” and therefore decolonize rather than search for “inclusivity” and “equity” within the colonial capitalist order (p. 375, see also Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 23-26; Barker in Konishi, p. 291-292). “Occupy” represents a common injustice among America’s population, but it does so, problematically, by positioning the 99% as a group of activists who “will no longer tolerate the greed and corruption of the 1%”. By conflating structural oppressions at the level of race and colonialism with class, racially privileged people can move to innocence in our complicity with Indigenous dispossession by eliding the ways in which settlerness is made at the intersection of ongoing relations of conquest.

Because of this, Indigenous scholars have in some instances denounced race analyses by saying that, under colonization, all non-Indigenous peoples are settlers. For example, “From the standpoint of Indigenous peoples”, writes Grande, what matters is not that “the so-called 99%” is “united in their collective indignation” against the “greed” of the “1%” but that they are organized “by their settler status” to demand an equal distribution of wealth that is already premised on dispossession (Barker in Konishi, 2019, p. 292; Grande, 2013, p. 370; see also Tuck & Yang, 2012).

The issue here is that while every “non-Indigenous person” contributes to the erasure of Indigenous peoples by virtue of their (willful or unwilful) presence (Dei, 2017, pp. 88, 90-91, 97, 110-113), lumping everyone into the category of “settler” is to ignore the relations of conquest and “colonial entanglements” of race (among others) that force peoples of color and Black Diasporas of peoples to “arrive” to North America (Byrd, 2011, p. xix; Patel, 2018, p. 8). This lumping serves the colonial order, and it reasserts the humanity of the settler—of racially privileged peoples—upon which citizenship rights and sovereignties are premised (Dei, 2017, p. 95). While Grande seems to agree that all non-Indigenous peoples are evenly positioned—as settlers—she also admits that this movement is primarily led by a “white majority” (p. 370-372). She clarifies that while this white majority can advocate for “inclusion” and a better economic representation vis-à-vis “the 1%”, people of color and Black Diasporas know, like Indigenous peoples, that settler economies will “hurt them” because they require their subjugation on different levels (p. 372). She also cites participants of color who call out the “majority white leadership” for failing and/or refusing to “connect the effects of capitalism to racism” and for appealing to a settler white order—in which they are uninterested (p. 372).

As seen through Grande's analysis, despite the concerns that she raises as an Indigenous woman, not all communities of color are interested in justice defined by settler inclusion. There are examples of cross-solidarities that show what can happen when resistance is articulated outside of a non-Indigenous/Indigenous binary (Hudson, 2017; Patel, 2012, 2018; Simpson & Maynard, 2020, p. 75). For example, when Ontario announced that the murderers of Andrew Loku, state police officers, would not be charged, a "tent city" was established in front of the Toronto Police Headquarters for more than two weeks (Hudson, 2017, pp. 1-2). This activism was led by Black communities who understood state violence against Black people as a constitutive part of colonialism and as an "afterlife" of slavery, but who were also conscientious about the risk of recolonizing land and erasing Indigenous communities if they proceeded without intentional engagements with Indigenous people (Hudson, 2017, p. 2). Thus, Indigenous communities were invited to conduct ceremonial protocols meant to honour their land. Each day at "tent city", Black activists recognized Indigenous peoples' lands and, in return, Indigenous people participated as allies, respecting the leadership of Black communities (Hudson, 2017, p. 11). Scholars of color have also been reflective about the ways in which their struggles do not absolve them from their implication in the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous peoples, as well as how they enforce anti-Blackness (e.g., Patel, 2012, 2018). These cross-solidarities show, on one hand, that settler formations are multidimensional rather than binary (further seen in chapter four), and on the other, that given this, settlerness is defined via varied modalities of conquest.

My point here, is that it matters how people "arrive" to settler societies, as well as the education efforts that are needed to give "arrivants" (who are not settlers) the tools to articulate

decolonial solidarities that do not erase Indigenous peoples³¹. How people arrive to settler societies should also be a part of the field of settler colonialism. The lack of consideration to the histories of conquest that ensure global geopolitical dispossessions and dehumanizing conditions for those “arrivants” once “accepted” into settler states secures settler sovereignties and re/humanizes white people. When settler scholars fail to account for these histories, we can also more easily engage in inconsequential uses of “the settler”, which has harmful consequences for the way in which we might domesticate decolonization (Tuck & Yang, 2012). If settlers are to consider the question of land with seriousness, it is imperative to acknowledge how labor and racial capital relations organize bodies, peoples, cultures, spirits, lives, and languages to serve the colonial order that privileges white people, *the real settlers*, as I define next.

3.5 Inconsequential Uses of the Concept of “the settler”

This section is central to this work, for it is here that I aim to show how the binarism of the field brings scholars in the field to self-position across variations of settlers, non-Indigenous, settlers of color, or white settlers. As I have shown, when settler is used inconsequentially, the term denotes everyone, and so, no one in particular—and this is productive to the settler colonial order. In my own exploration of this limitation, I want to re-emphasize that I am self-positioning as a settler and that, for the work that I aim to do in later chapters, de-layering this limitation is crucial so that readers can understand how my *practice of working through settler complicities* is rooted in an understanding of settler colonialism’s multidimensional nature.

³¹ People of color and Black people have sometimes been co-opted through western imperial education (Patel, 2018). When they have been born in Canada, they have undergone education that erases Indigenous peoples and all histories of conquest through which they could, respectively through their positionings, understand how the settler colonial order needs them to secure land for settlers. The education piece is as important alongside these communities of peoples as it is alongside settlers (for an example, see Howard & James, 2019).

I am choosing to define “settler” in consideration of the fact that settler colonialism is a white supremacist formation that is premised on “residues of conquest” (e.g., Dei, 2017, p. 87; Hudson, 2017, p. 6-8; Howard, 2020; Moreton-Robinson, 2015; Simpson & Maynard, 2020). This means that, under the lens that I am utilizing to study settler colonialism, it is important to place in conversation relations of conquest that are “entangled” in “discrepant spatialities and temporalities” histories of racism, dehumanization, genocide, territorial expansion and theft, slavery, indentureship, and capitalism (Patel, 2018, p. ii). Anti-blackness, Islamophobia, different “intensities” of racism (to borrow from Razack, 2005), capital relations, and patriarchy are among the logics of white supremacy that inform settler colonialism. Thus, I argue that defining and applying the concept of the settler without a critical study of these white supremacist relations of conquest is to disengage the analytical complexity that should be expected of racially privileged scholars—“settlers” in my work—as part of our commitment to support Indigenous resistances and futurities.

As seen in table one, a non-exhaustive selection of authors in the field, the terminology used to self-position—if they self-position at all (i.e., Woons, 2014, Wood, 2019)—or to contextualize their chosen terminology is either presented as a footnote (i.e., Lewis, 2017, Rifkin, 2014; Woons, 2014) or not presented at all (Carlson, 2016; Davis et al., 2016). While my aim is not to place blame on Patrick Wolfe, in light of the limitations of the field’s binarism, which arguably stem from his influence in the field, my aim in this section is to read into the ways in which settler scholars have contributed to this binarism by enagaging in inconsequential uses of terminology around “the settler”. I suggest that this collective form of complicity might stem from what I call a practice of *noting and glossing over relations of conquest*.

Table 1. Selected examples of how terminology around “the settler” is used in the field of Settler Colonial Studies.

Authors	Title Cue	Terminology	Yes/No contextualization of terminology <i>*If yes, see page(s)</i>	Author positionality
Carlson (2016)	“Anti-colonial methodologies ...”	White settler(s)	No	Settler Canadian/American (p. 498, 517)
Wood (2019)	“Colonial erosion...”	White settlers, Euro-American settlers, and African American settlers	Yes (p. 400-403 and 405, 415)	Unspecified
Davis et al., (2016)	“Complicated pathways...”	Indigenous/non- Indigenous, Allies, Indigenous/settl er, “Settler scholar K. Wayne Yang”, Settler Canadians	No	Except for Cherylanne James who is Anishinaabe, all contributors identify as settlers (p. 413-414)
Woons (2014)	“Decolonizing Canadian citizenship...”	Settler peoples, settlers, settler majority, settler pathways, Indigenous- settler relationships	As a “(foot)note” - Establishes settler colonialism as a binary based on settler/Indigenous competing claims to land. Settlers involve all non- Indigenous people (p. 205).	Unspecified
Lewis (2017)	“Imagining autonomy on stolen land...”	Settlers and Indigenous peoples, settlers, settler society, “visitors”, occupiers	As a “(foot)note” - Recognizes some tensions between those who benefit from dispossession and racialized newcomers. Has supported Wolfe’s position to uphold the binarism of settler colonialism ³² .	Settler English anarchist (p. 475, 495)

³² See “Anarchy, Space, and Indigenous Resistance”

Rifkin (2013)	“Settler common sense...”	“Non-Native/Native” Settler, “settler being”, “settler common sense”	As a footnote – references Aileen Moreton-Robinson who argues that whiteness is not an “embodied social location” but a structure through which all “non-Natives” access/own/expropriate land.	Unspecified
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3.5.1 “Noting and Glossing Over” Relations of Conquest

Within Patrick Wolfe’s work on settler colonialism in the field of settler colonial studies, it is possible to observe instances where he “notes and glosses over” the different relations of conquest that inform questions of land and settler belonging. For example, in the article *After the Frontier*, Wolfe (2013a) recognizes that the question of land could not be resolved simply by eliminating Indigenous peoples (“you, go away”) (Veracini, 2013). The question of who would work the lands to establish settler society had to be addressed through another interrelated logic: the logic of slavery (e.g., Harris, 1993, p. 1716). Wolfe (2013a) acknowledges this point (p. 263). He specifically writes that settler expansion, and therefore the geographical removal of Indigenous peoples, was necessary not simply to define the borders of white settlement (i.e., “the frontier”) *but also* to “extend the slave-plantation economy”, particularly in places like Georgia and Florida³³ (p. 17). Wolfe (2013a) also notes that in the post-frontier era, blood quanta and the one-drop rule, while being singular in nature, worked together to establish concepts of settler citizenship (see also Tallbear, 2019). He overtly writes that blood quanta, “a system meant to replace entire Indigenous systems with white systems”, worked to advance the logic of Indigenous elimination *at the same time* that it was meant to maintain a stark contrast between

³³ Patrick Wolfe writes primarily about Australian/American contexts, but the Canadian context is no exception to settler dispossession and slavery (which inform questions of land/labour/ “body” property)

whiteness and Blackness through the reification of a hierarchy of race (Wolfe, 2013b, p. 32). For, “so long as they [Indigenous peoples] did not possess a single drop of Black blood, other Indians could turn white” (p. 39).

As seen here, Wolfe’s work demonstrates that settler colonialism involves more than a relationship of power between Indigenous people and “settler/non-Indigenous people”. However, given that he still concludes that settler colonialism is a settler/Indigenous problem (2013a, 2013b), Wolfe engages a practice of “noting”—that settler formations are informed by relations of conquest that exceed this binarism—and, in the same instance, “glossing over” the implications of this observation by concluding that analyses of conquest (i.e., white supremacy in his work) and settler colonialism should remain distinct (Wolfe, 2013a, p. 265). Another clear example of this “noting-and-glossing-over” practice is seen when he acknowledges that “enslaved people” settled on Indigenous lands *by force* (Wolfe, 2013a, p. 263), yet clears his analysis of this historical complexity by arguing that, like the Irish³⁴, former enslaved Black people and their descendants enable Indigenous dispossession by virtue of residing in settler societies. For Wolfe, anyone who occupies Indigenous lands “share[s] the historical situatedness of being part of the process of [dispossession]” *as settlers* (p. 264).

Seeing the consistency with which his work is cited by scholars in the field, as initially stated in this chapter through Indigenous scholars, it is not unreasonable to suggest that Wolfe’s binarism has impacted how settler colonialism is understood, as well as how scholars position

³⁴ In chapter three, I will explore the historical emergence of the category of “whiteness” in relation to “skin”, and this will explain why the idea of race has become the most explicit mode of classification (particularly in relation to the concept of the ‘human’). This understanding is important because, while the Irish were eventually able to acquire their inclusion as “whites”, Black people do not have this “possibility” given the system of anti-Blackness that positions them as “inhuman”/object to whiteness. Further, the Irish bought their way into the majority group by perpetrating anti-Blackness through minstrel shows, for example (Robinson, 2019). These are historical complexities that should not be looked over, for they reveal how settlerness is made through whiteness.

themselves in relation to it. By drawing attention to Wolfe's earlier work, I am not suggesting that he is solely responsible for the state of the field, but I am saying that if we look carefully, we can see that scholars in the field tend to also gloss over their respective and uneven structural positions vis-à-vis settler colonial formations. Apart from the examples on table one, across the field, the concept/positioning of the "settler" is used to characterize all non-Indigenous people (e.g., Carlson, 2016; Rifkin, 2013), even when scholars acknowledge that there can be different kinds of settlers (e.g., de Leeuw, Greenwood & Lindsay, 2013, p. 389; Lewis, 2017; Saranillio, 2013; Wood, 2019). Thus, "settler" is used to characterize no one in particular.

Table one focuses on how this concept's variable uses call out "white people" sometimes as "settlers" and other times as "non-Indigenous", although the terms will even be applied to peoples of color who are called "visitors" and/or "occupiers" (Lewis, 2017) and "African American settlers" (Wood, 2019). Other times, it will be impossible to determine whether scholars are referring to white people and/or peoples of color given the use of "non-Indigenous" (e.g., de Leeuw, Greenwood & Lindsay, 2013, p. 384-385; Siegel, 2017, p. 294; Steinman, 2020). This conflation, *what I call an inconsequential use of "settler"*, foment the grounds upon which a special issue aiming to understand how to create "Indigenous/non-Indigenous alliances" replicates the field's binarism (see Davis, Denis & Sinclair, 2016, p. 393). It could be that since the field's binarism has been critiqued with more intensity in the last decade, earlier scholars might not have had the opportunity that I have to think about the historical nuances that inform settlerness. For example, I have seen that even when earlier scholars acknowledge the implications of whiteness in the study of settler colonialism, the outcome is still to see "settler positioning" as a label equally applicable to non-Indigenous people (e.g., Davis et al., 2016, p. 400; Macoun & Strakosch, 2013, p. 434). Davis and her collaborators argue that "pedagogies of

discomfort” connect to “white fragility” (p. 400). Yet, in their examination of “settler” initiatives aiming to transform relationships with Indigenous peoples, they conclude that websites that did not use “settler” to refer to “non-Indigenous Canadians” perpetrated “liberal discourse” (p. 400, 405). There is a paradox in their analysis; if liberal discourse is colonizing by virtue of concealing colonial and racial inequities, it is clear that settler colonialism is not a binary “issue”, and thus, how can the use of “settler” to describe all non-Indigenous people be unproblematic?

While there are a few settlers (e.g., Lowman & Barker, 2016; Veracini, 2015) who have debated the tensions surrounding the use of “settler”, the field remains rooted in a binarism that, at most, permits race analyses as secondary to colonialism. In account of the perspectives of Indigenous scholars who question the “one size fits all” use of “settler” (e.g., Byrd, 2011; Simpson in Simpson & Maynard, 2020; Vowel & Joseph in Marshall, 2019³⁵), some scholars of color have also pushed for more rigorous analyses of the concept’s use (e.g., Dei, 2017; Patel, 2012, 2018; Phung, 2011; Sandhu, 2014; Sehdev, 2011; Sexton, 2016; Saranillio, 2013; Sharma, 2005; Thobani, 2007; Walcott, 2014b; Wood, 2019). Despite these important conversations, in the field of settler colonialism, Wolfe’s binarism persists even in pieces authored by scholars of color (e.g., Ben-Ephraim, 2015; Saranillio, 2013).

For example, Dean Itsui Saranillio recognizes that settler colonialism is not formed by one binary but by several binaries. Yet, he still concludes that “non-white people” are complicit with Indigenous dispossession *in the same way as “white settlers”*. Like Patrick Wolfe, the question of land is reduced to a binary and, therefore, under the logic that “migration” takes up space and resources away from Indigenous peoples, Saranillio writes that “non-whites” are also

³⁵ Access the piece here: <https://www.vice.com/en/article/gyajj4/who-is-a-settler-according-to-indigenous-and-black-scholars>

settlers (p. 288). As an Asian scholar, he situates himself and his family as settlers because his family strives for relief and justice within a settler colonial context (in particular, Hawaii). But at the same time, he describes that his family is “barely coping”, as they “often” live “paycheck-to-pay-check” (p. 291). The most significant portion of his writing, in my view, is when he explains that this technique, of having to live “paycheck-to-pay-check”, was “...a strategy that Paul Isenberg, prominent leader of the sugar industry in the nineteenth century, argued would make controlling [Asian’s] workforce easier, *so that the ‘Chinese and Japanese had to work or be hungry’*” (p. 291, my emphasis). This section is important because, in it, we can see that just because people racialized as non-white end up on Indigenous territories and contribute to their erasure, does not mean that they should be charged with the *complicity of settlers*.

Where settler colonialism is studied as a binary issue, less attention is given to how settler privilege is informed both in relation to land and race, as well as in relation colonial/racial logics of conquest. Yet, the concept of the settler is informed by privileges that have historically been established through the conflation of whiteness, settlerness, and the concept of the human (Wyner, 2003). To this end, anti-Blackness was foundational (Hudson, 2017, p. 13), and it was by treating Black people as “objects of property” *and* removing Indigenous peoples from their lands on the basis that they did not have valid uses of land that the settler human acquired content (Harris, 1993, p. 1716). As settler states developed in relation to the broader changing character of empires (e.g., Bradford & Connors, 2020; Bradford, 2020; Lowe, 2015), whiteness accrued its social significance by “placing” other peoples of color into already existing racial and colonial workings (see Patel, 2018, p. 49). These added logics of conquest ensure that Indigenous dispossession persists, even as the character of settler states shift to more “conciliatory” forms of power and dominance. To this extent, then, settler scholars need to engage a robust study of

conquest to understand how whiteness informs settlerness and settler formations still today. In the final section of this chapter, I begin to reinsert historical density to the concept of the settler, something that I do by primarily drawing from George Sefa Dei's theorization of *implication* and *complicity* in his chapter *Blackness and colonial settlerhood: A purposeful provocation*.

3.6 Re/inserting Historical Density to the Concept of “the settler”

To be clear, I am not suggesting that Black people and peoples of color do not contribute to the erasure of Indigenous peoples, but in my analysis so far, I have tried to show that given the modalities of conquest that inform settler colonialism, it is important to account for the ways in which these peoples arrive to settler colonial formations, as well as how these conditions force them to participate in settler colonial orders that are structurally harmful to them *and to Indigenous peoples*. Having offered a theoretical overview of the field of settler colonial studies, I will use this section to restate, in a more contextualized manner, the aims of this chapter.

The main objective of this chapter is to argue against the settler/Indigenous binary of the field and to instead insert historical density into the study of settler formations and to the concept of “the settler”, which go hand in hand. The implications of this work can be relevant to the field of settler colonial studies in general. However, since the work of “re/inserting” historical density to the concept of “the settler” requires a historical review of how long-standing systems of race and capitalism evolve throughout years of imperial conquest, the implications of this work can also be of utility in the field of whiteness studies (where, often, the focus is on a white/Black binary) (see Carey, 2019). Both fields would benefit from a concomitant analysis of race and coloniality, particularly in relation to conquest, which is interesting given that both fields are primarily entertained by racially privileged scholars who have often erased the long-standing contributions of Black and Indigenous scholars in an effort to challenge structures of domination

and their own systematic affiliation with these (Carey, 2019, p. 269; Howard, 2009, p. 18-19; Konishi, 2019; Macoun & Strakosch, 2013, p. 431-432). Bringing a different “reading” of “the settler” is a task that I undertake throughout this work’s chapters, but that will be continued in chapter four, as I look at the multidimensional nature of settler colonialism and *settler complicity*. Here, I offer an analysis primarily of George Sefa Dei’s chapter (2017) *Blackness and Colonial Settlerhood*, which has been influential in my understanding of “the settler”.

3.6.1 Implication Versus Settler Complicity

George Sefa Dei (2017) builds from previous scholarship that has grappled with the question of “who” should bear the status of “settler”. For example, Melissa Phung (2011) agrees that people of color are settlers because regardless of their experiences of racism, their presence on stolen Indigenous lands materially affects Indigenous peoples (p. 291). However, she differentiates between white settlers and settlers of color because “not all settlers are equal” (Phung, 2011, p. 292). Although Phung offers some nuance in her conceptualization of the “settler”, Dei argues that it is insufficient to differentiate between white settlers and settlers of color. This is because,

...the approach to...differentiating between “white colonial settlers” and “settlers of color” is “more focused on supporting Indigenous activism against the settler state, rather than...engag[ing] Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities...to challenge the logics of white supremacy and the settler state together” (Sehdev in Dei, 2017, p. 90).

Dei’s argument is based on the understanding that “settlerhood”, which encompasses processes of violence, genocide, and dispossession, were deployed by “white bodies” for their own benefit. This, Dei argues, denotes an issue of *complicity*, which is why only white people can be charged

with the status of “settler” (p. 88-89; see also Walcott & Abdillahi, 2019. p. 56). Alternatively, he argues that *implication* with settler colonialism denotes that non-Indigenous non-white people who live in settler societies contribute to Indigenous erasure *but not through acts of violence and genocide* (p. 112). Under this reading of complicity and implication, which is “not simply [a] semantic” differentiation, Dei suggests a conceptual differentiation between the “real” *settlers*—who are racially privileged—and *non-settlers* who are racialized as non-white people, and whose racialization at different degrees of the referent of “whiteness”, privileges settlers (p. 110).

Dei (2017) writes as “an African Indigenous” person who is primarily concerned with the anti-black implications of charging Black individuals and communities with the status of settler (p. 82, 86). However, like other non-settler scholars (e.g., Byrd, 2011; Howard, 2020; Lethabo-King, 2010; Simpson & Maynard, 2020; Walcott, 2014b; Walcott & Abdillahi, 2019) who recognize the centrality of racialization processes in the formation of settler states (as I have demonstrated above), Dei brings attention to how variously positioned racialized immigrants become instrumental to settler formations and to the reinstatement of the superiority of settlers (p. 89). An understanding of how settler nation-states are continuously fortified through Indigenous land theft, anti-black racism and coercion of migrant peoples reveals that “Settlers are more than “strangers” to a Land” (Dei, 2017, p. 92). Even as the character of the nation-state shifts, the institution of (Canadian/settler) citizenship continues to be racialized, as Dei writes:

While nation-building *is* entrenched in the notion of citizen, racialized citizens have never been fully embraced in White settler nations—politically or socially...It is true that Black/African Canadians occupy Canada and have different degrees of citizenship and even full citizenship. [Yet,] It is also true that our bodies and our citizenship are always

suspect, always changeable, and too often and too easily denied. This does not fit with the concept of “settler”... (p. 96, 98, emphasis on original)

The concept of the settler coheres with *full* citizenship, as Dei (2017) continues to put it:

The forces that constitute the “settler” and allow their safe passage to and through Canada are secured through a settler government and settler laws that “crown” them as citizen.

As “crowned” citizens they secure rights, freedoms, prosperity, health, security and livelihoods *on the backs of Indigenous bodies and through the ongoing usurpation of Indigenous Lands and resources* (p. 99, my emphasis).

Also, as I have mentioned in this chapter, the logic of Indigenous elimination, which is about the disappearance of the Indigenous person/personhood so that Indigenous Lands and resources can be stolen, is connected with the dehumanization of Black/African-Indigenous peoples, and with the coercion of Asian people and the subsequent subjugation of peoples of color, particularly of racialized immigrants (see Walcott, 2014a). The histories of conquest that bring these different communities of people to Indigenous lands matter, not to absolve them of their responsibilities towards Indigenous peoples, *but so as not to enable settlers to get off the hook from having to contextualize their/our decolonial solidarities amidst these historical complexities.*

The settler/Indigenous binary that makes up settler colonial studies is re/colonizing. When “settler” applies to everyone, it applies to no one in particular and, thus, white scholars need not engage the radical demands of decolonization regarding “land”. As I have written in this chapter, dispossession and land theft are settlement processes that are informed by ongoing relations of conquest. These relations of conquest shape processes of subjection that variously dehumanize “non-white peoples”, including Indigenous peoples, while humanizing settlers. A binary view of decolonization ensures that these relations of conquest go unexamined, which only serves the

settler person and state. Indeed, “Decolonization is not possible in the context of claims of complicities of, and hierarchies of, oppressions and/or when peoples who are themselves resisting ongoing colonization and oppressions are deemed as “settlers”” (Dei, 2017, p. 91).

I am cognizant of the risk of conflating colonial and race analyses, one of the implications being to classify Indigenous peoples as another “minority” on their own lands. I am also aware of the fact that, until now, most scholarship aiming to insert some complexity to the concept of “the settler” differentiates between “settlers of color” and “white scholars”. Indigenous views seem to be dispersed on this matter. I have noticed, however, that even when Indigenous scholars argue that non-white people are “settlers”, their work reveals that disaggregated terminology matters in efforts to decolonize and attend to questions of land with seriousness. For example, in collaboration with Wayne Yang, Eve Tuck (2012) writes that “The settler...sees himself as holding dominion over the earth and its flora and fauna, as anthropocentric normal, and as more developed, more human, more deserving than other groups or species” (p. 6). They add that “the settler” makes a home where “wild land” and “wild people” are organized “for his benefit”. They also acknowledge that because “the settler positions himself as superior”, “excess labor” is needed from “chattel slaves” who are “never paid because payment would have to be in the form of property” (i.e., land) (p. 6). Although they conclude that anyone who settles on Indigenous land is a type of settler (i.e., “settlers are diverse”), the passage paraphrased here shows that “the settler was about the (re)production of a preferred and very particular body upon whom humanness was granted”, including the rights and freedoms of modernity based on ongoing concepts of property (Dei, 2017, p. 104). If race and colonial analyses are interrelated, how can the present organization of the field yield robust examinations of “settler privilege”?

Jodi Byrd (2011) writes that power and dominance do not operate “horizontally” but rather “vertically”. Questions of land, in her view, are organized through vertical relations of power “between different minority oppressions within settler *and* arrivant landscapes” (pp. 54-55, my emphasis). Her work adds nuance to the concept of “the settler”, not simply by using “arrivant” to speak of non-settler people, but also because the complexity that she brings to conquest shows that, while arrivants uphold settler colonialism and the state’s racism towards Indigenous peoples, vertical relations of power organize these peoples to “arrive” and “support whiteness by not interfering with its work” (see also Dei, 2017, p. 109). Non-settler people can be “wilfully” implicated in settler colonialism when, for example, they occupy positions of dominance and “collude” with the colonial order to uphold power (Patel, 2018, p. 4). However, an account for these instances should not override the fact that, because settler states are born out of conquest, it is more common—but more difficult—to understand how non-settler peoples might be implicated “situationally” and/or “structurally” (Patel, 2018, p. 4). Settlers make use of instances when non-settlers, and even Indigenous people, are “seen” in positions of power or wilfully consenting to work with/within the colonial order. They make use of these instances to disavow responsibility. While I have not corroborated this in the literature, I do often hear these arguments (e.g., “look at the chiefs’ wealth” or “some Indigenous people do want the pipeline” or “look, Obama was elected”) when settlers are challenged to examine our settler privilege.

Settlers represent the “preferred body” whose interests, rights, beliefs, cultures (and more) are reflected in the settler order and rewarded with (often) unearned privileges (Dei, 2017, p. 105). “The foreigner, the stranger, the brown, yellow or Black body all live in Canada conditionally”, and this does *not* absolve them from their responsibilities to Indigenous peoples as *non-settlers* who reside on stolen Indigenous lands (Dei, 2017, p. 109). Using language that

reflects disaggregated positions (e.g., settler, non-settler, different kinds of non-settler?) is not about diversifying language. From the position of a settler, as I argue in the next chapter, **it is about taking responsibility for our *settler complicity* in a system of conquest that is complex and where**, if our aim is to support decolonization, our positioning as “settlers” needs to account for the historical residues of conquest that make “decolonial solidarity” a complicated, and often contradictory, undertaking.

In account of these layers of complexity, I feel compelled to uphold in my analysis a use of “settler” that reflects on, and aims to rupture the binarism of the field, by thinking about: “Who benefits from naming Black/ African-Canadians as “settler”? Who benefits from a divide that has not existed...between Blacks and Indigenous peoples?” (Dei, 2017, p. 96). What can a regard for Black presence in the Americas tell settlers about the “normative routes and knowledge systems” of the field of settler colonialism that “cast a shadow and inform the projects of genocide, settlement, and the remaking of “the human” under ongoing relations of conquest? (Lethabo-King, p.10, paraphrased). What might looking at variously connected histories of conquest reveal about the place and positioning of Black Diasporas and peoples of color in settler colonialism? (See Patel, 2018). Indeed, what can an analysis of “historical residues” of conquest tell us about how the “settler personhood” emerges from an “imperial attitude” and continues in modernity?

In the following chapter, I address these questions by looking at the multidimensional nature of settler colonialism in relation to conquest and by conceptualizing “settler complicity” with historical density. Although the next chapter only offers a brief historical review of the “residues” of conquest that inform settler colonial formations, it is important to acknowledge and demonstrate how imperialism and capitalism become the conditions of possibility for settler

states to emerge—and to emerge for the benefit of the “settler human”. Settler formations and the subjective category of the settler are not, as I argue, disconnected from a “web of power” that is global, capitalist, and enmeshed in relations of modern coloniality, which secure land for settlers.

Chapter 4: Conceptualizing Settler Complicity Through a Multidimensional Settler-Colonial Project

4.1 Preamble

To ground this next chapter where I examine the *multidimensional* nature of settler colonialism towards defining the main concept of analysis in my work, *settler complicity*, I have selected two excerpts from two of my research conversations. As I unpack these excerpts, my aim is to demonstrate how the writing of another dense and academic chapter has roots in the relationships that inform this research, but also in the specific aim of responding to the pervasive nature of settler colonization with processes of decolonial solidarity that account for the fact that dispossession is always and everywhere ongoing, both in settler-Indigenous collaborations and in everyday settler life, and across these contexts.

4.1.1 Train of ~~thoughts~~ layers

Wahéhshon: And the thing about the positionality, too, it's not just about being more accountable because we live here, but it's also that [when] we wrote the policy, I was a research assistant, so I was working on a project that Kahtehrón:ni led... So, at the time, there was that power dynamic too, right? So she's bringing you in, I could have said 'no'. I could have said, 'am I going to work on this?' But because she and I had talked about it, and [because] I know how important it was and I know how busy she is, I knew she wouldn't have been able to make the time to move it along. So, I did it for that reason. And now, I'm the coordinator and I chair the Ethics Committee (train is heard in the background passing by). So, I'm in a very different position than I was then. I'm literally the most accountable person to that work that we did...

As the reader will find in chapters six and seven, Wahéhshon and I spoke about the layers of relationality and positionality that informed our collaboration on the development of the research ethics policy, but also our own experiences before and after this formal partnership. In this excerpt, she alludes to the *levels* of accountability that exist in relation to our positionalities. Even though I am responsible for the nature and effects of my participation in this project of

resistance, as an outsider, the stakes are distinct *in kind*, for I do not live in Kahnawà:ke and can thus distance myself from any potential backlash. Wahéhshon and Kahtehrón:ni live out the meaning of accountability with directness, at all times, because they are from Kahnawà:ke. But they also experience that sense of accountability based on who they are within this community as individuals and as a part of a collective. For example, Wahéhshon consented to participate in the development of the ethics policy, not because of the power dynamic that existed at the time between Kahtehrón:ni and her, but because she had been involved in conversations about the urgent need for the establishment of “safety parameters” around education research. While invested in the project personally, she also chose to participate given her awareness of Kahtehrón:ni’s time limitations—thus embracing her accountability as a community member.

I chose to include this excerpt in this chapter’s preamble because of a detail that could have gone unnoticed: the sound of a nearby train passing as we revisited moments of our relationship in conversation. In this chapter, as I trace the *residues* of imperial conquest that inform settlement and dispossession, I will narrate how Canada’s nation-state came into being, and in this, the significance of *trains* will be seen in terms of how Canada became a Confederate Nation. Gerald Reid, a settler scholar with relationships in Kahnawà:ke, writes that Kanien’kehá:ka have seen their lands stolen through projects of progress such as via railways, hydro-electric power, and the St Lawrence Seaway (p. 150). I have compiled the next phrases from his work to bring into salience the significance of the St Lawrence Seaway for Kahnawa’kehró:non, and to situate this specific process of settlement in relation to the larger aims of settler colonization in Canada (pp. 158-161):

The most significant of government surrenders of Mohawk land...
 Were the St Lawrence Seaway expropriations [for]...
 Canada’s development of a national transportation infrastructure and
 Within the framework of the Canada-United States

[settler-settler] relationship.
 The Seaway ...[ran] directly through
 The oldest residential and historical section
 Of the community.
 It entailed expropriation ...
 [Denying]
 Mohawks access to
 The river ...
 Resistance ...was
 precluded by... the RCMP...
 Mohawks conveyed:

a protest in the strongest terms to the Government of Canada and the Department of Indian Affairs at the violation of its ancient right to the possession of its land at Caughnawaga...derived from sacred treaties and proclamations from the French and English Kings.

The lands at Kahnawà:ke have never been ceded, sold, or surrendered.

In account of this, I situate my examination of the multidimensional nature of settler colonialism as the larger framework through which to acknowledge and zoom into context-specific histories, experiences, and effects of colonization such as this one. The establishment of this framework is also crucial for later chapters where I aim to situate the pressure points of relationship-building within the complexities of settler colonization.

4.1.2 Railing (Trains of) Settler Privilege

Mark: ...Look, I have to go to work soon. I feel like it's easy to just throw theory at responses, like theory is the holy grail of how we need to act...on these topics...It's like business. You can learn all the business theories in the world, but the only way to truly acquire a good business sense is to go out and start a business because *the real life examples differ significantly from theory*...

As part of our conversation, Mark and I discussed the practical applications of theories of struggle and resistance, particularly of critical race theory. In chapter eight, the reader will see that although this kind of theory represents the real embodied experiences of Indigenous peoples and non-settler peoples, for settlers, it can be difficult to accept the authority of these theories

since they challenge us to faceup the “insulated environment” (DiAngelo, 2018, pp. 215-225) of our privileged lives and livelihoods that is never truly detached from the settler-colonial project. While Mark knows this, in this excerpt, we can see him questioning the usefulness and truthfulness of such knowledges since, as I will see later, we are in the middle of a discussion about our complicity with racism, and it is difficult to unpack our own roles as perpetrators of this modality of conquest. Here, he suggests a balance of theory and practice (“the real life examples”). But *balance* insinuates that life as we know it, from our privileged vantage point, is sometimes unregulated by the modalities of conquest—like racism—that are inherently a part of settler life and society. Meanwhile, what theories of struggle and resistance say, most generally, is that the conditions of settler colonial societies are not only inequitable, but routinely dehumanizing for Indigenous peoples and variously positioned non-settler peoples. In this way, Mark’s suggestion for a balance of theory and practice can play out as a move to innocence through which to re-establish the settler colonial “insulated environment” where we can choose the extent to which we faceup our complicities—and even opt out from acknowledging our privilege. In chapter eight, I will unpack this point in relation to the moment that we revisited, and I will demonstrate the *pressure points* that underlie our efforts to name and work through our complicities through a consideration of critical race theorists.

I chose to share this excerpt here to highlight, as you can see in the bolded portion of the excerpt, how settler complicities are not only enrooted in the colonial order at a structural level, but also are enmeshed in the mundane fabric of settler everyday life. Going to work is not an activity solely relevant for settler peoples; indeed, it is so ingrained into the functioning of settler colonial-capitalist States that it calls on the participation of Indigenous and non-settler peoples as well. My goal is not to get into a discussion about the intersections of class, gender, and race—a

conversation that would reveal that “going to work”, mundane as it is, it is diversely experienced, and for settlers, it tends to be a fraught with structurally less frictions than for Indigenous and non-settler peoples across axes of class, race, and gender. I want to draw attention to the juxtaposition of this conversation—where Mark and I are engaging in a discussion about our own privilege and complicity with racism—and of the commonsensical declaration, “I need to go to work”, that *naturally* redirects our gaze away from ourselves and towards the flow of settler orders that is itself structured so we can experience it as normal. This point is important, for in this chapter, one of my aims to show how settlers reproduce modalities of conquest that inform settler colonial orders in systematic and mundane ways. *Our ways of being and knowing take root in the colonial order, and we experience this as natural and universal, while we see the responsibility of naming and working through our complicities as a hobby—as something that, against the pace of life, is secondary.*

I understand that we do not inhabit a decolonized world and that, as such, the expectation that settler people will give up our social and economic activities is similar to arguing, as whiteness scholars do, that if we want to, we can choose to give up our privilege because whiteness is an identity (Rodriguez, 2006). This is not what I am suggesting. Rather, in pointing out this ontological limitation, my aim is to show that *working through*, the practice that I am proposing to develop, is—and should be—engaged by settler people with complexity towards showing ourselves grappling with the contradictions of our efforts to de-naturalize the colonial relation by naming the ways in which we commonly re-naturalize it. Thus, before proceeding to the theoretical writing of this chapter, I want to draw attention to the train [that] is heard in the background [of my conversation with Wahéshon], and the phrase, “I have to go to work soon”. Trains, and particularly the Canadian Pacific Railway, enabled settler imperialists to

unify territories and provinces into “one Great British America”, thereby informing Canada’s coming together as an economic and political Confederation (Tough, 1992, pp. 232-234). The consequences of this settler project on Indigenous Life were/are varied (Tough, 1992), and to this extent, trains are not just a symbol of progress—they are a material representation of Canada’s emergence as a settler colonial capitalist nation-state. Yet, trains are also seen as mundane objects of everyday life—trains take us from one place to another, from home to work, and on. The relationship between settler people, settler life, settler capitalism, and dispossession can be seen, most recently, when settlers who had previously offered their solidarity to Wet’suwet’en and other Indigenous peoples against the construction of the TMX-pipeline retrieved their discursive support Indigenous land defenders blocked access to trains indeterminately—effectively threatening settler everyday life realities³⁶. As I examine the multidimensional nature of settler colonialism, my aim in this chapter is to show that settler complicities are also multidimensional, and that they take root in the configuration of settler colonial orders thereby regulating settler consciousness and solidarity actions.

³⁶ See for example, <https://montreal.ctvnews.ca/protesters-in-kahnawake-will-remain-in-place-until-wet-suwet-en-hereditary-chiefs-are-satisfied-1.4814260> Regarding Kahnawà:ke’s blockade <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/montreal/coastal-gaslink-wet-suwet-en-natural-gas-rcmp-protest-1.5457923>. There were many other blockades across the country, including one in BC done by Punjabi, Chinese and Indigenous peoples <https://globalnews.ca/news/6556116/wetsuweten-protests-east-vancouver/>. This poll suggests that while three quarters of Canadians believed that the federal government should act to improve the situation of Indigenous peoples, two thirds of them did not support the blockades due to the inconvenience imposed on them: <https://globalnews.ca/news/6567463/wetsuweten-rail-port-blockades-coastal-gaslink-pipeline-poll-canada/>

4.2 Introduction

Chapter two offered a literature review of the field of settler colonial studies. Through the perspective of critical race theorists and Indigenous scholars, I reiterated that a major limitation of the field is in the organization of settler colonialism as a “new” historical formation. The consensus in the field tends to be that while settler colonialism can “inter-mingle” with colonialism through labor relations, settler colonialism is distinct because of the logic of Indigenous elimination (e.g., Veracini, 2013, p. 1-2). However, as Joanne Barker writes, this conceptualization is problematic because it obscures “the more critical ideas of imperialism, capitalism, and empire”³⁷. While there are distinctions between colonialism and settler colonialism, it is important to acknowledge that settler colonialisms were created and sustained through various forms of colonialisms and colonies that, sometime in the fifteenth century, brought “all” geographies and peoples into contact via a racist hierarchy of labor and capital (Krautwurst in Patel, 2018, p. 21; Quijano, 2000, p. 533-534).

By having established the limitations of the field’s binarism, I situated my use of “the settler” within the modalities of conquest through which racial difference is articulated to variously position Indigenous peoples and non-settler peoples at a distance from the settler human. The reader should therefore know that when I ask how settlers might engage in practices of *working through*, as relayed in my research questions, I am referring to racially privileged people. My aim in this chapter is to continue to work past the field’s binarism by offering a view of settler colonialism that is *multidimensional* and reflective of capitalism and empire. From within this task, I also conceptualize *settler complicity*, the central lens of analysis in my work.

³⁷ See Joanne Barker’s critical notes on “settler colonialism”, which can be accessed here: <http://mexmigration.blogspot.com/2014/01/decolonize-this-joanne-barkers-critical.html>

This chapter is then to be read as an eclectic theoretical and conceptual piece—one where my understanding of settler complicities is relayed in connection to the structural modalities of conquest that inform settler colonization. This framework will guide my analysis of this research’s data towards identifying discursive practices through which Mark and I reproduce such modalities of conquest mundanely and across this work’s two main contexts.

As seen in chapter two, primarily through Dei’s work, because the “settler colonial project was a White project driven by white colonial settler discourses”, it is the “preferred white body” that has unparalleled privilege in the institutions of democracy that underlie settler nation-states (Dei, 2017, 111-112). Dei also writes that a “dual recognition” that Euro-colonialism and settler colonialism are “cut from the same cloth” is valuable to emphasize that settler colonialism is not distinct from previous colonialisms (Dei, 2017, p. 93). This idea is significant across scholarly works (e.g., Byrd, 2015; Lethabo-King, 2019, p. 13; Sexton, 2016, p. 2-3) and has implications for studying settler colonialism as a structure of “empire-making” that exceeds, requires, and operates through multidimensional relations of conquest to secure land for “the preferred human body”, that is, for settlers (Dei, 2017, p. 104-105, 111-112). Through an exploration of previous processes of conquest and “empire-making”—previous to but continuous through settler projects—I thus proceed with my first aim, to demonstrate the multidimensional character of settler colonialism.

4.3 A Multidimensional Settler-Colonial Project

Lisa Lowe’s study on *The Intimacies of Four Continents* offers incomparable value to this chapter because she demonstrates that the world’s colonial, capitalist, and racist organization is “not a brute binary division, but rather one that operates through...spatialized and temporalized processes of both differentiation and connection” (p. 8). She investigates the

connections between settler colonialism in the Americas, the transatlantic African slave trade, and the East Indies and China trades. Lowe describes these connections as “often obscured” by a catalogued organization of colonial state archives aiming to displace ongoing colonial violence with narratives of liberal progress (pp. 1-2). By using a methodology of “reading across” archives, she reveals that European liberalism has been positioned as a project of progress that economically and politically emancipates some people while continuing to oppress “the variously colonized and dispossessed peoples whose material labor and resources were the conditions of possibility for that liberty” (p. 6). In other words, through liberalism, settler and (former) colonial states have further ensured liberty for those considered to be Human³⁸—a condition that relies on colonial divisions of humanity that are tangled in processes of Indigenous erasure, land theft, slavery, anti-Blackness, and various other colonial modalities (p. 7).

What makes Lowe’s investigation meaningful to this work is her position on the fact that modalities of conquest are not organized as a “brute binary”. Yet, she is not alone in holding this position, and she even acknowledges following on the steps of scholars like Aníbal Quijano, Cedric Robinson, Walter D. Mignolo, and Jodi A. Byrd whose work has—and will continue—to guide this writing (see p. 2). Lowe sheds light on how imbricated elaborations of racial difference secure an ostensibly liberal/peaceful government through which, as I show later in this chapter, the *settler democratic order* serves as a diversion from the racist capitalist management of labor, spaces, social life, justice, and humanity upon which Indigenous land is secured for the

³⁸ Whenever I capitalize “Human”, I am drawing from Sylvia Wynter (2003) who established, through a genealogy of the colonality of being, that whiteness was marked as the sole marker of *full* humanity against Blackness, and later, through imbricated applications of the idea of race (or what she terms “spaces of otherness”) to Indigenous peoples. She looks at how the idea of humanity is connected to “Man’s” whiteness and explains “Man’s” varied inventions through “descriptive statements” that evolve as the needs of empire-making and imperialists shift to supersede religion with science (pp. 282-283, 294-296), and science with secularism (p. 304-305).

benefit of the settler (pp. 8-11). The significance of racial classifications has been noted by Latinx scholars who acknowledge that with the discovery of America in 1492, a world-system was established through a global application of the idea of race (Maldonado-Torres, 2007b, p. 131-132). Consequently, based on a racist hierarchy of labor and human division, the population of America, and later the world, was classified within the new model of power of colonial capitalism (Quijano, 2000, p. 533-534). From within this new model of power, the processes of differentiation and connection which Lowe writes about were articulated through intersecting processes of conquest—like dispossession, slavery, serfdom, and indentureship—that forced non-European peoples into contact, often in settler contexts, by racializing them at different degrees of the white-European who self-defined as “Human” (e.g., Wynter, 2003, p. 265-267).

Prior to the colonization of America, European imperialists had “improvised racial terms” for a variety of non-European people, including Muslims who were Europe’s main “enemy” and African peoples who were brought back to Portugal *at least* as early as 1441 (Lethabo-King, 2019, p. 1). Much earlier than that, however, colours such as blue and purple were used to imitate black skin, for “Dark skin...was understood as a “theological consequence of sin”” (Arjana in Patel, 2018, p. 161). During Aristotle’s time, hierarchies of power were justified based on racial difference, for instance, in relation to enslaved non-Greeks, and especially Thracians who were described as “tribal” (Robinson, 2019, p. 132). These earlier articulations of racial difference are significant because they informed colonization in Europe where, for almost eight centuries prior to the discovery of the Americas, Europe’s enemy was often represented through a dark-skinned “Muslim figure” (Patel, 2018, p. 159). These notes on the varied but interrelated applications of “racial difference” to justify conquest are important since the voyages that led to the colonization of America were “...a logical outcome of the traditions and aspirations of

[these] earlier age[s]” (Elliott in Patel, 2018, p. 164, my emphasis). Indeed, when European imperialists met Indigenous peoples in America, their assumptions about them were shaped by earlier encounters with Muslims and African peoples (Patel, 2018, pp. 157, 163-164, 169). Even the notion of “terra nullius” had previously been applied to dispossess African Indigenous peoples from their territories and lands, and this earlier instance was utilized, albeit under another context, to fuel conquest and expansion in the New World (Wynter, 2003, pp. 291-292).

Following my work in chapter two, these earlier encounters are of crucial importance to undo the binarized nature of settler colonialism and instead understand the settler colonial project as being *continuous* with earlier processes of conquest that became the conditions of possibility for the establishment of Indigenous lands as settler property. For example, as Indigenous peoples were racialized at a distance from the settler human, they were seen as inferior to the civic and moral traits of settler imperialists because Indigenous peoples had not “marked” the land according to European notions of progress (Paul, 2011, p. 169). Then, as Indigenous peoples were removed and sometimes forced to labor for white settlers, African slavery was rationalized as the most effective mode of developing Indigenous lands because Africans had already been misconstrued as “inhuman chattel” for many centuries (Harris, 2019, pp. 219-220; Harris 1993, 1716; Lethabo-King, 2019, p. 16; Lowe, 2015, p. 8). Being so crucial to the establishment and maintenance of settler property, settler imperialists could not afford to abolish anti-Black racism, anti-Blackness, anti-Indigeneity, and Indigenous erasure. Thus, towards the nineteenth century, when colonial officers feared “insurrection” from Black peoples in the colonies, they advocated for an “imperial innovation” through which slavery would be abolished but supplemented with “Chinese indentureship” (from *Great Britain Colonial Office Correspondence*, co 295, vol. 17, in Lowe, 2015, p. 22-23 and p. 108). The abolition of slavery was couched as a transition to

freedom and as European humanist philosophers and proponents of abolition failed to challenge the anti-Indigenous and anti-Black conceptions of the human—now presented through the invention of citizenship—indentureship could be omitted as a continuation of imperial rule that fuels settler projects (Lowe, 2015, pp. 13-14). Because of this, Wynter (2003) argues that “all our present struggles with respect to race, class, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, struggles over the environment...hunger and immiseration...overconsumption on the part of the rich techno-industrial North...” are imbricated in the settler humanist project that persists through modern institutions of liberal democracy (pp. 260-261).

With the advent of liberal philosophy, democracy became a mirage of freedom for Indigenous peoples and non-settler peoples who were “exempted” by the promises of equality, fraternity, and human dignity (Lowe, 2015, p. 14). This exemption is seen in material “democratic gaps” of settler societies where:

The conditions of life for racialized people in Canada, and particularly for Black and Indigenous people, are dismal, as indicated by a host of negative indicators such as: mass criminalization and incarceration, repeated death at the hands of law enforcement, un/underemployment, disproportionate poverty, income inequality, housing discrimination, disproportionately poor physical and mental health, school push-outs and drop-outs (which serve as pipelines to incarceration), and overrepresentation of Indigenous and Black children as wards of the state (Howard & James, 2020, pp. 318-319).

Non-settler peoples can be variously implicated in these dehumanizing systems. However, their *implication* is structural given their own marginal positionings within settler societies, as well as situational given how they are called to *survive* within an oppressive colonial system (see Patel,

2018, p. 38). At times, this implication results from an internalization of colonial and racial dynamics and systems of oppression. Further, while non-Black non-settlers are invited to “live with proximity to whiteness” more than others because of their capital utility (Hudson, 2017, p. 9-10; Walcott, 2014a, p. 96), this invitation is variously dehumanizing, but for settlers, living in settler states does not require any ontological sacrifices nor experiences of violence and death; for, although settlers are not privileged evenly across class, ability, and gender, as seen so far, settlers have been given unparalleled privileges based on whiteness.

As seen here, contemporary uses of the idea of race have a long-standing genealogy in histories of empire-making. Race is so important in my work because it is the “most explicit mode of expression” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007a, p. 244) through which the colonial difference has been marked to organize divisions of humanity through violent processes of conquest (Lowe, 2015, p. 7; Wynter, 2003). This does not mean that gender and other markers of difference are not racialized, and thus unimportant (Maldonado-Torres, 2007a, p. 244). Christina Sharpe writes that “The belly of the ship birth blackness” and that “the birth canal remains in, and as, the hold” because, as African people were “packed” into slave ships, they were “ungendered” “...according to Euro-Western definitions not as male and female but as...property” (pp. 73-74, 79). Being considered property, the bodies and wombs of Black women were specifically (de)valued because of their “factory” production of Black babies who would inherit the condition of “non-being” under the logics of enslavement and of the perpetual logics of anti-Blackness, thereby giving whiteness social value (p. 73-74; see also Harris, 2019, p. 222). As seen here, racialization operates through sex and gender: race is gendered (and vice versa).

Differently but connected to this system of racialization that marks colonial difference, under the logic of Indigenous elimination, it was particularly important to “attack” Indigenous

women who often held a central role in social and political areas of Indigenous communities (Harris, 2019, p. 222). For example, Susan Hill (2017) explains that although males formed the Grand Council, the participation of Clan Mothers “in the village and the outlying gardens” was crucial to “complete the Great Law” (paraphrased, p. 35). The centrality of Haudenosaunee women in the protection of land through their responsibilities was enrooted in the belief that they had an essential relationship with their children; that “Beyond the physical aspects of pregnancy and birth...” they must “nurture and protect” “...new life, both present and future” (paraphrased, p. 57). As seen through various colonial tools such as “Indian residential schools”, there was a clear intent to sever Indigenous mother/child and child/community closeness (Palmater, 2020).

Because through conquest gender and race have been socially constructed to establish degrees of humanity that mark whiteness as the only quality afforded full humanity, gender is racialized (and vice versa). In this way, the centrality of processes of racialization cannot be minimized in terms of how they inform colonial difference, for it is through the “differential devaluation of racialized groups” based on categories of race and gender (Cacho in Byrd et al., 2018) that whiteness acquires the attributes of property (Harris, 2018, p. 218). Thus, while I recognize that race is not the only mode of violence, race always affords unparalleled privilege to settlers. For this reason, and since settler property continues to be made through the alienation of Indigenous women from their communities, of Indigenous children from their homes, and through the hyper sexualization of Black women, the hyper-strength attributed to Black men, and the perception that Black children are always older than their age and thus feel less pain (Razack, 2005, p. 353-354; Dumas, 2018), I emphasize “race” as the mode through which settlers self-make as the only group who can “fulfill the conditions and ideals of whiteness...and secure *the*

full benefits of the colonial settler regimes that stabilize and fortify whiteness” (Dei, 2017, p. 109, my emphasis). As seen in chapter two, the settler is racialized as white.

As well, the historical genealogy of how settler societies are formed through long-standing relations of conquest and empire-making shows that, because racialized and colonized processes are not “sequential”, they can appear to be concluded even though they are “continuous in our contemporary moment” across time and space (Lowe, 2015, pp. 7, 19-20). This has applications in settler orders, for as Dei (2017) writes, “...other logics of white supremacy can be *added* to create a unique colonial landscape with particular geopolitical and historical manifestations” (p. 94, my emphasis). In the Canadian context, the settler-colonial project is seen evolving alongside innovative tools of conquest that keep with the overall arguments of liberal democracies since the nineteenth century. For example, Canada’s multiculturalism portrays the settler-colonial project as a “romance story” because of Canada’s “benevolent immigration practices” and the democratic ideas of culture, diversity, tolerance, and harmony attached to Canada’s particular character (Walcott, 2014, p. 129). In reality, as Howard and James (2021) put it, “Canadian multiculturalism...has been successfully aligned with Canada’s settler-colonial project, the function of which is to uphold a particular configuration of colonial and racialized social relations” (p. 315). Multiculturalism couches, in other words, ongoing relations of conquest and others that appear new, which enable settlers to see “the place of invasion” as a utopia (Sexton in Dei, 2017, p. 94), or as the closest modern state to justice and benevolence while it is the place of various forms of violence for Indigenous and non-settler peoples (Thobani, 2007).

Through the benevolent immigration policies, for example, various racialized immigrants make their way to Canada, and since whiteness is the token of civic humanity, the presence of

non-settler peoples can be used to criminalize, survey, “cast out”, and do violence onto non-settlers and “oriental others” who are not yet part of the state and reside abroad (Razack, 2005, pp. 4-5). While the “war on terror” stigmatizes Muslims and appears to be a recent “logic of white supremacy”, as seen above, the racialization of Muslims as threats begins in Europe and has informed settler colonial formations since the beginning. The war on terror is an example of how settler states are and remain “first-world countries” through their ability to maintain power and dominance on the organization of human divisions internally but also externally (Cox and Wallerstein in Robinson, p. 86, see also Robinson, 2019, p. 336 and Simpson & Maynard, 2020). Having an internal and external dominance is important to settler formations because colonialism intersects, quite tangibly, with world-capitalism. The privatization of African and Caribbean territories, labor, resources, and livelihoods (Dei, 2017, Simpson & Maynard, 2020, p. 84), but also the war on terror in the Middle East for oil, are crucial determinants of a settler state’s capitalist leadership globally. For, as Cox writes, “capitalism itself” depends “... upon the economic and political relations developing *between the major capitalist nations and the backward peoples*” (1959, p. 9; 1964, p. 479, my emphasis). Thus, geopolitical disposessions, which often displace other Indigenous peoples from their lands, enriches settler nations by granting them, before other powerful nations, sovereignty over foreign territories, as well as by using the presence of non-settler immigrants to further erase Indigenous histories and sovereignties in settler colonies (Dei, 2017, p. 108).

What helps settler states conceal racialized and colonized violence is that, at the same time that settler states are capitalist, they are democratic. The system of capitalism, first

developed by the Venetians³⁹, was adopted by Britain and subsequently by settler Canada⁴⁰. What made this model successful was that Venice adopted a “capitalist government”, couched under a democratic political council, at the same time that it “made the world its farm” by controlling territories and their small economies, forcing them to produce *based on her ambitions and needs* (Cox, 1964, pp. 40-43, 69-73). As in Greek society, the political democratic council was composed of “organic intellectuals”, the elite class, whose power depended on the “welfare of the commercial class as a whole” (Robinson, 2019, p. 135). As Robinson asserts, after two millennia, Plato continues to be seen as a precursor of western democracy because Socratic oral rhetoric and debates cleverly obscure the anti-democratic racist ideological and historical context under which politics were/are made (pp. 128, 136-137). The ongoing relations of conquest, which enable the advancement of white supremacist nation-building, are able to persist because,

³⁹ I am making this statement based on the work of Oliver Cromwell Cox (1959, 1964) and Cedric Robinson (2019). Cox established that the roots of capitalist democracies are in Venice. In the fifth century, when upper-class Italians were pushed to Venice by the Lombards (Robinson, 2019, p. 81), they chose not to continue the traditional practice of trade of the Roman Empire, and pursued the potential of foreign trade (Cox, 1964, 31, p. 68-70). Rather than relying on elementary modes of agriculture, Venice saw foreign geographies as a means for making the world “its farm” (Cox, 1964, p. 483), so Venice set out to control other territories and their smaller economies (Cox, 1964, p. 73). Venice was at an unprecedented advantage, for she not only changed the nature of trade but also merged this economic system with the principles of territorial expansion and control (p. 73-74), while becoming the first *capitalist democratic* system in Western history (and possibly the world), and the model for imperial powers like France, England, Holland, and Germany (Cox, 1964, p. 48, 74). Under this capitalist democracy, the oligarchies moulded Christianity to fit its capitalist values, created a criminal and civil code through which property violations were punished, and gave birth to the concept of “citizenship” and nationalism. Its democracy concealed the hierarchy of capitalism (Cox, 1964, p. 48), eliding the fact that since the individual prosperity of the elitist groups “...depended upon the welfare of the commercial class as a whole”, the subordination of Venice’s own lower classes and of “manumitted slaves” was required (Cox, 1964, p. 43). In the 1600s, England succeeded at adopting this model, making her the most powerful colonial capitalist empire (p. 297-298).

⁴⁰ For this statement, I rely on the work of Tolly Bradford (2020, 2021) and Tolly Bradford and Rick Connors (2020). These authors examine the colonial and economic role of the Hudson Bay Company and argue that while historians tend to see the company’s support in Canada’s imperial interests only after 1870, like the East India Company, the HBC was constantly forced to evolve with the changing character of the British Empire (pp.173-174). Bradford also argues that as early as 1810, the HBC implemented a “New System” that not only made it “the single most important representative of imperial Britain...” but also enabled it to lead Canada into confederation by implementing administrative, accounting, and economic techniques from the system of slave plantation in Jamaica (See also Frank Tough (1992) and Perry (2014)).

as Robinson writes, democracy cancels out the “decay” of modern colonial societies caused by racial capitalism (pp. 331-338).

Through the ideals of democracy, settlers⁴¹ can think that settler states are post-racial and post-colonial because overt forms of violence (e.g., slavery, genocide, murder) are believed to be part of an “old” and “distant” world rather than rooted in the present order (Lowe, 2015, p. 13) but also because the settler human, defined per the ideals of democracies, is also a “capitalist subject” (Lethabo-King, 2019, p. 15). Meanwhile, as every aspect of settler life is made to appear legal and moral through modern institutions of law and society, all of settler life is illegal as it rests on stolen Indigenous lands and depends on intersecting but distinct colonial and racial modalities, including the specificity of anti-Blackness against which the settler human self-positions. This *democratic mirage*, as I call it, results because, as seen throughout this overview of the historiography of western capitalist democracy, “the category of “freedom” was central to the development of ... a modern racial governmentality” that today serves to manage “...the diverse labors of metropolitan and colonized peoples... through the liberal myth of inclusive freedom” (Lowe, 2015, p. 25). Settler sovereignties are, in other words, secured as colonial and racial modalities of conquest intersect to dispossess and alienate Indigenous peoples from their land-based relationships.

With this historical exploration, settlers can learn that, per the capitalist democratic and racist-colonial character of settler states, settler privilege incriminates us with dispossession, not

⁴¹ As a reminder, I am not omitting the fact that non-settler peoples and even Indigenous peoples can buy into the systems of conquest that oppress them variously. However, in this work, I am focusing on the relationship of privilege that settlers hold, and which enables us to center our experience as universal. The ontological position that we occupy, as privileged and dominant under a white-supremacist nation-state, enables us to believe in discourses of post-racialism and post-colonialism (i.e., colorblindness, whites can choose if we are racist or not, Indigenous peoples are “recognized”). The ability to “believe” in these ideals is a settler investment in the colonial capitalist order upon which our belonging is dependent—this is what I mean when I focus on settlers.

just by virtue of settling on stolen Indigenous lands, but because dispossession is informed by our anti-Blackness, anti-Indigeneity, racism(s), capitalist subjectivities and practices, and sense of self-entitlement as the embodiment of the Human (Wynter, 2003). In the field of settler colonial studies, as seen in chapter three, settler understandings of settler colonization are premised on a settler/Indigenous binary. This is a serious limitation in that settlers can claim to disrupt settler colonialism while knowing that the binarism of the field will only reassert it (Macoun & Strakosch, 2013). Another important limitation is that, for the most part, the study of settler colonialism by settlers is premised on the “structural” nature of this relation of power. Mark Rifkin (2013) is perhaps among the few scholars in the field who names this limitation, arguing that when settler colonialism is seen as a “totality” *only*, settlers can disavow responsibility in terms of analysing how settler colonialism is “commonsensical”—rooted in settler life, being, and knowing. The issue with Rifkin’s work is that his contributions are still premised on a Native/non-Native binary, and this flattens out the colonial and racial modalities of conquest that inform not just settler states but also “the settler” as a subject invested in capitalism, racism, and colonialism given our ontological experiences alongside democracy’s mirage.

Although this section only briefly touched on why considering the longer-standing patterns of empire-making is important to sustain a non-binarized understanding of settler colonialism, I want to suggest that since settler privilege is co-constitutive with settler colonial projects, being aware of the histories of empire-making that precede but inform settler formations in multidimensional ways can help settlers reinsert complexity in our modes of studying, thinking, writing about, and taking responsibility for our complicities. Given the co-constitutive nature of settlerness and settler colonialism, the task of “pinpointing” settler

complicity, especially in real time, is difficult for settlers. Yet, this difficulty adds important complexities that can bring settlers to explore and de-layer how we perpetrate dispossession not just when “land” is directly evoked. Rather, with the recognition that settler complicity is manifested in response to a multidimensional settler-colonial project, settlers can proceed to examine how we perpetrate colonial and racial modalities, which inform land theft. With this preliminary context, I now move to conceptualize *settler complicity* in relation to the multidimensional imperial character of settler colonialism.

4.4 Conceptualizing Settler Complicity

...all land in Canada is Indigenous land. It doesn't matter if there is a national park or a city or a mine or a reserve on top of it, it's Indigenous land because Indigenous peoples have relationships to it.... The same processes of dispossession and erasure operate in all parts of our territory. Resurgence happens *within* Indigenous bodies and through the connections we make to each other and our land. That's how we strengthen ourselves within Nishnaabeg intelligence (Simpson in Simpson & Coulthard, 2014)⁴².

Towards my aim of conceptualizing settler complicity, the central lens of analysis of my work, I use figure 1 to show how the multidimensional nature of settler colonialism is structured and layered across time and space (e.g., “it doesn't matter if there is a national park or a city or a mine...”), but also across all aspects of settler life (where “the same processes of dispossession and erasure operate...”). In my work, “settler life” refers to how settlers experience legal, political, social, and economic structures at the level of everyday life, in the most mundane or

⁴² These words come from a conversation with Glen Coulthard on land-based pedagogies and Dechinta Bush University. The entire conversation can be accessed here: <https://decolonization.wordpress.com/2014/11/26/leanne-simpson-and-glen-coulthard-on-dechinta-bush-university-indigenous-land-based-education-and-embodied-resurgence/>

“commonsensical” ways, as Rifkin (2013) puts it. Settler life therefore reminds us that settler colonialism is not a hegemonic totality; although it is structurally reproduced, settlers experience the “order of things” with certainty because our racial privilege fits and moulds spaces, practices, behaviours, ways of thinking and moving, and all processes, protocols, and procedures of a settler colonial order (Rifkin, 2013, p. 323-326). Sara Ahmed (2007) best explains the co-constitutive relationship between the settler—who is white—and the order of things, which history makes “already and always” present (p. 154). “Whiteness”, she writes, “is an orientation that puts certain things within reach” and these “include not just physical objects, but also styles, capacities, aspirations, techniques habits” so that “what is within reach”—and for whom—has very much to do with racial privilege *and* racial difference (p. 154).

Settler privilege is an investment (that does not need to be “conscious”) in the settler-colonial project, particularly in a democratic mirage, which, as seen briefly in the previous section, informs the settler order through structural dynamics and through settler participation in racial and colonial modalities of conquest. With the recognition that settler colonial orders are multidimensional, I conceptualize *settler complicity*. As I show next through a *de-layering* of settler colonialism in Canada, racial and colonial modalities of conquest are also enmeshed in settler ways of being and knowing, which underlies settler belonging.

The central aim in this section is to highlight the contradictory relationships across settler privilege, liberal democracies, and the divisions of humanity that are organized to fuel settler capitalism and colonialism such that I can conceptualize settler complicity as unbounded, structurally multidimensional, and co-constitutive with the ontological experience of the settler personhood. These are the “tenets” of settler complicity that I develop by simultaneously de-layering settler colonialism in consideration of the excerpt cited above, which are Leanne

Simpson's words. Ultimately, my goal is to show that dispossession is not achieved by abstract colonial, racist and extractive processes but that the structural nature of settler colonialism interpellates settlers to reproduce its order, and, because it is an order that is embedded with settler ontologies and perspectives, settlers respond, consciously and unconsciously, as they are interpellated. The question of land is always and already relevant as settler life and settler societies are premised on stolen Indigenous lands.

4.4.1 De-layering Settler Colonial Dispossession. If we juxtapose Leanne Simpson's words with the visual displayed below (Figure 1), we see that an image with overwhelming symbolism can focus our glance on two crucial facts: settler states were and remain premised on stolen Indigenous land, and, because of this, every aspect of settler life and all systems of settler democracies are manufactured to reproduce the terms of capitalism, extraction, exploitation, colonization, and dehumanization that secure land for settlers. My visual shows the first point, that settler states were and remain premised on stolen Indigenous land, in the green "wavy" base (which represents "Indigenous Land"), in the grains of corn (which represent Indigenous resources), and in the corn at the top right extremity of the visual (which represents Indigenous push-back, resistance, self-determination, resurgence, and decolonization). By virtue of their resistance, Indigenous peoples let settlers know that, even though settler colonialism is meant to eliminate them by alienating them from their lands so settlers can claim to have a "natural affinity" to the territories of Indigenous peoples (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 8), settler colonialism is not concluded. Settler Canada is illegally premised on Indigenous Lands.

“dispossession” was broadly applied to diverse Indigenous populations based on their racialization in relation to the European imperial “human” (Dei, 2017, see pp. 101-103).

The proximity of the ship, water, and land is also meant to show that the first relations of conquest that helped imperialists establish “settler property” involved “two colonial procedures: African-enslavement, dislocation, displacement, and transmigration; and Indigenous genocide, displacement and illegal Land usurpation” (Dei, 2017, p. 105). The water and land “shoal” the “...humanist tradition and hegemonic hold of White settler colonial studies” that permits a view of dispossession as a simple “snatch-and-grab” process (Lethabo-King, 2019, p. 18). The train tracks, which explicitly denote the Canadian Pacific Railway, are meant to show that the democratic appeal of settler societies is tainted with ongoing “imperial innovations” rather than with a genuine commitment to redress the inhumanity of slave and colonial systems (Lowe, 2015, p. 13). The train tracks are close to the Hudson Bay’s symbol for, as a British joint-stock company, the company was “endowed with the power of the British state” when, after 1810, a Scottish merchant used his experience in managing sugar plantations in Jamaica and turned the HBC’s territory into a business model of high efficiency that would secure the Company’s monopoly over the Athabasca region—a key area for fur trade (Bradford, 2020, p. 12-13).

The train tracks and the HBC’s logo also have proximity to Canada’s flag because the interests of British expansionists, to join all territories and provinces, unfolded with the extinguishment of “Aboriginal Title” and the transfer of Rupert’s land to Canada—which today covers 75% of Canada’s land mass (Tough, 1992, p. 225-229)! Part of this territory, the Athabasca region, is now under attack with the TMX pipeline project, which also threatens Wet’suwet’en sovereignty. Ultimately, the Canadian Pacific Railway demonstrates a contradiction. That contradiction is that, as Canada becomes confederate and thus democratic,

the railway construction that allows the coming-together of all territories and provinces upholds anti-Blackness by having Black porters work and rely on the “benevolence” of white travellers for “tips” (Carson, 2002, p. 276) and indentureship by exploiting Chinese people and denying them the right of citizenship (Lowe, 2015). These systems of racial labor enabled settler imperialists to further displace and dispossess Indigenous peoples, while cashing out on “buffalo bone trade” after the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway (Philips, 2018 p. 29).

The city skyline represents an apparently concluded outcome of a “distant past” that seems to be no longer part of the new and modern post-racial/colonial Canada, known to settlers and to the world, through its multiculturalism. The perfectly crafted parks and green spaces, along with the buildings and homes as signs of progress, are there to demonstrate that settler spaces are an outcome of, but also continue through, processes of racialization that make getting by and getting through a seamless process and experience for settlers while creating tension for Indigenous and non-settler peoples. The homes, parks, and different kinds of buildings are meant to juxtapose the spheres of settler life and everyday activity—i.e., being/feeling at home, studying, working, exercising, and relaxing—that are strictly rooted in the system of capitalism. I place the “stock market” at the top of the skyline to show this, but also to very clearly show that the structural nature of settler colonialism is ontological and epistemic (Mignolo, 2007, p. 29, 42; Quijano, 2000, p. 549): the ability to experience the system of capitalism as a “free market” bounded only by the lack of effort and hard work reinforces settler property while perpetrating “glaring inequalities” attached to race (Lipsitz, 2018, p. 266). This ontological difference is represented in the overlapping but distinct “bubbles” at the top.

The bubbles represent different kinds of experience across Indigenous, Black, and non-settler communities. Indigenous peoples experience the “colonial relation” as a direct attack on

their sovereignties, not just when land or access to land is at stake, but as these alienating elements are structured into assimilation policies that settlers tend not to see or see as not connected to the struggle of land even though they are (Palmater, 2020). Black peoples experience the “colonial relation” as a direct attack on their livelihoods and lives seeing as the system of anti-blackness “...not simply subjugat[es]... the Black human subject” but “...places the Black outside of the Western construction of the Human altogether...” (Howard & James, 2019, p. 316). The experiences of non-settler peoples differ. For example, Middle Eastern⁴³ Muslim males are cast out as “terror” while Muslim women are seen as victims of a barbaric Muslim male (Martino & Rezai-Rashti, 2008). When these people are “hosted” in Canada, their inclusion is always conditioned because, at any moment, they can be criminalized and incriminated as “terrorists” through systems of surveyance that affect them (Razack, 1998, pp. 1-2). Some of these experiences are common across these groups, as seen in the intersections of the bubbles, because the systems of anti-Blackness, anti-Indigeneity and racism emerge out of residual imperial, patriarchal, and capitalist processes (as previously seen).

The bubbles also demonstrate that, given their interconnections, Indigenous and non-settler peoples can work together to oppose the colonial relation “even while anticipating that [their] pathways toward enacting liberation will diverge” (Tuck & Yang, 2018, p. 2). Shaista Patel (2018) writes that “If systems of oppression are all interconnected and none...can be liberated until all of us are free, then caste, race, anti-Blackness, Indigeneity must all be considered to understand South Asians’ situational complicity...” (p. 198). Under this premise,

⁴³ Middle eastern is used to acknowledge, generally, Antirblackness and Islamophobia can intersect. This is to follow from the previous analysis on how Blackness and Islamism were conflated to create Europe’s Enemy, and how from this early on, anti-Blackness and Islamophobia existed as tools of conquest through which to articulate and negate humanity.

abolition projects, illustrated through the symbol of the Black Lives Matter Movement, are important to consider not just because of their shared “radical” aims with decolonization—to abolish the colonial relation—but because the sovereignty of the settler is particularly legitimized through a system of anti-Blackness.

If I now scale us back to notice the king at the bottom right side of the visual, I can demonstrate that these systems are not independent from the “settler human” (Wynter, 2003). These systems demonstrate the subjective role of racial difference in terms of how “human divisions” stand alone and converge at the same time to “self-define and self-invent” whiteness as human and, alternatively, subsume the real identities, ways of being and knowing, concepts of living and existing of Indigenous and non-settler peoples under dehumanizing terms of conquest (see Patel, 2018, pp. 2, 144-145). Because of the concomitant relationship between the settler human (as an individual and collective identity tied to whiteness) and the structures and systems of racism, colonialism, and capitalism, I wanted to place the representations of “settler life” in-between the ship (i.e., the “structures and systems”) and the king (i.e., the embodiment of western humanity). Settler complicity happens at the intersection of the subjective and material structures of settler capitalism that encompass all of settler life and its most “mundane” spheres (e.g., racism through humor, consumption as leisure, time and resources for health and wellness). Even settler perceptions of belonging, selfhood, and opportunity are tainted such that understanding how settler complicity manifests itself always and everywhere—structurally and mundanely—is very difficult for settlers. This difficulty adds a “generative tension” as settlers work to explore and unpack our complicity as a matter of responsibility in decolonial processes.

Finally, these different layers of settler colonialism come full circle in relation to the question of land as capitalism, racism, and colonialism are “couched” under the ideological

promises of settler democracies. This aspect is shown with the positioning of “settler democracy” at the top and a few examples of the system of capitalism under the “stock market” graphic through which dispossession is explicitly secured. Although “...addressing capitalism *explicitly* is something that’s... less “in” ...”, it makes possible settler colonization (Maynard & Simpson, 2020, p. 85-86, my emphasis). Despite the fact that in the study of settler colonialism, capitalism is seen as an outcome of its “particular mode of domination” (Veracini, 2015, p. 153), or settler colonialism is framed as bearing zero dependency on the system of capitalism (see Hiller, 2016, p. 421 and Grande, 2013, p. 370), these two systems are co-constitutive of each other. Capitalism and dispossession are each other’s driving force but neither of them can function without colonialized and racialized relations (Maynard & Simpson, 2020). Settlers depend on this colonial-capitalist-racist and democratic system to secure land, proprietorship, privilege, belonging, and the status of humanity—all the while feeling as the embodiment of progress, civic virtue, and morality.

Based on the multidimensional nature of settler colonialism, I now elaborate on how settlers are complicit with dispossession by participating and reproducing racialized and colonized systems and relations that, as seen here, extract Indigenous lands and resources and exploit Indigenous and non-settlers variously.

4.4.2 Defining Tenets of Settler Complicity

I define settler complicity as unbounded, structurally multidimensional, and co-constitutive with the settler personhood. I suggest that to fully understand settler complicity, it is important to keep in mind that if settler colonialism is informed by multiple “residues” of “empire-making”, then settler complicity needs to be understood as the manifestation of

intersecting colonial and racial modalities that dispossess Indigenous peoples and reproduce settler sovereignty.

While the effects of settler complicity are various—not directly perceived by settlers as connected to questions of land—these effects are rooted in racialized, colonized, and capitalist relations and systems of conquest that secure land for settlers. To proceed with this exploration, I refer back to Leanne Simpson’s words in the epigraph of section 3, and I explain the “tenets” of settler complicity by breaking down her ideas as follows.

4.4.2.1 Multidimensional – “...all land in Canada is Indigenous land”. As seen throughout this chapter, settler colonial projects are informed by long-standing imperial and capitalist processes that have had structural and subjective effects in terms of organizing settler spaces with the mark of European progress and civilization but also in that “the settler” is made and re/made human through these structural organizations. When Leanne Simpson says that “all land is Indigenous land”, my reaction is to think about how Indigenous land is made to *appear* as “settler land”. How does Indigenous erasure work? In chapter three and in this chapter, I have argued that “erasure” does not operate through a settler-Indigenous binary. Singular but intersecting racialized, colonized, and capitalist relations are needed to dilute Indigenous presence with multiple non-settler presences. However, even though the presence of various non-settler peoples helps settlers and the colonial order displace, dispossess, and erase Indigenous peoples, depending on this group’s racialization, their presence will be utilized to create divisions of humanity through which racial capitalism will be justified—even made to appear a seamless outcome of a “free market” and meritocracy.

If settler projects are capitalist, exploitative, dehumanizing, and racist, the other question that comes to mind is: how are colonial states made to appear post-colonial and post-racial?

Democracy has much to offer in terms of answering this question. Canadian democracy is multicultural, which means that, per the Multicultural Act, “cultural diversity” and “racial diversity” are more discursive than factual; indeed, multiculturalism was instituted to couch racism and colonization under the terms of culture (Walcott, 2014b; McKittrick, 2015). In terms of defining settler privilege, what this means is that multiculturalism brings settlers to believe that settler orders are exemplary while racial capitalism and colonialism operate through this mirage to humanize settlers and legitimize their sense of entitlement and belonging on and over Indigenous lands. Through this mechanism, Indigenous scholars have already said that Indigenous peoples are erased and, if recognized, they are presented as a minority group of a multicultural mosaic (Grande, 2013, p. 369; Lawrence & Dua, 2005, p. 123-124, 126, 132; St-Denis, 2011, p. 311).

Simpson’s words, “all land is Indigenous land”, de-naturalizes this multicultural-democratic mirage, reminding that Canada sits on stolen Indigenous lands and that all aspects of its society rest on racial-capitalist divisions of humanity that underlie dispossession. As settlers perpetrate the terms of conquest upon which these divisions rest, settler complicity cannot be under the radar of settlers only when dispossession is seen through palpable instances of land theft, as in the case of resource projects that threaten Indigenous sovereignty. Rather than asking *when* settlers perpetrate dispossession, a multidimensional view of settler complicity means asking, how is dispossession underlined by settler activities, life experiences, conversations, humor, and understandings that are, for example, anti-Black, anti-Indigenous, variously racist, extractive, and dehumanizing? As seen so far in this work, settler property underlies dispossession, and since settler property relies on various divisions of humanity to legitimize settler projects and the settler personhood, it is important to explore how settlers forego

Indigenous sovereignties by living life under these racialized and colonized relations. For, indeed, settlers “...actively...reconstitute” settler colonialism “as a set of actions, occupations, deferrals, and potentials slide from view...” that are enmeshed in a multidimensional settler project (Rifkin, 2013, p. 323).

4.4.2.2 Unbounded - “...dispossession and erasure operate in all parts...”. While settler individuals express solidarity to Indigenous peoples when they are under the direct leadership of Indigenous groups, there is less attention given to the “quotidian” aspects of settler realities where “clear, local, [and] defined Indigenous guidance” is absent (Steinman, 2020, p. 564). For example, where settlers have direct research collaborations, there are concerted efforts to understand the role of settlers in terms of abiding by local protocols through which Indigenous communities organize and practice resurgence (e.g., Brophey, 2011; Brophey & Raptis, 2016; Carlson, 2016). Settlers also examine their roles and responsibilities in “social movement contexts” such as when “pipelines” and hunting/fishing/trapping laws inhibit Indigenous peoples from accessing their territories (e.g., Peters, 2017; Steinman, 2020, p. 561,566). While these forms of solidarity are important, settler solidarity *can be* “compartmentalized” to defined moments when land is perceptibly threatened by the colonial apparatus (Steinman, 2020, p. 567). This compartmentalization is problematic because settler colonial “...mechanisms are in force *regardless of whether there are Indigenous people present*” (Steinman, 2020, p. 560, my emphasis), or as Leanne Simpson puts it, whether “...there is a national park or a city or a mine or a reserve on top of it”. Indeed, dispossession has no boundaries: erasure and land theft “operate in all parts of our territory”.

The “unbounded” quality of settler complicity means that settlers have a responsibility to “...analyze and evaluate the innumerable ways in which White sovereignty circumscribes and

mitigates the exercise of Indigenous sovereignty” beyond “overt” “snatch-and-grab” dynamics of dispossession (Nicoll in Rifkin, 2013, p. 323). Instead of asking what works or what is unsettling about working with Indigenous peoples to address complicity, an “unbounded” view of settler complicity attends to the questions: how are the terms of conquest reproduced in moments of settler/Indigenous collaborations that do not register as “unsettling” to settlers but that are enmeshed in modes of conquest? How do settlers disavow responsibility to Indigenous peoples by not seeing/wanting to see how our ways of being and knowing circumscribe Indigenous sovereignty even when Indigenous rights appear to have no relevance to our practices and discourses?

4.4.2.3 Ontological — “Resurgence happens within Indigenous bodies and through the connections we make to each other and our land”. There is another way in which settler complicity is “unbounded”, and that is at the level of being and knowing. Settler ways of being and knowing are derived from the privilege afforded to settlers by and through the colonial order. When settler imperialists settled on Indigenous lands, they settled by deploying an “imperial attitude” through which the violence of dispossession and conquest was “justified” because European imperialists had believed, for many centuries, that they were superior and therefore endowed with the responsibility of gifting “civilization” to inferior “others” (e.g., Césaire in Maldonado-Torres, 2015, n.p; Razack, 2005, p. 9; Robinson, 2019, pp. 21-22 and 69-74). Despite this self-ascribed superiority, the colonial encounter was characterized by a “tension” between the settler imperialist and the colonized (Dei, 2017, p. 107). At first, this tension was handled with overt expressions of violence (Maldonado-Torres, 2007a, pp. 140-141). But, as settlement evolved, the relational tension was institutionalized into practices and discourses of law and society through which settler states are made to appear “democratic”—and thus post-

racial and post-colonial—while, in practice, the supremacy of “settlers” is “...continuously...normalized...through the apparatus of the state” (Coulthard, 2014; Dei, 2017, p. 107). Multiple scholars have written that the “ontological difference” of the original encounter continues through modern institutions of democracy and capitalism, creating material forms of friction for Indigenous and non-settlers (e.g., Mignolo, 2007; Quijano, 2000; Maldonado-Torres, 2007a, 2007b, 2018).

Settler complicity is therefore “unbounded” not just in terms of space as mentioned above (i.e., dispossession happens everywhere), but also in the sense that the terms of conquest through which dispossession is reproduced become manifested in settler ways of being and knowing before settlers have a chance to oppose them (see Howard 2009, pp. 22-23).

When Leanne Simpson writes that “resurgence happens within Indigenous bodies and through the connections that [Indigenous peoples] make to each other and [their] land”, I hear her saying, because this comes after her statement that “all land is Indigenous land”, that the positioning of peoples residing on Indigenous lands informs how we can understand, mobilize, and theorize a decolonial framework. Indigenous peoples have embodied understandings about the violence of dispossession whereas settlers can, at most, access a historically and intellectually based understanding about it (Mignolo, 2007, pp. 29-31). As a result of our settler privilege, settlers do not need to consciously support the state to reproduce settler colonialism. As in the visual representation presented above, all aspects of settler daily life, even the most mundane, emerge out of a colonial-capitalist-racist order, a “field of possibility”, that is meant to make settlers feel at home (Rifkin, 2013, p. 331).

Because settlers are epistemically meant to “feel belonged” to a settler colonial order where processes of dispossession are always at play (since all land is Indigenous land), efforts to pinpoint settler complicity require settlers to *try to* “opt in” into the workings of conquest in the only way possible: by de-layering the elements of an issue/moment in relation to and as an exercise of responding to the knowledges of Indigenous and non-settler peoples. I use *opt in* to denote the structural limitations that place settlers in contradiction with our intentions to know how to be in solidarity to Indigenous peoples without reproducing the colonial order by virtue of our privilege to look away when it is convenient. This de-layering practice is fundamental to my conceptualization of “working through settler complicity”, which I explore next, in the methodology chapter.

Chapter 5: Using the Art of String Figures to Conceptualize a Method(ology) For *Working Through* Based on a Back-and-Forth Dynamic

5.1 Preamble

I offer this preamble to bring into salience how the exercise of revisiting key moments of my collaboration and relationship-building with Kahtehrón:ni, Sandra-Lynn, and Wahéhshon, and also moments of interaction with Mark, has enabled me to **work through relational pressure points** where *settler complicities* can be **named and de-layered** (research questions one and two). To help the reader visualize *working through*, and to center the relational contexts that bring this research alive, I briefly present excerpts from this research's conversations, and in this way, evoke some of the qualities that emerge from practices of working through.

5.1.1 "This whole thing is about working through the tensions"

First evocation – relating through our differences

Excerpt from a conversation between Wahéhshon and Daniella:

Wahéhshon: ...there were sections where we were trying to really make sure the policy was grounded in like Rotinonhsión:ni worldview and culture....And you said, 'you know, I took this course with Alex McComber, and I think I understand a lot about Kanien'kehá:ka world view or culture. I learned a lot, so I'm going to take a stab at it'...

Excerpt from a conversation between Kahtehrón:ni and Daniella:

Kahtehrón:ni: ...you had the knowing of what you learned with Alex. But I still felt like **knowing is not an owning of that knowledge**. I felt like that was our section to write. But at the same time, I look at the whole thing, and I think it's a good example to reflect on because we're able to ***work through it. It's working through it. This whole thing is about working through those tensions. When we see them, it's about trust, too.***

Being the person with whom I hold the longest relationship in Kahnawà:ke, Kahtehrón:ni and I spoke about several moments covering the time that we have known each other as insider/outsider collaborators in her community, but also as PhD peers and friends. The excerpt

that I present here alludes to a moment that overlapped with a moment that Wahéshon brought up in our conversation, as seen in her excerpt. This moment will be central to the discussions of chapters six and seven, but to offer some context, when we were co-writing the research ethics policy, I took a course with Alex McComber, a Kanien'kehá:ka man from Kahnawà:ke. The course was about Indigenous Health and Wellness, but he rooted the discussions of the course in his worldview, bringing guest speakers from his community, and in this way, offering a contextualized view to elements of the Kanien'kehá:ka worldview and culture. For the writing of the ethics policy, it was important for me to learn about the Thanksgiving Address, which community members call Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwén—"the words that come before all else". This experience was meaningful since there is a section in the ethics policy where *reclamation* is discussed in the context of education research, and the writing is detailed in relation to the Thanksgiving Address. For reasons discussed later, I proposed to write that section, *and through this form of complicity, a pressure point* was felt in our collaborative relationship.

I chose to present the latter excerpt from my conversation with Kahtehrón:ni because she directly evokes the practice of *working through* as she shares her discomfort vis-à-vis my complicity in my writing of the Thanksgiving Address, but while noting that there is a context of relational consent that grounds these pressure points in collective practices of accountability. In this way, she reveals that working through is a **layered practice** that is meant to bring into salience the layered complexities underlining, in this case, relationship-building—rather than yielding prescriptive qualities to relationship-building. Here, Kahtehrón:ni models some of these layers by *naming* the practice of complicity that impinges on our experiences as collaborators—"knowing is not an owning of that knowledge", she tells me—but while also alluding to the consent, trust, and relationships that are always weighty because they require individual and

collective investments *through our differences*: “This whole thing is about working through those tensions. **When we see them**, it’s about it’s about trust, too”.

Second evocation – relational engagements of theories

Excerpt from a conversation between Mark and Daniella:

Daniella: ...I think that the best takeaway from our conversation is that we need to change our focus and focus on ourselves first instead of on another person [because] **we just spent the last hour talking about someone else.**

Mark: **But I never I knew there were more layers to it.** We just ended up going down that path because you picked that point apart. I probably would have never brought up the fact that [this other person] was loud and obnoxious had we not reemphasized on that for the rest of the conversation, because it wasn't that important.

Mark and I also spoke about a few moments where, in our seven year relationship, we have failed to problematize *our complicities in the reproduction of modalities of conquest that inform dispossession in settler contexts*. The moment that we discussed for most of our conversation, however, happened at our friend’s Jack’s home⁴⁴. Along with other settler friends, we met at Jack’s house, and his girlfriend also invited a friend, Maite. Jen, a settler woman in our group, got into a discussion with Maite, a Brown Latina woman⁴⁵, on the affordability of private education. While Maite relayed her experience as a single mother who could not afford private tuition, Jen relayed her experience as the child of Italian immigrant parents who had worked hard and sacrificed much for her education. Jen continuously insinuated that affordability is a matter of sacrifice, while Maite kept arguing that it was structural, attached not just to her experience as a single mother, but also as a woman racialized as non-white. In chapter eight, I unpack the

⁴⁴ I will use pseudonyms for the people involved in this moment.

⁴⁵ I remind the reader that while I am Latina, I am also white. For this reason, it is important for me to bring into salience the role that racial difference plays in the way Maite experiences the moment of contention in conversation with Jen. This is important to bring into salience our individual and collective complicities in the perpetuation of racism, which we do by situating our settler experiences as universal. All of this will be further discussed in chapter eight.

complicities that Mark and I perpetuated in our very efforts to revisit and problematize our involvement in this instance of racism.

I chose to share the latter exchange to highlight that being willing to explore and unpack a moment of complicity, as settlers, is not an antidote to the perpetuation of other forms of complicity. Rather, for settlers, working through is an opportunity to “grapple with the conflicts that are engaged in” given our settlerness, and to acknowledge that while we might be engaged in understanding why and how we perpetuate modalities of conquest, we cannot transcend our structural positionings from wherein more complicities stem (Macoun, 2016, p. 88). The aim is to keep the conflicts visible. For example, in this excerpt, I am alluding to the fact that for almost all of our conversation, Mark and I engaged in a back-and-forth meant to root us in a practice of accountability without realizing that, contradictorily, our back-and-forth scrutinized Maite instead of reversing-the-gaze on complicities. Mark’s response—“But I never knew there were more layers to it”—brings into salience the relational nature of practices of working through in that the theories of knowledge that are produced by Indigenous and non-settler scholars can aid settlers in *showing ourselves grappling with our complicities without claiming to have mastered them*.

Third evocation – relating through power dynamics

Excerpt from a conversation between Sandra-Lynn and Daniella:

[1] Sandra-Lynn: There is that one instant, which is the number two thing that you put in [your list of moments] that I don't really want to chat about ...since it's fairly recent.

[2] Daniella: ...Remember that conversation that we had regarding [anonymous person]?... there were so many different layers and interpretations of it, and it wasn't straightforward. So, maybe there's something there...

Sandra-Lynn: I'm okay with [discussing] it. It's just that ... I would prefer to keep that content anonymous... we can discuss, but we have to be careful about the writing.

Sandra-Lynn and I got to know each other whenever I came to the Education Center to meet with Kahtehrón:ni. We then became friends on Instagram and our interactions extended to the online space, occurring more regularly. When we gathered for our research conversation, I had emailed her with two moments that I had thought to be fitting for our discussion. One of them, we determined in our conversation, would inhibit the relational back-and-forth that I was hoping to follow because it positioned her as a knowledge holder and me as an “observer” of that knowledge. The conversation would have been about why she dislikes the concept of decolonization. The second idea that I sent by email was related to the instance that Sandra-Lynn alludes to here, a moment when we discussed a heavily precarious topic on social media, falling into pressure points that we left unresolved. I discuss this in more detail in chapters six and eight.

Given this, we had to brainstorm on the spot to find a moment of contention that we both consented to explore. The second interaction displayed above shows our interaction in real time, as we tried to arrive at a point of discussion. While this interaction points to a pressure point, a moment of tension that would have been fitting for our discussion, there were safety parameters that would have been tricky to respect in the writing of that moment. After going back to the drawing board, the moment that we ended up discussing alludes to the way in which settler being is imbricated in power dynamics that, while being structural, are also evoked by settlers in moments when our stability is threatened. This moment is similar to the moment that Sandra-Lynn placed off-limits—“since it’s fairly recent”—and in this way, as I show in chapter six, *working through* is itself regulated by the power dynamics that confer privileges on settlers. These contradictions are valuable to this practice of working through, and I aim to show them.

5.2 The Phrasal Verb “working through”

Given the latter evocations regarding practices of *working through*, I begin this chapter with a brief exploration of this phrasal verb. What is working through and why is it significant to this work? From this examination, the rest of the chapter will present the analytical and relational processes that have led me to situate this work’s methodological inquiry **as one with** the method of inquiry: the back-and-forth dynamic that I have explored in chapters one and two.

The concept of “working through” first spoke to me when I read Cynthia Levine-Rasky’s work (2010, 2012, 2016). I was drawn to her distinct way of framing the tensions inherent in the work of “studying” and “writing” about “whiteness” as a white woman. Central to her work was the knowledge that, as a racially privileged person, she could not expect non-white people to educate her but that, at the same time, her efforts to “interrogate” whiteness would always be “regulated” by her own dominance (2012, p. 2). For her, rather than finding ways of superseding this ontological and epistemic “entanglement”, it was important to make evident the tensions of this contradictory work by framing and communicating her efforts to “*work through* whiteness” (2012, pp. 1-2). I have seen few racially privileged scholars build from her work, and I have not yet encountered practical examples of what *working through* can look like except for the ones that contributors in her book *Working Through Whiteness* present. However, not all these contributors are racially privileged, and moreover, since Levine-Rasky draws from the field of whiteness studies and critical race theorists to frame whiteness in tension, even when her contributors explore the perpetration of white supremacy on Indigenous women (e.g., Mawani, 2012, pp. 43-68), there is a theoretical lapse in relation to how whiteness informs settlerness and settler colonization, and how the latter concepts are *interrelated* (as seen in chapter four of this work). For example, while Renisa Mawani links the problematizations of prostitution to the

spatial control of Indigenous women's movement and bodies while connecting this to the establishment of a settler white society, her analysis remains structural—that is, focused on how governments and officials fomented white settlement interests through anti-Indigenous violence. Her positioning—as a settler or non-Indigenous non-settler—is also not shared.

I am interested in continuing this structural analysis of whiteness but while, also, bringing into salience how settler colonization and personal settler complicities are co-constitutive. I want to explore how, in this work, I have identified moments in my conversations where I have had a theoretical understanding of how to proceed with accountability, but while sometimes failing to put into practice that knowing. In this chapter, I delineate the steps that I have taken to practice *working through* by privileging a method of inquiry based on a relational back-and-forth. My aim is not to develop a prescriptive model for working through, but to show how, within the relational contexts of this work, I have instead aimed to *show myself grappling with and coming up with strategies meant, not to explicate complicities, but to try to understand why and how they surface in the most mundane of ways*.

One crucial point to establish, given my third research question, pertains to how working through connects to land. How does this practice help center land? As explored in chapter four, settler complicities delineate settler individuals' involvement in land theft by way of reproducing a colonial order that is hostile to Indigenous lifeway systems and sovereignties. The fact that this outcome is attained by calling settler individuals to participate in intersecting modalities of conquest means that working through, which I situate as a practice of **decolonial solidarity**, requires settlers to examine our varied involvements with systems and dynamics of conquest. I offer the following figure to summarize how settler colonialism's multidimensional nature informs settler complicities.

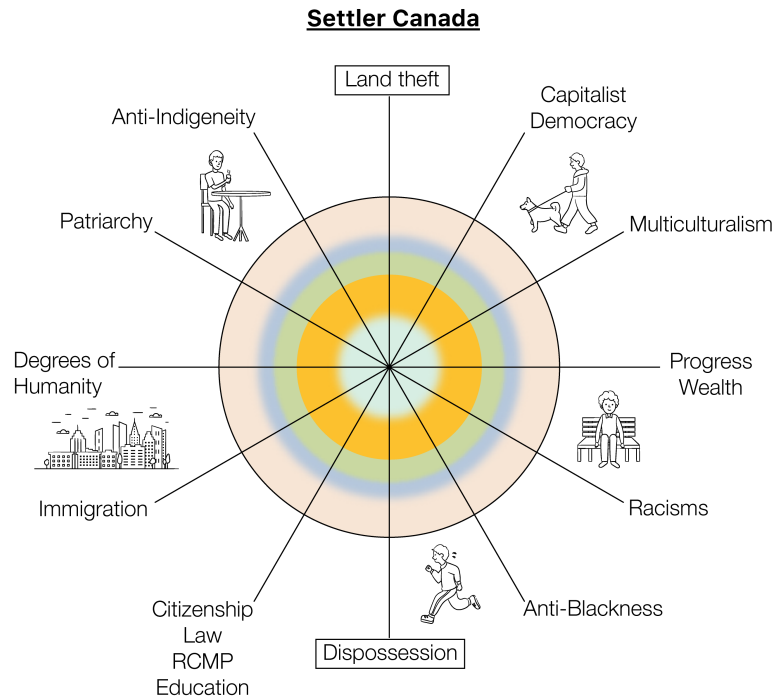


Figure 1. Settler complicities enmeshed in the settler colonial-capitalist-democratic order.
Image designed by me and digitalized by Janani Narahenpita.

From a theoretical view, settler complicities are variously diverse but always enmeshed with modalities of conquest that inform settler colonization. We can let our imaginations go and come up, based on this visual and perhaps by returning to chapter four's visual, with varied examples of discursive and practical complicities. The mere fact of living life on stolen Indigenous lands demands settler people to reverse-the-gaze upon us and recognize that the most mundane aspects of our being and knowing are reificatory of dispossession. In this chapter, as I describe the processes that have informed my decision to use the back-and-forth dynamic of relationship-building as a method of inquiry, I will be illustrating what pressure points refer to, and how they are connected to settler complicities. In this way, through the back-and-forth, the reader will begin to see that working through is a layered practice that is somewhat improvisational. It requires working from within the contexts of the conversations, as well as those that surround these specific conversations. Thus, while working through is a layered

practice that cannot be prescribed, in this chapter, I highlight three forms of de-layering that were consistent throughout the following chapters. Two of these practices share a dual relationality, while one of them, the one that I discuss first, emerges as an aid in moments when visuals have helped me articulate complex ideas related to my own personal complicities.

5.3 Searching For a Methodology

In this section, I narrate my process in the selection of a methodology. I draw from Lynn Butler (2018) who suggests that qualitative research can be subdivided into three modes of inquiry that represent “a way of being in the research” (p. 15): thematic inquiry, narrative inquiry, and arts-based research. I summarize them here and offer a commentary on why I decided to develop an eclectic inquiry process that draws from *but is not* quite arts-based nor narrative-based. This discussion will pave the way for my return to the back-and-forth dynamic that I situate as both method and methodology of this work.

5.3.1 Thematic Inquiry and the Itch to Find Patterns

Thematic inquiry replicates older models of doing research where researchers use “fine-grained analyses” to create “rules of inclusion” through which researchers examine field texts and acquire a general understanding of an issue or experience (p. 46). Butler asserts that while contextual complexities tend to be lost through this approach, the upside is that the common understanding that is generated from coding can sway policy decisions to support social change (p. 42). While the aim might not be to use “damage” as a tool of social change, the collapsing and expanding of categories across the data to find generalizable relationships can be damaging to research participants—already vulnerable from the colonial order—by de-contextualizing and essentializing the singularity of lived experience within shared contexts (Tuck, 2009). Given my

awareness of this risk, in the earliest conversations about this research, I regularly emphasized to Kahtehrón:ni, Sandra-Lynn, and Wahéhshon that I would not scrutinize their experiences and that the focus of analysis would be on me while looking to honor the contexts of our discussions.

In my practice, I have found that the management of this ethical balance is difficult. When I wrote chapter seven, the chapter where I turn to my conversations with Kahtehrón:ni and Wahéhshon, I felt a disequilibrium in the writing compared to chapter eight where I turn to my conversations with Sandra-Lynn and Mark. I felt this disequilibrium amidst the awareness that I was focusing too much on what Wahéhshon and Kahtehrón:ni said, but not enough on an analysis of my own subjective and discursive processes. Alternatively, I found a way of using my conversation with Sandra-Lynn as a framework through which to examine my conversation with Mark, and in this way, bring into salience my/his/our complicities in processes of knowledge-production. With Wahéhshon and Kahtehrón:ni, I felt the pressures of misrepresenting and reproducing voyeurism much more acutely, and I have determined that this difference is in part due to the nature of the conversations, but also given the backgrounds of these conversations. Describing the pressure points that underlie relationship-building and collaboration in Kahnawà:ke has a distinct quality of precarity—than unpacking complicities shared among settlers—for it is a process that is distinctly experienced by each one of us and that is ever-changing still today. My struggle, then, was rooted in the fear of smoothening out the textures that can sometimes be felt but not seen—and so, not described—by falling into the “itch” of finding patterns through which to structure the writing of that chapter.

While my writing still brings into salience points of connection across our conversations and experiences, my process of meaning-making has not complied with the rigor that is required of thematic analyses to be credible. Even in the early stages of analysing the data, when I thought

of writing a chapter by looking at my conversation with Sandra-Lynn and Wahéhshon (I elaborate on this in chapter six), the connections that I noticed were always imbricated in their differences, and I reflected this in the tentative themes that I observed (see figure 2). For example, if *boundary* and *barrier* had been important concepts in my conversation with Wahéhshon, it was *boundary* that was significant with Sandra-Lynn. Rather than collapsing them into one theme, I had originally aimed to work through the differences that the terms conveyed—even if linguistically similar—given their contexts. Overall, a thematic inquiry seemed unsuitable for my purposes.

5.3.2 Narrative Inquiry and the Importance of Words

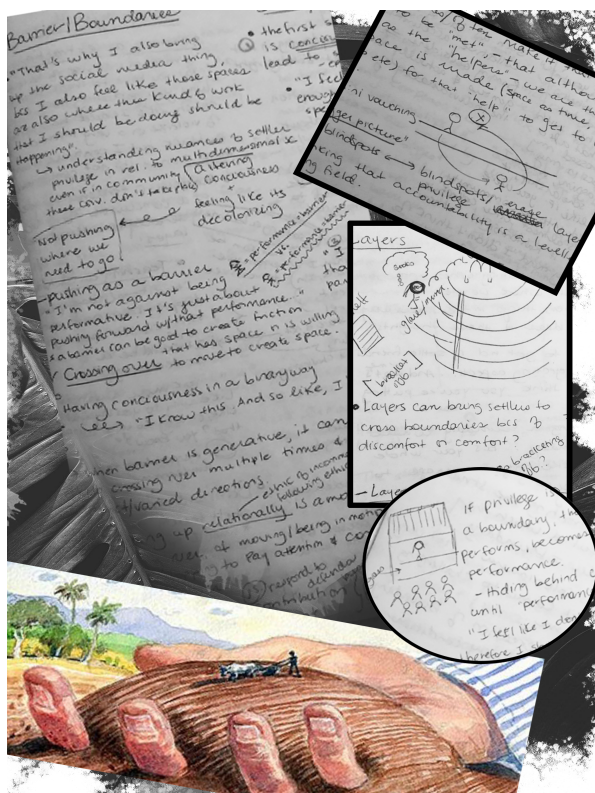
Narrative inquiry was the mode of inquiry that spoke to me the most given its connecting approaches (Butler, 2010, pp. 7-8, 15). I appreciated its emergence from within the challenges of critical feminists and Indigenous scholars who refused to engage in research from within the colonial premise that knowing and being—and the knower and coming to know—are separate. It was also encouraging to see that the ethics of “knowing others” were centered in discussions that concluded on the importance of relationality and relationship-building (p. 71). The attention to story and storytelling as processes of inquiry were appealing because of the increasing attention given to language (p. 75). The research questions that I formulated rely heavily on the transcripts of the conversations, for it is through them that I can draw attention to the subjective and discursive structures that reveal structural complicities while modelling working through them. Finally, the fact that the dry portions of a dissertation—such as the literature and conceptual chapters—can be enmeshed with other modes of writing, like story, was compelling given the preambles that I have included in some of the chapters (pp. 81, 89).

Narrative inquiry has enabled me to embed portions of the conversations early on, but also to evoke moments that I have shared with the participants before and beyond the scope of the field texts, the conversations. But narrative inquiry is less ideal for this work, for it still relies on a degree of structural analysis that is usually helpful in bringing out portions of the transcript into a cohesive story, thus privileging linearity over complexity and messiness (Butler, 2010, p. 77). Given that I am not writing a comprehensive reflective piece on relationship-building in Kahnawà:ke, the affordability of messier analyses is necessary. Thus, while narrative inquiry does not fully represent this work, alongside arts-based inquiry, it has informed my practice of working through in some instances.

Barrier/Boundaries

Example of how I sorted out themes to maintain diversity and the respective contexts rather than collapsing them into one theme based on thematic analyses.

Man holding the Earth.
Retrieved from
<https://www.wrm.org.uy/bulletin-articles/land-grabbing-tactics-used-by-european-actors-abroad>



Handmade drawings to represent the data

Figure 2. A Collage of my data analysis “notes”.

Image designed and digitalized by Janani Narahenpita.

5.3.4 Arts-based Meaning that Cannot Be Put into Words

Arts-based approaches were not in my radar when I started this research, but *in some instances of the writing*, it has been the only way through which I have been able to work through complex ideas. For example, in chapter four where I share my understanding of settler colonialism as a multidimensional mode of conquest, I wanted to illustrate its workings in settler Canada. This task was ambitious given the theoretical density needed to paint a picture of settler Canada through its ostensible multicultural façade. It was also a tricky task in that, through the complexity that I was trying to convey, I wanted to ensure that land remained centered alongside discussions of Indigenous sovereignty. Given my inclination for visual learning, it felt natural for me to craft a visual of how I understood the various modalities of conquest, as well as how I saw them interlocking to inform the formation of a settler colonial-capitalist-democratic Canada.

After that chapter, I did not expect to use more visuals, but throughout my data analysis, I often represented relationships and concepts through hand-crafted drawings (see figure 2). When I began drafting my chapters to show how I had worked through my settler complicities, I found it impossible to turn away from some of the visuals that I had developed. I realized that, apart from helping me put into words my thoughts, they also “juxtaposed different worlds onto one another” and offered the possibility of engaging the readers in other forms of *working through* (Butler, 2018, p. 114). Even for me, it was difficult to choose the focus of my thoughts—what did I want to communicate through the visual? What did I *need* to work through in relation to what my participants were saying? In practices of working through, as I explore below, there are multiple vantage points to explore, name, and de-layer—this makes sense since settler complicities are multidimensional, unbounded, and variously rooted in the limitations of settler being (as seen in chapter four). Visual representation became an inherent part of my attempts at working through. Because I spent time drafting versions of the drawings, adding color or

descriptions of what I wanted to convey, or of the “data”, visuals have become one the layers through which I have worked through—de-layered—the aspects of my complicities that cannot always be said in words (see through chapters six to nine).

There were also moments in the writing where an excerpt that I wanted to share from the conversations seemed flat, either because of its original presentation or because of the explanation that I offered to contextualize it. For example, I wanted to convey the *smaller and circular* moments of relationship-building with Kahtehrón:ni from the beginning to where we are now. Kahtehrón:ni had started our conversation recalling these moments—*small* because they were mundane, not always related to formal interactions, and *circular* because they always connected us back to the meaning of our processes of relationship-building. When she relayed these memories, she did so with fluidity, and I felt that the original transcription and the explanation that I offered to contextualize it did not retain the textures and rhythms of how she had shared with me, and of how I had experienced that sharing. Thus, I decided to play around with the words and phrases and present the excerpt more as a stanza. Mela, my supervisor, insisted that I needed to explain this methodological choice, and she suggested that I look at Janine Metallic’s use of *found poems*. When I read Lynn Butler’s book, I encountered found poems again, and I realized that they had been a method used for many years. In this way, I understood that I was trying to find the words and phrases that, together, could convey, more than a meaning, a feeling, *and a relationship in motion through the exercise of sharing memories*. In chapter five, you will again encounter the following found poem with a more elaborated discussion of its context, and of how it relates to a form of complicity that I then describe as *holding time*. For now, the excerpt might not make much sense to the reader, but the purpose of sharing is to demonstrate what found poems can look like in this work.

Kahtehrón:ni:

I remember you being very nervous, and at the same time, the way I felt was a little bit of surprise.

But surprise that

There wasn't that type of interest to work with community [...]

Like maybe they don't hear the things they hope to hear in that introduction

But you continued to follow up and

Kind of really start building this relationship. Yeah.

And so, from there, I guess, for yourself

You mentioned that it was like a learning process for you, every step of the way.

But I felt that same learning process too [...]

All along the way.

It was about my learning process,

The questions you would ask me or as I was watching you challenge yourself

Or struggle with the ideas you were having.

I was struggling along with you.

Your learning process,

I learned from it, too.

I got to grow from it.

I used this poetic method again in chapter eight in relation to an exchange with Sandra-Lynn:

Daniella: grab

the meaning of

decolonization,

in my hands,

make sure that we ,[settlers and I],

exit that conversation

in a different place

Sandra-Lynn: factory

Pushed out and get to "here"

sit on a shelf, [a]

mental self

and it's going to get stuck

there.

shelved mentally or physically in your dissertation

The choice of words for this found poem was more strategic than poetic, for I wanted to convey

how I had become complicit with using knowledge, alongside settlers, to display my

understanding of colonization without respecting their own processes of learning. Thus, while I

wanted to show how I had objectified decolonization, I also wanted to share the back-and-forth

of our conversation so that readers could sense the *pressure points* underlying two very distinct

relationships to the meaning of decolonization—here, mine and Sandra-Lynn's. Originally, I also

planned to include a visual of a landscape that was held into the hands of a settler capitalist (see

figure two). This time, I had not designed the visual but had come across it online, and I felt that

it perfectly depicted the level of *systematic and structural* complicity conveyed in the found poem: settlers are always and already entangled in dispossession by living *privileged lives* on stolen Indigenous lands, and thus, we are, in quite material ways, represented by the settler capitalist grabbing the land with his/our hands. In chapter eight, while I have decided not to include the visual, I unpack the found poem by relating this form of complicity to the role of knowledge in colonization, especially in the depiction of settler people as progressives—sensitive to issues of justice, including Indigenous rights—while knowledge is misused to create a façade to the practices of complicity that settlers continue to entertain for our benefit.

While I will unpack these poems in the context of their discussion later, I offer them here to show how arts-based inquiry has, like narrative inquiry, shaped this study. It has shaped the way in which I have been able to *name and work through* layers of complicity *at key moments of the analysis*. All in all, however, neither arts-based nor narrative inquiry fully represent the process of inquiry of this work. Rather, I have found myself constantly returning to the back-and-forth dynamic that has guided processes of relationship-building with Wahéhshon, Kahtehrón:ni, and Sandra-Lynn, but also with Mark in our interactions. While I have described the interplay of this dynamic in chapters one and two, I return to it here to show how this back-and-forth dynamic has informed the process of inquiry *and* acted as a method as well.

5.4 Returning to the Back-and-Forth

5.4.1 How the Back-and-Forth Paved the Way For this Research

Lynn Butler (2010) has also argues that “inquiry is the method”, that, “It is the way of being in and doing the work from its inception to its conclusion” (p. 8). While I recognize that art and narrative inquiry has helped me find ways of *working through settler complicities* in moments of interactions with Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéhshon, Sandra-Lynn, and Mark, (research

question one) all the while showing myself struggling with that task (research question two), it is a back-and-forth dynamic that has guided my inquiry. While acting as a methodology, through the back-and-forth, the narrative, visual, and analytical tools that I have used to show myself grappling with my settler complicities have emerged from a relational duality that I describe next by showing how different “movements” of the relationships have interlocked to shape this work.

5.4.1.1 Stringing Movement One – Triangular Relationships. As I mentioned in chapters one and two, when Kahtehrón:ni and I started a relationship, neither of us knew where it would lead. Kahtehrón:ni reiterated this experience in our research conversation, recounting,

...when I first met you, you mentioned that you were interested in introducing yourself... you had an interest in meeting and possibly collaborating and learning...we were just kind of going with the flow and learning together where it would lead. So I didn't have something clear. Neither of us did. And I think it evolved...

This excerpt elucidates how Kahtehrón:ni viewed our relationship through a back-and-forth dynamic, one that *evolved* throughout time, leading to a place of stability when we collaborated with Wahéhshon on writing the education research ethics policy. In this collaboration, our relationship materialized not just because of the tangible aspects of collaborating on a project, but because we became further connected through our individual and shared relationships with Wahéhshon. In these *triangular relationships* (see figure three), the back-and-forth acquired new relational complexities, which Wahéhshon unpacked in our research conversation by highlighting the nature of our interactions in settler-Kahnawa'kehró:non interactions—as when we related with each other—and in Kahnawa'kehró:non-Kahnawa'kehró:non interactions—as when they related with other Kahnawa'kehró:non and people from the Education Center. Across

these relational layers, our relationship as insider/outsiders of Kahnawà:ke were complicated, and the pressure points impinged on our relationships.

Wahéshon: ...there's a lot **more at stake for us** because not only are we working in the Education Center, and this policy would reflect us individually, on a personal level, because **our names are more associated** with it and then professionally **in the community**. But there's also **still that whole resistance to research and even education**, especially higher education **in a lot of Onkwehón:we communities**. So **the stakes are higher... there's also other dynamics**, you know, like professionally, **in our organization**, [and] **who do we report to in the community?**...

The bolded words bring into salience Wahéshon's speaking tone about the relationship between *what* and *how* working on a project of resistance such as the education research policy bears different kinds of *stakes* for insiders and outsiders of her community:

More at stake for us.
Our names are more associated
In the community.
Still that whole resistance to research and
Even education
In a lot of Onkwehón:we communities.
There's also other dynamics in our organization:
Who do we report to in the community?
The stakes are higher.

In chapter seven, I will return to this found poem to unpack one of the central themes of our conversation, which regards the way in which structural dynamics of settler colonization, internal responses to these dynamics, and local understandings of resistance interlock in ways that add relational complexities to relationship-building and collaborations among us. **My point here is that, given these relational complexities, our collaborative dynamics required various forms of back-and-forth that sometimes directly involved the three of us, other**

times Wahéhshon and I or Kahtehrón:ni and I, and finally others that involved them two and/or them two with others from the Education Center. These relationalities, even when they did not directly call our engagement with each other at the same time, they always informed our triangular relationships within the context of our collaboration because the priority was to move forward the education research ethics policy with accountability. To this extent, as Kahtehrón:ni says it in our research conversation, these very relational contexts required us to *work through* the tensions in diverse ways, always with the aim of prioritizing the development of the research ethics policy.

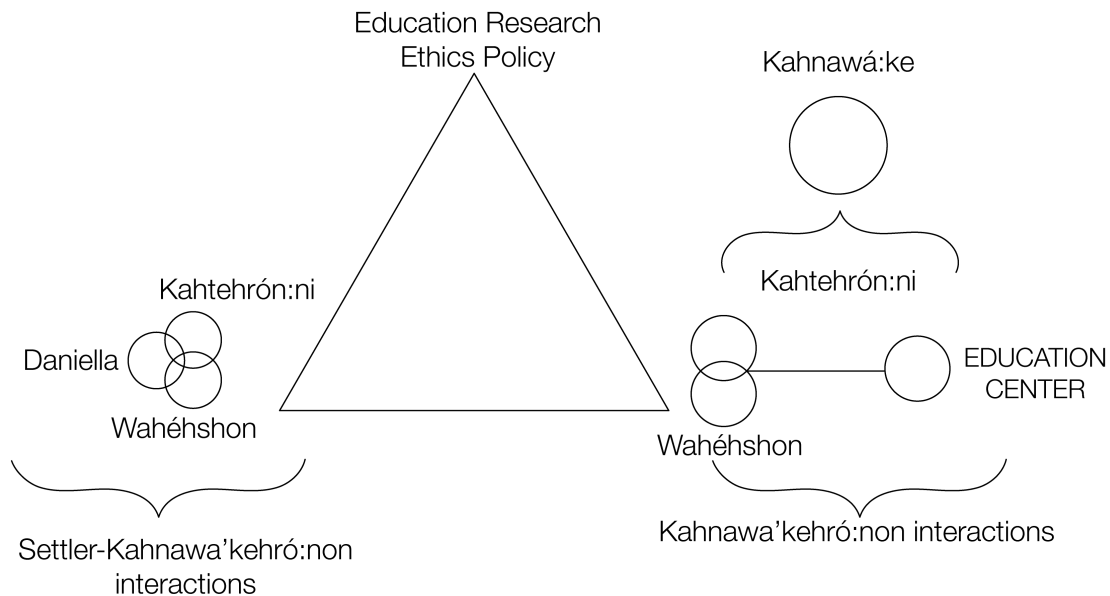


Figure 3. Triangular relationships.
Image designed by me and digitalized by Janani Narahenpita.

5.4.1.2 Stringing Movement Two – Shaping this Thesis Through brainstorming. A

tangible example of when we engaged in a back-and-forth dynamic was when, during the development of the research ethics policy, we started to discuss research ideas more formally for my PhD. For these discussions, Sandra-Lynn joined in. At times, she participated in collective conversations where we would gather to discuss ideas that were relevant to the Education Center, and other times, Sandra-Lynn and I spoke on our own time. In these discussions, we had to *work through* different considerations related to time and feasibility, relevance to the Education Center, contribution to our work on the ethics policy, and finally, relevance to my personal interests. For some time, I became interested in the idea of working with settler males in high positions of power at the institutional level who sat in Indigenous led discussions about Indigenous sovereignty without always a proper understanding of their privilege and roles in those spaces. This was an idea proposed by Sandra-Lynn based on work that she had been doing at the institutional level with other Indigenous scholars who grew tired of the same patriarchal and white settler colonial dynamics. It was an idea that impacted Kahnawà:ke, given that its proximity to Montreal made it a community sought for by academic institutions, a point that Wahéhshon makes in our research conversation:

...There's an unhealthy level of productivity happening where we're trying to meet the demands of that academic world. Now, everybody wants a piece of this community because we're so close to Tiohtià:ke, to Montreal. Every research institution and the university wants to partner with someone because there's indigenous research dollars, and we're the first place they look...

In account of this *unhealthy level of productivity*, we saw that the benefit of basing my research on working with my own community of settlers to examine our privileges and complicities in

instances where we are called to support Indigenous peoples' sovereignties in structurally impactful ways.

In the end, there were two reasons why, with their support and insight, I decided not to pursue this research. The first one was related to academic timelines. At the time of these discussions, I was about to finish my fifth year in the PhD program as a full time student, so I considered that in a year and a half left of studies, this research would not be feasible since I would have to start by building relationships with Indigenous scholars who I had never met, but also with other settlers. The second reason for not pursuing this research ideas was related to the weight of the previous five years that we had spent time building relationships, not just within the context of our collaboration on the ethics policy, but before and beyond it. **This back-and-forth planning has still informed this work by, first, creating space for me to reflect on the processes of relationship-building that had been foundational to the entire journey, and second, by still drawing me to work with my community of settlers through Mark.**

5.4.1.3 Stringing Movement Three – Spatial transitions. With the latter back-and-forth with Wahéhshon, Kahtehrón:ni, and Sandra-Lynn, we agreed that this research would somehow become a self-reflective piece, and I shared with them that I wanted to focus on the *pressure points* that had impinged our relationships. I also started sharing more on my reflections about *settler complicity*, and I shared my interest in exploring how, in these relational pressure points, I had variously perpetrated modalities of conquest that, notwithstanding the relational successes of our collaboration, were important to name and unpack. “This way,” I remember telling them, “the reflections will contribute an experience of relationship-building processes that is complicated and contradictory rather than either “good” or “bad””. Adrianna Poulette, the Research Education Coordinator at the time, met with me a few times to help me refine my

ideas. It was around the time of these discussions that I began noticing the *spatial transitions* that I had described in chapters one and two. **What was I doing, beyond the context of our formal collaboration, to account for the fact that dispossession is always ongoing and that I contribute to its reification in the most mundane of ways, with my community of settlers?**

I brought up this question with Adrianna, Wahéhshon, Kahtehrón:ni, and Sandra-Lynn, but also with Mark. Through various instances of back-and-forth with them, I realized that extending the reflective pieces of this work to account for my interactions with other settlers was an integral piece of this research's grounding in critical accountability. For, during the six years of relationship-building in Kahnawà:ke, I have also continued to live my settler life with unparalleled privileges that secure settler sovereignties while reifying the very dynamics of dispossession that underlie the settler colonial order. When I shared this with Adrianna, Wahéhshon, Kahtehrón:ni, and Sandra-Lynn, they got it right away because from their everyday experiences, the way in which settler colonization is fortified through settler life is nothing new. In selecting phrases of an excerpt from my conversation with Wahéhshon, this point is clearly reiterated by her:

...I explained to you last time that
that's always present in our lives, always on every level.
Even if I'm working here in my community,...
we still have to confront it
all the time.
And so it's not it's not nothing new.
It's something ever present all the time...
those tensions and microaggressions ...
we confront these power structures
in all of our relationships
all the time.
It's always, always there.

In chapter seven, I will return to this found poem to unpack its context, which emerges out of the *relational complexities* briefly discussed in stringing movement one and is connected

to the meaning of *resistance* that roots the research ethics policy as a community-based project. My point here is to show how, on the one hand, the crafting of this research was progressive—informed by the back-and-forth of communication—but also an important and, in some ways, natural outcome given the way in which settler ways of being and knowing are fully enrooted in the colonial order.

5.4.2 How the Back-and-Forth Has Guided the Research

Across chapters one and two, but also in this chapter, I have offered concrete examples of the back-and-forth dynamic that has informed processes of relationship-building with Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéhshon, Sandra-Lynn, as well as in interactions with Mark. The aim has been to illustrate how this dynamic has shaped the inquiry process of this work, but in order to delineate the steps that I have taken in the actual development of this work, I have turned to the artsy imagery of string figures.

5.4.2.1 The art of string figures.

...given the relational complexities underlying relationship-building and collaborating on the research ethics policy, we required various forms of back-and-forth that sometimes directly involved the three of us, other times Wahéhshon and I or Kahtehrón:ni and I, and finally others that involved them two and/or them two with others from the Education Center.

- Excerpt adapted from my writing in stringing movement one

The basic principle of string figures is that the participants of the game should be willing to give and receive patterns by interacting with strings and observing what other participants do with the strings. Generally, string figures are played by two or more people, but they can also call on one player to develop patterns by using objects such as the leg of a chair. While string figures are related to Indigenous cultural practices from around the globe and thus are played through

cultural protocols, string figures have also become more mainstream, and they are played in playgrounds by diverse children who might instead improvise playfully⁴⁶.

In the following visual, I have illustrated two string figures. **String figure A** represents the context of settler-Kahnawa'kehró:non relationship-building and collaboration, while **String Figure B** represents the context of settler-settler interactions.

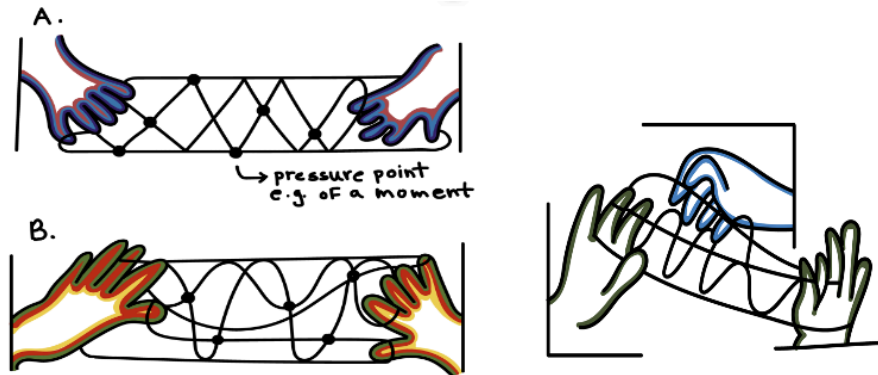


Figure 4. A visual representation of this research through string figures.

Image designed and digitalized by Janani Narahenpita.

To be specific, the strings represent *relational patterns* that have been shaped through relationships with Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéhshon, and Sandra-Lynn—but with the understanding that other

⁴⁶ To offer some context, there are three variations of games with strings: cat's cradles, string tricks and catches, and string figures (Society, 1941). Variations of these games have been found in Northern Australia (Mckinty, 2015) Hawaii (Akana, n.d.), South East Asia, Korea and Japan (Society, 1941), New Guinea (Maude & Wedgwood, 1933), and South America (Basu, 2019). Society (1941) describes cat's cradle as being known in western Europe and having been introduced after the period of European expansion, specifically with the early tea trade (p. 768). However, as string figures (a more complex variation of cat's cradle) were found in African communities, string figures were likely grafted to European contexts much earlier. Because I am borrowing the concept of string figures to design this research, this brief historical context is important seeing as anthropologists (e.g., Philip Noble) have tried to reconstruct the cultural meanings of string figures that belonged/belong to diverse Indigenous populations. This attempted reconstruction is an example of research extraction—seen in the need to acquire Indigenous knowledges to enable erasures (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). While I am not using the cultural meanings of string figures, I am still benefitting from the idea behind them to communicate and conduct this work—an example of how “whiteness” discretely and inevitably “wields power” and re/centers itself (Nakayama & Krizek, 2014, p. 291).

Kahnawa'kehrón:non were involved in shaping the context, albeit in less direct ways. Similarly, the strings in String Figure B denote the *relational patterns* that have emerged from interacting with Mark in discursive contexts. In both string figures, I have visibly indicated the intersection of strings with a black dot, and I have indicated that those intersections represent *pressure points* and *moments* that have been shared with the participants of this work in the past years. Usually, to play string figures, participants manipulate the strings from the point of those intersections ("knots"), and this characteristic is significant since, in this work, I along with Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéhshon, Sandra-Lynn, and Mark, are revisiting moments and de-layering knots, here known as pressure points. We are, in other words, attending to the knots of our relationships. Given that games of string figures require normally two or more participants, I have added different colored outlines to the hands; this is to show, like in the triangular representation of relationships shared above (visual three), that giving and receiving patterns—that is, engaging in a back-and-forth dynamic—is *how* we have revisited moments of the past years. This relational interaction is seen in the third part of the visual where two green hands—which represents one participant—is holding the strings after having moved them, while the blue hand—another participant—prepares to respond, contribute, and add meaning. This part of the visual represents one of the "knots" of string figures—the pressure point(s) that makes up one of the moments that has been selected with the participants for discussion. In this research, there were four conversations: Daniella/Sandra-Lynn, Daniella/Kahtehrón:ni, Daniella/Wahéhshon, and Daniella/Mark. However, as I see in the delineation of the research phases below, there were overlaps in the relational dynamics, especially in the data analysis and writing phases.

5.4.2.1 Delineating Processes of Giving and Receiving Patterns.

5.4.2.1.1 Preparing to revisit a moment. In the preparation leading up the research conversations with Wahéshon, Kahtehrón:ni, Mark, and Sandra-Lynn, as seen above, the act of giving and receiving patterns involved playing around with the general procedure that I offered them regarding how we would revisit a moment together. This is what I told them:

If you want, I can send you an email with bullet point suggestions of moments to revisit – If not, you can write me an email with their own suggestions – If email is not the desired conversation starter, we can schedule a meeting online for our conversation, and we can gather to brainstorm on the spot, leading into the conversation. You can also choose a moment and decide to only share it with me in real time, when we gather for our conversation.

5.4.2.1.1 Preparing and Revisiting a Moment. Participants responded differently to the general procedure that I offered to guide us in choosing a moment, and I discuss these differences here while offering a general overview of the themes discussed with each person.

Wahéshon knew what moment she wanted to revisit, so I did not have to send her suggestions, and to this extent, I was unprepared to unpack the following,

Wahéshon: So the specific moment [that I wanted to discuss] was when we were trying to really make sure the policy was grounded in like Rotinonhsión:ni worldview and culture. And you said, ‘you know, I took this course with Alex McComber, and I think I understand a lot about Kanien’kehá:ka world view or culture. I learned a lot, so I’m going to take a stab at it’, even though I was trying to save some of those sections for Kahtehrón:ni and I to edit and draft...

The section that she is referring to is situated under *Reclaiming Education Research* in the education research ethics policy, and it is a section that touches on the Thanksgiving Address, an integral part of Haudenosaunee worldview that I discuss in chapter seven. While unpacking this *pressure point* in our collaborative relationship, we also diverged into a discussion of the local and settler colonial dynamics that inform and complicate processes of relationship-building among outsider settlers and Kahnawa’kehró:non.

Although I was surprised when Wahéshon brought up this moment, the element of fluidity underlying the process of selecting a moment to revisit was also surprising to Mark, Kahtehrón:ni, and Sandra-Lynn in different ways. For example, at the start of our conversation, I reminded Mark, "...you know that we're here to discuss a moment that we have shared in the past, and that the way to do this is to suggest a few moments that you might have in mind...if not, I can suggest some". He preferred the latter, saying, "You suggest a couple. Just so I can get examples of what these moments are". Even though I reiterated that the moments could be about anything, here, we can see that this fluid process created uncertainties that reflected in who initiated the back-and-forth dynamic in our conversation. Once giving Mark an example (that I discuss in chapter six), he felt more comfortable coming up with other moments that we ended up discussing at different lengths. As we discussed these initial moments, Mark recalled a night out with some of our settler friends:

I remember we were at [my friend's] house and Jen [a pseudonym for our settler friend] was having an argument with [someone we did not know, here called Maite]. Our friend was getting really upset. And I think it came down to merit and she was saying how hard she works. And then I remember that we went home, and we had a discussion, and I couldn't understand why you were defending Maite where everyone at the party was kind of against her because she was being loud and obnoxious, but no one was understanding her point of view.

As I mentioned in the preamble to this chapter, this moment became central in our discussion. As I see in chapter eight, while Mark and I tried to bring into salience this moment's interrelatedness with a specific kind of racism—animated through the myth of meritocracy—there were layered forms of individual and collective complicities that marked our interaction, thus demonstrating

that, as settlers *co-enable each other* to perpetuate conquest, there is importance in working together to name and unpack our mutual complicities.

To the element of fluidity and spontaneity that underlined the process of selecting a moment for discussion, Kahtehrón:ni had a different approach, fully embracing it: "...you first mentioned that you would bring forward some moments or a moment that that you were thinking about or that I would be able to bring one up. So, I was prepared either way, and I was actually just imagining it starting somewhere and leading into different moments, just like naturally". Our conversation did unfold more naturally. Kahtehrón:ni would take time to fully unpack small, interconnected moments for long minutes, and I would then respond, bringing my perspective during long minutes as well. Because Kahtehrón:ni and I have shared a relationship for almost six years, she started us in our conversation by touching on a variety of moments briefly presented here through headings and aspects of her discourse:

The day we met at her MA presentation on language revitalization

"I remember you being very nervous"

Following-up to meet

"But you continued to follow up and
Kind of really start building this relationship"

Moments of self-reflection and struggle that she noticed in her and me

"The questions you would ask me or as I was watching you challenge yourself
Or struggle with the ideas you were having.
I was struggling along with you".

Sharing a classroom

"...I guess in the classroom where I was, I watched you struggle..."

As collaborators of the research ethics policy

"... the length of a few of the sections... It was so important what you were saying,
that's when we decided it would become an annex later to the policy".

Reading and bonding

"...having those deep conversations about all these scholars and learning together.
It's like we didn't have to explain to one another
So it made it feel easier and just a lot of fun
when we start talking about: 'did you read this and did you read that?'"

Kahtehrón:ni spent the first eight minutes of our conversation creating what seemed like a time travelling machine of different small moments in our relationship. Eventually, these small moments led us to discuss the moment that Wahéhshon had wanted to discuss, about my writing of the Thanksgiving Address on the policy. This part of our discussion was important, and Kahtehrón:ni even requested to meet again to *re-revisit* this part of our discussion.

As I mentioned in this chapter already, Sandra-Lynn asked for a few examples of moments to revisit, which I sent via email. When we gathered for our conversation, we found ourselves brainstorming on the spot. The back-and-forth that ended up shaping our discussion around the performative nature of social media activism in relation to my interaction with settlers and relationship with knowledge went as follows:

Daniella: Has there ever been a moment for you where we've been interacting in conversation or you've observed me interact [and you've seen] a contradiction in my theoretical understandings of the things that I write about and the things that I'm learning?

Sandra-Lynn: I mean, the only thing is that one instant, which is the number two thing that you put in [your email] and that I don't really want to chat too much about since it's fairly recent.

As I discuss in the next chapter, this interchange is mired in personal complicities that are enmeshed in moves of innocence (Tuck & Yang, 2012), for the moment that Sandra-Lynn does not want to discuss ends up shaping our conversation about social media activism. Through this conversation, Sandra-Lynn evokes and contests applications of “decolonization” in academia, and to this extent, paired with our discussion about the role of knowledge and how it can serve settler people to appear to care about justice while remaining idle, this conversation stands as a discursive framework that informs my analysis of my conversation with Mark.

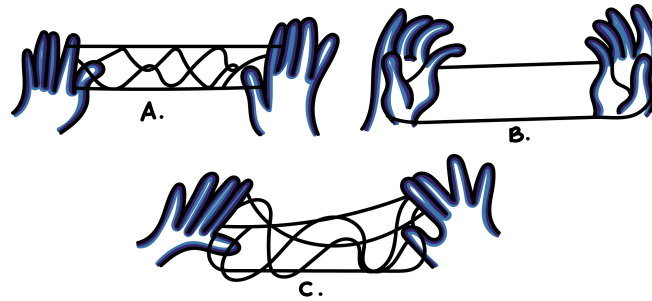


Figure 5. Giving and receiving patterns towards shaping and unpacking each conversation.
Image designed and digitalized by Janani Narahenpita.

As seen in these brief descriptions, the way in which Wahéhshon, Kahtehrón:ni, Mark, Sandra-Lynn, and I chose what moment to revisit varied, and this back-and-forth process informed the nature of our conversation. In the visual displayed here, I am representing this point. When Wahéhshon entered our conversation knowing what she wanted to revisit, she offered an overview of how she recalled the moment—and in this way, she established the string figure that we had to revisit and unpack. Image A represents that moment: the strings represent dynamics and details of that moment, and the knots are *pressure points* that uniquely qualify our experiences of that moment. The outline of two hands represent, in this case, Wahéhshon and I. In the moment, as Wahéhshon shares the moment that we will be revisiting together, there is a level of shock (on my part) and anticipation (on her part) pertaining the next moves. Although we have both lived the moment in question, *revisiting is not recreating. Instead, revisiting involves committed efforts to put forward a framing of the moment so that, collectively, we can proceed to unpack it.* Thus, as seen in image B, once the moment has been chosen, we find ourselves in a shared space—a space where we need to pick up strings to give and receive patterns—information—that can help us move forward in our conversation. At the end of our conversation, Wahéhshon and I did not necessarily account for the exact details of the moment as when it occurred for the first time, but we arrived somewhere new: Image C represents the moment once revisited *with new vantage points*. These

new vantage points are represented in the “data”—the transcripts of the back-and-forth—and they are crucial, for while choosing and revisiting a moment represents one of the layers of working through, there are others.

5.4.2.2.1 Relationships After the Formal Back-and-Forth.

When we explored this idea, there were two reasons why, with their support and insight, I decided not to pursue this research [...] I realized that I would sidestep the opportunity of reflecting on the processes of relationship-building that had been foundational to the entire journey, and I knew that it would be important to center those processes in my work—a form of settler accountability.

- Excerpt adapted from my writing in stringing movement two

At first, when I had just concluded the conversations with my participants, I was certain that I would not need to consult them as closely as I did in some phases of the analysis, writing, and re/writing phases of this work. But as I have shown throughout this work so far, the back-and-forth research dynamic presented here is more messy than linear because of the nature of my relationships with the participants. The fact that Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéhshon, and Sandra-Lynn are participants and members of my sub-committee in the Education Center makes it impossible to compartmentalize the research phases and isolate interactions with them. Furthermore, as is the case with Mark, the multidimensional nature of our relationships, as life partners, means that our involvement in this research does not stop when we revisit a moment.

For example, around the time of my writing of the chapters to come, Wahéhshon invited Kahtehrón:ni and me to a panel under McGill’s EGSS conference. The purpose of the panel was for us to share our process of collaboration on the research ethics policy, as well as on our research interests. This form of collaboration overlapped with several discussions that we had, formally and informally, about my research. For example, at the conclusion of my research conversation with Wahéhshon, Wahéhshon pointed out that the panel itself might become a moment to discuss: “So maybe you’ll have more after the panel, too. It’ll be like a moment”. In our conversation, she had

spoken about the layers to our relationship that give it meaning beyond just a collaboration but that also complicate our ways of relating—thus creating, at times, pressure points. Her point had been that in our panel, we would be addressing some of those pressure points, but that the nature of relationships means that other pressure points will always come up—it is also given the nature of our structural and ontological positionings as settler and Kahnawa'kehró:non. I ended our research conversation reiterating that I agreed with her point and that,

...I'm going to work actually on the panel slides now. And I think I'm going to focus on the layers, the layers of complexity and how settler complicity is manifested through all those layers. I think that ties in well with the relationships and the layers to those relationships and all of that. So I might talk about, the awareness of the shifting behaviors in research, the awareness of how settlers are one and the same with the structures, and then, the awareness of the local perspectives and community dynamics [that complicate relating]...

This outline is so closely enmeshed with the discussions of later chapters that, at some point, I had structured my introduction of chapter seven based on these three layers of awareness.

Across all phases of the work, my relationships with Mark, Wahéhshon, Kahtehrón:ni and Sandra-Lynn have overlapped with what is normally considered to be, even in more progressive qualitative methodologies, systematic to research studies aiming to contribute knowledge in a given area. For me, it has been particularly difficult to make choices about the organization of this dissertation, and as I explore in detail in the following chapter, the choices in themselves have required *collective* forms of *working through*, at different points, with the participants. At almost every turn of the analysis and writing phases, I found myself returning to the participants of this work. Sometimes, I reached out to them to update them on my process through informal texts. For

example, when I committed to the idea of *found poems*, I texted Kahtehrón:ni just to let her know, “when I write about our conversation and I write what you shared, I hear your exact mode of saying it to me. And I just hope people, when they read it, they can hear the tone, the pause, the rhythm of it!”. And she would respond, thinking about her own research process, “I can’t wait to be writing the words of those I’ll be working with too...”. I can think of similar informal exchanges with Sandra-Lynn. One time, I messaged her about wanting to include a one-page long excerpt—the one that ended up becoming a found poem—and when I expressed my struggles with the writing choices, she encouraged me with her usual tip, “Well, like I said, just keep writing away and then edit later...”. With Mark, I often sought for his feedback by reading portions of the PhD to him and asking him to summarize it back to me so I could see if it was clear. He was a significant support in this writing phase because, if he could not relay a summary, I knew that I had to re-write things. Other times, we would end up engaging in deeper discussions about the writing, and those conversations would be therapeutic for me—they helped me get the words on paper. With Wahéshon, as I share in chapter six, the back-and-forth related to this work was formal. She would join calls to hear me out and give me the push I needed. But with all my participants, the back-and-forth exceeded the scope of *my* work. I heard about Kahtehrón:ni’s PhD work and her own struggles. All of us had friendships that we sustained throughout, and in this way, Wahéshon relayed in our conversation that there was a holistic quality to the nature of our relationships:

you don't get that often.
 Someone who's open to—
 people use the word ‘relationship’ or ‘relational accountability’
 and they throw in all of these methods.
 Right now I see,
 two eyed seeing
 everywhere.
 And most of those relationships
 are just about them being able to get access to what they need from us.
 And that's one of the things that's,

I think,
 important about this work that you're doing:
 there are layers to relationships.
 we also support each other in other levels,
 as students.
 We also did writing groups to
 move along our own projects and
 gave each other advice and
 socialize on whatever levels we could in the pandemic.
 And so,
 layers to the relationship that I don't see very often with other researchers.

The layered nature of our relationships, as I see in chapter seven, is the steppingstone to practices of *working through* that are presented in this research, in relation to these specific contexts.

In reflecting about the back-and-forth of our relationships across the past years, but also about how this dynamic has continued to make itself a part of this work, I realize that working through has already been a collective practice in real time. It has been collective because working through is not just about naming and unpacking settler complicities, it is about the *pressure points* that inevitably shape processes of relationship-building not just because of the historically dense meanings of relating as settlers and Kahnawa'kehró:non in the present, or as settlers among settlers, but because agreeing to be in relationships is itself a practice that requires relating through difference(s). As I shared in the preamble, Kahtehrón:ni contributed to this realization when she acknowledged that the entirety of our work has been about working through and that when we do, we recognize tensions in our relationships, and this recognition reveals the possibility of pursuing with trust and accountability. **Thus, if we return to the image displayed above, about giving and receiving patterns, we can see that the back-and-forth has created relational strings across the conventional phases of research that tend to be “out-of-time” because they are reserved for the researcher.**

5.4.2.2.2 Naming and De-Layering in Relation to Theories. While the relationships that inform this work have played a central role across all of this work, there is a level of personal accountability that cannot be shared, and that, as the settler researcher undertaking this study, I have tried to guide by acknowledging that the authors whose voices have helped me think ideas for this work, have also informed my practice of working through. In this way, the back-and-forth significantly informs how I have engaged in practices of working through, first, by involving my participants in my processes of inquiry, and second, as I show here, by acknowledging that in order to de-layer my complicities, I have to engage in analyses that are relational—that emerge in relation to theories developed by Indigenous and non-settler scholars. For example, a word in any conversation can shed light on how settler subjectivities work contradictorily, on the one hand, to take responsibility for our role in a pressure point and on the other, by moving to innocence through various techniques of disavowal. To de-layer it and show its connection to modalities of conquest, I have embedded theoretical knowledge into my analyses. To illustrate, the word trespassing comes to mind.

In a conversation with Kahtehrón:ni, as we were discussing the moment that I briefly introduced in the preamble about my complicity in writing up a section of the ethics policy regarding the Thanksgiving Address, I drew a comparison to when I drove through Kahnawà:ke in college to film the landscape for a research methods course (discussed in chapter one). I described these two instances as trespassings, but Kahtehrón:ni challenged this conflation in passing, saying, “I don't know if I would feel like it's a trespassing, because you're welcomed in this”. I thought about this subtle pushback, and I realized that a *crossing of boundaries*, as was the case in the context of the ethics policy, was different from a *trespassing*. In one, there is a consenting relationship to collaborate, which comes with the ethical commitment of learning to

relate despite the pervasive dynamics of conquest that interpellate settlers into complicities and create relational pressure points; in the other, there are no relationships to inform practices of working through that are themselves necessary in processes of decolonial solidarity.

Coming to this realization consists only of one layer of working through: *naming* specific instances of settler complicity. However, “... acknowledging and recognizing white ‘supremacy’ is not the same as critically examining how and why it continues to exist (Levine-Rasky, 2010, p. 84). This means that without de-layering how and why settler complicities are reproduced in given moments, while naming them can de-naturalize settler privilege, **naming is not in itself enough to question how settlers might move to innocence despite being engaged critically.** For example, as I see in chapter seven, one way of de-layering this form of complicity has required me to ask and unearth the subjective functions of conflating these two contextually different events with the same terminology—trespassing. Forms of complicity are never unconscious, and neither are they the result of settler ignorance; this would mean that settlers can stop being complicit with enough education, and at least in this work, I am arguing that complicities are sometimes even perpetrated through knowledge—particularly via settler consciousness. For this argument, I draw from Tiffany Lethabo-King (2019) who writes that settler complicities can be a result of *not wanting to see* instead of not seeing (Lethabo-King, 2019, pp.43-44). This author offers the example of the defacement of Christopher Columbus’ statue in Boston, writing that white settler people were surprised to see “BlackLivesMatter” painted on it. “In the “White American imagination””, she writes, “if bloodletting was associated with Columbus *at all*, it was confined to Indigenous peoples and failed to touch the bodies and lives of Black people” (p. 37-38, my emphasis). But given the pervasive nature of anti-

Blackness, she argues that what appears to be an outcome of confusion is instead a *refusal* to acknowledge the full scope of conquest.

Adrienne Harris (2019), a settler, similarly describes this contradictory but benefitting refusal as the “perverse pact”; that is, as when white people “self-impose limits in regard to reflection and action, along with the unconscious conditions in which white guilt and white fragility inhibit our progress towards genuine civil rights” (p. 310). While she explores this perverse pact primarily in relation to white/Black relations, this framing is important to the extent of demonstrating how whiteness remakes itself the center by discretely wielding power (see Nakayama & Krizek, 2014, p. 291). Through guiltiness, which is very much connected to settler benevolence, Harris argues that settler anxieties resettle whiteness by inhibiting genuine forms of reparation, or in this work, of solidarity. One way in which settler anxieties monopolize the space of responsibility (while eliding this) is when settlers claim to *forget* “what is clearly known and understood in mind” about the colonial order, modalities of racism and coloniality, and of our complicities (Harris, 2019, p. 315-316). Forgetting and investments, then, work as techniques of disavowal when paired with settler benevolence.

Given these structural contradictions, in my work, I am generally conceptualizing *working through* as a relational duality that is not perfectly separated. On the one hand, it is related to the back-and-forth of relationships with the participants of this work, across all phases of the research, and on the other, it is related to a back-and-forth with various authors whose theories enable me to reverse-the-gaze on myself while trying to look through the lenses of those who experience the colonial relation first-hand.

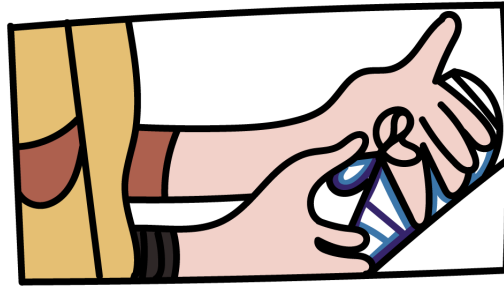


Image 4. Working through discursive aspects of the conversations that delineate settler complicities by evoking a relational analysis through the works of Indigenous and non-settler scholars.

Image designed and digitalized by Janani Narahenpita.

As I mentioned under the section of giving and receiving patterns, string figures can be played by a sole individual by using other objects to help manipulate the strings. For me, in the stages of this research where I have had to find accountable practices to my own analytical limitations, I have decided to work in relation to the works of Indigenous and non-settler scholars. In this image, you can see me, holding the strings of a conversation that has taken place, and trying to name *and* de-layer discursive portions that are enmeshed into forms of complicity. Although I am not claiming that with a relational theoretical analysis such as this one, I can bypass all of my structural limitations—and thus offer a polished analysis of my own complicities—what I am suggesting is that this choice is ethical. On my own, as can be seen in the image, if I am both subject and object, if I am holder of the strings that are directly attached to my settler positioning, there needs to be an effort of accountability to recognize that my lens, on its own, risks re-colonizing analyses. This risk is never eliminated, and in my writing, as part of working through, I am to show as many layers to my complicities as possible—precisely to elucidate the complexity that is inherent to this practice.

5.4.2.2.3 Attending to the Matter of “Across Time and Space”. So far, in the description of the research phases, I have showed how I have addressed research questions one and two. While research question three is addressed within these analyses, it is also formulated to demand an intentional re/centering of an analysis to questions of land. If all of Canada is Indigenous Land, if dispossession is active always and everywhere, and if settler colonization is informed by interlocking modalities of conquest—then, the question to re/center is: how to ensure that even when land could be elided from any form of analysis, land is made present?

In chapter seven, where I unpack my conversations with Wahéhshon and Kahtehrón:ni and elucidate pressure points and complicities related to relationship-building, it has been easy, problematically, for me to feel like land is being evoked simply by virtue of the fact that relationship-building brings us into collaborations that take place under Kahnawa’kehró:non sovereignty. But in my work, this indirectness is not enough. I try to be explicit about the centrality of land. In chapter eight, where I unpack my conversations with Sandra-Lynn and Mark, the connection to land is even harder to make, in part, given that the main topic that I unpack is related to issues of racism towards Maite, the Brown Latina woman. But as I will see, in making land central to this analysis, and thus, in showing the relevance of my conceptual framework in chapter four, I have used my conversation with Sandra-Lynn as a framework through which to examine how knowledge is interconnected with settler innocence—and most specifically, with the conqueror’s right to know (first explored in chapter six).

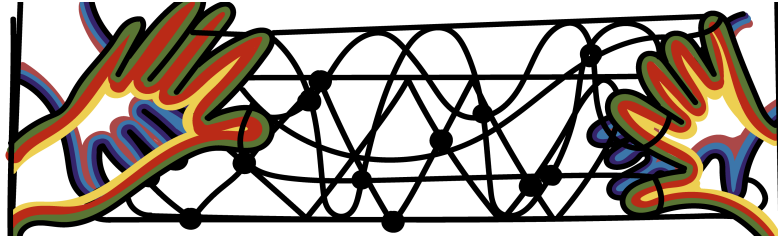


Figure 2. Example of how I imagine decolonial solidarity, if decolonial solidarity could be painted through string figures.

Image designed and digitalized by Janani Narahenpita.

While attending to the question of land in each chapter, I reserve the final chapter of this work to directly address research question three, which asks: **How might working through settler complicity across time and space, in settler/Indigenous direct collaborations and in settler everyday life, elucidate a process of decolonial solidarity that accounts for the fact that dispossession is always at play?** In the final chapter, I return to chapters six through eight and, **by juxtaposing the visual aids of these chapters, I aim to paint a picture of *a process of decolonial solidarity***—singular because it is contextualized in this work and can acquire distinct shapes through differing analyses—that is imperfect *but continuous across my engagements with Mark and with Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéhshon, and Sandra-Lynn*. In this final chapter, I also address the limitations of this work in terms of materially responding to decolonization by giving land back to Indigenous peoples. These limitations, again, are framed through the practice of working through.

5.5 Towards Next Chapters

The breakdown of the following chapters is as follows. Chapter six offers a deeper look into each conversation, which is preceded by an examination of how I worked through decisions about the organization of the conversations. This discussion is framed in relation to the role that knowledge and knowledge-producing dynamics have played in the perpetuation of settler

colonization, and I bring into salience how I have grappled with this understanding in my practice, while showing my reliance on a back-and-forth communication primarily with Wahéshon. Chapter seven unpacks my conversations with Kahtehrón:ni and Wahéshon by examining personal pressure points in our relationships, but also within the collective context underlining our work on the research ethics policy. Through this discussion, I show that the pressure points and complicities that are part of our relationships do not overdetermine possibilities for *collective forms of working through wherein place is made*. Chapter eight unpacks my conversations with Sandra-Lynn and Mark. I extend the discussion regarding the role of knowledge-producing dynamics in the reification of settler colonization by reversing-the-gaze on my relationship to knowledge and academia. My conversation with Sandra-Lynn serves as a discursive framework through which I center land and move to examine the layers of complicity that Mark and I co-enable each other to reproduce *even as we willingly gather to be critical of our complicity with racism towards a Brown Latina woman*. Finally, in chapter nine, I return to research question three to juxtapose the findings of these conversations and show what *a process of decolonial solidarity* can look like across time and space

Chapter 6: Working through a Knowledge-Practice Gap Across Four Conversations

6.1 Introduction

In games of string figures, players have to take turns selecting and moving the strings to move the game forward. As I saw in the previous chapter, these individual acts are rooted in a relational back-and-forth that requires players to act in response to each other and each other's contributions. It requires individual players to reset their perspectives of the string figure, paying attention to how the strings have been moved during each turn, and thus acknowledging how the figure of the game has changed. In this chapter, I situate myself at the intersection of different resets. After participating in an oral back-and-forth with Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéhshon, Sandra-Lynn, and Mark to revisit four moments, I have had to individually transcribe our conversations, spend time with the words and ideas, and discern how to organize the analysis chapters of this work to address my research questions. This task has required me to make present the ethical precarities of any research—the moment at which the researcher re/enters into an isolated position of power by virtue of having power over what the data says outside of the influence of the participants. Although this power dynamic cannot be eliminated altogether, in this chapter, one of my aims is to share with the reader how I have struggled with decisions around which threads of the conversations to focus on, and how to relay them in writing in order to keep close to their contexts. In a way, I imagine this process beginning with the string figures of my four conversations and having to decide which string(s) of the figure to examine without moving them around too much so as not to manipulate the point at which Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéhshon, Sandra-Lynn, Mark, and I have arrived. In practice, as I show here and in next chapters, this process is undesired, for it situates subsequent practices of working through—those that I have to at times undertake on my own—*out of time* from the dynamism of the conversations, and from

the fact that moving strings after completing a string figure with others is part of the inquiry. As I show myself grappling with choices, then, I also draw from the surrounding contexts to the conversations where I have continued to benefit from the guidance of Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéhshon, Sandra-Lynn, and Mark.

After sharing how I have worked through these struggles towards finding a structure for the writing of subsequent chapters, I give an overview analysis of the strings (threads) of ideas of each conversation that I will be focusing on in chapters seven and eight, and I show how I have paired my conversations with Kahtehrón:ni and Wahéhshon, on the one hand, and with Sandra-Lynn and Mark, on the other. In the discussion of these conversations. Since the overarching theme of these conversations regards questions of how settler complicity can be variously manifested through settler consciousness, prior to this chapter's main sections, I extend the introduction to establish the relevance of these pieces in relation to the larger context of settler colonialism and "the right to know" (see Maldonado-Torres, 2007a pp. 144-146).

6.1.1 "The Right to Know" and Settler Consciousness

Knowledge has been a central tool of conquest since before the epoch of overseas colonization in America (Patel, 2018, pp. 157-163; Wynter, 2003). After 1492, European colonizers redefined and adapted their racist knowledge epistemes to account for "new" identities in relation to old ones (Maldonado-Torres, 2007a, 2007b; Mignolo, 2007, p. 29; Quijano, 2000, p. 549; Quijano & Wallerstein, 1974, p. 550). The right to know became intimately connected with the right to conquer based on a racist structure through which European humanity was redefined: "The 'lighter' one's skin is, the closer to full humanity one is, and vice versa" (Maldonado-Torres, 2007a, pp. 244-246; Tuck & Yang, 2013, pp. 224-225). Because conquest became largely connected to "property", the appropriation and theft of peoples

and lands were concomitant processes that became morally justified through the conqueror's right to know (Maldonado-Torres, 2020, p. 18).

With the advent of liberal rights and freedoms, liberal philosophy appeared to alter the violence enrooted in the conqueror's methods of knowledge production (e.g., Lowe, 2015, pp. 13-15; Mignolo, 2007 pp. 42-43, Maldonado-Torres, 2007a pp. 144-145, 158-159; Robinson, 2019, pages 139-141). However, because European philosophers gave attention to "what and about what they thought" and not "from where" thought was produced, the right to know of the racially privileged European was reinscribed (Mignolo, 2007, p. 42; Lowe, 2015, p. 6-8). Instead of centering the views of non-Europeans, for example of Cugoano (African) and Wampum (Quechua)⁴⁷, European philosophers wrote of man in general, relegating conquest to a distant past (Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 64-65; Mignolo, 2007, p. 42-43), and, in North America, establishing modern democracy while continuing to own stolen Indigenous lands and African enslaved peoples (Robinson, 2019, p. 139). Through these contradictions, even with behavioural changes in academic research (for instance, against extractive research), it is important to unearth how settler scholars still benefit from the structural and historical contexts that keep "knowing" as a racialized practice and right (Moreton-Robinson, 2004).

In the field of settler colonial studies, there has been a consistent interest in pedagogies of discomfort, which follow after Regan's book (2010) *Unsettling the Settler Within*. For example, in their introduction to the special issue titled *Pathways of Decolonization*, Davis, Denis and Sinclair (2016a) write that "non-Indigenous peoples" can benefit from colonial theory to "better account for ourselves" and build alliances with Indigenous peoples (p. 343). With other

⁴⁷ These were two individuals who wrote about the inhumanity of colonization and slavery before European philosophers wrote about justice and equity, yet their works were ignored. Mignolo (2007) talks about this, as does Soler-Urzuá (2017) pp. 32-33.

collaborators, Davis (2016b) then argues that the acquisition of settler consciousness is crucial and that, because it usually emerges out of a situation of discomfort, it is connected to David DiAngelo's white fragility (p. 400). While pedagogies of discomfort are useful in terms of highlighting the unparalleled privileges that afford settler people the luxury of living life under the false premise that it is universal, the issues that I see with scholarship around these pedagogies is that they are not too far off from two projects in whiteness studies that have been problematized for undermining the endemic nature of whiteness with the choices that a racially privileged person *might want* to take to give up whiteness or to abolish it altogether (see Howard, 2009, pp. 21-26; Rodriguez, 2000; Levine-Rasky, 2012, pp. 324-328).

Discomfort can cue settlers to examine, notice and denaturalize the discourses, systems, and practices that we experience as a given; but often, "discomfort" leads settlers to presuppose that we can *want* and then move to give up "certainty" such as in research contexts (Steinman, 2020, p. 562). Meanwhile, as Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2004) writes, since whiteness is defined as "human" through a long-standing and ongoing process of conquest (see chapter four), "racial superiority becomes a part of [settlers'] ontology...and informs the white subject's production" (p. 78). Thus, even though settler scholars acknowledge that discomfort is paired with consciousness and that consciousness is on its own insufficient to support decolonization, there is still the issue that even when paired with action, consciousness is always regulated by the settlers' whiteness. For example, Chris Hiller (2016) writes that settler consciousness and action can be "reversed" in "moments when learning is interrupted" such as

...when we, as settler subjects, seek to *re-settle* our privileged identities, positions, and claims to space and place... when we lay a pre-existing political epistemic framework over Indigenous realities and struggles...as: 'Hey, let's understand *your* experience in my

analytical framework that I'm comfortable with...[or when] our efforts to recognize and actively value Indigenous cultures, worldviews, and sovereignty slide into uneasy forms romanticism, or when we to take in the enormity of the devastation wrought by colonialism dovetail into colonizing forms of nostalgia...(p. 428).

However, is there a time when settler people are not invested in challenging these colonial practices *while* perpetrating them, to varying degrees, in those very efforts? For example, in research, there are always risks of voyeurism and misrepresentation that can be appropriative and exploitative of Indigenous peoples and research participants. While conscious settler researchers might take steps to minimize these extractive practices, rather than suggesting that we can successfully do this but fall back into old practices, in my work, I suggest that settlers can strive to be ethically accountable while being complicit in the process. For me, reversions implies linearity: that in one instance, settlers are “clean” from our complicities, but that this moment will not last. Thus, Hiller speaks to me more when he writes that consciousness and action can “compete with each other”, and that his own writing is not devoid of his desires to appear as “the exceptional white settler who ‘gets it’” and who might, as a result of this investment, feel less involved with racism and colonialism (see pp. 428-429). To this extent, despite the limits of the terminology “reversals”, I agree with him that settler being is never apart from settler complicity and that these contradictions are what gives practices of *working through* generative potential in terms of yielding robust forms of settler responsibility. In the following, as I explore my own struggles in processes of decision-making about what conversation strings to explore and in relation to which others, my aim is to demonstrate that the knowledge-practice gap that permeates settler consciousness and action cannot always be bridged, and that *working through* has informed these stages of the analysis as well.

6.2 How Whiteness Regulates Settler Writing

Around the time when I was beginning to draft portions of my writing, I struggled with questions about how I should use space, and therefore, I struggled to determine how I should make choices about what to include and leave out of the writing. When I designed this research, I knew that carrying it forward would represent a struggle. The theory said so: “How can whites name, yet sidestep their claim to knowledge so as to avoid reaffirming their social domination?” (Levine-Rasky, 2012, p. 319). In this work, I do not aspire to resolve the tensions framed in this question but to instead use them as momentum to find ways of *working through* the complicities that I can sometimes identify and name by examining what language and ideas in the conversations reveal about my investment in structures of settler conquest. Crucially, on its own, *naming complicities* does not define working through; naming needs to be paired with an examination of how and why complicities are manifested in apparently hidden ways such as in the ways of being and knowing of settler peoples. For example, I offered the case in chapter five of the word *trespassing* that I used in my conversation with Kahtehrón:ni to recall the time when I had been to Kahnawà:ke without consent, and the time when I had crossed boundaries by writing a section of the policy regarding the Thanksgiving Address. While I can acknowledge why this conflation works as a form of complicity, *working through it* requires me to ask why and how my choice to conflate these two contexts is itself enmeshed in dynamics of settler conquest, as well as to denaturalize the varied effects that these smaller forms of complicity can have at the level of relationships, but also in terms of reifying the colonial order.

The added layer of complexity is that the very exercise of working through is interrelated with the words, ideas, and contributions of Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéhshon, and Sandra-Lynn, and to

this extent, I recognize that the struggle to respect their individualities by striving to amplify their voices, is part of the exercise of working through that I had not contemplated. Even with Mark who is also a settler, there is an ethical complexity in the way I might acknowledge and show our individualities in the writing. In qualitative research, especially in the methodologies that I explored in chapter five, what is known as *credibility and transparency* tends to be measured in the depth with which a researcher engages with the field texts across lengthy time periods. For me, in this context, this framing of credibility and transparency is not useful because the exercise of working through can tear apart a single word of the conversation, yielding robust and lengthy analyses that quickly take up the space of writing. What gives credibility to my work, I propose, is the fact that although working through can be shown as a critical tool through which to name and unpack settler complicities with detailed analyses, there is an ethical imperative to do this without losing the contexts and voices that surround the field texts—in this case, the conversations with Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéhshon, and Sandra-Lynn, and Mark.

I struggled immensely with the ethical choices around what to focus on and how much of the participants' voices to include—and whether to show them in their raw, original shape or edit them—as well as what connections to make across conversations without butchering the differences that existed across them. At its core, in relation to Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéhshon, and Sandra-Lynn, this research was designed to zoom into *my discursive practices* and model working through by digging into the structural meanings behind words and ideas that I conveyed. But once submerged in the meanings of the conversations, I realized that before getting into those analyses, I needed to figure out how to proceed with the choices of this work's writing. I shared with Wahéhshon these internal struggles, and when I asked her for advice about how she organizes her findings in her own work, she brought up a question that she had already evoked in

the past, including in our research conversation: “what is the meaning that is trying to come out?” While this question was at first not as useful, the more she reminded me of it, the more I understood its importance in drawing my attention, not to the meanings that I could see from spotting complicities in my speech, but to what each participant was telling me, as well as how, per my third research question, these conversations could not be analyzed separately but required forms of *reading across* to unearth the connections and differences that could dictate how to organize the writing of later chapters. Thus, in this section, I attend to Wahéhshon’s question by narrating some of the struggles of noticing how my whiteness regulates my writing, and then, by showing how Kahtehrón:ni became a leading voice in the organization of my writing.

6.2.1 The Meaning that is Trying to Come Out

Wahéhshon: ...So, I know I can't—it's too big and burdensome of a thing for me to take on my shoulders, and it's too much to take on yours. I think you focus on the part that you can be accountable to. That's one thing. And the other I would just say with your work is to make sure you're conscious of even though you're well-intentioned and well-meaning, but you're conscious of the space you're taking up, whether that's theoretical space, it's physical space and so on... *what's the meaning that's trying to come out?...*

I have never openly said that I want to resolve the entire structure of colonialism, but the struggle of/for any kind of space, as here Wahéhshon shares, can stand as a demonstration of this subjective desire. When Wahéhshon uses the qualifiers “too big” and “burdensome”, she is referring to the deep expansive nature of settler colonialism, and to her experience of choosing when to confront it, and how to do so strategically. When she invites me to focus on what I can be accountable to, she helps me reflect about how the itch to deliver knowledge—and to show

that I can deliver it—can take precedence over questions of space by erasing the “actual interactions” that underlie this work, as she goes on to share here:

...So that's one thing you should be conscious of because your research and your PhD is your space, but ... you're talking about a lot of stuff...So just make sure you call the space for your *actual interactions*, because I think these moments, the work you did in the community and all that stuff—there's plenty of time to bring in all that other stuff...

Because Wahéshon was so involved in my writing process, the impact that she has had on the delivery of this work goes beyond the scope of our research conversation. She has informed my practice of working through by problematizing earlier drafts that were imbalanced because they had been premised on the academic literature *without a consistent return to the relationships, the participants, the contexts*. “This reads a little pan-Indigenous”, she said about my review of the field of settler colonialism. Academically, literature reviews and theoretical frameworks are expected to be enrooted in the works of previous scholars, and to demonstrate a contribution through the writing. But within the relational contexts that have brought to life this research, there is a need for a disruption in that tradition, and Wahéshon’s feedback has been a gravitational pressure for me to face up ways in which I was leaving unexamined my complicities in the production of knowledge. She has made me think of Robinson-Moreton who writes that, “knowledge can be acquired outside of experience *but knowing is...connected to experience and understood in relation to acts of interpretation and representation*” (2004, p. 76). The preambles that I have added through chapters three to five have been additions to earlier versions, and through them, I have had not only to make present the voices of Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéshon, Mark, and Sandra-Lynn, but also make myself present by continuously self-positioning through the limitations of my writing and position of power as writer. This is why, in chapter one, I have

stated that, while “I begin this research with an overview of my background...[to]...situate myself as a settler and..., start articulating a Land Acknowledgement, my acknowledgement will be ongoing across chapters”. In general, while I cannot name all the changes that have come from relational back-and-forth exchanges such as the ones here presented with Wahéshon, working through my complicities in this writing has entailed acknowledging and practicing writing as an asynchronous process.

I also struggled with choices related to the organization of the field texts, and this was partly a result of the fact that the conversations did not happen close to each other and that, as a result of time constraints, I began transcribing, examining, and *planning the writing* without a holistic understanding of all of the field texts. Wahéshon was first, then Sandra-Lynn, followed by Kahtehrón:ni, and the data collection ended with Mark, and as a result of the asynchronous rhythm of data collection and writing phases, at first, I planned to write four shorter chapters to unpack each conversation. Then, I abandoned this idea when I began seeing connections across my conversation with Sandra-Lynn and Wahéshon. While Wahéshon used the word “boundary” to describe how I had diluted my settler positioning when I wrote on the Thanksgiving Address, Sandra-Lynn used the word “boundary” to draw attention to our differences in experience in relation to the task of speaking up against injustices:

...I'm not afraid to engage critically as a non-white person, [yet] I'm at more risk of harm than you, *so you have to think about why you're pushing back so much*. I could be a victim of violence or a very intense pushback, but I continue to critique things even if it's not comfortable...

She explained that given this difference in experience, whenever she spoke up and settler people “rejected” aspects of her efforts to engage with them, she had to put up a safety net, which

sometimes meant “getting rid of settler friends”. “And for me, that’s a boundary”, she said. Alternatively, she challenged me to question why I was “pushing back so much” against my responsibility to speak up in the face of injustices perpetrated by my own community of settlers instead of engaging them in conversation and working together to unpack our complicities. “And I think that you’re putting a boundary where there shouldn’t be a boundary and then you’re not putting a boundary where there needs to be a boundary...”, she said. Wahéshon had also employed the use of “boundary” as a safety net in terms of how she chose to confront colonization and microaggressions in her everyday life. *Boundary* was a word that sparked thought-provoking ideas in my examination of the conversations, for in relation to my complicities of withdrawing from conversation with settlers and crossing the lines of positionality to write about the Thanksgiving Address, I could see avenues for working through the ways in which I could afford to proceed as though there was no context of colonization.

By the time I had almost completed my chapter based on my conversations with Sandra-Lynn and Wahéshon, I had my conversation with Kahtehrón:ni. As I mentioned in chapter five, during our conversation, I felt that Kahtehrón:ni effortlessly painted a picture of our relationship across the past six years, giving examples of memories in the classroom, in her office, and at meetings but also sharing *pressure points* in the relationship. Because Kahtehrón:ni and I have shared the longest relationship, moments that we revisited in our conversation overlapped with others that I had revisited with Wahéshon and Sandra-Lynn. Even when the overlap was not explicit, hearing her relay her experience of the pressure points led me to see, as she says it herself, that I had groomed anxieties about mistepping in my relationship with her, and that these anxieties had “carried over” onto my other relationships. Amidst this realization, I second-guessed my writing choices regarding the chapter where I explored the use of *boundary*.

Wahéhshon was always consistent with her feedback. “What is trying to come out?”, she would ask. In our research conversation, she relayed her own research experiences as she tried to negotiate space in her writing:

...And that [the question of space] is even hard for me because I'm doing historical research that has—there's so many things that I could bring in. I could do a whole chapter on settler colonialism, too, in my research. *But what I have to do is hold the space for the people who live through Indian Day Schools to tell their story...* What's in the middle? I feel like there's a research story here. So, what is it? *What's the meaning that's trying to come out of this? And that's the thing you have to prioritize. That's how you're going to make your choices...*

What was the middle in my research? What needed to come out so I could guide my choices about what complicities to then work through? The more I stayed with these questions, the more I could see that if I wrote four chapters—one for each conversation—or if, alternatively, I made decisions about how to combine the conversations into chapters based on the order in which I revisited moments with the participants, I would miss the opportunity of addressing my third research question—a question that requires me to make present connections across contexts, and to root them in analyses about how complicities are unbounded, just as settler colonization is so. My aim of showing that processes of decolonial solidarity are messy when settlers seek to sustain them across time and space would be subsumed under a compartmentalized linear analysis of the conversations. In the end, over a few days of playing the recording of my conversation with Kahtehrón:ni, I kept returning to the first eight minutes of our conversation where she shared a blueprint of the key moments in our relationship. Her account was so effortless that, at some point, Kahtehrón:ni remarked, “I'm doing all the talking, but feel free to

interrupt”. Every little bit of this excerpt has felt like a weaving thread: bringing into salience strings of other conversations, and by the same token, elucidating their differences. Through Wahéshon’s questions, Kahtehrón:ni indirectly helped me create a blueprint of the strings to focus on, and of how to pair conversations. I am not claiming this process as a revelation, but rather, I am describing it to show my own vulnerabilities in my writing role, as well as to demonstrate how the back-and-forth of relationships has helped me move forward in this phase of working through. The story of this research emerges, then, from the choices that have stuck. To this extent, it is not the only story.

Having unpacked these struggles, I now move to share the stringing patterns that will organize chapters seven and eight, as well as how these patterns are rooted in a pairing of conversations: my conversations with Wahéshon and Kahtehrón:ni will make up chapter seven, and my conversations with Sandra-Lynn and Mark will underlie chapter eight.

6.3 Stringing Patterns From the Conversations

In this section, I first share the ideas emerging from my conversations with Kahtehrón:ni and Wahéshon, and then, those stemming from my conversations with Sandra-Lynn and Mark. These ideas will be further unpacked in chapters seven and eight respectively.

6.3.1 Timing Complicities with Blurring the Lines of my Positionality

One of the central moments that Wahéshon and I, and Kahtehrón:ni and I revisited has been described so far as a crossing of boundaries or as a blurring of the lines of my positionality.

Wahéshon: there were sections where we were trying to really make sure the policy was grounded in like Rotinonhsión:ni worldview and culture....And you said, ‘you know, I took this course with Alex McComber, and I think I understand a lot about Kanien’kehá:ka world view or culture. I learned a lot, so I’m going to take a stab at it’...

Kahtehrón:ni: ...you had the knowing of what you learned with Alex. But I still felt like **knowing is not an owning of that knowledge**. I felt like that was our section to write.

Kahtehrón:ni explained that this moment felt tangibly uncomfortable for her because the Thanksgiving Address—“the words before all else”—is lived through a “lifetime of learning” and is not “like learning your ABCs where you learned it and you know it”. *Knowing is not owning*. She explained that the Thanksgiving Address “is an integral part of our worldview that depicts our worldview. But it's also something that guides us and changes our understanding and thinking from when we're young to when we're elders”. *It was their section to write*.

There are multiple moments that we revisited in our respective conversations that have been as important as this one, but I re-evoke this moment here to highlight that my suggestion and writing of the Thanksgiving Address reveals a practical gap—one of theoretically knowing better than this, yet still proceeding to appropriate and dilute the lines of my settlerness. Finding an explanation for the “why” is one part of working through this form of complicity, but the more difficult task, and perhaps even more significant, is to question how this gap manifests itself—how settler consciousness can be overridden by my own subjective investments. Did I feel that taking a local course with Alex changed my status as an outsider settler? Was there an urge to belong as an insider? Could time have made me feel like an equal in the relationship? How did I arrive at a point where, knowing well that this action would be re/colonizing, I proceeded to bracket out the context of colonization that regulates our engagements, even if it does not overdetermine them?

In *Beyond Settler Time*, Mark Rifkin (2017) posits that the concept “temporal orientation” can help understand how the possibilities for experiences are shaped by the elements of the realities in which one is immersed. For him, time is a feeling that depends on how place is organized and made, as well as who we are in relation to place. To this extent, positionality is

important, and through Ahmed, he argues that “being oriented” is an experience regulated by whiteness, which means that as settlers embody the normative settler colonial order, we misconceive settler belonging as universal while, in reality, it represents the baseline of dispossession and land theft (Ahmed, 2007, pp. 150-151 and 157-159; Rifkin, 2017, pp. 3-7). Thus, just because settlers might assert Indigenous peoples’ sovereignties in the present does not redress the organization of settler societies “around the coordinates of settler occupation” (p. 1).

In the context of my complicity with blurring the lines of my positionality by writing a section of the policy on the Thanksgiving Address, Rifkin’s analysis on the interconnection between settler experiences of time and space with our sense of belonging serves as a framework through which to show that, while the reason for this complicity might not be pinpointed with certainty, there is a structure in place that interpellates me to search to “feel belonged”. *Feeling belonged*, per Tuck’s wording⁴⁸, is a settler obsession because it is connected to the need to naturalize one’s presence *outside of the violence of conquest* that has enabled settlers to illegally settle on Indigenous lands for more than five hundred years. In other words, seeking to become belonged is connected to settler moves to innocence (Tuck & Yang, 2012) that do not have to be conscious or intentional to be real, and to have real effects, as in this case, where my actions create discomfort for Kahtehrón:ni and Wahéshon in our collaborative relationship.

In other moments of our conversation, there have been pressure points when I have used settler consciousness to individually regulate my actions in order to minimize harm or avoid mistepping altogether. In these instances, rather than a relational use of knowledge, knowledge has become an object—a tool through which I have tried to bridge the knowledge-practice gap by bracketing out the relationships and interactions with Kahtehrón:ni and Wahéshon. By using

⁴⁸ In *The Henceforward* podcast: “A conversation between Rinaldo Walcott and Eve Tuck”.

knowledge as an object, I have engaged in an out-of-time self-regulating practice, that has at times, reproduced “the coordinates of settler occupation”—where settlers self-position as a sole authority—and in this way, I have failed to be accountable to the *atemporal* ebbs and flows that exist in my relationships with Kahtehrón:ni and Wahéhshon, and in Kahnawà:ke, thus meeting with resistance settler sovereignties. To show the effects of this complicity and continue to delineate other parts of my conversations with Kahtehrón:ni and Wahéhshon, I explore how I have *held time* into my hands by self-regulating to avoid mistepping, and by overlooking the heterogeneity that exists across my relationships with them through *feeling like enough time had passed* to continue to keep a critical outlook on power dynamics.

6.3.1.1 Holding Time. One time, in our colloquium classroom, Kahtehrón:ni did a presentation on her research interests: language revitalization. She mentioned that despite years of arduous language revitalization efforts, her language, Kanien’kéha, remained “endangered”. Given the importance of language for her people, she shared her dedication to use her research to further these language revitalization efforts, but during the question-and-answer period, one of our settler peers asked her, “well if your language is at risk, why don’t you just speak?”.

Daniella: ...I remember[ed] sitting at the table and thinking, ‘I don’t feel like it’s fair for you to have to address that question because it’s a settler asking you, and so, I feel like I should respond. But I also don’t want to assume that you don’t want to exert your agency to respond to it, because it could also be an act of reclamation, right?’ And so, [I identified] that friction in those moments where sometimes settler responses fall short....

In this case, we can see me grappling with the grey areas of determining, in real time, what the accountable course of action is. While speaking up could have silenced Kahtehrón:ni—resulting

in the “white saviour complex”⁴⁹—my silence could have, quite problematically, enabled whiteness to go unseen by my settler colleague (Howard, 2006, p. 57). At the same time, the dilemma raised through these complexities also problematically shows how, in this instance, my concerns were more on showing myself as an ally rather than on being practical simply because the situation deserved to be addressed. In that moment, it was Kahtehrón:ni who strategically responded to our peer but without giving her a history lesson of why Indigenous languages remain vulnerable to colonization. It was her who challenged our peer’s whiteness, and she did so in her own terms.

I wanted to begin with this part of our conversation to show an example of how decolonial solidarity is imperfect, and that even in attempting to be accountable, settlers can be complicit because of the variables that inhibit a systematic application of theory into real life situations. *Knowing does not resolve the complexities that settlers are faced with in practical moments of solidarity.* Still, throughout my relationship with Kahtehrón:ni, I invested a lot of time thinking about the knowledge that I was reading. I knew about “research fatigue” (Kovach, 2022, pp.127-129)—the outcome of expecting more than Kahtehrón:ni could offer in terms of time and resources—and, without realizing *the impacts*, I became focused on using knowledge as a baseline through which to strike what I thought was the perfect balance of needing her support and being resourceful. Taking as little time as possible from her became an aim rather than being receptive to the interactions of our relationship that had been guiding our interactions and growth. In our research dialogue, we thought about the *pressure points* incurred from this:

⁴⁹ The white saviour complex paints a picture of a settler who assists a person of color in moments of systemic racism, which can have harmful effects to the extent of maintaining control over Black, Indigenous and peoples of color (mostly by centering white benevolence) (Kherbaoui & Arosen, 2021, p. 269). In addition to silencing the person of color and taking away her right to exert her agency however she wants, there is also the risk of reinforcing damaging stereotypes about non-white people (Rodesiler & Garland, 2019).

Daniella: ...I feel like I put a lot of unfair pressures on you, but in a way, I recognize that that's part of a consequence of the structures of colonization, and that maybe the relationship would not have evolved without going through that. I don't know if there's a solution to those tensions, you know, because I'm thinking that if I had to redo things all over again, I tell myself that the right thing would have been to just communicate [with you]. But maybe being in that moment again, without this stepping back and looking onto it, I would have still felt this tension of 'do I take space, or do I not take space'?

The settler colonial context that has been inherited and continues to exist complicates questions of settler accountability and settler-Indigenous reconciliation. This is what I mean when I say that the pressures that I caused in our relationship are somewhat "a consequence of the structures of colonization": the privilege that is afforded to me, as a settler, is systematic and structural to the extent that it shapes my lens and informs my practice, leading into complicities that cannot be anticipated, calculated, and (always) halted from happening. However, this is only a partial acknowledgment of how and why I created unfair (and unnecessary) pressures that impinged on our relationship, and while the individuality of settlers is never totally separate from the structural, it was my concern with striking a perfect balance so as not to misstep that also animated these pressures. I perpetrated settler colonial dynamics by centering myself in the relationship and, in this way, I ignored Kahtehrón:ni agency, as she here points out: "... you mentioned earlier how all along the way you were thinking ...if you were taking too much of my time or other people's time ... *You know, I know what I was opening up to...*". In other words, I used my knowing of the risks of burdening her to *hold time* into my hands, and in this way, create pressure points from within my itch to control the terms of our relationship.

One of the consequences of this form of complicity is that by focusing on self-regulating to do good, I created the grounds for a potential de-personalization of the relationship by which I placed Kahtehrón:ni in an idealized superhuman position. Kahtehrón:ni remarked that these anxieties about burdening her by taking too much of her time “carried over” onto other relationships and other contexts where we interacted, even as our relationship evolved.

Kahtehrón:ni...there were times like, okay,
you came to the office and met people, and
we were just kind of going with the flow and learning together where it would lead.
I didn't have something clear.
Neither of us did.
it evolved. And then...
we thought, okay,
it's going to be research.
Is it going to be focused on the ethics policy?
And I think that was a good fit...

To get to this idea where I would work on the ethics policy, we spent much time brainstorming on a variety of projects over the first year, but even when concrete ideas would come up, as in this case, I was always concerned with time. Was I suitable to take on that project? How self-sufficient would I be? If I felt like I would rely on a consistent back-and-forth, I created impasses for myself for fear of taking too much of Kahtehrón:ni's time. *My holding of time was seen.*

Kahtehrón:ni: all along,
the way you were thinking about time,
about time.
Each time you would [be]
thanking me for my time...
But I knew what I was opening up to.
...I always felt like
I wasn't giving enough of my time.
Like, did I?
Yes,
sometimes I felt like I didn't give enough of my time, or
I wanted to give more of my time

Apart from self-creating impasses that precluded me from being practical in some moments, I also created pressure points in our relationship that, ironically in relation to my concerns about burdening her, impinged on Kahtehrón:ni, making her second guess if she was giving me enough time. I realize that these pressure points also point to my disregard for the back-and-forth communication that Kahtehrón:ni had to entertain with others from the Education Center as a matter of accountability to the principle of collectivity that is fostered in Kahnawà:ke by many.

Kahtehrón:ni:...And it was a little bit challenging for me to not be able to just say, yes, let's [work on the ethics policy] and jump into it...there were others...Everybody has an accountability to their community. I still have accountability to community. *So even if anyone reaches out to an individual, that individual also has to go back to and make sure that the community is on board to support it...*

There were others. I ignored the behind-the-scenes dynamics and conversations that were led by Kahtehrón:ni and others as part of the system of accountability that guides insider-outsider relationships. To this extent, while I was overconcerned with not burdening, I also failed to receive the giving that Kahtehrón:ni—and others through her—offered me as support. In chapter seven, as I continue to explore the repercussions of this complicity, my aim will be to demonstrate how, in a consensual relationship such as this one, accepting the back-and-forth of giving and receiving is what creates *place*—places of reconciliation and solidarity despite the pressure points and complicities. For, what is a relationship where those involved are not giving and/or allowed to give? Now, I explore another form of complicity connected to time by turning to my conversation with Wahéhshon.

6.3.1.2 “Enough Time Has Passed”...Feeling Being Over Time. Wahéhshon and I met in Kahtehrón:ni’s office sometime in 2019. She was working as a research assistant under Kahtehrón:ni’s supervision and had a desk set up in her office. That day, I had come to the Education Center to meet with Kahtehrón:ni and share visuals that I had put together for outsider researchers and Kahnawa’kehró:non researchers, and which would guide discussions about the research ethics policy that, by then, had become a community-based initiative. We were preparing for a first meeting with an Advisory Committee that had come together to guide our discussions on the development of an education research ethics manual. When I entered Kahtehrón:ni’s office for our meeting, Wahéhshon was working at her desk. We greeted each other and broke into conversation as I waited for Kahtehrón:ni. I wondered if she would stay for the meeting, and the thought made me nervous because we did not know each other. Would she see me as the outsider settler who comes in and thinks she knows better? Even though Kahtehrón:ni had spoken about me to others and, over time, I had been around to meet others at the Education Center, this was the first time that I was meeting Wahéhshon.

As Kahtehrón:ni and I discussed the agenda for our first meeting with the Advisory Committee, Wahéhshon, who did stay present, interjected occasionally, offering questions. As I mentioned in chapter two, from the start of our relationship, I have always seen Wahéhshon as a gatekeeper of her community, partly because of her directness in ensuring that her people are being put first. In this moment, I remember that she challenged some of the practical aspects of the visuals that I had worked on, and then, I learned that she would be at the advisory meeting.

“So, I think it goes back to maybe when we started out, back to that first meeting”, Kahtehrón:ni said, “...you were feeling nervous about crossing lines and boundaries, and I think you carried that. You carried it all the way through...”.

Thinking about Kahtehrón:ni's reflection vis-à-vis my experience in this moment, meeting Wahéhshon for the first time, it is true that I carried over my anxieties about mistepping onto other relationships.

After our meeting, I returned to Kahtehrón:ni's office to recover my car keys, which I had forgotten there. When they saw me, they shared that they were debriefing on our meeting. I remember Wahéhshon saying something along the lines, "We were just saying that you are generous with your time". This made me think that she approved of me, and I felt some of my anxieties dissipate. Years later, as Wahéhshon and I met to revisit a moment for this research, I can see that this incident holds significance in the way I went on to build a relationship with Wahéhshon. Focusing on the feeling of acceptance, I wonder if the anxieties that were ever present in my relationship with Kahtehrón:ni became displaced with feeling as less of a stranger and outsider. The closeness and acceptance that I felt did not totally contravene with my use of knowledge to self-regulate, thinking about how to minimize harm and avoid mistepping in our relationship. But in a way, I can see how I relied on the feeling of having a relationship with Kahtehrón:ni for over a couple of years to see my relationship with Wahéhshon as an extension of it. In this way, I recognize a complicity in flattening out the heterogeneity that exists in our individualities and across our relationships, even while we collaborated together.

Wahéhshon's contributions in our research conversation have helped my reflection of this complicity, particularly hearing her discuss the *layered relationalities* that inform *distinct forms of accountability* both within the frame of insider/outsider dynamics, but also among insiders of her community. As she said, "there are so many other things at play [than just the context of our relationship] that if you're coming into this situation—you would have never been aware of, if

we didn't have this conversation". For example, one of the most shocking points of our conversation was when Wahéshon shared her reservations about working with me:

Wahéshon: So, I didn't really have a choice at the time because we had conversations in-house at the Education Center about the need for a research policy. And that's because there's a number of us who are graduate students and researchers now. [We] are identifying issues that we're observing. So, we had the conversation for several years about that. And then, you took a little bit of time and made connections, and you came in. I didn't really feel like I had a choice to say, 'I don't want to work with Daniella, or I don't want to co-write with someone'. Because the question did come to me at one point where I thought, why would we need someone from outside the community to write this?

Thinking about why this portion of our conversation stuck with me, I can see that it speaks to the anxieties that I groomed since starting a relationship with Kahtehrón:ni. It makes me question whether my anxieties were more about fearing burdening Kahtehrón:ni by asking her for more than she was willing and able to offer in our relationship or about levelling the emotional instability that I experienced from having the opportunity to build meaningful relationships yet fearing seeing myself reflected in the image of the settler colonizer/anthropologist. At the fork of these anxieties, I can see that I was focused on proving my innocence as though my settlerness could be diluted with good actions.

Despite being consistently worried about mistepping—**Kahtehrón:ni:** *"you were feeling nervous about crossing lines and boundaries"*—it was a moment of crossing lines that Wahéshon had wanted to address in our conversation: "...we were trying to really make sure the policy was grounded in Rotinonhsión:ni worldview...And you said...I'm going to take a stab at it. ...that was a moment where for me, it was kind of crossing a boundary...". I recalled this

moment well. In our conversation, although I tell Wahéshon that the underlying reason is unimportant to the outcome, I still grapple out loud with these questions: “Where did I come from doing that? Is it that because we had been working together, *then* I felt like it was okay for me to do this? Did I think that because I had taken a course [to learn about your worldview] *then* it would be a contribution?”.

In my reflection of this moment, I realize that there are multiple reasons for why I engaged in this boundary crossing *knowing* well that it would be a move to innocence, an act of cultural appropriation, and so, a blurring of my settler positioning. One reason is that I wanted to be supportive of Kahtehrón:ni who was “strapped for time” (her word choice) with a variety of other projects. My anxieties about time and about overstepping came alive. I was aware that the section on the Thanksgiving Address was being kept for Wahéshon and Kahtehrón:ni to write, but I knew that Kahtehrón:ni was occupied with other projects and the fact that they had supported me in taking a course with Alex, a Kanien’kehá:ka man from Kahnawà:ke, made me feel like “taking a stab at it” would be an act of solidarity rather than an act of complicity. I mistook these relational aspects as having overcome the colonial context that, while not overdetermining our relationships, must be navigated with contextual forms of accountability. There is a difference in the logics of settler time here; when I was given consent to write a proposal for the ethics policy, I was overly concerned with crossing boundaries, and this led me to an impasse. Here, in this moment, I was mostly concerned about Kahtehrón:ni’s time and less on diluting the lines of my settler positioning. Instead of halting time—as “time” acquired texture based on internal local dynamics—I wonder if, *over time*, as we collaborated and as I took Alex’s course, I felt that given these contextual elements, proposing to write about Kanien’kehá:ka worldview would not, *anymore*, represent a boundary crossing on my part. I

share this thought as an example of how *working through* can—and should—involve a de-layering of differing avenues through which complicities come alive rather than trying to pinpoint one, which can only bring things to a recolonizing close. “Over time”, which I use to denote how I might have experienced the passing of time, can imply, in my subjectivity, that the pervasiveness of settler colonialism diminishes, leading to the re/establishment of settler being as the baseline of time—as here shown. In collaboration, Hart, Rowe (both Cree), and Straka (a settler) (2017) share their experiences of working together, and they offer a reflection that I think properly gets at what I am trying to communicate here: It was easy, even tempting for Silvia [the settler] to forget of this larger context [the broader societal and academic context of white supremacy] and focus on the equality *that she experiences* in the relationship” (p. 339). In chapter seven, as I continue to unpack this form of complicity, my focus will be on exploring pressure points in our collaborative relationship, as Wahéhshon, Kahtehrón:ni, and I worked on the research ethics policy. I will look at how, through a centering of my own experiences of time, I reduced heterogeneity, which is inherent to Kahnawà:ke and peoples’ individualities, by centering a *flat* knowing; that is, that settlers are the *sole* marker of tension, and that by extension, we are solely responsible for managing the complexities that we bring on when we enter into relationships. By centering my individuality and displacing the relational contexts, this conversation is also connected to place-making: what is a relationship where those involved are not giving and/or allowed to give? I now move to explore my conversations with Sandra-Lynn and Mark.

6.3.2 Self-Storying as a White Progressive

For a white person to claim to be progressive, white people tend to, problematically, draw a discursive difference with other whites who are (seen as) uneducated or unwilling to listen

(Macoun, 2016, pp. 86-87). This comparison only benefits white people: the white progressive relishes on proving her virtue by self-positioning at a distance from these other whites while those who are uneducated or unwilling to learn are given an out to continue to live a life of complicity (see Howard, 2006, pp. 50-51). Alissa Macoun writes that “Assuming one’s criticality can be a way of not admitting one’s complicity”, and often, as she also writes, this admission is seen as whites come to feel and believe that our activism makes us fundamentally different from other whites, but also distinct from racial and colonial modalities of power (p. 86). But what constitutes activism that is rooted in relationships and that shows white people using our *knowing* to de-naturalize power, including our own individual and collective complicities with it?

I articulate this question from within the threads of conversation that Sandra-Lynn and I brought alive, as we gathered to revisit a moment and ended up discussing the nature of social media activism and whether it is possible for people to use it without being performative. The very nature of crafting a post with information that we choose, paired with the anticipation of being read by others and possibly making a difference, is performative because it is planned, and because it is inevitably self-serving. What is important, then, is to use the inherently performative nature of social media platforms critically. “I’m not against being performative”, Sandra-Lynn shared, “It’s just about pushing forward with that performance”. Sandra-Lynn and I spent much time discussing how *pushing forward with that performance* requires a critical attunement to what scholars have called the “colonial difference” or the “ontological difference” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007a, 2007b; Mignolo, 2007; Wynter, 2003). I have already discussed this difference in chapter four, but I offer the following paragraph to summarize the relevant ideas:

The modalities of conquest that have shaped settler-capitalist-democratic societies and which continue to uphold this colonial character also impinge on what it means to be human, as well as on who can ever be seen and treated as human. The closest a person’s skin is to the phenotypical marker of whiteness, the more that person is seen and

*treated as human (Maldonado-Torres, 2007a). While other social markers of difference matter in the classification of human genres (Wynter, 2003), race is the most explicit marker, and it has been misused to justify various forms of violence on Indigenous peoples and non-settler peoples. As processes of racialization have morphed—but never ceased (Coulthard, 2014)—the settler human has benefitted from the institutionalization of a “colonial attitude” (Castro-Gómez & Grosfoguel, 2007, p. 21) that **diminishes alternative ways of knowing and being human** to the point of bringing into being a reality that is unevenly experienced by Indigenous peoples, Black peoples, peoples of color, and settler people. In other words, colonization, which **is** ongoing, creates a reality that is made to appear as universally accessible, but that is not—and in not being so, it gives way to the **coloniality of being** from within which the experiences of Indigenous and non-settler peoples are diminished and/or negated altogether (Walsh, 2007, p. 56).*

In the context of our discussion, the coloniality of being variously affects our experiences on social media as consumers and generators of content, and one important reason for this *difference of experience* is that our relationships to the knowledge that we might share are distinct in nature because of our structural positionings in a colonial reality.

Sandra-Lynn:

I'm at more risk of harm than you [...]
I could be a victim of violence or
a very intense pushback, but
I continue to critique things
even if it's not comfortable...

Daniella:

... there's this gap [in my communication]
in terms of how
I'm able to process
this high-level understanding of things
and then
break it down for... *settlers* [...].
And,
I also feel that sharing is
counterproductive because I feel like
it's aggressive [...]
the other people on the other side
don't understand it...

The physical closeness that I have chosen to present these found poems is meant to draw attention to our differences in experience in the context of being active on social media, sharing information that is sensitive *and* controversial, and thus impelling settler people to swipe through without critical engagement of our involvement in the issues being called out. The length of these found poems, which are condensed versions of our exchange, are also significant in terms of highlighting what is at stakes for us, individually, as well as in terms of showing a different

relationship and perception of knowledge. Sandra-Lynn's communication does not need much elaboration for me to understand that her first-hand relationship to knowledges that she might be sharing to call out issues of coloniality makes her vulnerable to the receptivity of settlers, which can even involve violent responses that *could* bear a psychological and emotional burden on her. On the other hand, my choice of words "high-level understanding", "break it down", and "able to process" reveals a distant relationship to knowledges that convey issues of power and contest the colonial order. The distance to knowledge that I can afford when I share on social media is enmeshed with the privilege that I am afforded in terms of engaging from afar, from an intellectual standpoint. This ontological difference delineates, not only a relationship of power *over* knowledges of struggle and resistance, but also an attempt to look away from the way in which I sometimes use my voice on social media to call out injustices and expecting settler people to take accountability while, problematically, self-positioning as better than them. *Needing to break down high-level understandings for people on the other side* speaks to a power dynamic that I am fabricating based on having knowledge that most settler people do not have and speaking to my responsibility to share it with them to bring them *to my side*—a side that, without saying so explicitly, implies that I might feel less complicit in the reproduction of settler colonial conquest. Simply put, I self-position as a white progressive through a form of "education elitism", as Sandra-Lynn points out:

...yes, you have PhD level knowledge, but to automatically assume someone who is arguing one way doesn't have the knowledge or the ability to gain that knowledge is also an issue. Right? It's the sort of *elitist privilege* [through which you think]: 'I'm an academic'. [But] you're not just an academic. [And] then what happens is that you talk over them *or you could potentially talk over non-settler [and Indigenous]*

individuals...yes, maybe [they] won't be able to talk about critical race theory but that doesn't mean [they don't] have an idea of what it is or maybe [they're] personally rejecting it...

As I mentioned at the beginning of this section, white people self-make as progressive often times by drawing a discursive distance from our community of white people who might be less vocal, willing to learn, and perhaps even lack the language and education to name issues of power. Whether we are formal academics or not, this elitist education privilege has consequences in at least three interconnected ways. First, the so-called white progressive feels less implicated and more “righteous”, thereby enabling us to *use knowledge and our knowing* as a tool of power. Second, through this discursive distance, a power dynamic is created between settler people, which enables white progressives to perform knowledge *on them* to prove that we are on the “right side” while inhibiting a back-and-forth dialogue with settlers who, despite perhaps lacking formal language to communicate ideas, nevertheless deserve—and should be—active participants in conversations about our privilege. Consequently, Sandra-Lynn calls me out, saying: “...you're just allowing yourself to let [your community of] people do whatever they want or think... You're just allowing this colonialism, this colonisation, white supremacy to keep going on and existing”. If there is no dialogue, there is an opportunity for settlers and me to look away from our complicities, thus reifying colonization. Third, as white progressives develop a deeper sense of self-entitlement, we risk, as here Sandra-Lynn points out, speaking over Indigenous and non-settler peoples. This third aspect requires attention because it is intimately connected to the way in which Sandra-Lynn and I ended up in this discussion about social media activism.

When Sandra-Lynn and I met to revisit a moment, we had just recently gotten into a heated discussion on social media, and I wanted to discuss it. In this moment, I treated knowledge as though it did not summon people differently based on our diverse lived realities. When Sandra-Lynn called me out, bringing to my attention my *elitist* way of *handling and sharing* knowledge, I failed to respond with accountability and instead focused on demonstrating the validity of the information that I had researched. As I mentioned in chapter five, this is the second moment that I proposed to discuss when I wrote her an email with suggestions, but she did not want to get into this moment—“it’s still fresh”, she said. At first, we were going to discuss the first idea that I had suggested. It had to do with a comment that she had made, about hating the concept of decolonization. We had briefly spoken about why in past conversations, but I was interested to hear more about why. As we started discussing this moment, I promptly interrupted our dialogue, realizing that this discussion would situate me as an spectator of a lesson on decolonization, and that my idea had emerged from a mere curiosity to *know more*: “And now I’m questioning if this is the right moment to discuss because I am going to get more of a lesson of how you see it...”. Although by this point Sandra-Lynn had established the limits of what she was willing to discuss—choosing not to discuss our recent contentious exchange—I found a way of bringing us to discuss the dynamics that had been at play in that exchange without explicitly addressing the topic of our conversation. The evidence is seen here:

Daniella: I was wondering if there's ever been a time when I've posted something [on social media], and you've been critical of what I posted or how I posted it... The thing that ...you made me realize...is that there's this **gap** ...in [my] communication... of how I **process high-level understandings**...and then communicate it to...settlers...I feel like

it's aggressive and **the other people on the other side** don't understand it, but then also
feel intimidated...

As seen in the bolded words, this is the original excerpt that I transformed into a found poem to contrast my relationship to knowledge with Sandra-Lynn's. The underlined portions, alternatively, reveal another coded form of complicity:

I was wondering
 if there's ever been a time.
 You made me realize
 Gap
 communication
 SETTLERS.
 Feel like it's aggressive
 Feel intimidated

The mechanism of deception used here—"has there ever been a time when...?"—aids me in self-positioning as innocently *wondering* what I already knew: we have recently had a contentious interaction on social media that Sandra-Lynn has *just* placed off limits. I see this as a mechanism of deception because I try to deflect my desire to unpack what happened in that moment of contention—possibly to feel better after debriefing with Sandra-Lynn—by positioning her as a source of knowledge—"you made me realize"—that has brought me to reflect on my relationship to knowledge—but in relation to settlers. I also display feelings of guilt and intimidation from our altercation, but that I situate as stemming from aggressively communicating with settlers. In working through my complicities here, I am drawn to specify that my actions in this instance were not consciously planned out in the moment⁵⁰. This itch deserves mention here because, on

⁵⁰ There is a dysconsciousness in the awareness that I claim to have regarding Sandra-Lynn's decision to not discuss that particular moment and my action to find a similar topic to discuss. In chapter seven, I will examine this term, dysconsciousness, in relation to Joyce King (1998) who explains it as an impaired view of whiteness, and not as unconsciousness. It is connected settler investments, to the idiosyncratic aspects of settler being that are connected to power.

the one hand, it reveals how difficult it can be to take responsibility for my actions *without moving, at the same time, to innocence*. On the other hand, it is an opportunity to emphasize for settler readers that we do not have to be ill intentioned to reproduce settler colonial dynamics; the nature of our settlerness is co-constitutive with the larger colonial order, and to this extent, *there is always a structural background in place to interpellate us, before we can choose another pathway, to reassert our dominance*. The agency of a settler is never totally separate from the colonial order. Thus, what is important to *name* in this instance is my subjective need to recover an equilibrium that has been touched, leaving me with a feeling of discomfort vis-à-vis my friendship with Sandra-Lynn (see DiAngelo, 2018 on the “insulated environment”, pp. 215-225).

The other point to notice here is that, while we did go on to discuss the performative nature of social media activism with an emphasis on our differences of experience, and in connection to my complicities discussed so far, there are textual cues that show that Sandra-Lynn might have gone along with the conversation to challenge my practice, but while letting me know, in ways that I would not have seen without an analysis of the data, that she understood how we had gotten into this discussion and that she would continue to place her limits on what she was willing to share. I sub-divide this found poem to show these layers with quotes that relay what I imagine might have been going through Sandra-Lynn’s mind:

["I am still letting you know that I am not discussing that"]

And, again,

I don't want to bring up and discuss this in detail, but

["You need to reverse-the-gaze on yourself"]

I engage with you critically...

I'm at more risk of harm than you,

...think about why you're pushing back so much.

["The field is not levelled"]

I could be a victim of violence or

a very intense pushback, but

I continue to critique things

even if it's not comfortable.

["But you are creating power dynamics and access with your own people"]

you also have to think about people at different levels.

There's still the ability to learn something from

[different forms of knowledge].

the way that I talk to you or approach you is

not the way that I

approach somebody I went to high school with...

[My communication and content] will

obviously be altered, but

["Adapting is a matter of criticality, not an invitation to withdraw"]

it doesn't mean I'm not going to address it.

The added quotes that I offer here *should be read as an effort to work through* what Sandra-Lynn is de-layering in a heavily packed exchange. It is a discursive strategy that I attempt to show myself thinking relationally, trying to read between the lines towards accountability. If we read these quotes on their own, we are brought to what I think is the most fundamental piece of Sandra-Lynn's contributions in this conversation: "...sometimes", she says, "I've had to get rid of settler friends because they are just fully rejecting certain aspects [of what I share]. And for me, that's a boundary. You're putting a boundary where there shouldn't be a boundary and then, you're not putting a boundary where there needs to be a boundary...". Sandra-Lynn is reiterating that the field is unlevelled, that there is a coloniality of being to account for, which she has sometimes done by withdrawing her participation in settler friendships. *And for me, that's a boundary.* Alternatively, I am withdrawing from conversations with settlers—putting a boundary where there should not be one—because, by drawing on this education elitism, I am determining that non-academic settlers are not up to par for critical discussions. In so doing, apart from self-positioning as a righteous activist and leaving my complicities unquestioned, I am also failing to push my community of settlers to, also, unweave their complicities. Thus, I am not putting a stop to our ability to disengage or engage superficially in conversations about coloniality.

In the final portion of this chapter, before the conclusion, I turn to my conversation with Mark, the settler participant in this work, and I begin to demonstrate how, in our very attempts at being critical of our complicities in a moment of the past, we reassert our dominance. This analysis will make the bulk of chapter eight where I will return to the ideas discussed so far in relation to my conversation with Sandra-Lynn to build a discursive framework through which I will de-layer Mark and I's individual and collective complicities with racism and with treating knowledge as an object through which to self-make as progressive whites.

6.3.2.1 Moving Past Our Settleriness. Looking Away. A few months ago, Mark and I were walking through the city of Montreal. It was a spring morning, and he brought up “non-fungible tokens” (NFTs). What I understand of NFTs is that they establish ownership of a variety of things (like art, music, and virtual land) through a new technology called blockchain. A person can buy and invest in these tokens knowing that they are not divisible (meaning, they are unique). I am not well versed in this space, but I have dedicated time to thinking about the idealistic discourses around bitcoin and blockchain—idealized because no one really knows who invented this and since the principle behind the technology is that it is decentralized (from traditional banking systems and government regulations). I have been interested in problematizing how this narrative represents a settler investment in reproducing the same logics of coloniality, racism, and capitalism that underlie modernity—except now in an alternative but somewhat tangible reality. When Mark brought up non-fungible tokens on that spring morning, I remember agreeing with his take; he said something along the lines of, “people are buying land and air across the world through this technology, and they are raving about their ownership. It’s like that conquer mentality”. We briefly touched upon that thought, thinking about the expansive ideology of capitalism and the power of “property” and “ownership” as paired with the feeling of

possessing something that, while abstract to the real world, acquires unique value in that technology. Since that time, I have questioned this technology, beginning with who has access to it (and therefore who continues to build wealth), but in general, because I have not invested time in learning further about it, it has been difficult for me to substantiate any of these questions and concerns about settler complicity in casual conversations.

As I mentioned in chapter two, Mark has continuously challenged my silences in social environments when settler people participate in harmful practices, but, like Sandra-Lynn, he has also been critical of the inaccessibility of my communication approach, questioning, specifically, how much space I take to self-position as a knowledge-holder while leaving no space for others to unpack their ideas and assumptions. Alternatively, whenever he has been called out to examine his practices, in some instances, he has refused to face up his complicities. When we met to discuss our moment, I was prepared to pitch ideas of moments where we had discussed complicities clearly connected to conquest, but where my grasp of the topic was limited—like NFTs. I thought that if we discussed a topic where he was better versed than me, I would be able to pace myself more attentively in the space that I took, listening more, and taking a relational approach in the discussion. As I see in chapter eight, while this strategy is intended to help me address a limitation in my practice, there is also an underlying dichotomy that falsely suggests a quick fix to a problem that is more systematic and requires ongoing work. In the end, as I also see in chapter eight, Mark mapped out a few moments that eventually led us to discuss the moment that I had already evoked in the previous chapter:

The moment that we discussed for most of our conversation, however, happened at our friend's Jack's home⁵¹. Along with other settler friends, we met at Jack's house, and his girlfriend also invited a friend, Maite. Jen, a settler woman in our group, got into a

⁵¹ I will use pseudonyms for the people involved in this moment.

discussion with Maite, a Brown Latina woman⁵², on the affordability of private education. While Maite relayed her experience as a single mother who could not afford private tuition, Jen relayed her experience as the child of Italian immigrant parents who had worked hard and sacrificed much for her education. Jen continuously insinuated that affordability is a matter of sacrifice, while Maite kept arguing that it was structural, attached not just to her experience as a single mother, but also as a woman racialized as non-white.

Mark used the qualifiers “loud” and “obnoxious” to describe how our friends and us had seen Maite in the conversation. While I quickly moved to question these qualifiers, naming their interrelatedness with racism, Mark became defensive. In the back-and-forth of our discussion, we both became complicit with scrutinizing Maite’s reaction and the validity of our arguments, while only realizing, towards the end, that we had looked away from our own complicities. Through the discursive framework that I develop in relation to my conversation with Sandra-Lynn, my focus will be on de-layering our complicities, while showing how, as settlers, we co-enabled each other to recenter (our) whiteness rather than *work through* dominance.

6.4 Inconsistencies around “speaking up”

Because Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéhshon, and I worked closely on developing the education research ethics policy, it was easier to see points of connection worth exploring together. As I mentioned in chapter five, there was a triangular relationship among the three of us, but what added “texture” in our collaborative interactions was that Kahtehrón:ni and Wahéhshon were always aligned with the needs, goals, and policies of the Kahnawà:ke’s Education Center.

Through their back-and-forth with others from their (professional) community, our collaborative

⁵² I remind the reader that while I am Latina, I am also white. For this reason, it is important for me to bring into salience the role that racial difference plays in the way Maite experiences the moment of contention in conversation with Jen. This is important to bring into salience our individual and collective complicities in the perpetuation of racism, which we do by situating our settler experiences as universal. All of this will be further discussed in chapter eight.

relationship was continuously informed and guided, and in this way, I saw even more of an opportunity to pair these conversations and explore the layered relationalities that complicated our engagements while, also, enriching them. The pressure points enmeshed in our collaborative relationship had something to say about the friendships that were shaped, enabling opportunities for place-making. I discuss these aspects in chapter eight, bringing attention to the implications of having written the policy's section on the Thanksgiving Address.

But what about the why and how behind the choice to pair together my conversations with Mark and Sandra-Lynn? If it seems so, the choice was not systematic. Despite the natural inclination that I felt to pair together my conversations with Kahtehrón:ni and Wahéhshon, as I explored earlier in this chapter, I struggled to finalize the structural choices of this work. I also said that sharing the longest relationship with Kahtehrón:ni, her exploration of various moments of our relationship became like a guiding blueprint that offered support in finalizing these organizational choices. There was a very specific phrase in her discourse that stuck with me: **“...a commitment you made to yourself to follow through”**. The word “commitment” and “follow through” were paired with the act of “speaking up”, which she used to recall small moments when, in our PhD classroom, I had been vocal about issues of power. I present the full context through this lengthy found poem:

I remember you being very nervous, and at the same time, the way I felt was a little bit of surprise.
 But surprise that
 There wasn't that type of interest to work with community [...]
 Maybe they don't hear the things they hope to hear in that introduction
 But you continued to follow up and
 Kind of really start building this relationship. Yeah.
 And so, from there,
 You mentioned that it was like a learning process for you, every step of the way.
 But I felt that same learning process too [...]
 All along the way.
 It was about my learning process,

The questions you would ask me or as I was watching you challenge yourself
 Or struggle with the ideas you were having.
 I was struggling along with you.
 Your learning process,
 I learned from it, too.
 I got to grow from it.

In this portion of her discourse, she relays her memory of our first meeting, and of noticing that I was nervous. Although the process of building a relationship was not straightforward, I persisted to reach out, and Kahtehrón:ni continuously supported that initiative with openness. We built our relationship on a precarious, sort of uncertain, pathway because neither of us knew where it would lead. But across it, we were also getting to know each other as peers and researchers, and whenever I shared struggles with her, she involved herself, and so we shared a learning process. The way in which she describes seeing me here, as persistent, is seen also in the way she recounts experiencing moments in our classroom when I spoke up against *microaggressions*.

I could see you would recognize tensions,
 Maybe not between us in our interactions, but
 things that were happening in one of our courses, and
 Different things would be mentioned.
 You know, there were some instances where I didn't speak up, but you would speak up.
 And I realized that—
 Was I questioning myself? [...]
 I always felt grateful in that when you would, in those instances,
 Speak out just in a good way [...]
 Like point things or steer things in a different way to help others think
 Just think more deeply about things
 And recognize **microaggressions** [...]

Sometimes it was direct, but they didn't realize.
 So, when you were doing that,
 I would push or challenge myself to be like: yeah, I can do it!
 We are in a space where we should be doing it.
academia,
 Is a place where, you know,
 I do have a responsibility to do that [...]
 Not just sit there.

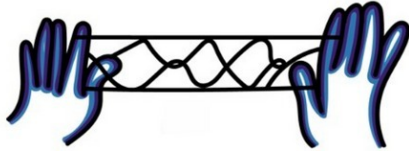
So, anyway, I'm jumping all over the place, I think,
 But definitely starting off with that first introduction and
 Leading into, you know,
 Just that *continuance*.
 It's, I guess,
A commitment you made to yourself to follow through.
 And I really appreciated that along the way.
 Because like I said,
 There's not always that follow through.

In the first block of this poem, Kahtehrón:ni makes me think of the ontological difference that I have discussed in relation to Sandra-Lynn. Sharing space in the classroom, as peers, does not mean that we experience things equally. We also are differently positioned in relation to the colonial reality that organizes mundane spaces and influences who will be more likely to be in those places, which means that noticing microaggressions in the classroom represents a distinct experience for both of us—and this informs how we decide to respond or not. In the second block, Kahtehrón:ni makes me think of Sandra-Lynn's critique on the accessibility of my approach to share knowledge with settlers. What makes it that in the instances that Kahtehrón:ni evoked, I might have been able to help directly and indirectly some of my peers to think more deeply about issues related to power? In the third block, Kahtehrón:ni wraps up, referring again to the start of our relationship—that first introduction—and to the *continuance* that she could see through my commitment to follow through. It is through this reflection that I am drawn to conclude that pairing together my conversation with Mark and Sandra-Lynn is called for, not only because of the connections that I can see and explore across them, but because speaking-up has been a part of the commitment that I have tried to live up alongside Kahtehrón:ni. Struggling to unravel my complicities in this practice of speaking up is a matter of accountability, and it is deeply enmeshed in processes of decolonial solidarity meant to be continuous. For as Sandra-Lynn says, when I misuse my education to feel superior to other settlers, my withdrawal also

enables them to withdraw: "... and when they engage with us, the people you're trying to support, it goes really poorly on our end, and it's very bad for us. [You] just allow this colonialism, this colonisation, white supremacy to keep going on and existing...". It is therefore based on these relational choices on the writing's organization that I continue, in chapters seven and eight, to unpack the pressure points and complicities shared here.

Chapter 7: *Working Through Pressure Points in Giving and Receiving Before, During, and Beyond a Non-Research Collaboration with Wahéshon and Kahtehrón:ni*

7.1 Recapitulating and Expanding



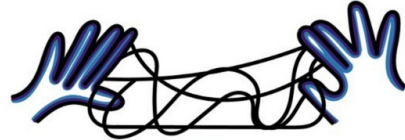
Wahéshon to Daniella:

More at stake for us.

Our names are more associated
In the community.
Resistance to research and
Even education
In a lot of Onkwehón:we communities.
Also other dynamics in **our organization**:
Who do we report to in the community?
The stakes are higher.

...I explained to you last time that [...]
Even if I'm working **here** in **my community**,
those tensions and microaggressions ...
we confront these power structures
in all of our relationships
all the time.
It's always, **always there**.

important about this work that you're doing:
there are **layers to relationships**.
we also support each other in other levels,
as students.
did writing groups [...]
gave each other advice and socialized
on whatever levels we could in the pandemic...
layers to the relationship that I don't see very
often with other researchers.



Kahtehrón:ni to Daniella:

all along,
the way you were thinking about **time**,
about **time**.
Each time you would [be]
thanking me for my **time**...
But I knew what I was opening up to.
sometimes I felt like I didn't give enough of my
time, or
I wanted to give more of my **time**

I remember you being very **nervous** [...]
But **you continued** to follow up and
... start building this relationship [...]
from there,
You mentioned that it was like a learning
process for you, every step of the way.
But I felt that same learning process too [...]
All along the way.
It was about my learning process,
The questions you would ask me or as I was
watching you challenge yourself
Or struggle with the ideas you were having.
I was **struggling** along **with** you.
Y/our learning process,
I learned from it, too.

In the writing of this dissertation so far, the reader has already encountered versions of these found poems. In this chapter, where I take a more analytical approach to see what meanings are coming out from my conversations with Wahéhshon and Kahtehrón:ni, as well as what my discursive practices can tell me about my own complicities, it makes sense to share these found poems again. As the asterisks suggest, I have included three small found poems from my conversation with Wahéhshon and two from my conversation with Kahtehrón:ni to share anew the main threads of our discussions.

Wahéhshon spoke about the levels of accountability that underlie community-based projects—like the research ethics policy—given her community’s layered organization. For instance, she explained that the level of accountability of a community member will be experienced distinctly than for an outsider collaborator such as myself who gets to leave the community at any point. But moreover, Wahéhshon explains that even among community members, accountability has different meanings depending on a person’s level of involvement in community-based projects. For example, Wahéhshon and Kahtehrón:ni are not just Kanien’kehá:ka from Kahnawà:ke. They also work at the Education Center and are leaders in the development of the education research ethics policy. Their accountability is layered, for if the project is not accepted by (a) member(s) of the community, Wahéhshon and Kahtehrón:ni will be accountable to work through the resulting pressure points. To add to this, Wahéhshon is also the Research Education Coordinator, and in her words, “someone can knock on my door if they don’t like the decision I make about the policy, because now I’m the one enforcing it. I’m the *most* accountable”. Wahéhshon also explained that, as a heterogeneous community, and as a diverse people, meeting the expectations of community members requires insider insight for navigating various layered relationalities and complexities that impinge on what *resistance* and *reclamation*

might come to mean. One of these complexities regards the pervasive and ever-ongoing colonial relation, which is understood, experienced, and dealt with in variously diverse ways by Kahnawa'kehrón:non. As a result of these differences, she explains that members of her community have different capacities of coping and working through power dynamics, which sometimes leads community members to reproduce harm among each other. In her words, "...the things you talk about in your research, those modalities..., the power structures of ... settler colonialism, we're reinforcing them here in certain ways *when we're not functioning within policy or protocols that are really **grounded here***".

These varied considerations add complexities to projects of resistance such as the ethics policy, and this has informed experiences and levels of accountability among the three of us. The various layered relationalities that pervade resistance projects inform the layers that ground our relationships, but not just as collaborators. Wahéhshon and Kahtehrón:ni both acknowledge our relationships as friends, students, and peers. With Kahtehrón:ni, while there was not a single thread in our conversation that seemed to prevail over another, in my own reading of our conversation, our discussion about my anxieties around time felt significant. This discussion unearthed pressure points in our relationship that were either noticed and shared by both of us or that we experienced in discretely distinct ways. For example, hearing Kahtehrón:ni describe my reservations about time and how she was impacted—"sometimes I felt like I didn't give enough of my time"—represented a tangible moment where I paused and examined the gap between my motivations and the effects of my actions. While I had intended to be mindful of the power and privilege that I bring into our relationship, and while I had wanted to be attentive to the space that I took, in practice, these concerns partook in a recentering of myself. I overlooked

Kahtehrón:ni's agency by taking control of what I thought was best instead of responding to the back-and-forth relationalities that informed our relationship in contextually specific ways.

As I mentioned in chapter five, the anxieties that I groomed over time, alongside Kahtehrón:ni, also impinged on my relationship with Wahéhshon. One of the moments when this "crossing over" is seen tangibly is when I wrote a section on the ethics policy on the Thanksgiving Address.

Excerpt from a conversation between Wahéhshon and Daniella:

Wahéhshon: ...there were sections where we were trying to really make sure the policy was grounded in like Rotinonhsión:ni worldview and culture....And you said, 'you know, I took this course with Alex McComber, and I think I understand a lot about Kanien'kehá:ka world view or culture. I learned a lot, so I'm going to take a stab at it'...

Excerpt from a conversation between Kahtehrón:ni and Daniella:

Kahtehrón:ni: ...you had the knowing of what you learned with Alex. But I still felt like **knowing is not an owning of that knowledge**. I felt like that was our section to write. But at the same time, I look at the whole thing, and I think it's a good example to reflect on because we're able to *work through it. It's working through it. This whole thing is about working through those tensions. When we see them, it's about trust, too.*

This is a moment that Kahtehrón:ni and Wahéhshon evoked in our conversations for its pressure points. I have come to see this moment as an extension of the singular *but connected* pressure points that we have sometimes experienced among the three of us, and others just within the context of our individual one-on-one relationships. Despite the tensions inherent to this moment of complicity, both Kahtehrón:ni and Wahéhshon interposed threads about *moving forward, collectively working through pressure points, and relying on trust and friendship to go on*. These threads are seen in our respective discussions of our collaborations on the research ethics policy, which touch on how they handled my boundary crossing when I wrote the Thanksgiving Address. In this chapter, my aim is to get to a deeper discussion of this moment of complicity by mapping out preceding pressure points and complicities across our triangular relationship, but

also in our individual one-on-one relationships. In this exercise of mapping out preceding pressure points and complicities, I model different discursive ways of *working through* layered complexities and relationalities that will reveal how I have minimized back-and-forth instances of *giving and receiving* that, by virtue of happening in the context of *consensual relationships*, are the crux of where and how *place-making can be made and felt in our imperfect relationships*.

Towards this aim, I have organized the chapter into three main sections that are themselves structured to reveal three forms of complicity related to the contexts of these found poems. However, to focus my discussion across this chapter, I have emphasized in bold words from each one of the found poems presented above, and from these words, I have created even more focused found poems that will be presented at the start of each main section. I invite the readers to follow pieces of these re-found poems throughout the writing of this chapter, and to map out each piece into the following three-part re-found poem, which I will be unpacking:

1. More at stake for us	2. Time	3. [...]—struggling
Our organizations	Time	with – (y)our
HERE	Time – Nervous you continued	learning process
My community	Time	
----- Power structures	Time	
Always THERE		
Layers to relationships		
Layers to the relationship		

7.2 Complicity 1 – Flooding Layers with an Essentializing Settler Benevolence

More at stake for **us**
Our organizations
HERE
My community
 -----~~Power structures~~
 Always **THERE**
 Layers to relationships
 Layers to the relationship

Based on my understanding of the history of colonial research in Indigenous communities (e.g., Kovach, 2021; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2020; Wilson, 2008), for some time, I have thought that, in being invited to foster relationships with community members in Kahnawà:ke, I had a huge responsibility to stray away from extractive practices, for if I mistepped and caused harm, the individuals with whom I was in direct contact would be held accountable. However, until having revisited moments of our relationship with Wahéhshon, I lacked insight into the social, political, and experiential layers of consideration that diversely inform what accountability comes to mean at an individual and collective level, and across relationships that are variously interconnected through insiders/outsider and insider/insider dynamics. I qualify such layers of consideration as social, political, and experiential in account of what Wahéhshon shares when she explains that, *depending on who a person is in relation to a project of resistance* such as the research ethics policy, the stakes are higher for community members than for outsiders, but also for some community members more than for others: “...There's other roles we have, right? So, we're not just from here. Our families are here. We live with the people we work with” but as the Education Research Coordinator “someone can knock on my door if they don't like the decision I make about the policy, because now I'm the one enforcing it. *I'm the most accountable. And so that's the difference*”. In other words, people who reside in Kahnawà:ke are not evenly positioned across a spectrum of accountability. Simply based on their professional roles and responsibilities within the community, their connection to various projects of resistance will vary, and so will their experiences of the accountability that they owe to others.

I remember reading a conversation between Kathy Absolon and Cam Willett (2005) about the importance of location in Indigenous research. A point that stayed with me was when they emphasized that, for Indigenous peoples, knowing who the researcher is and what is at stake

for the researcher in relation to a community, is about recognizing that the stakes will be distinct for insiders and outsiders. Willett puts it this way, “I assume that a person has more of a stake in a community because of their connections or ties...[to] that community” and that based on this insight, he will be more or less open to sharing knowledge with the researcher (p. 102). The insider and outsider difference has been acknowledged in the way community members must navigate, as researchers and members of the community, the feeling of being an insider/outsider (e.g., Dana-Sacco, 2010), and this is what Wahéshon means by, “we live with the people we work with”. However, there are levels of location relative to who a person is in the community—where she works, what her roles and responsibilities are—that result in layered forms of accountability. Wahéshon is in many ways the most accountable to the ethics policy since she determines who gets in, but her level of accountability is not just measured in terms of whether incoming researchers support the strategic goals of the Education Community or if they are accountable in their own roles as outsider researchers or insider researchers. As part of a politically and socially complex community, Wahéshon also responds to diverse ways of being and knowing of others whose experiences of colonization and resistance are heterogenous:

there's also other dynamics, you know, professionally, in our organization, who do we report to in the community? There's other things just like everywhere, there's families who are more prominent and who have money and the right connections and then families who don't. So, there's all of those dynamics at play that you're just not privy to, that affect anything we do and say here. It's a very different way to live and experience [working on the ethics policy].

Relative to the found poem presented at the start of this section, the pronouns *us*, *our*, and, *my*, along with the adverbs *here* and *there*, I understand that the stakes are distinct in nature for

Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéhshon, and me when it comes to building relationships and collaborating on something more tangibly connected to resistance, reclamation, and healing. The education research ethics policy is deeply connected to the reclamation, resistance, and healing of Kahnawa'kehró:nnon by way of aiming to honor Kanien'kehá:ka culture in the way research is done. Because the power structures of colonization are so pervasive, the research ethics policy is a step forward into offering community members ways of functioning within policy and protocols that can foster self-determination and healing. But while Wahéhshon communicates this point—"we're reinforcing [power dynamics] here ... *when we're not functioning within policy or protocols that are really **grounded here***"—she also explained that other dynamics—e.g., families who are more prominent, the roles and responsibilities of every person, and community member's diverse understandings and experiences of the colonization—become layers of consideration in the way she might approach and experience working on the research ethics policy. While, as a settler outsider, I am not privy to these *behind-the-scenes dynamics*, as I call them, she encounters them every day, and this difference in our location makes it that experiencing and living through our collaborative relationship will be distinguishably enrooted in higher stakes for her than for me. And, based on her professional role as the Education Research Coordinator, her level of closeness to these behind-the-scenes dynamics will be felt more than for a member of a researcher's sub-committee who is also from Kahnawà:ke, for example. To this extent, in the re-found poem, I emphasize the plural and singular in *layers to relationships* and *layers to the relationship* to show that while Wahéhshon and Kahtehrón:ni are directly and variously accountable to the layered relationalities of their community, there are also layers to our relationships as collaborators of a tangible project of resistance: the education research ethics policy. For them, accountability weights differently because of their insider knowledge—they

are privy to dynamics that I am not aware of, and which they must center and consider through and through—but at the same time, we have a triadic relationships and individual one-one relationships that are layered *because of our locations as insider and outsider*, but also because of our locations as settler and Onkwehón:we. While our friendships are not overdetermined by these structural locations, they are affected and informed by them in ways that, at times, add pressure points that require attention.

What I want to communicate to settler readers in this section is that, while I was overfocused on understanding and navigating my relationships with Kahtehrón:ni and Wahéhshon as insiders and outsider, I overlooked the ways in which the behind-the-scenes dynamics that I am not privy to are always a part of our collaborations through Kahtehrón:ni and Wahéhshon's professional and personal roles. I consider this reductive view to be a form of complicity because by bracketing out the existence of these insider dynamics, I assumed that pressure points in our relationships would only emerge from our direct interactions and, primarily, from my misstepping given my location as an outsider settler. However, as seen here, Wahéhshon has shown that the layered relationships that exist in Kahnawà:ke—by virtue of the power dynamics of colonization that impinge on the sovereignty of Kahnawa'kehró:non, but also as community members have variously diverse ways of experiencing the ongoing effects of colonization—make it that community members can resist and reproduce modalities of conquest in their own institutions and among each other. Eve Tuck (2009) characterizes this “reproduction and resistance” by referring to moments when *all people*, “at different points in a single day, reproduce, resist, *are complicit in*, rage against, celebrate throw up hands/fists/towels, and withdraw and participate in uneven structures...” (p. 420, my emphasis). For Indigenous peoples, she specifically talks about the importance of “making room for the contradictions” to “sustain a

sense of collective balance” by mounting resistance projects and ensuring that every community member who chooses to engage can benefit from it (p. 421). She argues that community members must “work to afford the multiplicity of life’s choices for one another” (p. 420). This affordance can mean different things, but in light of Wahéshon’s ideas, I interpret it in relation to the fact that, given the pervasive nature of colonization and the variously diverse ways in which Indigenous peoples experience these power dynamics, what can be tricky in the leadership of projects of resistance—as is the case for the ethics policy—is that community members are not all engaged equally (or even at all) in broader processes of decolonization (see Palmater, 2017, p. 77). These context-specific variations inform the behind-the-scenes relationalities and dynamics of which Wahéshon has to be sensitive to, in addition to having a high level of accountability to support the strategic goals of the education community in Kahnawà:ke, and while navigating the insider/outsider tensions that inevitably underlie our relationship as collaborators.

Wahéshon clearly states, at different points of our conversation, that, as an outsider to her community, I am not meant to be attuned to the behind-the-scenes dynamics that she describes and connects to the research ethics policy:

... and the third phase, in terms of growing this on another level,
 what I hope to do,
 I hope that it will lead to community wide conversations about our collective research capacity...
 because of the policy,
 and now I’m in certain conversations
 with certain circles in the community around research,
 there's an unhealthy level of productivity happening where,
 we're trying to meet the demands of that academic world.
 Now, everybody wants a piece of this community because we're so close to Tiohtià:ke
 to Montreal...
And so, this, you might not have understood it, but
 ...this is part of a movement,
 it's part of ... a change on a *bigger level*.
 And it's a resistance, but

resistance in a strategic way...

We're going to do research that really serves us from now on.

While she argues that this lack of awareness is normal—outsiders are not supposed to have insider knowledge about the community's organization and dynamics—she also points out that my theoretical knowledge can sometimes eclipse the practical knowledge that emerges from being invested in the relationships, as a settler, in real time: “then in application, when you actually came into the community, there are still things there that come up that you didn't expect...”. For instance, in this found poem, Wahéhshon is talking about the layered nature of the research ethics policy—e.g., there are more phases to it—and while I might have a general understanding of how this policy is connected to resistance, there is much that I do not know about the issues, dynamics, contexts, and discussions that give a *strategic* meaning to how resistance is used here. In our conversation, Wahéhshon de-layers some of it for me, but my understanding remains superficial because I am not directly connected to her community, as well as limited to what she is willing to share with me. For example, for some time, I thought that the education research policy evolved into a tangible project because of the conversations that Kahtehrón:ni and I had. I was not aware that there were conversations within the Education Center for years before I even started a relationship with Kahtehrón:ni. But as I mentioned in the previous chapter, it was eye opening for me to learn that these conversations were happening—forcing me to question my tunnelled vision about relationship-building processes—and that at some point of these conversations, Wahéhshon questioned the need to work with me or with an outsider:

So, I didn't really have a choice at the time because we had conversations in-house at the KEC about the need for a research policy. And that's because there's a number of us who are graduate students and researchers now are identifying issues that we're observing...So

we had the conversation for several years about that. And then, you took a little bit of time and then you made connections to the KEC and you came in. I didn't really feel like I had a choice to say, 'I don't want to work with Daniella or I don't want to co-write with someone'. Because the question did come to me at one point where I thought, 'why would we need someone from outside the community to write this?'...

This is an example of the layered relationalities that Wahéshon and others from the Education Center considered in account of the complexities that can be expected to surge across and within insider/outsider relationships. While I was not a part of these conversations, they certainly informed our relationship, because in these conversations, as Wahéshon and others worked through the question of whether an outsider would be needed, they also agreed that working alongside a settler would give them *some* insight into settler researcher's struggles and considerations when reaching out to them for potential collaborations. The *strategic resistance* that they were hoping to shape through the development of the ethics policy involved creating protocols through which to filter outsider research collaboration requests, and while I do not speak for all settlers, given my prior relationship with people from the Education Center, working together seemed like a strategic choice.

At the same time, Wahéshon's location as a researcher and activist enabled her to understand that, because there is already a negative view of higher education "in a lot of Onkwehón:we communities", her role in the development of the policy would involve pushing for it to truly represent "our interests, our values, who we are as a people". Otherwise, she said, "it wouldn't be respected or accepted by people in the long run". For this, she felt accountable to ensure, especially as she became the Education Research Coordinator, that Kahnawa'kehró:non researchers and members of the education community can benefit and find support in this policy

by vesting them with the appropriate understandings and tools to navigate the ongoing colonization. Staff awareness was an important part of this initiative because, as she explained,

Wahéhshon: ... there's a difference between theoretically understanding what a policy says and in practice how it affects your day to day job. And that's the same thing with what you're talking about understanding in theory, all of the things you can read on Indigenous research. You have that very strong theoretical approach going on in your research and your chapter's drafting. But then in application, when you actually came into the community, there are still things there that come up that you didn't expect...

In reflecting about the way in which I have viewed processes of relationship-building as being complicated only given the structural differences that exist between Wahéhshon, Kahtehrón:ni, and me—as insiders and outsider—I thus realize that I have come to see myself as the *sole marker of tension*. I have self-positioned myself as the carrier of colonization, while I have seen Kahnawà:ke as somehow tucked away from colonization—as perhaps a perfectly unified community with a common understanding of resistance. Meanwhile, as seen here, dynamics of colonization are always ongoing, and as a result of Kahnawà:ke's heterogeneity, there are multiple relationalities that Wahéhshon and Kahtehrón:ni have had to consider *while they have been engaged in navigating the pressure points of our relationships*. In highlighting this heterogeneity, and the complexities that already exist in Kahnawà:ke, I am not looking to disavow responsibility for my complicities. I am trying to acknowledge that one form of complicity—to self-position as the sole marker or carrier of colonization—has enabled me to smooth out the layered relationalities that exist in Kahnawà:ke—and around *resistance*—by centering settler benevolence. Settler benevolence can be seen in moments when I have relied on

my theoretical knowledge to try to be critical of pressure points in the relationship, but by self-incriminating in essentializing ways—that is, by looking away from the “gravitational pressures” of ongoing colonization that do not define but do impact the everyday experiences of community members in multiple diverse ways (Rifkin, 2017, pp. 96-97). This reductive view also falsely presumes that my participation in the development of the research ethics policy is essential to its success, thereby reproducing damage (Tuck, 2009). In the following, I have selected a portion of my conversation with Wahéshon where this unilateral/reductive view can be seen being operated, *in real time*, as a means of restoring my own sense of benevolence.

7.2.1 When Settler Presence Is Seen as the Only Marker of Tension

When Wahéshon and I were discussing the time when I wrote a section of the ethics policy on the Thanksgiving Address, she explained that she decided to address the situation indirectly—“I didn't say anything on the spot just because I didn't want to create tensions and we're still working together...”—but that she knew she would get a chance to bring it up with me when we revisited a moment for this research. As Wahéshon was sharing her recollection of this moment, I got hung up on her saying, “I knew you meant well”, and I wrongly assumed that by not wanting to create tensions among us, she was looking out for me since she knew that I “meant well”:

Daniella: ...Maybe if the relationship had been different, you would have felt the need to bring it up right away? ... It's kind of you to not have brought it up... it's something that was important to you, and you still had to go through with it [keep working together]. You kind of vouched for me in a way, you know? ...It also makes me think of all the times when this dynamic is so, um, what's the word? It's so common...sheltering the settler, you know?

By “sheltering the settler”, what I meant to say is that Wahéshon might have felt forced into a position where she perhaps felt the need to shelter me emotionally instead of expressing her disagreement bluntly as it was her right to do (I am thinking here of Audre Lorde’s text *The Uses of Anger*, 1997, pp. 182-183, where she connects white guilt to ignorance). In drawing this parallel during our conversation, I was trying to be critical, to acknowledge a recurrent dynamic where white women’s complicities (can) inhibit non-white women from bluntly calling us out, given how we ‘shed tears’ and expect non-white people to take care of us (Lorde, 1997; see hooks, 1986, pp. 127-128 on “the opportunism of manipulative bourgeois white women”; see Howard, 2009, pp. 312-342 on “caregiving”). However, in this attempt at recognizing this dynamic of complicity at play, I recenter settler benevolence by erasing Wahéshon’s response as a form of pushback rather than as a kind affordance to look out for me. Because it is not uncommon to see settler women react emotionally when we are confronted for reproducing harm, Wahéshon might have chosen to address the situation implicitly to avoid potential roadblocks that could have halted the flow of our work, and thus compromise the project’s timeline. Furthermore, her decision to address the situation implicitly is not passivity; it is strategic resistance: “in that setting of us co-writing the policy and everything, there was nothing I was going to let by me that would have potentially been harmful...”. Thus, even if the context of our relationship could have informed her decision to hold off from bringing up this moment as it happened, her priority was not to shelter me, as she continues explaining:

Wahéshon: Um, you know, there is a certain amount of cultural protocols—there’s an understanding we have of people who are learning or are new either as an outside relationship with the community or sometimes even in the Kanonhsésne [Long House], we have protocols around our own people who are reconnecting or reclaiming because

we have a lot of people who, because of residential schools and colonization, are out of touch with our own practices. So, their awareness and their access to that is limited. So, we have protocols for that. *So, it isn't necessarily about protecting settlers, but we do have this cultural idea around understanding when someone is learning and is new to a process.* We put safety measures there. You know, that's what we would do. So, for me, what we ended up doing when you had not even realized in the moment was, we addressed the things we needed to as delicate a way as we could to be respectful, just to say the parts that we couldn't keep in the policy...and then we just edited and made the contributions we needed to make to make sure, um, it was for us, by us, you know?...

In the italicized portion, Wahéshon clearly states that she was not sheltering me. The rest of this excerpt has been helpful to identify the tunnelled vision that I employed, partly as a result of not being privy to internal dynamics, and partly as a result of presuming that any pressure point in the relationship could be avoided and managed by me. If Wahéshon had not elaborated on this cultural protocol through which Kahnawa'kehró:non set "safety measures" for outsiders who are "new" either as an "outside relationship with the community" but also for Kahnawa'kehró:non who might be reconnecting with their cultural practices, some of the layers of my complicity would have been missed. For example, I recognize that writing a section on worldview is a "crossing of boundaries" (Wahéshon's words) or a "dilution of positionality" (my words, see chapter two). However, I might have missed the fact that it is a privilege to be *able* to access a course on Indigenous worldview—in my case, it was specific to Kahnawà:ke⁵³. I emphasize "able" because, for settlers, accessing this knowledge involves our intellect, but for

⁵³ As a reminder, the course in itself was useful towards understanding some of the general ideas of Kanien'kehá:ka worldview, and it was led by a Kanien'kehá:ka man from Kahnawà:ke.

Kahnawa'kehró:non, there are frictions—rooted in intergenerational trauma—that affect experiences of reclamation and reconnection:

Daniella: ...when you were talking about the safety protocol ...I thought further into that moment where I proposed that I was going to write those sections because it made me think of how that's also a very privileged thing to say and to even think. Where I was able to take a course from an intellectual perspective and kind of learn [about the Thanksgiving Address] without all the baggage...

As a settler *and* outsider to Kahnawá:ke, my participation in the latter course is embedded in my privilege. I can participate as a learner, as someone who wants to expand her understanding of the culture of those with whom I work, but I do not have to face up to the disastrous effects and deep wounds that Kahnawa'kehró:non might deal with when they engage in reclamation. I find that James McKenzie, a member of the Diné Nation, conveys how learning as a settler and learning as an Indigenous person encompass distinct experiences when he writes, "...learning *my own* language has been both more difficult while at the same time *healing* in a way that is only possible in our language" (2022, p. 72, his emphasis). To this extent, my complicity with "crossing boundaries" stems, also, from my disregard for the fact that reconnecting and reclaiming are difficult but healing processes, making 'learning' a layered experience for Kahnawa'kehró:non. This form of disregard should not be conflated with unconsciousness; it is, rather, a form of ignorance that helps rescue a fractured self—the settler self as well-intended—from having to face up to the consequences of our complicity, as in this case, with self-entitlement and appropriation (see Levine-Rasky, 2016, pp. 154-155).

In the next section, I will push through to see how a unilateral view of relationship-building is manifested when knowledge is used as a self-regulating tool. In this case, the outcome is to theorize relationships, and this displaces the actual interactions through which *place(s) (of reconciliation) can be made*. Here, through this section, I begin to transition into an exploration of my conversation with Kahtehrón:ni. Kahtehrón:ni and I discussed what I call *smaller circular moments* since the start of our relationship. I call these moments “circular” because while standing as isolated (and thus ‘smaller’) moments, they circle us back to this moment that Wahéhshon and I first discussed, about a time when, in our writing collaboration, I proposed to write a section on worldview, specifically regarding the Thanksgiving Address.

7.3 Complicity 2 - Using Knowledge to Theorize Relationships

Time

Time

Time – Nervous ~~you~~ **continued**

Time

Time

When it comes to working with Indigenous peoples in their own communities, as settlers, we have to understand that the hyphen in ‘settler-Indigenous’ relationships is not just symbolic. Alison Jones (2008) writes that the hyphen “...marks a relationship of power and inequality that continues to shape differential patterns of cultural dominance and social privilege” (n.p.). Thus, the hyphen conveys the “tensions of difference” that inform settler-Indigenous relationships in diverse interactions such as in (research) collaborations. For her, these tensions of difference can be generative of a “conditional relationship-between” by which she means a *place* where Indigenous and settler positionings do not succumb to sameness but thrive on renewed consent. “My point”, she writes, “is that “us” cannot *stand in place* of the hyphen” (n.p, her emphasis). For settlers, the hyphen can stand as a reminder of the false promises of solidarity when the

tensions of difference are seen as obstacles, as something to resolve, rather than as a bridge to contingent collaborations based on shared aims and visions that are based on Indigenous terms (Tuck & Yang, 2012, pp. 28-29).

In my relationship with Kahtehrón:ni, there have been several moments when I have tried to resolve pressure points in our relationship by deciding for her and for me the best course of action. As I have mentioned in the last chapter and in the introduction to this chapter, these specific pressure points have been related to my own anxieties about time. In the re-found poem shared here, I have included the word “time” five times, as it came up in one exchange of our conversation, to reiterate its prevalence in the way I wanted to minimize the risk of burdening Kahtehrón:ni. Across her recollection of differently connected small moments, Kahtehrón:ni says that while I was often nervous, I continued to push through and “really build” our relationship. I have crossed the pronoun “you”, which is embedded in her discourse to mean me, to emphasize, as I will explore in the last section of this chapter, that we both *continued* to engage with each other, to even work through tensions, and to create a sense of place. Through the following exploration of two small moments that Kahtehrón:ni and I discussed, I focus on showing how I have tried to self-regulate in relation to the following two forms of knowledge:

- (1) Even though Indigenous communities demand consensual, ethical, and beneficial research, the processes of consultation, participation, and relationship-building can place significant burdens on already burdened communities (de Leeuw, Cameron & Greenwood, 2012, p. 187). Having this understanding can help settlers be more practical, for instance, by adapting our research agendas to fit already articulated local needs and interests, as well as knowing that, depending on community capacity, the scope of the research might need to be reduced to clear and tangible steps. When the relationship is participatory and Indigenous people want to be involved in the research processes, there is still a responsibility to be mindful of the time of those with whom we hold relationships.
- (2) Building relationships with Indigenous peoples is not a means to an end, and it is not temporary. This means that the relationship is ongoing into the “long-term”, that “it doesn’t end with the research report or whatever” (Kovach, 2022, p. 176).

My aim is to illustrate how this knowledge has turned into a rigid compass, a compass that I controlled. In my relationship with Kahtehrón:ni, I have been complicit with focusing on a *raw application* of knowledge *without* always a regard for our relationship. By ‘raw application’, I mean that I have been complicit with reducing certain Indigenous precepts to a mathematical equation (i.e., acquire awareness of these precepts + apply them to your relationships = minimize harm). This form of complicity affects **how we can, together, make place**, although it does not impede place from being made altogether (as I say in the last section of this chapter). However, this systematic equation does reproduce generalizing dynamics (i.e., if something can be applied in one context, it can be applied in another; therefore, if settlers acquire consciousness, we just have to apply what we learned) that are re/colonizing (Tuck & McKenzie, 2014, p. 155).

Finally, because these complicities stem from settler anxieties, here specifically about my desire to cause as little damage as possible, my aim is also to bring into salience how these complicities are also, even if not intentionally, rooted in a failure to respond to the ebbs and flows of Kahnawà:ke’s community dynamics, which are always shifting—and with these dynamics, collaborations shift, too. In this regard, I think of Lisa Slater (2019), who writes that “When they [settlers] encounter the materiality of Indigenous life, in all of its complexity, strength and vulnerabilities, they are confronted by the limits of settler innocence and goodness and feel uneasy and under siege” (p. 2). In these instances, I constantly hesitated to follow through with the more practical aspects of relationship-building (like our back-and-forth communication) because I was concerned about taking too much time and burdening Kahtehrón:ni. I did not want to misstep, and in this way, my anxieties ended up leading me to monopolize moments and aspects of place-making. “Anxiety”, writes Lisa Slater, “brings subjects undone but it is also a practice of constitution” (p. 13). What she means by ‘constitution’

is that while discomfort can lead to a conceptual shift, it can also become a segue for settlers to focus on settler goodwill rather than on the colonial relation—and this, by reducing Indigenous peoples to a bundle of vulnerability (p. 2).

7.3.1 A Table, a Chair, a Classroom, and a Clock

The first day of graduate class, Kahtehrón:ni was sitting in our colloquium classroom. We had just started a relationship, she as a Kahnawa'kehró:non and I as an outsider to her community with an interest in research collaborations. At our meetings, we had spoken about starting in the same cohort, but that day, entering our classroom, I was not sure whether to sit with her. What if she wanted to separate contexts? I thought that since we would have to talk about our research with our peers, maybe she would want to sit with those who had different interests, not necessarily connected to 'doing research' in her community. This day, this moment—it was one of the small memories that Kahtehrón:ni brought up in our conversation. She recounted,

...I remember sitting in the classroom, you came in and you sat next to me, and you asked me if it was okay [as if it was] cursing...and I felt so relieved to know someone, you know, in the class... it was nice to have a familiar face. But see, that kind of [anxiety] carried over from the first meeting and coming in worried about crossing a line or making a mistake. And you carried that through. Whereas when we got to know each other more, it was more natural. But then at times it would still creep in on you when you were feeling like, 'okay, am crossing a line? Am I doing this right?'...

Even though this is a small moment in the larger conversation, it is filled with significance about the kind of complicity that I "carried over" throughout my relationship with Kahtehrón:ni (and later with Wahéhshon). When Kahtehrón:ni and I met, there was no research ethics policy. There

were no clear steps for either of us, but there was an interest on my part and an opening to entertain this interest on hers. We spent much time speaking about different collaborative possibilities, some connected to pedagogy and teaching, others regarding relationship-building in Kahnawá:ke. During this period, it often occurred to me that research might not be the outcome, that we might simply build a relationship.

Since she was my only contact, I also often thought about the burden placed on Kahtehrón:ni. Outsider researchers do not have to engage in extractive practices to cause “research fatigue”, which means burdening Indigenous individuals and communities with the ethical demands attached to researching *with* Indigenous peoples (Kovach, 2022, pp. 127-129). In other words, building relationships with Indigenous peoples prior to research, while it is important, it can nevertheless be experienced as exploitative when the engagement is too demanding (Kovach, 2022, p. 127). Early on, it was easy to see Kahtehrón:ni’s devotion to her community. She wore many hats that have evolved over time. Apart from fulfilling her professional role as the Curriculum Developer in the Education Center, Kahtehrón:ni supports Iakwahwatsiratátie (the Language Nest), is an advanced Kanien’kéha learner, has completed a master’s degree on language revitalization, has opened a local store in Kahnawá:ke featuring products from Indigenous communities across Turtle Island, and is now completing her doctorate degree in the areas of language and food systems. These are just the ‘tangible’ roles that I can name. One time, at a conference on Indigenous Health and Wellness, I met an Elder from her community. “Who do you know in Kahnawà:ke?”, she asked. When I mentioned Kahtehrón:ni, her face lit up, and right away, she started to talk about all the things that Kahtehrón:ni has done for her community. Getting to know Kahtehrón:ni, there was no question that she was an activist in and for her community, and I wanted to be sensitive and mindful of her time.

The issue with this intention is that it became the center stage, the compass with which I often navigated relationship-building, rendering, in a way, a unilateral process. Kovach (2022) writes that while “building relationship is not a “checklist” endeavour”—but rather, “It is contextual”—researchers still need to prepare to engage with Indigenous communities (p. 133). The preparations that she offers are broad, but they are connected to the core principles that guide Indigenous research away from extractive and exploitative practices (see pp. 133-135). For me, however, these kinds of precepts or preparations elided the contextual elements of the relationship through which collaborations are negotiated and re/negotiated throughout time and space. The need to control the terms of our relationship through a raw application of the understanding that ‘asking for *too* much can be *too* much’, impinged on the relationship:

Kahtehrón:ni: ...I felt like you were very apologetic when I didn't feel you needed to be apologizing for things. And one of it, it was about my time when I was more than happy to invite you and have you come over, like today, you know, it's just we're reflecting...

Daniella: Yes, I remember. And honestly, I mean, now, I look at it—but even then—I know it's problematic to be so apologetic because it's kind of like recentering myself, making myself the center of the stage. But it's also not acknowledging your agency, your willingness to open up that time...it makes me wonder what the function of being apologetic was—how it was serving me. Because one thing that is true is that I feel like in the entire relationship, I was constantly trying to find some stability, like some emotional stability *because of all these tensions*...

In the same way that Kovach acknowledges that research can be experienced as exploitative when the ethical demands of decolonial research are burdening, searching for ‘control’ of the terms of the relationship does not have to be overt to affect our individual and collective

experiences. It can be disguised under the intentions of minimizing harm to the point of monopolizing the relationship and reproducing the power dynamics that are inherently colonial. Furthermore, what is “too much” when it is defined by a settler outsider? Or when the relationship, being consensual, requires patterns of giving and receiving to exist?

Settler and Indigenous scholars have written about the unsettling nature of relationship-building, which is mostly a result of the clashing of distinct worldviews and experiences of the colonial relation (Aveling, 2013, p. 209; Brophy & Raptis, 2016, p. 244; Graeme & Mandawe, 2017). But while settlers know that discomfort is inevitable, we still sometimes see research as a space wherein to improve settler-Indigenous relationships, which can ultimately become about reconciling settlers with our place in colonialism (Watson & Jeppesen, 2021, p. 91). What is tricky about this assertion is that, for settlers, there is a sense of uneasiness in understanding how, if we are committed to building meaningful relationships, we can, at the same time, be invested in closures that are themselves re/colonizing. To an extent, this is the paradox of interpreting “discomfort” as a sign of potential transformation (see Davis et al., 2016) when discomfort can also re/constitute settler dominance and privilege (p. 16). For example, in chapter five, I brought up another instance from our colloquium class. It was about the time when Kahtehrón:ni received a question by a settler peer about “why, if Kahnawa’kehró:non language is endangered, they don’t *just* speak?”. I mentioned that I encountered an impasse given my theoretical understanding regarding the harm of speaking for the other and, at the same time, the harm of staying silent. When I think about this instance of discomfort, here in relation to my concerns about time, the questions that come to mind are: was my aim to demonstrate solidarity or to secure the limits of my presumed and felt innocence? In that moment, I reached an impasse in the realm of action, as I tried to work out in my mind what the “right” course of action was,

which brings me to question how discomfort—e.g., being unsettled, as settlers—can also become a tool through which to move to innocence and avoid dealing with the complexities that we have a responsibility to navigate.

Against this other smaller moment, it is possible to observe that the complexities and/or ethical demands that are inherently a part of reconciliation and solidarities can, rather than become generative of contingent but critical relationalities, stand as considerations through which settler benevolence is re/centered. This recentering offers a subjective re-equilibrium in the way settlers can feel in the relationship all the while being aware of the tensions that this poses to meaningful solidarities (Watson & Jeppesen, 2021). However, because the objective of achieving goodness can create a false sense of accountability—for instance, by apologizing to Kahtehrón:ni for taking her time as a way of demonstrating awareness for our relational “hyphen”—the very tensions that are fabricated end up validating the need to self-regulate. For example, wanting to find emotional stability “because of all these tensions” (from my dialogue above), the tensions result from wanting to control the terms of the relationship, from assuming what the best course of action is, from wanting to minimize my own complicities. This is not to say that tensions are not, also, co-produced (seen below). The point is that my own anxieties about being complicit—causing harm—become a brick wall: before we can engage in discussion to work through the pressure points that are to be expected from the hyphen, we get stopped by my own impulses to feel like I am being mindful of my positionality.

Returning to the first day of class, then, that tendency to want to control the terms of our engagement to ensure no harm ends up centering a table and a chair, which interposes with our relationship. “Am I doing this right? Am I crossing a line?”—these concerns are perceptible to Kahtehrón:ni, even though I do not share them aloud, simply in the way in which I check with

her if I can sit by her side. Therefore, it is also important to highlight who this consideration is meant to serve. *Something that is mundane, the act of joining a familiar face in class, is depersonalized with my anxieties.* This mundane example is not so mundane: it shows a trail of attempts at developing the perfect model of relationality across contexts, and this form of complicity, carrying over this essentializing practice, is what Kahtehrón:ni perceptively describes as the thing that I carried over throughout time and space—with the ticking of a clock. “...you know” she went on to say, “so that kind of played on you? I think so...those moments where I could tell you [were worried], ‘oh am I crossing a line, am I causing something uncomfortable’, *yeah, I felt that...*”.

7.3.2 “Like Switching Gears”

Sometime in winter 2020, as we were wrapping up the final edits for the ethics policy, I was also beginning to transition into my role as a graduate researcher. During a meeting with Wahéhshon, I picked up on the fact that the transition could pose a conflict of interest if I kept working on the policy while doing my research. Wahéhshon and I never addressed that transition directly. We just implicitly followed through with it, but in that moment, I remember feeling confused. Wasn’t I supposed to show ongoing commitment to this work even while moving on to do my research?

When I shared this experience with Kahtehrón:ni, she seemed to be surprised: “I didn’t realize that that moment for you [felt] kind of like *switching gears* and rethinking about things. And then that collaboration aspect, it just happened like flick of a switch without a discussion”. The transition did feel bumpy, but looking back, I see that in my excitement to show that I was not just going to leave to do my research, I suffocated the space for a conversation, so the implicit cues that I noticed might have been Wahéhshon’s ways of pushing back against this

assumption. When Wahéshon and I spoke about the multiple layered relationalities that underlie work such as the ethics policy, I shared with Kahtehrón:ni that “the conversation made me realize that I have this way of processing things in a homogenous way...”. For example, I always just assumed that the relationship is ongoing once it begins, that “...It doesn’t end with the research report or whatever” (Kovach, 2022, p. 250). While this is true, there are different layers to a commitment, and these are not captured into a general framework of long-term commitment.

I like the imagery of “switching gears” because it helps me visualize the depth and dynamic pace that underlie the small movements of relationships, and because this in itself helps me understand that I idealized the meaning of “long-term commitment” by conditioning it to linearity. Driving a manual car requires an attunement to diverse sources of stimuli. Depending on the driver’s receptivity to these stimuli, the gears will be manipulated. But as well, the fact that those gears exist within a range also limits the manoeuvring of the driver. There is a relational back-and-forth: if cars slow down, certain gears will become options, calling for a full stop or a slight decrease in speed. These contextual elements *focus* the relational back-and-forth, creating different rhythms in the overall trip. The implications of not responding to these elements can be diverse, even catastrophic, but there is the opportunity of adapting and re-focusing. For example, when Kahtehrón:ni graduated from her master’s, she initiated a five-year strategic plan, with others from the language community, on language revitalization to keep giving back. As she recounted this experience, she shared that she realized that there are different forms of “ongoing” in the way we demonstrate our long-term commitment, and that she has had to adapt, but that adapting does not mean full stop.

Kahtehrón:ni:I don’t think we can really determine what the long-term commitment really means...long-term commitment or ongoing doesn’t mean that you’re just giving so

much of your life and time to the Education Center...you're continuing with the annex, and we did a presentation. So that's a little part of it... it means finding how this work is branching into other ways...let's imagine you did write a book one day on these relations, that's a commitment to share..."

The need to develop long term, ongoing, and meaningful relationships with communities has been stated plentifully (de Leeuw, Cameron & Greenwood, 2012, pp. 187-188). But within every community, there are gear switches that will give contextual meaning to that responsibility, that will give it speed and direction—and none of these are safe from change. As the needs of the community shift, as more information becomes available, as relationships evolve, as the community in itself moves forward with resistance and deals, at the same time, with the physical and psychological barriers of colonialization (St-Germain, 2003)—these are some of the stimuli that recalibrate the meaning of 'long-term'.

Understanding this form of complicity—that is, of idealizing the meaning of 'long-term' as seen through me—also reveals an investment in some responsibilities more than others. For example, in transitioning to my role as an outsider researcher, I was also going to become subject to the ethics policy. My research was going to be submitted for review, and I was going to undergo the process that we had developed together for outsider researchers. It seems obvious that this transition would be needed and that it would call for a response on my part in terms of seeing it through rather than assuming that I would remain engaged in the next phases of the policy while acting as a researcher. What does this say about my own anxieties of un-belonging? Desires for belonging do not have to be explicitly stated to be a part of settler subjectivities. They are enmeshed in intentions of benevolence, which are tainted with undertones of romanticism. Put differently, my idealization of 'long-term', even though I articulate it as a commitment, is

overdetermined by outcomes that I have already imagined, rather than by a response to stimuli that, as here seen, is predictable, even logical. In our conversation, Kahtehrón:ni drew from the metaphor of strings:

...So even with thinking about the strings...I used to play it too, when I was a kid all the time. But sometimes you're looking at the strings and you don't know what the next move is and you're just stuck. But it could be with a conversation, then, together, you figure out what the next move is. And then it takes some figuring out, some discussion, *and then the next steps are next moves*. So, your string, your methodology is really working here? Yes, it really is...

Kahtehrón:ni is describing a way of negotiating this moment of sudden change. Sometimes, when players are stuck in the game of string figures, there is conversation that guides the next moves, and sometimes the next move is to drop the strings altogether. It is why solidarity is non-linear. But in instances such as this one, I am pulling, refusing for the strings to be dropped and for others to be picked up. This imposition on the relational process is an outcome of settler idealizations of knowledge, and it leads to a suffocation of space wherein to discuss next moves.

7.4 Complicity 3 – Not Seeing Collective Forms of *Working Through*

W[...]—struggling **with** – (y)our learning process

What is place? According to Tuck & McKenzie (2014), place is not just physical or social, it is also a practice and is intimately connected to land (pp. 34-35). What is place-making? They also write that place-making, usually a social and relational act, is not devoid of “human and spatial differentiations” where power dynamics can be seen clashing and bringing into salience points of contention (p. 36). Contingency has been linked to an ethic that guides interactions across communities of Indigenous and non-settler peoples (Tuck & Yang, 2018), and

which I have explored in chapter two in relation to my use of *decolonial solidarity*. Since contingency is so central to place-making, I find that the metaphor of “inner angles” represented through the holding of a baby (Tuck & Yang, 2018, pp. 2-3) shows what Tuck & McKenzie mean by the fact that places are neither fixed nor understood objectively; rather, they write, “places have practices” and “in some definitions, places are practices” (p. 14). Usually, in western paradigms, colonial reorganization, enclosure, dispossession, and extraction reflect a view of time that is divorced from space, whereas Indigenous peoples did not make absolute differentiations between the two (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2022, pp. 57- 60). Simply in these distinct organizations of space and time, it is possible to see how colonial dynamics *over land* clash with Indigenous relationships *with land*.

So far, in this chapter, I have tried to show that my subjective processes—ways of thinking and discursive practices—are structurally informed and take root in the colonial relation. The relationship between the idiosyncratic—what is peculiar to me, to my individuality—and the structural—how what is proper to me is embedded in the structures of conquest (and vice versa)—makes it that no amount of knowledge (settler consciousness) and relationships with Indigenous peoples (context-specific relationalities) will eliminate the emergence of pressure points and complicities in my relationships with Wahéhshon and Kahtehrón:ni. What I want to show in this final portion is that these inevitable pressure points and complicities can be generative of place-making when the relationship itself is founded on cycles of renewed consent upon which friendship and trust are built and developed. To do this, I want to imagine how place is made through the following metaphor:

For readers who have ever held a young one on their laps or on a hip, consider the weight of the baby, how the weight and pressure grows more intense with passing time. Then,

consider the physical sensation of moving that young one to the other hip, or off the lap, or to another knee. New vantage points, new movements, new somatic possibilities are made through that small shift. This is the simple idea at the center of the metaphor of an inner angle (Tuck & Yang, 2018, pp. 2-3).

The phrases, “Places do not always appear on maps” and “In some definitions, places are practices” (Tuck & McKenzie, 2014, p.14), resonate with me when Tuck and Yang describe holding a baby. It is not just that with the passing of time we might feel the need to shift the baby to another leg; it is that *at different points* of holding that baby, “new vantage points, new movements, new somatic possibilities” will come into view *because* the relationship between holder and baby demands it. Even if the baby is too heavy or remains unsettled and inconsolable; even if the holder has a weak leg or places to be...the relational pressures act as ethical reminders of the commitment to remain engaged, present for one another. For me, the tensions that are incurred from those relational demands are what gives meaning to the act of “apprehending the small inner angles” that exist between two or more people, and in my case, in relation to Kahtehrón:ni and Wahéhshon, and across the three of us. In direct and indirect ways, sometimes to each other and other times not, there are excerpts from our conversation that show how we have grappled with the relational tensions that move us to ask: How do we keep the movement of our relationship going? How do we go on? The relational back-and-forth of our relationship has been, more than a dynamic, an ethic, and in this section, I show how collective forms of working through have always underlined our interactions. Kahtehrón:ni said that my struggles were hers too, that my learning process was hers too. But as I emphasize in the re-found poem of this section, the preposition *with* was a bridge—a reminder of the hyphen in our relationships—that made my learning process, and her learning process, and Wahéhshon’s

learning process, an “our”—a collective space of struggle, of place-making. Thus, in this section, as I return to a deeper discussion of my complicity in writing the Thanksgiving Address, I also need to show how I have undertaken the task of *working through* as a settler individual practice—as something that is solely my responsibility—while ignoring how it has been underlying our relationships through collective forms of accountability.

7.4.1 Place-making Through Collective Forms of Working Through

The emergence of place from within the pressure points is seen in the way Wahéshon explained that while my choice to write the section on worldview was “like a red flag” for her, there was a relational context that allowed her *to work through* the situation as she did, knowing that she would get the opportunity to share it with me eventually:

Wahéshon:

...And that's something that I appreciate...
 you don't get that often.
 Someone who's open to [...] every person who
 wants to work in an Indigenous community wants to say,
 ‘I'm using two eyed seeing’, [...] most of those relationships are just about ...
 get[ing] access to what they need from us...
 And that's one of the things that's, I think,
 important about this work that you're doing...
 and we're going to talk about that in the EGSS panel:
there are layers to relationships.
 you didn't just join us in [this]
 important initiative for the education system and for our community
we also support each other in other levels as students.
 did writing groups
 gave each other advice
 socialize on whatever levels we could in the pandemic.
 layers to the relationship that I don't see very often with other researchers.
 So[...]
 to show people that the *all the good that can come out*
of these kinds of collaborations
doesn't mean that there's never going to be harms.

In her decision to not address the situation directly—by confronting me for writing the Thanksgiving Address—she exerted her agency to do what she considered to be most beneficial for the collective aspects of our relationship so that the development of the policy would not be compromised. Apart from this strategic approach, the layered relationalities of our relationship also offered a context of trust in that, at some point, she would have the opportunity to talk it out with me. Kahtehrón:ni also spoke about how she was affected when I wrote this section on worldview, and like Wahéhshon, she also emphasized the importance of safekeeping *movement* in the relationship by relying on trust, friendship, and camaraderie. She explained that trust never “dwindled” in our relationship, and in this way, as Wahéhshon, she embraced the pressure points as opportunities to work through, to come out stronger and closer. *All the good that can come out of these kinds of collaborations doesn't mean that there's never going to be harms.*

Kahtehrón:ni: ... that was our section to write. But ... I look at the whole thing and I think it's a good example to reflect on because, you know, **we're able to work through it... It's working through it. This whole thing is about working through those tensions.** When we see them, it's about trust, too... I like that we were able to trust one another, all three of us to go through that process and that editing or providing feedback and discussion, discussing everything along the way.

When we discussed this moment, I tried to explain to Kahtehrón:ni that although I was aware that this section on the Thanksgiving Address was being kept for them to write, I proceeded to write it anyway, thinking that it would be helpful, perhaps even relieve some pressures for them, and primarily for Kahtehrón:ni. “...There’s so much work to be done”, I blurted, “There’s never a moment where there’s nothing to be done, and sometimes the ethics policy was not advancing as fast...”. By acting from my implicit assumption, I sidestepped the back-and-forth dynamic

that we had collectively entertained for “discussing everything along the way”. As seen already, this is an example of when I put forward my own settler anxieties instead of acting with accountability and openly discussing my observations with Wahéhshon and Kahtehrón:ni. It is also telling that, at the same time, it was important for me to clarify what I mean by “fast”:

...when I say fast, I'm not referring to my expectations per se, but just in the sense of our own purposes that we would set up. And it was one of those moments where I feel like in the whole relationship, all of our relationships, I would have never thought of proposing something like this... I often just felt like I shouldn't [even] ask about your worldview, for instance, or your culture if it's not something that you wanted to openly share. So, I never actually took that step. But then, after I took the course with Alex and with the circumstances of how the work was going, I felt like something was different...

The self-regulating discursive mechanism (“when I say fast, I’m not referring to my expectations per se...”) also elucidates my awareness of the fact that this justification is itself an act of complicity. It is a subtle way of saying, ‘I would never pressure our process *for my benefit*... I did it because I wanted to be helpful’. Finally, the point about self-regulating throughout our relationship so as to not inquire about Kahtehrón:ni’s worldview works as a technique of disavowal of this moment where, the fact of having taken a course led by a local man, becomes *the* difference that I take to be an invitation to dilute my settler positioning through this appropriation.

Writing about worldview was a complicity that materially affected Kahtehrón:ni and Wahéhshon. On the one hand, it led to a situation where they had to spend energy, paradoxically in relation to my intentions about minimizing the risk of ‘burdening’, thinking about how to address the situation.

Kahtehrón:ni: ...But when you did write it, I thought it was it was well written. I mean, there were some parts where I was like, 'oh, that's not quite it'. Or 'I wouldn't say it like that'. But I had to be kind of really creative in my feedback. I didn't want to offend you too, because you did so much work on it. And but at the same time, **I had to really change up those words or to make it sound the way we would say it, you know, from being from the community and knowing that that content was about the Thanksgiving Address...**

Wahéhshon: ...what we ended up doing when you had not even realized in the moment was, we addressed the things we needed to and as delicate a way as we could to be respectful... And then we just edited and made the contributions we needed to make to make sure, um, it was for us, by us, you know, **that it was coming from us, and it was grounded in our worldview...**

By claiming to have the 'right' training to represent the Thanksgiving Address, I monopolized the space of reclamation and representation where Indigenous peoples counter deficient and self-entitled representations of Indigenous peoples that circulate in settler spaces and subjectivities (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2020, p. 152). Furthermore, as when my concerns about time made Kahtehrón:ni question whether she was giving me enough time ("I guess that I always felt like I wasn't giving, enough of my time. Like, did I? Yeah. Yes. Sometimes ... I wanted to give more of my time"), I also see that, by writing that section on the Thanksgiving Address, I might have indeed added to any felt pressures about her involvement in the writing.

...So definitely [it] was a little bit challenging to navigate that part of the process...I felt really grateful that you were working on it and that Wahéhshon was joining in to do the writing. *But I felt this tremendous guilt all along the way that I wasn't contributing as much as I wanted to writing the policy. And that was pretty hard for me, but I had to accept [that] we're still working on it as a team. I'm still doing the editing, and there's a lot of projects I work on where I wish I was more there and this definitely was one. *[what gave] an extra layer of navigating that cultural part of that section that you wrote was that you gave so much to it...**

At one point of our conversation, Kahtehrón:ni and I spoke about the practical implications of having an open communication, and of *being accountable to that*. We both concluded that if I had been accountable to that back-and-forth line of communication that we had collectively built with Wahéhshon, these types of pressure points could have been addressed by working through my presumptions, as is the case with my fixation on her busyness.

My complicity with writing the Thanksgiving Address caused such a deep pressure point in our working relationship that, even after Kahtehrón:ni and I discussed it in our conversation, she continued to think about it after we logged off. It was end of May when I received a text from Kahtehrón:ni. “Kwe Daniella, there’s something that’s on my mind from our discussion. I was wondering if we can meet once more so I can add a little something...”. As I read her message, I felt a tinge of excitement because this kind of unpredictable back-and-forth was exactly what gave life to the string figure metaphor. The next morning, we were on Microsoft Teams, talking.

Kahtehrón:ni: Okay. So, I was going back to that moment that we discussed about after you met with Alex [and] you did the workshop and then we were writing the section on, I guess, World View. And you were writing about the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwén (the Thanksgiving Address). So, I know Wahéhshon—that was part of her moment [that] she went back to, and I had the same...

Kahtehrón:ni had requested to meet again because she felt that when we spoke about this moment during our first conversation, the meaning that she wanted to convey about why she felt tension in this moment might not have been clear. She explained that it had to do with the meaning of the Address, “...the Ohén:ton Karihwatéhkwén ...that's something that we use or that's an integral part of our worldview...”, and she explained that there is a relational aspect to

living it, and not just understanding it as a teaching: “it's also something that guides us and changes our understanding and thinking from when we're young to when we're elders”. The Thanksgiving Address, she explained, “provides clarity for us in any tensions in life”, so it’s not something that ends once you learn it: “It's not like learning your ABCs where you learned it and you know it”. When I learned from Alex and felt fit to write about the Thanksgiving Address, I disrespected that relationality by treating those “complex teachings” as something static, rather than as something inherently connected to a “lifetime of learning”. So, when we gathered anew to discuss this moment, Kahtehrón:ni really wanted to convey her experience of discomfort vis-à-vis my complicity as a questioning of, “wait a minute, can someone know it just from a workshop... when it's really so much more complex?”. She concluded, “And that's basically what I wanted to share”. But *what did I want to offer back in response to her sharing?*

I wanted to simply let her know that I understood what she was telling me, but I also wanted to let her know that I had known it all along, and that, for me, what was difficult to grapple with was that even with this knowing, I still proceeded to cross that boundary. I just did not know how to convey this, and whether it was important. I did not want to seem like I was trying to justify my complicity by moving to innocence.

I thought of an interview (2021) between Robin Maynard and Leanne Simpson on their newly published book *Rehearsals for Living* (2022). When asked about the concept of “rehearsal”, Simpson said that when it comes to music, she prefers rehearsal over performance. In “rehearsal there is always possibility” and it is not just a “temporary practice, one that we do until it is time to actually live, but as a generative life expanding practice in and of itself” (p. 145). As she unpacked this thought, she spoke about meaning making in Anishinaabe worlds where:

...Meaning is derived from context. Our practices in communal life are just that, practices. *Processes that we create, recreate, embody and enact over and over and over again.* Many Indigenous societies follow seasonal cycles, the cycles of life and movement that order ecological worlds. If life is circular, instead of a line, there really is no performance, and *all of the joy, the knowledge and continuous rebirth, comes from the repetition of rehearsals as individuals, and as communities. It is through these collective studies that we ignite the knowledge and practices we need to replicate life or to build anew.*

The meaning of “rehearsal” as something that acquires meaning from within the relationships and contexts convey this sense of a “lifetime of learning”, of how the Thanksgiving Address is expansive as a person like Kahtehrón:ni grows through life, making space for those teachings to guide her in life’s rehearsals. In our original conversation, Kahtehrón:ni said, “...Alex did a pretty good job. I thought that when I read [my writing on the Thanksgiving Address], but I still felt, ‘okay... *knowing is not an owning of that knowledge*’. What I wanted to share back with Kahtehrón:ni was that I recognized that my practice had perpetrated the logics of settler paradigms whereby “knowledge is an individual entity”, something that a settler (researcher) can find, discover, and “gain” as a thing to own (Wilson, 2001, p. 176). But with this, I also kept returning to the subtler portions of my conversation with her where we touched on the importance of communication and communicating—of relaying the pressure points that we can experience individually, for instance as a tension of wanting to do good and be helpful, so that they do not impinge on the relationship through gaps in accountability.

I recognize that in experiencing the discomfort of not knowing how to respond, I kept wanting to tell her, “You don’t have to explain anything to me, of course I understand the extent

to which this action was harmful”. But at the same time, she wanted to take the time to share; the fact that this research was open to spontaneous back-and-forths also made her feel drawn to sharing further, to making this process of working through, also her own:

Kahtehrón:ni:....the discussion between you and I and the reflection [of our first conversation] was really helpful. Yeah, it helped me to—it didn't end at the end of our interview. Obviously, since we're coming back. But it was helpful to understand: why did it feel like a tension? And so, yeah, it helped me to understand those feelings a little bit more. *But I felt like I wanted to share it back because I thought it was important...*

I realize that another facet of always wanting to ensure that I do as minimal harm as possible is that I end up centering myself, assuming, as is here the case, that Kahtehrón:ni would only want to share back *for me*. This reductive and self-entitled perspective is a-relational. It subsumes the relational dynamics and contexts of our relationship to linearity, and so, to statism, as the pressure points are seen as denting or spoiling an idealized view of relationship-building rather than as generative of depth, trust, comradery. When Kahtehrón:ni was sharing this moment, all I could think about was the word “trespassing”, the qualifier that I had used to tell Kahtehrón:ni about the time when I had come to Kahnawà:ke, uninvited, to film the landscape for my research class (discussed in chapter one). I thought of this word, too, because it somewhat clicked with “crossing a boundary”, which is how Wahéhshon had originally described the moment.

Daniella:... I do understand what you're saying. It's that the context is obviously something that, um, comes with being from that worldview and having the relationships that support that. And because with Wahéhshon, we talked a lot about how, for her, it felt like a blurring of positions, like blurring a boundary type of thing, like overstepping. And that was something very vivid ... using that phrase. It was very visual...

When it comes to visualization of words, I find that there is a fine line between being engaged in meaning-making processes and in overdetermining meaning by drawing rigid lines that only reinsert binarism into the process. Here, for example, crossing a boundary or blurring a boundary, paired with overstepping, creates the imagery of a line on the earth and of me leaving my position to get to the other side. This imagery is reductive. Rather than helpful, it reproduces modalities of conquest, particularly of settlement and of the frontier logic, by which only land that has been “gifted back” and is on the “side” of Indigenous people’s communities is Indigenous land (Tuhiwai-Smith, 2021, pp. 49-50, 58). By this logic, violence can only be considered when those lands, now seen as communities and reserves, are “trespassed”. Yet, all of Canada is Indigenous land, and this means that, at all times, settlers are trespassers. The difference is that years ago, when I drove through Kahnawà:ke, I had no relationships. There was no consent, no context, and this was why I had reached out to Kahtehrón:ni and had wanted to ‘go back’ to Kahnawà:ke under new terms. But in the space of collaboration, and across these years, there is a context, there are relationships, and this means that neither trespassing nor boundary crossing can adequately do justice to the fact that, *because of these relationships and these contexts*, we go on. We work through the tensions, and we keep moving things forward, keeping in mind the larger purpose. In explicit and implicit terms, both Kahtehrón:ni and Wahéshon gave meaning to this practice of working through.

With this, then, I want to transition to the “coda” of this chapter by recognizing that one of the mechanisms through which complicity is reproduced is by self-incriminating as a default. What I mean is that there is also a fine line between working to be critical to recognize ways in which complicity is reproduced and missing the relational and contextual nuances that do not make complicity an all-encompassing determinant of whether collaborations cease or continue.

7.4 Coda : The Hyphen in Relationship-Building

When looking at all the layered complicities that I have unpacked in this chapter, the overview shows that my responsibility to knowledge, which is to put it to action critically, can turn into a self-regulating tool that overdetermines the meaning of relationship-building. This complicity can be seen when Kahtehrón:ni responds to my use of “trespassing” to describe my complicity with writing the Thanksgiving Address: “I don't know if I would feel like it's a trespassing. Because you're welcomed in this, you know, we're collaborating right on in this work that we were doing”.

In the context of my relationships and of the trail of moments examined in this chapter, it seems that engaging in a back-and-forth communication would have had a better affordance than withdrawing and making decisions that I alone interpreted as “good” practice. By making decisions on my own, I centered my agency as a benevolent settler, rather than as an outsider who is invited into collaboration. In this way, I over-essentialize the fact that all consenting relationships require a back-and-forth—a giving and receiving response of accountability that is, according to the meaning of giving *and* receiving, relational. As Wahéshon asserted upon reading this, we did not have to engage in a relational back-and-forth; the relationship could have been more systematic by giving me directives rather than investing in deeper processes of relationship-building. Thus, moving to control the relationship in the ways I did in some instances stands as a form of complicity because it undermines the relational consent that underlies, and makes possible, the nature of our relationships.

The consent that was brought into our relationships from the beginning does not mean that relationship-building among the three of us becomes an easy process devoid of tensions. Rather than ‘I agree to engage with you’, having consenting relationships in our contexts has

meant, ‘I agree to engage with you, *so I agree to engage with the gravitational pressures of colonialism*, because I am aware that, while this reality is not overdetermining, it does affect, and it is in effect in our interactions’. Furthermore, even outside of the gravitational pressures that are inherent to insider/outsider processes of relationship-building, as a heterogenous community and people, within Kahnawà:ke, there are multiple layered relationalities that must be considered throughout projects of resistance. For outsiders, as I showed, this consideration might only be possible through the direct relationships that we hold with specific people who have insider insight and who, therefore, have higher levels of accountability in relation to their community.

I would like to bring an extended attention to the way in which place can be made through a mundane but difficult commitment to embracing the relational giving and receiving of relationships—a practice that involves contributing to open communication. This practice will not resolve the pressure points, but it will make them communal in a way where everyone can insert their voice, and where, as settlers and Kahnawa’kehró:non, we can negotiate movement (or how to go on). In very real ways, the conversations that Wahéhshon, Kahtehrón:ni and I had to revisit moments of our relationship model this idea. Kahtehrón:ni spoke about how our relationship was about working through tensions that can only then yield more trust. Collective forms of working through can happen through a committed practice of sharing points of pressures, and of being open to receiving feedback. The “hyphen” of relationship-building that I mentioned earlier is about finding ways of collaborating without needing to reconcile the clashing temporalities of our experience and understanding, as insider and outsiders to Kahnawà:ke. **Finally, communicating opens up spaces for *working through*, and while these spaces might seem transitional or secondary to the tangible outcome of collaborating (as, for example, the ethics policy), these transient spaces are where place is made. They might**

not be “named” tangibly against the material outcome, but place-making underlies the relational aspects that allow us to move forward with the contradictions. Ultimately, I would like to suggest that place is made at the crossing of so many considerations, as seen here.

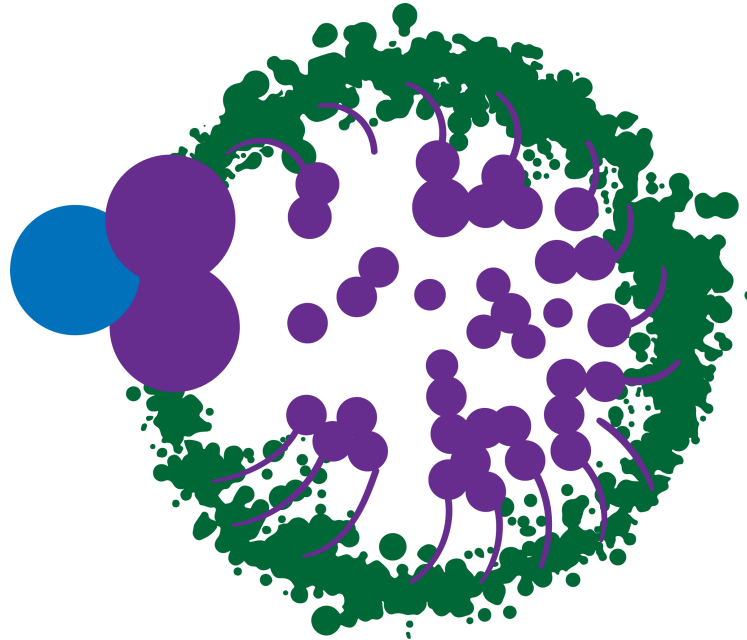


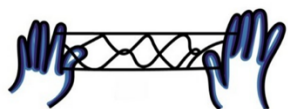
Figure 1. Layered relationalities in place-making.
Image designed and digitalized by Janani Narahenpita.

In this figure, the large green circle represents Kahnawà:ke as a community. The circle is more fluid than perfectly drawn to show that (a) after making a home by the St-Lawrence River, Kahnawà:ke has become a heterogenous political community (Reid, 2007, p. 25-33; Rueck, 2017) and that (b) the imposed boundary around this community neither tucks away Kahnawa'kehró:non from experiencing the modalities of colonialism and racism that still exist, nor does it erase their stewardship of land outside of this community. As seen in relation to the ethics policy, these contextual aspects inform and complicate what and how "resistance" is taken up. The purple hooks-arms-connectors-extensions represent diverse aspects of this community, including questions of belonging, membership, resistance, education, etc., These aspects are diversely experienced and understood by members of the community, and outsiders are not privy

to their effects in everyday life (Simpson, 2014, pages 2-12). The smaller circles, which are connected and disconnected, represent Kahnawa'kehró:non's multiplicity, not only in terms of their stance on these community aspects, but also as they relate with each other based on their experiences and understandings. The three overlapping circles represent Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéhshon and me (I am the outsider circle). Kahtehrón:ni and Wahéhshon share a relationship, but that relationship does not mean sameness. I share a relationship with each one of them, and with the two of them as well. We can coexist, as seen in the common spaces—the “hyphen” of our relationship—even though our relationship does not bracket out colonial modalities of conquest. The position of these three circles are meant to demonstrate that the meaning of “accountability” shifts drastically depending on closeness to Kahnawà:ke and community ties. Because of the multiplicity that exists among Kahnawa'kehró:non and in Kahnawà:ke, place-making between settler outsiders and Kahnawa'kehró:non is complicated both by settler complicities *and* by the layered relationalities that already exist, which require consideration in projects of resistance. The clashing of our ways of being and knowing is also a clashing of diverse temporalities and understandings of space (Rifkin, 2017; Tuhiwai-Smith, 2021). In these pressure points, place-making can be negotiated, but often, in real time, the ways in which settlers respond with accountability are complicated by diverse mechanisms, as explored in this chapter.

Chapter 8: How Settler Dominance Regulates Settler-Settler Attempts at Being Critical of Settler Complicities in Dialogue

8.1 A Narrative-based Recapitulation of Moments



Mark and Daniella's discussion "Loud and Obnoxious"

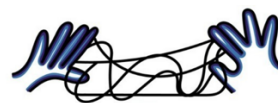
Mark: Do you remember when we went to Jack's house and his girlfriend had a friend over, Maite? Our friend, Jen, had a heated discussion with Maite.

The discussion was about meritocracy.

Mark: Jen argued that her parents self-sacrificed to put her and her sisters through private school. Maite argued that, as a parent, she knew that sacrificing does not work as a magic wand.

There are structural barriers, like racism and class, that preclude some more than others from getting by and getting through.

Mark: I couldn't understand, at the time, why Maite was so upset. She was kind of "**loud and obnoxious**"...



Sandra-Lynn and Daniella's discussion A Presumed Education elitism

Sandra-Lynn: While people label me as aggressive when I speak out against structural injustices, while *you're worried about being seen as aggressive.*

You withdraw from conversations with your own community of settlers because you assume they do not have knowledge or that they are not at your level.

When you do that, you let yourself and them get off the hook. Then, when they engage with us, it goes badly for us.

*You are doing all this academic work, letting it sit in your mental space, refusing to work with your own community because of your **presumed education elitism.***

What about the people who you say you want to support? How is this practice true to your commitment to us?

I offer these reconstructed narratives to reintroduce the main ideas and contexts of my discussions with Mark, my husband who is also a settler, and Sandra-Lynn, a Kanien'kehá:ka and Mi'kmaw friend who lives in Kahnawà:ke. While it might seem odd to pair these two conversations into one chapter, as part of this work's aims and research questions, this pairing is meant to highlight the way in which I am searching to respond, with a practice of working through across contexts, to the fact that dispossession is unbounded—and that the modalities of

conquest that inform settler colonization in the present are at play always and everywhere. For reasons that I have already discussed in chapters five and six, I have also paired these two conversations because of their embeddedness in complicities where Mark and I have, individually and collectively, reproduced knowledge-producing dynamics that “other” Indigenous and non-settler peoples to disavow our responsibilities from examining our involvement with such power dynamics. As seen here, our discussion specifically featured our complicity with *othering* Maite, a Brown⁵⁴ Latina woman. Our complicity with othering Maite stems from a discussion about the qualifiers that Mark uses to describe our perception of her—as loud and obnoxious—which becomes the crux of our conversation, because, as I question Mark’s characterization of Maite, I also end up distancing myself from my complicity in the original moment, but also from our discussion. As can be seen in the reconstructed narrative of my conversation with Sandra-Lynn, this tendency to self-distance from conversations with settlers regarding structural inequities is recurrent in my practice, particularly with non-academic settlers, which is why Sandra-Lynn calls me out for perpetrating a form of education elitism. Given that I reproduce this complicity with Mark, in this chapter, I have found it important to examine my conversation with Sandra-Lynn towards developing a discursive framework through which to unpack my discursive practices with Mark. Then, as I examine my conversation with Mark, my aim is to show how, problematically, **we co-enable each other** to use knowledge as an intellectual tool through which we attempt criticality of our involvement as bystanders of Maite and Jen’s conversation, but without implicating ourselves in our analysis of how meritocracy

⁵⁴ As a reminder, “Brown” is meant to emphasize that, as a result of conquest in Central and South America, Latinx is a spectrum that includes peoples racialized as white and non-white (and who are usually connected to the Lands through their indigeneity). I am Latina because I was born and raised in Mexico, but I am a *white* Latina because of my family’s settler lineage, which I continue today through my whiteness.

interacts with racism *for our benefit*. In this way, we focus on scrutinizing Maite's experience and reaction while looking away from Jen's aggression, our roles as bystanders, and now, in this exercise of revisiting that moment, as intellectuals with no involvement in the violence that we are trying to name. However, as I aim to show in this chapter by working through these dynamics of complicity, it is important for settler people to reverse-the-gaze on ourselves *and on our efforts at being critical*—and this, to be accountable for the ways in which, even as we engage in dialogue to unpack our practices of complicity, our criticality is regulated by our own whiteness. It is amidst this tension that I want to draw settler readers into a consideration of how we might work through these limitations towards de-naturalizing how we reproduce modalities of conquest that, as seen, inform the settler colonial order. Because the examination of Mark's and my complicities is rooted in the specific contexts of my discussion with Sandra-Lynn and Mark (respectively), I am not proposing to show settler readers how to watch out for these complicities in their own interactions with other settlers. The aim of this work, rather, is to model what *working through* can look like when we engage knowledges of struggle of resistance relationally *and* keep each other accountable to think about our own analytical processes—and how these might be reproducing power and dominance. As the settler colonial order is complexly enmeshed in interlocking modalities of conquest, I want to reiterate that in my own practice of working through, I aim to bring into salience the layered nature of settler complicity in an effort to de-naturalize settler hegemony—and this, while knowing that, given this very complexity, the aim is to also acknowledge the systematic ways in which settlers can seek resolution, and thus move to innocence. In an effort to situate myself in relation to the task of *working through* by drawing on knowledges of struggle and resistance, I want to begin by demonstrating how these knowledges speak to the singular experiences of Indigenous and non-settler peoples while

interlocking to reveal the *difference of experience* (i.e., “the coloniality of being”, see Mignolo, 2007 and Wynter, 2003) that underlies settler colonial orders and, specifically, settler privilege.

8.1.1 Threading a Difference of Experience Vis-à-Vis Knowledge

As the heckles rise and the defiance grows... I cannot continue to emotionally exhaust myself trying to get this message across, while also toeing around...not to implicate any one white person in their role of perpetuating structural racism...So I’m no longer talking to white people about race. I don’t have a huge amount of power to change the way the world works, **but I can set boundaries** [...] (Eddo-Lodge, 2020, p. x-xii, my emphasis)

I stumbled upon a larger account of these lines when I was trying to understand why, as I questioned how Mark’s description of Maite—as loud and obnoxious—stood as a contradiction to his belief that he could *now* see why that moment had been rooted in racism, I could only think of transforming the interaction between our settler friend, Jen, and Maite, into a white-on-white encounter. Would you still be arguing the same things if a white person reacted per your descriptors “loud” and “obnoxious”? As seen in this question, I try to draw from our own experience, by calling us to put ourselves in Maite’s shoes, in order to account for the fact that, under this white-on-white encounter, **the stakes would be different given our settler dominance and privilege** (further unpacked below). But why did I need to re/center whiteness to try to get Mark to validate Maite’s experience? To get him to see that our conversation is suggestive of the expectation that, as a non-settler person, Maite should have to self-censor her right to push back against whiteness to be considered “civil”? I felt that my approach was only enabling more racism, yet I did not have the language to unpack it, and the only phrase that I could articulate on google scholar was: “**what if** it had been a white person?”. I saw a recent

publication (2020) by Reni Eddo-Lodge, a Black journalist; the book's title read: *Why I'm no longer talking to white people about race*.

The preface of Eddo-Lodge's book showed a post that she had shared online a few years ago. There, she outlined her reasons for refusing to speak about race, "Not [with] all white people, just [with] the vast majority who refuse to accept the legitimacy of structural racism and its symptoms" (ix). Her reason for this withdrawal was rooted in the understanding that, for white people, "**The journey towards understanding structural racism still requires people of colour to prioritize white feelings...**" (x). What I hope to show and unpack in this chapter is that, for Mark and me, even as we engaged in a private conversation intending to be critical of our involvement in racism that particularly affected Maite, our dialogue was regulated by our emotional fragility (DiAngelo, 2018). I guide this discussion with the following questions: What does it mean to be critical of whiteness, in settler-settler interactions, when that criticality requires Mark and I to implicate ourselves in our examinations of power so that we can bring into salience our complicities? Can settlers aspire to engage in this form of critical exercise without re/perpetrating our dominance? While I use these questions to frame my analysis, I aim to show how, since Mark and I co-enable each other to reproduce forms of complicity, my practice of *working through* involves forms of de-layering through I unpack our limitations in our efforts to be critical of structural modalities of power that give whiteness content.

This chapter is important to show how I have attempted to understand and engage in processes of *decolonial solidarity* that do not end with my direct involvement in Kahnawà:ke. As articulated in my research questions, this part of my research aims to center land *by modelling a practice of working through settler complicities* that is itself premised on the understanding that land theft and dispossession are secured through interlocking modalities of conquest. For some

settler people, it is easier to recognize that we reside on stolen Indigenous lands, yet harder to question *how* it is that, still today, we can benefit from a settler colonial order. For example, in our conversation, Mark and I recognize that we contributed to the perpetration of a hostile and racist environment by acting as quiet bystanders when our friend, Jen, was negating Maite's experience of structural racism, patriarchy, and classism. Yet, as we discuss this moment to unpack it, we distance ourselves from the moment by **acting as onlookers** rather than examining our roles as perpetrators. In this case, it is easy for us to *name* an issue of racism and much harder to question *how we perpetrate it and benefit from it*. As seen in chapter three, racism is not an isolated construct, but rather, it acquires content by interlocking with other structures of power like patriarchy and gender. Racism is also a tool of conquest that has been misused to justify various forms of violence that are necessary to inform settler colonial orders, and to this extent, settler peoples' solidarity to Indigenous peoples' articulations of decolonization require settlers to name and unpack our involvement in such modalities of conquest. *Thus, my aim in this chapter is to de-layer the discursive mechanisms that enabled Mark and I to re-naturalize whiteness by judging Maite's right to respond to our friend, Jen, even as we aimed to de-naturalize it through a critical dialogue.*

In account of this, it seemed important to attend to Reni Eddo-Lodge's words, not only because my conversation with Mark touches on the effects of **measuring the experience of Maite against our normative experience**, but also because as Eddo-Lodge exerts her agency to deny white people the right to challenge her experiences, she is also telling us that **there is a difference of experience**⁵⁵. After reprinting this online post, Eddo-Lodge goes on to share the

⁵⁵ I have spoken about this through scholars (Maldonado-Torres, 2007a, 2007b, 2018; Mignolo, 2007; Wynter, 2003) who have named this ontological difference "the colonial/ontological difference". See chapters three and five.

diverse responses from “black and brown people” but also from white people who felt that, by refusing to talk about race, she was “taking something away from the world” because she was giving up on white people (p. xiii-xii). Her recently published book paradoxically shows her decision to keep on talking about race with white people: “Since I set my *boundary*, I’ve done almost nothing but to speak about race... people want to continue the conversation” (p. xv).

There is a palpable connection that comes to mind when I think of Eddo-Lodge’s process to my conversation with Sandra-Lynn. Yet, the connection is imperfect, since **her experience as a Black woman is not homogenous with Sandra-Lynn’s experience, as a Kanien’kehá:ka and Mi’kmaq woman.** Without conflating these positionings, then, I want to draw attention to the word “boundary”, which they both use to **establish the limits of what they are willing to discuss and with whom.** Sandra-Lynn conveys this, for example, when she describes engaging with settler people who refuse to acknowledge the existence of structural conquest and with whom she has to **disengage to preserve her energy**, while calling me out for *not wanting to engage with my own community of settlers out of “education elitism”*: “...sometimes I’ve had to get rid of settler friends because they are just fully rejecting certain aspects. Right? **And for me that’s a boundary.** And I think you you’re putting a boundary where there shouldn’t be [one]...”. I see myself represented in the way Eddo-Lodge critiques the responses of white people who reproach her for “taking something away from the world” by choosing to withdraw from conversations about race. These responses are mired in white fragility—in white people’s need for approval and redemption—but *not necessary* in responsibility since wanting to talk about race does not mean that white people will be willing to self-implicate in structural racism. With Sandra-Lynn, as I discussed in chapter six, I pushed to have a conversation about my role in the space of social media activism because I wanted to indirectly work through a previous moment

of contention that Sandra-Lynn was unwilling to discuss upfront. Once in the discussion, I often self-positioned as someone who is willing to speak up against structural injustices but unable to engage in pedagogical discussions with settler people who might want to talk about what I share *because of their lack of criticality*. Sandra-Lynn continuously refuted my moves to innocence by asking me to account for the way in which I was using my academic privilege and knowledge to draw a discursive distance from my own settlerness—and this, by presuming to be less complicit than settler people who might not yet acquired the language and knowledge to understand complex ideas of complicity.

In the first part of this chapter, I have thus developed a discursive framework based on an analysis of my complicities with knowledge that are seen in my conversation with Sandra-Lynn. I use this discursive framework to specifically bring into salience how, in my conversation with Mark, I struggled to work through this tendency to want to self-position as being on the “right side” but without self-implicating myself in our discussion of our complicities (DiAngelo, 2018, p. 239). I look at how Mark and I have therefore co-enabled each other to look away from our complicities, and in this way, embody the resistance that DiAngelo describes: “I have found that the only way to give feedback without triggering white fragility is not to give it at all. Thus, the first rule is cardinal: 1. Do not give me feedback on my racism under any circumstances” (p. 240). My conversation with Sandra-Lynn has taken the form of a discursive framework through which I have examined my interaction with this “cardinal rule” alongside Mark.

As I develop this discursive framework, my aim is to elucidate different forms of silence through which I become complicit with using knowledge as a tool through which to reassert my innocence and dominance. Through this complicity, it is possible for me to, problematically, name my complicity without needing to unpack its effects and its workings in relation to

conquest (for an example, see McIntosh, 1992; for an analysis of this see Levine-Rasky, 2010, p. 280-281). The point that I most want to emphasize for settler readers, through this analysis, is that we do not have to openly admit to our emotional tendency in our search for stability in the colonial order (DiAngelo, 2018) to be complicit; our discursive practices work as referents through which to name and unpack the self-entitlement that is, in some ways, attached to our ways of being and knowing. As Richard Dyer (2002) writes, “Most of this”, that is, how white people become dominant without seeing it, “is not done deliberately or maliciously” (p. 12).

It is worth restating that in the rest of this work, de-layering my/our complicity is contradictory, for my efforts to engage in this practice are regulated by my whiteness (Levine-Rasky, 2002, p. 1-3): “The very ubiquity of whiteness paradoxically shrouds its essential properties” (Bedford & Workman, 2002, p. 27). The struggle to uncover the essential elements of my complicity is thus ongoing even as I transcribe, analyse, and write. My aim is to add layers into the main layers that I have selected to unpack towards showing what whiteness does through my own subjective investments as a settler and academic. By showing these contradictory investments, the intent is to attend to Sara Ahmed’s question (2007): “If whiteness gains currency by being unnoticed, then what does it mean to [TRY to] notice whiteness?” (p. 149).

8.2 Daniella as (Settler and) Academic

“Critical race theory...is characterized by a frequent use of the first person, storytelling, narrative, allegory, interdisciplinary treatment of law, and the unapologetic use of creativity” (Bell, 1995 p. 899).

“In the larger struggle for self-determination, we need to engage in what Tuhiwai Smith terms “researching back”. Like “talking back”, it implies resistance, recovery, and renewal” (Kovach, 2022, p. 34).

Critical race theory and Indigenous studies have contributed to my understanding of the fact that knowledge cannot be treated as an object. Simply in the methods of resistance used across these fields, for example storytelling, I see that when Indigenous, Black, and scholars of color write research, they are *naming their realities*, they are resisting different forms of erasure, they are surviving and affirming their humanities. Even though I know that they do not write for me, I acknowledge these scholars for sharing their embodied and lived experiences, for if they did not make their knowledge accessible for settlers, it would be difficult for me to name my whiteness and try to work through it. I might continue to *unsee* whiteness, as I know I can, by adhering to the myth that settler societies are founded on human rights when, in truth, they are premised on property rights (Harris, 1993; Ladson-Billings, 1998, p. 15; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, pp. 52-58). I choose the word “unsee” to bring into salience the fact that settlers are not complicit because we are ignorant. Rather, settlers are *invested* in the status quo, and so, we are complicit, not because we do not know better, but because the issue of privilege is one of *not wanting to see what is visible everywhere* (Harris, 2019; Lethabo-King, 2019, p. 43-44, see also Robinson, 2019, p. 332). Having access to knowledges of struggle and resistance is thus not to be seen as removing settlers’ blindfold of ignorance, but rather, as giving settlers *language* to name and work through our complicities. With this access, settlers have a responsibility to share with settlers who might not have equal access to spaces such as higher education, where these knowledges tend to be made available. As Kahtehrón:ni said in our conversation, “knowledge is not just for us, it’s for the betterment of everyone” (I am paraphrasing).

While having access to knowledges of struggle and resistance will not necessarily mean that settlers will let go of our internal resistances and rejections of these knowledges, when non-academic settlers are confronted with these knowledges, it is almost inevitable to observe moves

to innocence. This happens when Indigenous and non-settler peoples are directly speaking, but also when settlers engage our own community of settlers into critical discussions of our power and dominance. DiAngelo offers an extensive list of the “rules” that must be followed if a settler decides to break the “cardinal rule”; that is, if a settler proceeds to challenge another settler’s complicity. Some of these rules are:

- 2. Proper tone is crucial...5. Feedback must be given immediately [but] 6. Feedback must be given privately, regardless of whether the incident occurred in front of other people...
- 7. You must be as indirect as possible. Directness is insensitive and will invalidate the feedback and require repair...10. You must acknowledge my intentions and agree that my intentions always cancel out the impact of my behavior (pp. 241-243).

These rules are contradictory, revealing the superficiality of white people’s openness to talk about our whiteness, and also regulating and limiting the extent to which settlers might want to acknowledge and grapple with our complicities. As I mentioned previously, being critical of whiteness as something that exists ‘somewhere’ is not the same as engaging criticality in the examination of our participation in the systems of colonial and racial violence.

My first tendency, in reading DiAngelo’s list, is to think about how *other* settlers are complicit when they lean on these rules in discussions about whiteness. I think of my interactions with friends and family online and offline, and I think of the ways in which they have described me as ‘always’ talking about race, racism, and colonialism. Sometimes, settlers have vocalized their perceptions of me as a “bleeding heart”—someone who is too sensitive but irrational and extreme for connecting things that they see as being innocent and mundane to race and colonialism—or as cutthroat, which is the extreme end of the latter. These perceptions upset me, and they have impacted the way in which I have evolved in my responsibility to knowledge, to

this task of speaking up. As I have dwelled on this, I realize that I have justified my silences and partial engagements in dialogue with settlers instead of moving to examine how, irrespective of the context, DiAngelo's list regulates my own practice. This tendency of looking for the problem elsewhere, in other settlers, matters a great deal in this work. It is important because, while I am concerned about how settlers perceive me, and as I react with frustration to their judgements, I also erase the real crime of their/our complicity: that their responses are not an attack on me, but a rejection of the knowledges of struggle of resistance that I convey, and which they are unwilling to entertain because of what it might mean for life as we know it. This was a point of discussion with Sandra-Lynn in the context of social media activism.

Daniella: So, you're wondering what is the point of engaging with settlers who are aggressive?

Sandra-Lynn: No. With the people who assume that all of your messages are aggressive... Because you're getting the same comment from the same people or friends of yours. And for me, that interaction is more important, right? Because I'm used to being told that I'm aggressive, *whereas you're worried about being aggressive*. How does that fit into the performative nature of ... your work? Because you're engaging on social media with this heavy critical race theory related stuff. But then you're like, 'Oh, they say, I'm aggressive', but how are you combating that? How are you pushing back?

Sandra-Lynn did say that she is not against being performative but that:

It's just about pushing forward with that performance, right? Not just, 'here's my social media post. Goodbye'. Pushing forward with that, like when I called something that happened between you and I, we are not going to talk about that (she laughs), but I was able to address that with you and discuss it with you.

Dropping knowledge on a social media post without the intention of following through with conversation when settlers respond, is performative and can de-personalize the voices behind critical race theory. It is treating knowledge as an object. When Sandra-Lynn asks how I am combatting and pushing back, she is challenging my refusal to press on with the interaction by concerning myself with how settlers might see me. With this, in the following, I de-layer aspects of my conversation with Sandra-Lynn to establish how I have centered my emotions instead of pushing through and grappling with the rejection and challenges that settlers might bring on, but also to show how I have used knowledge as décor—to self-distance from my own complicities.

8.2.1 The Mental S(h)elf ⇔ Complicities with Silence(s)

When she Sandra-Lynn asks me, “...but how are you combating that? How are you pushing back?”, I deflect the question by focusing on *why I rather not push back*.

Daniella: ...I think that's also to do with my privilege and my fragility... But I'm also ...self-conscious about posting something and overthink[ing] it. That's why a lot of times I'd rather not. And when I do, and I get these sort of reactions [of settlers rejecting or challenging], I'm also not the type who will want to engage and respond back...

Although I recognize that my ability to *choose to disengage* is a function of my privilege, I nevertheless move to innocence by justifying it on the fact that *other settlers* are the problem. I think of Howard who references Dei and writes, “...the important question is not “Who can do antiracist work?”, but rather, “Who is willing to assume the risks?” (2006, p. 53). Clearly, while I would like to claim that I am willing to assume the risks, there are instances where my relationship to knowledge becomes static, a means with which to self-portray as “progressive” (Macoun, 2016). The effects of this complicity are varied: the point of sharing, which is to incite thinking in settlers who might not be familiar with critical race theory (or other scholarship),

becomes non-performative (Ahmed, 2006), which results in a power dynamic of “eating the other” (hooks, 1992). Ahmed (2019) talks about the culture of diversity to show that proximity to non-white peoples gives settlers a false sense of morality, and this interjects with the actual work of diversity, which would require naming and challenging whiteness (pp. 143-145). Before Ahmed, hooks (1992) described this power dynamic by referring to the “culture of commodity”. She spoke about the act of naming racial difference, a form of currency that enables white people to acquire pleasure by showing “a bit” of closeness to non-white people (pp. 21-22).

When I was searching for a way to talk about the knowledge-producing dynamics (of subject over object) that I knew I was perpetrating in my practice, these authors came to mind. I thought of this excerpt, on the one hand: “Certainly from the standpoint of white supremacist capitalist patriarchy, the hope is that desires for the “primitive” or fantasies about the Other can be continually exploited, and that such exploitation will occur in a manner that reinscribes and maintains the status quo” (hooks, 1992, p. 22). The elitist attitude that I have developed over the years of my graduate school, by claiming to have a hard time breaking down “high-level understandings” for non-academic settlers is something that Sandra-Lynn critiques:

[...] you're focusing so much on research and information and how does that feed into sort of like elitism and educational privilege? [...] You want to prove that you have this information but [...] you have these people that are there, they're reacting to what you're saying, but you're grasping with your brain in your head and your knowledge of research, and it just gets stuck there, right? Because we're so focused on that decolonial or decolonising aspect that we're not pushing to the areas that we go [...] Like yes, you have PhD level knowledge, but to automatically assume someone who is arguing one way doesn't have the knowledge or the ability to gain that knowledge is also an issue...

The discursive distance that I claim in relation to settlers, given my education background, becomes a “speech act”, a concept that Ahmed (2006) uses to describe a form of lip service that that commits a person to *a future* action (p. 104). *It is non-performative*. To this extent, while I might declare that I respect critical race theory (and other knowledges of struggle and resistance) as a representation of experiences that cannot be reduced to a “commodity”, my practice is mired in a sense of entitlement that tells settlers, ‘Here is what you need to know [to be like me], but if you want to engage in conversation, please don’t’. Even though I would argue, as DiAngelo (2018) has predicted through his “cardinal rules”, that my intention is to assume the risks of antiracist work, the justifications that I offer for withdrawing from settler-settler conversations shows that, in practice, I treat knowledges of struggle and resistance as a commodity through which to self-make as a progressive (Ahmed, 2006, p. 117). The “desires for the “primitive” or fantasies about the Other” of which hooks talks about are seen in this non-performative practice because knowledges of struggle and resistance *stand for real people with real experiences*.

Sara Ahmed and Sandra-Lynn both share the opinion that, to an extent, social activism is by nature performative. Sandra-Lynn emphasizes that pushing through with that performance is what underlies a critical praxis, and Ahmed (2006) echoes this thought by showing that what can help people stray away from non-performativity is the understanding that what discourses do “depends on how they are ‘taken up’” (p. 105). She goes on to explain that if we want to know what discourses do, “we need to...see how they move as well as how they get stuck” (p. 105). This speaks to me in consideration of the following exchange:

Daniella: ...I have this theoretical understanding of how important it is to keep things open and see complexity. But then [pause]. When I have these assumptions [about needing to “educate” settlers], it's almost like I want to grab what I understand as the

meaning of decolonization. I want to grab it in my hands, and I want to make sure that we [settlers and I] exit that conversation in a different place. That's actually bringing things to a close rather than opening them ...

Sandra-Lynn: Kind of acting like your factory, right? You want everybody to be pushed out and get to “here”, but they don't want to get there. Right? Or maybe they're rejecting that for a reason and then you're not actually helping anybody, right?...

Daniella: ...when I'm teaching is the one moment where I feel ...like I am receptive, listening. I try to think about how I deliver information. And I don't know if it's because teacher training has, you know, a soft side...Like I'm more aware of it being a safe space [but] when I'm outside of that context I can't have a relationship with the recipient of the input, does that make sense? I don't know.

Sandra-Lynn: Somewhat. But the same question comes up for me: what's the point of all this work if it's going to sit on a shelf, on your mental self and it's going to stick there.

Why are you doing all of this? What's the point of the conversations and this thesis ... if it's just going to get shelved mentally or physically in your dissertation?

To help me work through the mechanisms of disavowal that I employ—despite understanding the importance of open dialogue and of seeking to center complexities in conversations about modalities of conquest—I have aimed to show myself self-distancing from non-academic settlers while dropping knowledge on them, expecting them to come to *my level*, rather than giving them space to grapple with their understandings of knowledges of struggle and resistance, and thus creating spaces for collectively working through our settler complicities.

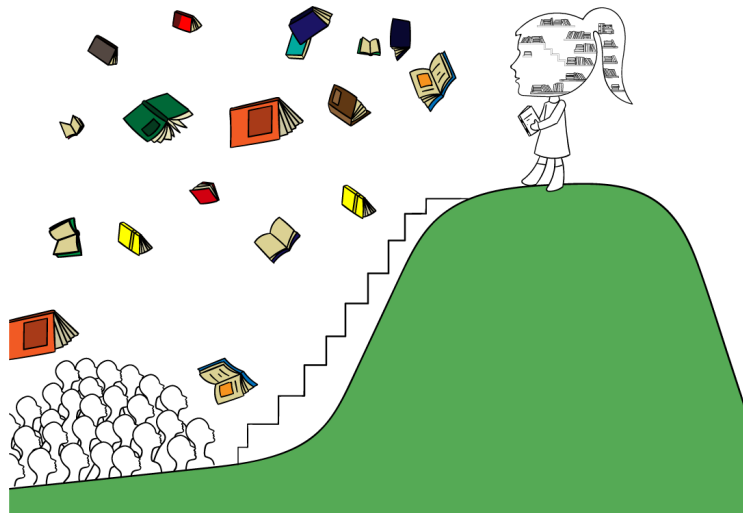


Figure 1. A representation of Daniella as “the settler academic” and as a “mental shelf”.
Image designed and digitalized by Janani Narahenpita.

The green hill is not simply décor, but rather, it is meant to show how settler colonization is animated through knowledge-producing dynamics that enable settlers to unsee our complicities. By using knowledge as an object rather than positioning knowledge as a true representation of Indigenous peoples’ and non-settler peoples’ experiences of struggle and resistance vis-à-vis a settler colonial order, I create a false dichotomy between my settlerness and my location as an academic. Rather than self-positioning as a settler academic *with a responsibility to work with my community of settlers while self-involving myself in our critiques of power*, I self-locate as just an academic who can objectively analyze power as something detached from my being.

When patterns of complicity are named and/or questioned, settlers have predictable responses” because white fragility can be seen erupting in denials, rejections, and the mutual hostility with which settlers relate to each other to prove that we know better or more than each other (DiAngelo, 2018, pp. 229-230). Although I tend to work through this idea by focusing on the resistances of non-academic settlers, my conversation with Sandra-Lynn reveals my personal investments in looking away from my own complicities. In this way, rather than working through

my silences by instead looking to examine *how I speak* (see Howard, 2006, p. 55), I speak to withdraw. How to speak—rather than if to speak—is a query that is rooted in complexity because it reflects the understanding that the approach matters as much as the content *because all matters related to conquest are complex*. Sandra-Lynn argued that, in her view, it is better for a settler to say something rather than nothing because the experience of speaking up and pushing through is ontologically distinct for non-settler people and Indigenous people than for settlers. Furthermore, for settlers, speaking up is a matter of responsibility: while an Indigenous or non-settler person **has the right** to disengage with settlers to exert agency and resistance, settlers cannot leverage this right (that we also have by virtue of our whiteness) **if the aim is to support decolonization**. If I look at the words that I have underlined in the back-and-forth exchange shared above, and if I try to play with them to form found poems, I can work through Sandra-Lynn’s question of how I might push through with the performative nature of social activism:

Daniella: grab
the meaning of decolonization.
in my hands,
make sure that we [settlers and I] exit that
conversation in a different place.

Sandra-Lynn: factory
Pushed out and get to “here”
sit on a shelf
mental self and it's going to stuck there.
shelved mentally or physically in your
dissertation.

I know that this exchange does not read as easily as when the words are embedded in their sentences. But the words, on their own, suffice to define how I am perpetrating what Aileen Moreton-Robinson (2015) defines as “the white possessive”, a concept that she develops in an account of how race and gender (“patriarchal whiteness”) legally establish Indigenous lands as empty, as up for grabs, as “land belonging to no one” (see p. 66). She draws from Cheryl Harris (1993) who coined the term “whiteness as property” to explain how land, race, and racism (in relation to Indigenous and Black peoples) gave settlers rights over Black persons (“chattel slavery”) and Indigenous lands (see pp. 66-67). Given that whiteness is not a “thing” but an

orientation (Ahmed, 2007, pp. 150-157 to see that whiteness *does* rather than whiteness is *done*), there are metaphysical elements (such as status and identity) that warrant protection, so that whiteness can continue to have social value (Harris, 1993, see specifically p. 1734 but also pp. 1734 through to 1741). Grabbing knowledge into my hands is not just a misplaced metaphor; everywhere in my conversation with Sandra-Lynn, there are discursive clues that show how I have used knowledge as a possession—a “commodity”, as something to “shelve” in my “mental self” (see figure 1). But the other a-relational aspect, wanting to “push” settlers “out here” *where I am*, shows, paradoxically and to evoke again DiAngelo’s rules, that if settlers push back and relay other knowledges that I might see as being acritical, then we cannot engage in dialogue. To add to this complicity, I am aware of the subject-object relationship that I have over knowledge, which I admit to Sandra-Lynn: “I know that doing that [dumping knowledge into a social media post with no regard for conversation] is like “eating the other” because...I don't want to spend that emotional, intellectual energy engaging with people [settlers] that are going to be responding...”. The implication here is that I am unwilling to push through with the performative nature of social media activism because settler-settler interactions are uncomfortable.

Sandra-Lynn evoked “boundary” to denote a difference in experience in relation to social media activism. She mentioned that meeting people where they are is about creating openings: “...that opening is important because sometimes it goes well, sometimes it doesn’t...sometimes they’re confused and that’s okay. But you’re not even giving people the opportunity to learn anything”. My practices of complicity, in other words, are harmful to any possibility of working through individual and collective forms of complicities with other settlers, which I admit in the conversation: “So, I'm giving this thought, which is basically a conclusion, a closing, instead of understanding that just the same way that I've had a right or the opportunity to a process, settlers

should have that right”. Creating a process where I, along with my community of settlers, can “...grapple with the conflicts we are engaged in” towards “try[ing] to understand them and how [we] perpetuate [them]”(Macoun, 2016, p. 88), is what gives this entire dissertation value exactly in the way I want to think and engage decolonial solidarity: across time and space.

Sandra-Lynn: [1] Because your whole point of this work is to critically engage different areas of settler versus non-settler and a variety of ideologies inside of it. But then you're just allowing yourself to let people do whatever they want or think whatever they want,

[2] and when they engage with us, *the people you're trying to support*, it goes really poorly on our end... You're just allowing this colonialism, this colonisation, white supremacy to keep going on... For me, if someone's just rejecting something, I'll try. It doesn't work. That's it. We're done.

[3] *And I have to put a boundary. But you're allowing there to be no boundary there. But then you don't want to talk to them because you assume they don't know anything. So, your boundary is there.* And I don't think that's super helpful when it comes to challenging settler colonialism or settler colonization.

I have numbered this excerpt to help the reader follow the points that I want to reiterate. [1] Positionality is not static. I am always a settler and one of the central ways in which I can show my commitment to “the people I am trying to support”, which are my friends from Kahnawà:ke, is by demonstrating a dynamic relationship to knowledge through which to show myself grappling with the elements of my being that are interpellated in (my) dominance. I have to do this alongside my own community of settlers. [2] For, while settlers and I will not eliminate our complicity by engaging each other critically, leaving whiteness unnamed is to re/naturalize the colonial order. [3] When it comes to any form of activism, the stakes are distinct for those involved as leaders or participants. While I do not have a right to disengage from dialogue with settlers, I have a responsibility to strive for a balance where I am not tiptoeing around implicating settler people in our complicity (putting a boundary to their/our fragility). I also have a responsibility (a) to think about the delivery of my communication by having a dynamic

relationship with knowledges of struggle and resistance; and **(b)** to follow through with dialogue, regardless of how the rules of white fragility regulate the exchange. These elements are about working to drop boundaries of elitism where knowledge gets turned into a settler commodity.

One of the complicities seen in my conversation with Mark is intimately connected to my tendency to self-position at a distance from our/my settlerness by engaging knowledge intellectually without examining my implications in my critiques. For although I enter my conversation with Mark wanting to avoid these practices of complicity, as I discuss next, I still reproduce a form of education elitism alongside him. Through the effect of self-distancing, the point that I wish to work through next is that this complicity is co-enabled by both of us as Mark and I engage in our conversation from an intellectual perspective—and without working through our role as perpetrators of the complicity in question. My point is that we have to be willing to involve ourselves in our critiques—how do we perpetrate dominance in our very attempts at being critical?—and hold the tensions that are generated (Levine-Rasky, 2012, 2016).

8.3 How Settlers Co-enable Each Other's Complicities

White people, unable to see their particularity, cannot take account of other people's; White people create the dominant images of the world and don't quite see that they thus construct the world in their own image (Dyer, 1997, p. 12).

In working through the elements of my complicity, I also will be attending to the elements of Mark's complicity. It can be easier, as I have shown above through my own tendencies, for settlers to want to focus our gaze on "other settlers" so that, in so doing, we can shield ourselves from having to examine our own complicities. Despite knowing the issues rooted in this dynamic, working through it is filled with frictions that often result in the same *reification* (Ahmed, 2007): settlers looking away from themselves, away from each other, outwards into a "nebulous" somewhere wherein to find dominance and complicity (Howard,

2006, pp. 45 and 50-51). **This co-enabling dynamic (see figure two) makes the task of working through our complicities significant in terms of how decolonial solidarity does not stop with tangible gestures, mostly those that involve settler-Indigenous relations.** As I have said in this work, if dispossession is unbounded (Simpson in Simpson & Coulthard, 2014⁵⁶), what are the unbounded ways in which settlers can look anywhere and at everything⁵⁷, including onto ourselves, to name the ways in which we contribute to the colonial order? Dyer's words serve to remind of the contradictions embedded in this practice, but despite them, we have to persist, to do more than be willing to think critically about whiteness.

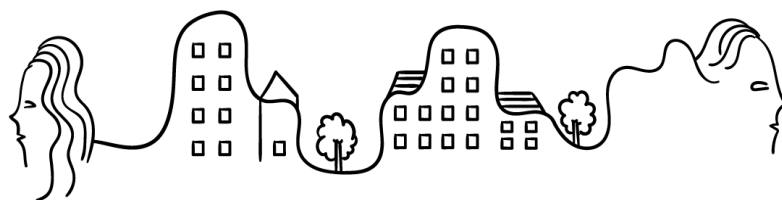


Figure 2. “When settlers look away, thinking we know more or better”.

Image designed and digitalized by Janani Narahenpita.

⁵⁶ Access the conversation: <https://decolonization.wordpress.com/2014/11/26/leanne-simpson-and-glen-coulthard-on-dechinta-bush-university-indigenous-land-based-education-and-embodied-resurgence/>

⁵⁷ When I say anywhere and everything, I am thinking about Lisa Lowe (2015) and Shaista Patel (2018) who builds from Lowe to argue and demonstrate that complicities can be seen in mundane things such as objects, art, music. Lowe has a chapter in her book where she explores this point in relation to vanity and the objects that can be found in elite houses (for instance, how textiles were stolen from India to vest families with the status of wealth and comfort, while India continued to be exploited under British rule). Shaista Patel traces the figure of the “Indian Queen” across periods of time, denoting, similarly, how socialization works through the creation of hierarchies (both in relation to indigeneity and Blackness, but also in relation to Muslims; these categories intersect). Thus, my work is mindful of the fact that decolonial solidarity—the practice that seeks to name and work through settler complicities as a matter of responsibility towards Indigenous peoples—is not devoid of looking everywhere and at everything wherein settlerness is made and re-made. Settler-settler conversations are a way of doing this, and often, they require unpacking colonial and racial modalities of conquest that are diverse, while always interconnected to questions of land.

As I show in the following de-layering of our conversation, the image represents Mark and I, for even though we are willing to engage in dialogue about moments when we have been complicit, we are limited in our willingness to implicate ourselves in the conversation. We tend to distance ourselves from each other, but also from our complicities, and end up engaging to prove our knowledge and/or innocence. The skyline is meant to draw us back to the figure presented in chapter four of Canada's foundations, and to emphasize that failing to account for our own complicities has structural and systemic effects that secure a settler colonial order for settlers. As I de-layer the discursive practices that outline our complicities—mostly with dysconsciousness, fragility, and abandoning our responsibilities at the point of naming our whiteness—I want to point out that these layers are interconnected. If layer one touches on dysconsciousness and layer two on naming but not working through our complicity, for example, it is not because these complicities are independent of each other. The compartmentalization is strategic (needed in a way) to illustrate with precision how these complicities regulate our discursive space and practices. The organization of the following phases of de-layering begins with an overview of the concept that I am using to think and work through each specific complicity (for example, “dysconsciousness”). This discursive portion will be followed by a dotted line, which I use to denote a transition to the analysis where the conversation will be mostly unpacked.

8.3.1 Layer 1: Co-enabling Dysconsciousness

Joyce King (1991) defines dysconscious racism as “an uncritical habit of mind that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as a given” (p. 135). Dysconsciousness is *not unconsciousness*, and so, it is different from critical consciousness. What is interesting is that, for her, **critical consciousness can still lead settlers to reproduce the**

“social order” through our very attempts at critically opposing it. For example, after examining her students’ reflections over two years of teaching, she notices an “impaired” view of why historical and structural inequities persist today (pp. 137-138). Except for one student, all her students sidestep their own complicities with these legacies. They can talk about the effects of inequity on non-white people, but they *choose* not to link inequity to their privilege, as the only student does by admitting that “racism *served* the purposes of *ruling groups*” which he is a part of (p. 139, my emphasis). “Why is it that more students do not think this way?”, she asks (p. 140). Her question is rhetorical, because she already knows that dysconsciousness is stressed by a “subjective identification” with the dominant ideology of whiteness (p. 135). Seeing and naming whiteness but *choosing* to separate oneself from it, as a settler, can be considered a strategic form of complicity, however conscious it may be. The question that interests me is not why settlers might not connect issues of power and inequity to the settler capitalist order, **but how, even when we do, we still deny our complicity.**

I want to use this question to frame my exploration of the context of my conversation with Mark, which leads us into a heated discussion about the applicability of critical race theory to “real life” in a discussion about the myth of meritocracy and its ties to racism. Mark and I co-enable each other to perpetrate dysconsciousness for two interrelated but still different motives. For Mark, dysconsciousness becomes a tool through which to assuage guilt and safekeep his intentions about being a moral and fair person. For me, dysconsciousness becomes a tool through which to try to self-regulate my academic tendencies, which I have discussed alongside Sandra-Lynn’s dialogue. While important to balance, I show how I slide into complicity by sheltering Mark’s feelings and my own, and thus, enabling us to look away from our complicities.

.....
[Threads that lead us into complicity of “looking away” from our complicities]

As we met, Mark wanted me to give him examples of appropriate moments for this work. When I suggested that we talk about non-fungible tokens (mentioned in chapter six), he said that our conversation about that moment reminded him of “...the many other examples in society that exist and replicate that behavior...of exploration, conquer, conquest, and capitalism in the sense that they are present throughout us, even without us really knowing. For example, in board games like Catan and Monopoly...”. Mark spoke about his evolution, admitting that, a few years ago, when I had commented on the conquered/conquering socializing aspects of these board games, he dismissed my remark as an exaggeration. We spoke about how these games normalize capitalism as a system of opportunity that naturalizes settler colonial logics of exploitation, competition, and settlement. Mark and I agreed that the creators of these games do not need to be seen as having “malicious” intentions in their craft; rather, as Mark points out, these creators are making a game to “reflect what *your* society *was* like”.

As seen through his choice of pronoun (“your”) and past tense (“was”), while Mark acknowledges the systemic and pervasive nature of a conquer mentality in the present, he also self-positions at a distance from these creators (who are settlers or Europeans) and from the context of conquest (as though it was part of a distant past). This dysconsciousness *could be* a result of his experience of personal and group-based guilt, which leads settlers to recognize and want to redress structural injustices but while moving to assuage guilt (Yyer, Leach & Pedersen, 2004). This move to innocence (Tuck & Yang, 2012) happens when, as settlers, we distance ourselves from the oppressed by denying responsibility (Iyer, Leach & Pedersen, 2004, p. 353) or by portraying them as “broken” (Tuck & Yang, 2014)—which I will touch on below—but also by distancing ourselves from other settlers and from the structures of ongoing conquest that confer on us unearned privileges, as seen here via these pronouns (Howard, 2006, pp. 50-51).

Going on with our discussion of the socially enrooted conqueror mentality, Mark thought of a conversation that we had with a friend a few years ago: “...we were talking about how...things that happened back then, we justify them now”. The conversation that Mark was referencing unfolded with one of his closest friends. This friend problematically argued that conquest could be justified through the survival of the fittest⁵⁸: for him, if a weaker group was conquered, it was only because the conqueror was stronger and, thus, entitled to the territory. Mark disagreed with his friend, sharing with me that “...today, when we see that [conqueror mentality] happening in our world, you wouldn’t accept the same...yet *a lot of people* justify it as having happened back then, and that we should just overlook it or move past it because...*they* weren’t strong enough to defend their land...”. While Mark problematizes his friend’s stance, he also places a distant temporality to “things that happened back then”, and which he later re-describes as a shift from overt racism to racism that “happens kind of behind the scenes”, which is “how *they* [people in power] get away with it”. The pronoun “they”, which stands in place of diversely located Indigenous peoples who were affected by imperial conquest, lessens the violence of land theft and dispossession that affected the **real** original stewards of those lands. *They* insinuates that Indigenous peoples might have been anyone, and so, no one.

Just as I wanted to address the distant temporality that Mark attributed to conquest, I also perpetrated this post-colonial mentality by affirming that ongoing relations of conquest have lesser effects today than they did back then: “...I agree that today it’s less abuse, it’s less overt...”. This is a discursive example (of many instances in our conversation) where I self-

⁵⁸ Darwinism was actually used by European imperialists to justify conquest by arguing that whiteness was “selected” whereas blackness was “dysselected” by evolution (Wynter, 2003). Thus, its ideological evocation here is not inconsequential—it cannot be dismissed as an outcome of ignorance or as an unformed opinion. Rather, it is a form of complicity with relations of conquest, specifically with its anti-Black and anti-Indigenous effects.

regulated the directness with which I would have normally responded to post-colonial and post-racial views of society, such as by saying that if the effects of conquest appear less overt, it is only because of our privileged lens. Furthermore, despite indirectly challenging this post-racial lens, I do so by erasing the immediate effects of settler capitalism in Canada and offering us questions about ongoing conquest “elsewhere”: Why, for example, are countries in Africa still under the soil of poverty while Western institutions, like the IMF and World Bank, build more wealth? What about the war for oil that displaces racialized communities through geopolitical dispossession? Through these questions, the effect is, inadvertently, to reinforce the commonly held settler view that Canada is separate from conquest (McKittrick, 2014; Walcott, 2014) because of Canada’s international façade as the “most humanitarian” (Thobani, 2007) and harmonious society (Howard & James, 2021). Erasing the structural context of settler Canada has implications for settler responsibility, making it possible for settlers to reject having privilege, to distance ourselves from settlers who might be unwilling to learn (Macoun, 2016, pp. 85-86) and from whiteness, which we learn to see as always “happening in a nebulous “out there” (Howard, 2006, p. 45).

Through the imperfections of this exchange, Mark continued to acknowledge his evolution and commitment to be critical of his/our whiteness,

...But I'm trying to think now of where my mentality shifted because obviously my way of understanding the world through this lens [critical race theory] is in large part thanks to you...because I probably wouldn't have been able to draw the same conclusions or come to the same realizations by myself. A lot of people can—and you teach this in class, and you always preface these lectures by saying, “what you're about to learn is going to

be upsetting and you're going to want to deny it at first. But as you're understanding comes together, then you understand your implication, your involvement in it" ...

At this point, Mark identified *the* moment that felt like a shift: "A moment I can think about where it started to turn was a time that we were at a friend's party...". At the party that Mark is referring to, one of our friends, Jen, was discussing private and public education with another woman who we did not know, Maite. Jen, not yet a mother and racially privileged, argued that private education is better than public education and that parents make sacrifices to afford tuition. She was responding to Maite who had been sharing her financial struggles and inability to put her children through private school despite her wishes for 'a better education'⁵⁹. Mark described feeling confused: "...we went home, and we had a discussion, and I couldn't remember why you were defending this person where everyone at the party was against her because she was being very *loud and obnoxious*, and [we were] not understanding her point of view...".

I remember our discussion on the way home. I saw our friend Jen, a white woman (not even a mom at the time), undermining another woman's experience of struggle through the myth of meritocracy (see Zamudio et al., 2011). While prejudices that emerge from this myth might be "outside of conscious awareness" (Crosby & Blake-Beard, 2004, p. 154), they can also be the result of an "impaired" awareness through which settlers *choose* to unsee our whiteness (King, 1991, p. 135). Our friend was defending the ideology of meritocracy by evoking her parents' immigrant background, and the narrative of their hard work to put them through private school

⁵⁹ I place quotations around "better education" to acknowledge a common perception of private education being superior to public education. Although I cannot unpack the layers that underlie this conversation, I do wish to acknowledge that western education is a result of colonial conquest (Ahmed, 2019, chapter 3) and that it is rooted in neoliberalism (Sonu & Benson, 2016), as well as racial capitalism (Pierce, 2017). Western education serves white people, particularly middle-class white people, while it ensures perpetual economic gaps for non-white peoples, in addition to representing a system of dehumanization (to varying degrees) (see special issue Snaza, 2016).

just as settlers justify our complicity with land theft by claiming that we built a life from nothing (McLean, 2018). The myth of meritocracy is always anti-Indigenous because it enables settlers to create social and political systems—one of which is education—that are needed to ensure settler sovereignties (Andrade & Cooper, 2019, p. 26). As in his evocation of the board games Catan and Monopoly, Mark conjured this moment to show *now* knowing better⁶⁰ why it was important to speak up and challenge Jen’s and our racist self-entitlement. However, and despite this shift in his view, it was interesting to hear him describe Maite as “loud” and “obnoxious”, and so, in this way, demonstrate how our whiteness regulates our intentions and commitments to be critical of our privilege.

At this point, I would like to unpack the discursive layers of the ideas through which we can see my/his/our complicities in at least two interconnected ways: in relation to our racism towards Maite, which is only exacerbated throughout the portion of our conversation where we focus on *her* and on judging her reaction (by defending or condemning it) instead of using that discursive space to collaboratively reverse-the-gaze on ourselves (Brown & Strega, 2015).

8.3.2 Layer 2: Naming White Privilege but Abandoning Working Through

Years ago, Peggy McIntosh (1988) wrote a text that went viral, about her realization that while she experienced oppression as a woman, she was a benefactor of racial privilege for her whiteness. Towards illustrating her understanding, she developed a list of benefits accrued to her at the expense of African American peoples⁶¹. I bring her up because, as much as her text has

⁶⁰ See Audra Simpson (2013) for an examination of how “now” and “knowing better” are framings of settler time, which as in Harper’s apology in 2008, disavows responsibility and reproduces post-colonialism. My choice of words here are meant to demonstrate how, as settlers, we participate in this disavowal, justifying our complicities as not having known any better.

⁶¹ She writes in relation to African peoples. However, racial privilege is made through intersecting relations of conquest that inform whiteness, and so, racial privilege is not binary.

been useful for people like me to name our whiteness, it is also important to point out that naming our racial privilege is not the same as examining how and why it continues to exist (Levine-Rasky, 2010, pp. 280-281). Having the language to name our dominance can become non-performative by being devoid of its intended impact and making the naming *stand for* the task of working to be critical about it (Ahmed, 2006). For example, to varying degrees, Mark and I understand the myth of meritocracy; but while we can name it, the more critical task of seeing and acknowledging how we benefit from it is difficult to uphold in real time for too long, as is the case in our conversation. Not seeing how we benefit from it is not an issue of consciousness as much as a result of our *subjective investments* in feeling morally righteous (if we work through how we benefit from it, we see that we enjoy privileges at the expense of others; thus, our conceptions of morality and fairness become undone). This contradictory investment is seen in a concluding portion of our conversation where, after spending time trying to prove that meritocracy is not *always* a myth, Mark admits the following.

Mark: Well, if I'm being truly reflective, maybe it's an egotistical [argument] or maybe you're right: it is being dominant of the fact that I felt bad or guilty of saying that [Maite] was loud and obnoxious and I'm trying to justify my use of that, which is how the conversation ended up focusing entirely on that topic. So yeah, if you want to change the lens to be like, 'What can we do?' ...I mean...because you spun the conversation, like, 'I want to focus on your use of those terms'...

However, while making this confession, Mark still displaces guilt onto me for getting hung up on his qualification of the woman as being loud and obnoxious, while erasing the racist aggression of our settler friend, and our own. Here, I want to focus on how we co-enabled each other to

name our privilege and complicity from an intellectual position, but while sidestepping the more important task of following through with an examination of how we benefit and reify whiteness.

.....
 Women of color are routinely dismissed as “troublemakers” when they speak up and challenge white people to face up the injustices that benefit us at their expense. To this extent, women of color are seen as “killjoys”, and in this situation, Mark saw Maite’s loud response as a transgression since it threatened the happiness that is convened to settlers through the myth of meritocracy (see Ahmed, 2010 pp. 62-65). Meanwhile, Jen’s high-pitched tone and the mere aggressivity of the ideas that she continued to push forward on Maite, while diminishing her lived experience as a mother and person of color, are displaced from the examination of our complicities in that moment—and by extension, again here, in this dialogue.

Daniella: ...She [Jen, our settler friend] was *also* very emotional and strong about what she was defending [the myth of meritocracy]. We don’t put emphasis on that reaction...[or] on... why were we uncomfortable. Maite was challenging something, it was like she was breaking our conceptual framework of meritocracy...

Mark: I think the reason why [her reaction] stood out in my mind was because it wasn't that single moment...I recall her being a loud and obnoxious person throughout that evening...It's true what you're saying, but I'm saying that if there's not [a racialized context like the one Daniella is describing], it doesn't justify being like that in all circumstances...And on [our friend’s] side, she's also having her aggressions... that's true as well. But...you could flip flop everything in the scenario and... they're going to be justified in their own ways based on who each person was...

Mark extrapolated that the woman was reacting aggressively, not given her exposure to racism in that instance, but because this aggressivity was built into her character—something that he

claims to have seen “throughout that evening”. Through his white male gaze, he imposes a temporal measure on when it is acceptable for a woman of color to have a reaction that he considers to be “uncivil”, saying that if in this instance it could be seen as a reasonable reaction, it is only because of the racialized context. “We don't know if that person's normal behavior is [like that] with their mother, their daughter, their friends [...]”, he said, and “*I know the playing field is not leveled...and we have to find ways*—but we have to find ways of dealing with each other civilly...”. When is a context in a settler colonial present ever not racialized? Even when spaces are occupied only by white people, those spaces are racialized despite the fact that whiteness wants to be the unmarked center (Dyer, 1997, p. 12). Mark knows this; it is seen in the italicized portion of his discourse where he likely begins articulating elements of our responsibility in response to the unlevelled field yet moves to undermine his/our complicity by wrongfully hypothesizing about the woman’s inherently aggressive nature in other contexts.

The emphasis on “also” (in my discourse) is as important, for it demonstrates that discursive choices such as this one, while on the surface insignificant, can have reificatory effects in terms of naturalizing dominant assumptions (Ahmed, 2007). The adverb insinuates that Mark’s gaze at the woman’s reaction has some merit, that she is indeed loud and obnoxious, and so, instead of naming (our) whiteness and understanding her reaction as pushback to our dominance, our collective agreement has the effect of reifying our damaged-center view of her (Tuck, 2009) while moving to assuage our (and our friend’s) complicity with racism. By pointing out this seemingly minor detail, I aim to show the ways in which settler subjectivities (how we understand *and* move to secure a world that confers on us the privilege of standing as the universal mark of experience) are reproduced in the mundane and taken-for-granted aspects of language. We have a responsibility to name and try to work through these subjective angles

given that, as small as these might seem to settlers, they have as problematic effects as our friend's complicity in that moment. As a result of the discursive practices that I chose to use, at times fully consciously to stray away from hostile dynamics, Mark was under impression that I agreed with his central argument: "...I gave you my arguments and you tend to agree with them. Or at least you're telling me that you agree that there's more to the person that we don't know...".

Mark's argument evolved throughout the conversation because he felt annoyed, as shown above, that I "spun" the conversation to focus on the qualifiers loud and obnoxious. But it was important for me to point out these qualifiers because of Mark's contradictory point of entry into this conversation as a more enlightened version of himself compared to that night when he did not understand why we had participated in racism. While this was an important point of discussion, however, I had also evolved since then, and in retrospect, perhaps a better pedagogy would have been to share how I had come to problematize my stance that night, beginning with questioning my assumptions about that woman's reaction. The aim would have been to model self-implicating in conversations about power towards remaining engaged rather than distant—playing the mediator—from our shared complicities. This is difficult to do for the acquisition of knowledge can center settler consciousness as an index of progress itself, rather than focusing settlers' attention on the task of teaching and learning to be critical (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 19).

Together, we contributed to the establishment of a discursive dynamic where we fended for ourselves to prove the validity of our knowledge, rather than working to make our complicities explicit *even after feeling like we had evolved in our understanding and stance*. Mark's focus was to prove his innocence, even though he understands that the ideas that he circulated towards demonstrating his innocence reify whiteness as seen here (and further below):

Mark: ...But I truly feel like I'm not going to come across well... I argued a side that probably every single person that you study with will say I'm a complete idiot.

Daniella: But why would you argue that side if you—

Mark: ...I'm not saying that I don't think what I said is wrong. But if you apply the lens of critical race theory, then yeah, I'm wrong. But I think that there's more to it—

Daniella: What—like a white lens, white theory?

I was complicit with self-distancing from the conversation by challenging what Mark was saying rather than finding ways of unpacking his assumptions, but while implicating myself in the exercise. My response is even rooted in an aggressive irony (“what—like a white lens?”), and this tone can generate further defensiveness and denial for both of us rather than responsibility. Additionally, my failure to make theoretical knowledge accessible to him can stand as a demonstration of how I self-distance from our conversation—and so from my own complicity—by re/drawing on my elitist education privilege—and this, despite trying to avoid this practice.

8.3.3 Layer 3: Monopolizing the Discursive Space

There are underlying settler investments that lead settlers to recolonize the critical discursive space of a conversation like the one presented so far. Such recolonization occurs when the problem of concern, for settlers, is not that colonization is ongoing (as we know it to be) but rather of using our presumed critical positionings to present ourselves as virtuous, progressive, and distinct from the real settlers (Macoun & Strakosch, 2016, pp. 433-434). This move to innocence, a form of complicity that occurs through contradictory contexts of wanting, trying, and/or pretending to be invested in the disruption of whiteness (Macoun & Strakosch, 2016, p. 426), tends to be seen when settlers engage with Indigenous and non-settler peoples, a space where whiteness routinely tries to establish the limits of what and how something can be known

through settler peoples' silences (Howard, 2006). While settlers can move to justify silence by arguing that we do not want to misstep and speak in the place of Indigenous and non-settler peoples, mainly in shared spaces (Howard, 2006, pages 55-57), settlers can recenter our whiteness in settler-settler conversations and still be complicit with "seiz[ing] voice while silencing other voices" (p. 55). We do this when we defend our dominance via dismissals of the real and embodied significance of theories *that we know stand for* the real peoples, the authors, the voices through which we are called to be critical of our "impaired" consciousness (King, 1999). We do this when we extrapolate to avoid facing up our complicities.

In order to examine how Mark and I monopolize the discursive space through extrapolations, there are two main threads in our conversation that deserve problematization, and which I use to elucidate two forms of dismissal by which Mark and I become complicit with re/centering our dominance. These forms of dismissal are connected in their reificatory effects of shielding our settler fragility, but the settler investments underlying them are different. In wanting to defend his innocence, Mark places a settler temporality on critical race theory, arguing that it cannot be applied as a blanket statement to name whiteness, that there can be other reasons for a non-white person's inability to make it by and through settler societies (other than whiteness as a system of dominance and power itself). He establishes his criticality—by insinuating that critical race theory is not all wrong, just not right when it is an inconvenience—and thus, he limits the reach of knowledges of struggle and resistance. As for me, I stand for, and so displace, critical race theory in implicit and explicit ways, which is an outcome of my efforts to re/orient the conversation towards an examination of our whiteness while self-positioning as an outsider to the complicities that I help perpetrate.

.....

After questioning Mark's choices of words and his focus on Maite rather than on our friend and our roles, meritocracy all of a sudden became something other than the myth we both know it to be. Employing a colorblind lens, Mark first extrapolated the context that we were discussing to other spheres of the woman's life—asking, what if she was loud and obnoxious everywhere, including with people of her own race? Would I still defend her behaviour? —and then, to abstract contexts pertaining to people of color in general.

Mark: But what happens if it's actually just because...they don't want to work harder, they don't want to do more... because I feel like [racialized] people ... sometimes don't even know the ...systemic pressures that are against them...and maybe that's not even the point [of their struggles]... Maybe that's not even why they're not able to advance and put their kids in [private] high school.

Extrapolating works as a form of settler complicity because the assumptions that Mark makes, about the woman's behaviour extending “everywhere”, beyond this moment, work as a concluding method through which to overlook racial difference and the fact that all spaces are racialized. It is a way for him to bypass the fact that he used two racist qualifiers, and that he could articulate these given his racial privilege.

Mark: ... if I just tell you that [Maite] doing that [being loud and obnoxious] in everyday life is not acceptable, you agree with that, right? Or would you not?

Daniella: Well, I wouldn't say that.

Mark: Just simply yes or not.

Daniella *No, I wouldn't agree or disagree [1]. I would just say exactly what you just said, you don't know the person [2].* And you know that she's a visible, racialized person...

Mark: Well, she wasn't even like—

Daniella: ...Yeah, she was Latina, for sure. She was a Brown woman.

Mark: But then...I take back what I said. I disagree with critical race theory because you would say the same thing if she hit [our friend]. You would say, 'well, you know, she was facing these microaggressions'. Then what if I said, 'okay, well, she does that every day, she hits her mom, her daughter, the bank teller'. And you would still say, 'I don't know' ... But now you're drawing the line between verbal aggression and physical abuse...we also have moral obligations as a society... and I know the playing field is not leveled, but if you take this theory and you share it with the world and this group of people is allowed to yell at you whenever they want, that's not an answer to society...

As in other cases already discussed, the italicized portion in my discourse highlights a response of compliance that acts as a silence because it is reificatory of whiteness. I numbered my response to show my neutral [1] and complaisant [2] stance before remarking on Maite's race. I thought of Sandra-Lynn's observation about the neutrality in my posts from her perspective as a Haudenosaunee woman, and I realized that, as I state in this chapter's introduction through Eddo-Lodge, "the journey towards understanding structural racism still requires people of colour to prioritize *white feelings*..." (p. ix). While our exchange was private, our feelings were still the priority. Our dysconsciousness shows that while we are willing to have a 'critical' conversation, we are unwilling to admit the power that we bring into this conversation, which is why Mark slides into a colorblind stance by which he denies what he knows: that meritocracy is a myth.

It is important to pause and note that, while colorblindness refers to the liberal view that race is (or has become) inconsequential (Zamudio et al., 2011), here, the implication is not that Mark does not recognize the relevance of race so much that he judges the woman's skin as not being brown enough. The idealization of darker skin as a measure through which to validate or

dismiss oppression is inherently anti-Black, because the insinuation that Mark makes is that he would be more sensitive (read: critical) if the woman's skin was closer to blackness, which demonstrates how whiteness acquires content by making blackness its object⁶². However, as Joyce King (1999) writes in relation to her white students, what is important is not to demonstrate that white people are racists (or anti-Black); it is important to attend to the ways in which white people *consciously* commit to an impaired view of whiteness, a task that is vital towards de-naturalizing white dominance (see p. 140). By choosing to measure race, Mark can not only deny meritocracy but also enter our conversation as though there was no context of personal and collective complicities. When I name the woman's race, he moves to deny the utility of critical race theory by re-tapping into his patriarchal racial privilege, re-undermining Maite's lived experience in that moment, but also by adding violence to the extent of extrapolating prescribed notions of "the other" as a risk to white people ("But then, would you say the same thing if she hit our friend?").

On my part, the neutral-complaisant stance (in italics), paired with my mention of race, shows a layered contradiction in terms of wanting to challenge Mark but being unwilling to face up to the full ramifications of doing so (compromising the stability of the conversation?) by instead softening the delivery. In this context, naming the woman's race to make a point is a form of complicity that can⁶³ tokenize and de-personalize her. A critical response would have been to name Mark's extrapolation, and encourage us to unpack it, by instead returning the gaze

⁶² I am thinking here of Hall & Alhassan (2017) who use the concept "light supremacy" to demonstrate how the ideals of whiteness give non-white immigrants "currency" in the pursuit of the American Dream (given that they have been indoctrinated to believe in the false ideals of white supremacy), but while perpetrating anti-Blackness.

⁶³ I say "can" to recognize the effects that are always possible, but also to recognize that non-white people have agency and exert it to undermine the white gaze. To this extent, I want to be mindful of not essentializing that the effect would be, indeed, felt as a de-personalization.

on us in relation to the moment that we gathered to discuss. Instead, we continued to talk about the Latina woman while discussing abstract scenarios about people of color breaking the moral rules that guide “human” conduct. To this extent, my efforts to guard the stability of our conversation is a move to shield settler fragility (his and mine), which works as an armour to a common liberal dynamic wherein progressive settlers are unwilling to expose our complicity by self-positioning as morally superior; something that can be seen implicitly in wanting to minimize the possibility of bursting our “civil” conversation while showing our commitment to dialogue *but on our terms* (DiAngelo, 2018, pp. 63-64). This is tied to our recognize whiteness’ significance in settler society but denying its microcosm effects in settler-settler conversations⁶⁴.

It is also true that, in the moment, I was unsure about how to address Mark’s own evocation of morality, civility, law, and society (some of these instances are underlined in his discursive portions). These tags are interconnected through long histories of conquest that underlie the national body (as a State) and the individual white subject who is legitimized by virtue of embodying morality and civility per her whiteness (Ahmed, 2019, pp. 56-67). By extension, western meanings of civility and morality also work to *variously* exclude “groups designated as Other” so that, through that dominance, the margins of humanity (i.e., who counts as human) can be clarified and legitimized (Razack, 1999, p. 161,170) against property rights (Byrd et al., 2018). It was difficult for me to proceed in the conversation, because, while being aware of the violence imbuing his evocation of morality and civility, morality is very much interrelated with emotions, and emotions are social and cultural practices that “shape” not only

⁶⁴ I am thinking of this, “A corollary to this unracialized identity is the ability to recognize Whiteness as something that is significant and that operates in society, but to not see how it relates to one’s own life.” (DiAngelo, 2010, p. 59).

what “bodies can do” but also what bodies *want* to do (Ahmed, 2014, pp. 4-5). For me, in this case, there was a delay in my ability and willingness to plainly challenge Mark’s assumptions, as here seen: “Why are you making assumptions about the other side, the other group of people, that if you don't take the stance that [our friend] took, then it's going to lead to more violence? Why are you making that assumption?”. Instead of this question, which came only later, I drew on our flawed evocation of morality (re the “appropriate” social adequate) by extrapolating, but this time by grafting two settlers into the scenario discussed, one to stand in place of Maite:

Daniella: But what if it would have been a white person? And I also get hung up on the words that you use [loud and obnoxious] ...? [would he still make the same arguments?]

Mark: the same thing...I would have defended the use of those words... and this is my whole point; if a person is being loud and obnoxious, I don't think that is a way to behave. And sure the playing field is not even...but we have to find ways of dealing with each other civilly. Like you're a religious person, you know what's right and wrong. You have a moral conduct that you follow, right? You wouldn't go and hit someone. You wouldn't murder someone because you have your principles. I do, too...And that's what I'm saying is: it's not about race. *It's about interacting with another human being.*

The contradiction in my discursive practice is that, while I know why the framing of morality is enmeshed with white supremacy, I fail to be critical by instead doing, again, what Eddo-Lodge condemns: prioritizing my white feelings.

Here, the prioritization of white feelings, while always connected to settler fragility, can be seen as a layered form of complicity to the extent that it is concealed under a failed attempt at moving us, Mark and me, towards examining how whiteness exists through us. The medium of extrapolation (“what if...”), as seen in my question, turns the task of working through our

complicities into a personal workshop through which to tap into our moral integrity to come around on the dynamic of “supremacy” underlying our dialogue. Because this question tries to garner Mark’s sympathy on coming around on his stance, the question itself works to naturalize white morality by drawing from it, and in this way, the question works to rationalize white dominance and privilege (see Levine-Rasky, 2012, pp. 328-329). Given the way in which I fuel a discursive space wherein whiteness goes unquestioned, I should have anticipated that my inadequate “pedagogy” bore more of the same supremacy that was already in place. For example, Mark is not a religious person. For many years, he felt repelled by religion, but through my faith, throughout the years, he has expanded his view to include nuance, for example, about the way in which imperialists drew closeness to and distance from religion as needed: closeness when they wanted to look away from their complicities and distance when they needed to evoke Christianity to conquer (see Wynter 2003 and Patel 2018 on the evolution of man’s descriptive statements in relation to the Requisition). Where he evokes my “religiosity” and pairs it with his code of ethics to judge Maite’s reaction, he draws on this closeness/distance dynamic to look away from race, and so, from having to face up our racism (which he is aware of). It is like evoking the Church as a “mistress” to prove our settler morality and “criminalize” Maite’s ways of being (see Bedford and Workman, 2002, pp. 25-26) or by admiring Pope Francis’ apology to Indigenous peoples while he recognized Canada’s sovereignty over that of Indigenous Peoples.

The evocation of a moral code to “interact with another human being” is also an issue, a contradiction in Mark’s own dominant positioning; Eddo-Lodge would describe it as an “emotional disconnect” and “white people’s never-questioned entitlement”, since “embracing” the Latina woman as an equal would require, at the most basic level, embracing her thoughts and feelings rather than questioning their validity (pp. xi-xii). Mark has read *The Intimacies of Four*

Continents, a text that very clearly unweaves the myth around human rights in relation to ongoing histories of conquest . We have had conversations about the text, as it applies to real life, so hearing him evoke these liberal ideas was a noticeable choice to look through an impaired lens (King, 1999), an investment to move to innocence that I have already discussed. There is also a greater contradiction in the way he pairs the discourse about “human interactions”—with his understanding that humans have distinct values within western worlds based on race—and his overt racism, as when he extrapolates on the scenario discussed to the presumed violent nature of people of color (i.e., “you wouldn’t murder someone” ...). My answer remains inadequate in terms of disrupting the dominance that we collectively bring into our dialogue, letting each other off the hook, while inflicting overt dynamics of violence in our back-and-forth.

Daniella: You're also missing the context, though. I just asked you what would happen if two white people are having the conversation and you said, ‘the same thing’. But that's the problem: two white people wouldn't be having the same stake [by] having the same conversation that [Jen and Maite] were having.

Mark: If you don't realize that we're dealing with *human beings that have emotional states and have evolved to deal with aggression*...aggression escalates very quickly for all people, as we see throughout our society. Then, that's my exact problem with critical race theory, that you're applying a theory that is never going to work.

Daniella: But ...the yelling in that situation... doesn't need to happen if the white person understands that she's coming from a privileged position.

Mark: But that's just theory. You're saying, in theory, the white person should understand this, but in reality, nobody wants to be yelled at. And if they're getting yelled

at then... Why can't you have both? Why can't you teach Jen her microaggressions? And why can't you tell the other side [Maite] that they shouldn't speak like that?

To the extent that race is gendered (Maldonado-Torres, 2007a, pp. 241-243; Moreton-Robinson, 2005, p. 66; Razack, 2005), the qualifiers (loud and obnoxious) chosen by Mark are not only framing, according to white virtue, the woman's civil deficit based on her brownness, but also based on her emotional nature given her gender. "Emotions", writes Ahmed (2014), "are associated with women" because women "are represented as 'closer' to nature, ruled by appetite, and less able to transcend the body through thought, will and judgement" (p. 3). In writing about emotions, Ahmed explains that the national body tends to respond emotionally, through legal and social discourse, to the presence of non-white immigrants who have been constructed as "threats" (pp. 1-5). However, this emotional response is not perceived as a violent, irrational, and racist emotional response by those who it serves. This is because, on one hand, whiteness makes itself by measuring and surveying, and then articulating what "the Other" is with a deficit (Razack, 1999), as damage (Tuck & Yang, 2014). On the other hand, the emotional nature of whiteness is made invisible by, precisely, establishing "good" emotions as "cultivated"—useful since bodies have utilitarian orientations—and "bad" emotions as variously "uncultivated" (Ahmed, 2014, p. 3-4; 2019, pp. 117-118). I have italicized a portion of Mark's discourse ("human beings have emotional...") to show that the structural and long-standing "aggression" of settler states is erased by creating the figure of non-white people as threats while diluting it with the argument of universality: that every human being has evolved to react with violence to aggression, hence the need for a civil code. Yet, the concept of the human, paired with evolution, is extremely violent, anti-Indigenous and anti-Black (Lowe, 2015; Wynter, 2003).

While still problematically, this dialogue begins to shift towards questions of responsibility when we work to remain rooted in the context that we can discuss (instead of extrapolating to innocence) and asking questions about relationality (“why can’t you have both?”) even though responsibility is not distributed evenly. The final de-layering attends to a “what if” question: what if Mark and I had focused on naming, problematizing, and working through the dominance **that we brought to the conversation** earlier?

8.4 Boundaries

In reality, the “what if” question is inadequate since several of the layers of complicity that I have unpacked are inevitable, or at least very difficult to anticipate and work through as they arise *in real time*. But at the same time, the layers of complicity that I unpacked result, not from our lack of consciousness, but from conscious investments in unseeing our participation in the reification of whiteness. Many times, in our conversation, Mark admitted that he was wrong and would self-regulate whenever he would talk about the “rules of our society” and our “moral conduct” (e.g., “I know what you are going to say...” or “I can’t even say this because it will get red flagged”). Whenever Mark made these mentions, although I mistook them for aggressions towards me, I dismissed them to remain “aloof” and engaged in the content of the discussion. I consider this to be an issue of complicity because the implication is that by ignoring these comments, I will remain objective, an effective mediator in the conversation. This assumption is tied to my tendency to interpret my responsibility in terms of educating other settlers rather than engaging with them in relationally pedagogical ways that can help us name and *work through* our group and individual complicities. Even though I try to self-regulate my top-down approach with Mark, I still self-position as the knower to “make sure that we exist in a different place”—as I told Sandra-Lynn I tend to want to do. When Mark dismissed the applications of critical race

theory, he made me feel like the entirety of the work that I am doing here is meant to remain on a shelf like a fairy-tale story that has no real applications. But as seen in my discussion with Sandra-Lynn, I have to be reflective about the ways in which my elitist approach to sharing knowledge already perpetrates the view that knowledge is static—something that can be ‘deposited’ in other settlers to get them to *my* conclusions. Thus, while I might verbally defend critical race theory, my practice reiterates the view that these knowledges are useless.

Towards addressing this complicity, I wanted to bring up the context of teaching, because in the classroom, I center a pedagogy of relationality where I, along with my students, have to learn to write and speak about the scholarship that we read by self-positioning.

Daniella: ... teaching is the one moment where I feel like I am receptive, listening. I try to think about how I deliver information. And I don't know if it's because teacher training has a soft side...Like it's that safe space that I'm more aware of [but] *when I'm outside of that context I just I can't have a relationship with the recipient of the input...*

I tell my students that if Indigenous, Black, and scholars of color are willing to write and name their experiences despite the exploitative nature of the academy, as settlers, we have to respond with accountability by working to also name *and work through our whiteness*. This kind of accountability requires us to think about how we come into relation with these knowledges, as well as how those relations mark the real world. It is about self-positioning and speaking from a place where we show ourselves grappling with the ways in which we perpetrate the systems of which these various authors write about—rather than simply showing that we can acknowledge the existence of these systems, as though we were not privileged by them. Instead of asking

“what if”, then, the question to frame is, *how* can Mark and I can refocus our discursive space to name, problematize and work through the dominance that we bring into this conversation?

The most explicit way of addressing this question is with another question: what kinds of practices can we engage in to be accountable to our responsibility to de-layer our dominance—both in relation to the moment evoked *and in the discussion of that moment*? The implication here is that we need to reverse-the-gaze on ourselves, and so, look away from Maite, because, as settlers, everything in the discursive space is already set up for us to recenter our dominance by gazing on her. The extrapolations, dysconsciousness, and unwillingness to see through the implications of naming our complicity, as seen, are outcomes of our refusal to acknowledge that, as settlers, we do not enter discussions such as these ones on a levelled playing field. There are power dynamics attached to our whiteness, and these, too, need to be de-layered.

A generative point of contention, seen in our settler tendencies, is to acknowledge that as much as we want to be critical without centering our emotions, this is an impossible ideal. Thus, working through settler complicities in settler-settler conversations *about* such complicities should thus involve naming and examining our emotions. For example, what would have happened if I had told Mark, **“You know, when you self-regulate by admitting that you know your logic will be problematized, it frustrates me, but I know that it shouldn’t because this is not about me. It is about the fact that you know you are perpetrating dominance but are still choosing to justify it. Can we talk about that?”**. As a graduate student, I have had the privilege of time in that I have had access to a process of learning to try to be critical and have taken time to think about the implication of working through my whiteness. This does not make me an expert, but it does help me push through with my own internal resistances. The problem is that, in wanting other settlers to get to where I am, I not only presume having transcended the

need for ongoing learning, but I also monopolize the space of dialogue by performing knowledge rather than sharing it and being committed to unpack it with settlers. What would have happened if I shared with Mark that I was interpellated by his evocation of morality even though I *know* it to be flawed, rooted with whiteness? I could have articulated this theoretical/practice contradiction as we entertained a conversation that only perpetrated racism to refocus our dialogue on examining our dominance: e.g., **“I am inclined to agree with the logic that no person likes to be yelled at, that we have a moral conduct. But I also know that this logic is simplistic and rooted in a white view of the world where we can afford to perpetrate dominance without having to think of the effects and while expecting those affected to respond as though they had not just been attacked. Can we talk about this?”**.

When Sandra-Lynn talks about putting safety boundaries for herself, she also talks about how I place boundaries where there should be no boundaries, and vice versa. The questions that I propose here (in bold) are not solutions to the way in which Mark and I perpetrate dominance in discussions where we might strive to be critical. Even if these questions framed our conversation, we would likely derail into alternative forms of complicity. But in a way, these questions are generative of two types of boundaries. On the one hand, by way of the first question (“when you self-regulated...”), we can collectively move to push the boundaries of our comfort by pushing (away or outwards?) the boundary of our privilege to look away, and getting us to, at the very least, struggle to acknowledge how we have just centered our dominance, getting us to grapple with how to work through it. On the other hand, by way of the second question (regarding my own contradictory investments), we can establish a limit to our knowing; rather than stand in the conversation as someone who claims to know better and is engaging with the purpose of proving it, we can name our own subjective contradictions, which can generate more responsible

discursive practices, including even engaging in learning collectively, reading texts that can help us work through these contradictions, or simply showing how our whiteness limits the extent of our criticality. This can very much remind us that we depend on relations of accountability to the knowledges of struggle and resistance (like critical race theory) to acquire language through which to name and work through our complicities.

If the aim is to uphold our decolonial commitments in tandem with the real and current efforts of Indigenous peoples, then the weight of examining our collective complicities—instead of on the relative degree of our individual complicities—cannot be understated. We must learn to unpack the structures that underlie settler self-entitlement in the way whiteness constantly makes itself the mark of universal experience to justify the social, political, legal, and education systems that confer privileges on us and ensure ongoing land theft by legitimizing the intersecting logics of conquest that are harmful to Indigenous and non-settler peoples. At the same time, as I explore in the final chapter, it is important to consider whether practices of working through as seen here and in chapter seven truly respond to decolonization's material centeredness on Land.

Chapter 9: Tracing “a” Process of Decolonial Solidarity Across this Research’s Contexts

“Decolonization, which we assert is a distinct project from other civil and human rights-based social justice projects, is far too often subsumed into the directives of these projects, with no regard for how decolonization wants something different than those forms of justice”.

“...decolonization in the settler colonial context must involve the repatriation of land...”

“Yet, this kind of inclusion is a form of enclosure, dangerous in how it domesticates decolonization”.

“...simultaneous to the recognition of how land and relations to land have always already been differently understood and enacted;”

“Decolonize (a verb) and decolonization (a noun) cannot easily be grafted onto pre-existing discourses/frameworks, even if they are critical, even if they are anti-racist, even if they are justice frameworks”.

“that is, *all* of the land, and not just symbolically”.

“Decolonize (a verb) and decolonization (a noun) cannot easily be grafted onto pre-existing discourses/frameworks, even if they are critical, even if they are anti-racist, even if they are justice frameworks.

“When we write about decolonization, we are not offering it as a metaphor...”

The easy absorption, adoption, and transposing of decolonization is yet another form of settler appropriation.

“Decolonization is not a swappable term for other things we want to do to improve...”

DECOLONIZATION **BRINGS ABOUT** THE REPATRIATION OF
INDIGENOUS LAND AND LIFE”

I begin this final chapter with the latter writing, which comes from Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang's (2012) famous text *Decolonization is not a metaphor* (pp. 1-3). This is one of the texts that I have read the most across my graduate education, because, although the idea that decolonization is always about the rematriation of Land to Indigenous peoples appears clear and simple, I still struggle to understand how it can be materially honored. To represent my own internal struggles with grasping how I might attend to the centrality of Land, I chose to offset parts of the text where I hear Tuck and Yang telling their readers about what decolonization is not by reiterating what it is. Every part of this interchange is important, for although these authors refuse the equation of decolonization with justice projects that disregard what "decolonization *really* wants", I also hear my own internal voice thinking: *How are settlers—am I—supposed to give land back to Indigenous peoples?* The desire to give land back this is trapped in the material complexities of settler colonial realities, and to this extent, I also find myself questioning if I can even aspire to exceed the "easy absorptions, adoptions, and transposing of decolonization" into my own project—of *working through settler complicities*. Can I aspire to **bypass** these forms of settler appropriation and settler innocence?

The word "bypass" is significant in the formulation of this question since I have tried to cautiously conceptualize *working through* as a practice through which to search for *generative tensions* in the way modalities of conquest take root in settler being. It is not a practice through which I look to solve—bypass—the structural and individual ways in which my settlerness enables me—and also interpellates me—to live a life premised on dispossession. I understand that the educated and individual choices that I might make to engage in accountable practices of solidarity will neither overturn the settler colonial order nor ever be quite detached from its workings. This recognition is not intended as a move to innocence. I am not trying to say that the

colonial order, and my participation in it, are beyond me—that there is nothing I can do. Rather, by stating this recognition, my goal is to acknowledge that, as a settler, I am working within structural tensions that have nothing to do with my feelings or intentions to dismantle the colonial order. I have tried to conceptualize and model *working through* as a practice that unfolds by bringing to the forefront such structural tensions, but while calling me to, also, work through the ways in which the intellectual aspects of *working through* are regulated by my whiteness and my own idiosyncratic experiences and understandings. Although my education gives me language to identify and name power dynamics, the exercise of digging into the roots of how and why these dynamics exist in relation to my own settlerness is itself subject to my privileged lens—a lens that is bound to produce gaps across my understanding (knowing) and practice (being). In these gaps, I have argued and aimed to show that settler complicities can be seen.

There are distinct forms of complicity. Some are enmeshed in overt violence, while others are “covert”. Overt violence can be seen when settler researchers go into Indigenous communities to “elicit pain stories” and deny Indigenous wisdom but while extracting Indigenous knowledges to naturalize settler presence and the settler colonial order (Tuck & Yang, 2014, pp. 227, 235). These types of violence are arguably more evident forms of re/colonization. It is easier to pinpoint them, and to even attribute them to settler peoples’ lack of historical consciousness and/or to their clear investments in conquest. But what about instances of covert violence such as when settler people listen to Indigenous voices and work to put our understandings into forms of decolonial action? What about the subtle forms in which we might still reproduce modalities of conquest with re/colonizing effects? To offer a much more concrete example, let us consider Eve Tuck’s concern for “research that happens much more surreptitiously” (2009, p. 413). What about research that operates from within a theory of

change? In these contexts, it is arguably much harder to pinpoint forms of complicity because the *pressure points* that are always enrooted in processes of settler-Indigenous relationship-building might be less perceptible—and arguably much less to settler people than to Indigenous peoples. There is a difference of ontology, which I have explored, that is *lived* distinctly based on the respective positionings of settler people and Indigenous peoples within a settler colonial order. This is why I have wanted to revisit moments of the past years with Wahéhshon, Kahtehrón:ni, and Sandra-Lynn. At a glance, our relationships have been positively experienced, and the uniqueness of our relationships has also informed our collaboration on the research ethics policy and on this research. But if I had written this research as a reflection of that felt experience, I consider that my work would reproduce the politics of recognition by looking away from the inner workings of settler colonization that *materially* refuse to engage with Indigenous peoples meaningfully (Coulthard, 2014).

We know that reconciliation has been highly contested by Indigenous peoples because of how it has been reduced to intentions and/or to solidarity actions that, even when yielding positive outcomes for Indigenous peoples, remain insignificant against the ever-encompassing nature of conquest (see Palmater, 2017). This is why I have wanted to slow down the excitement of seeing six years of relationship-building come to fruition through a tangible community-based collaboration with Kahnawa'kehró:non. I have wanted to slow things down to ask how reconciliation has unfolded through *pressure points* that index *settler complicities*, and my goal has been to share a story of the last six years through these “bumps on the road”. Why and how they happen—are important questions that require me to dig into the layers of structural colonization as much as into the layers of my relationship with them, and of how they emerge amidst a knowledge-practice gap. What has emerged from an analysis of these questions—from

working through them—is the understanding that the pressure points are not only inevitable, but they are also necessary. They are inevitable because relationship-building always takes place within historical and contemporary clashing that bring to the shore “how land and relations to land have always already been differently understood and enacted” by Indigenous peoples than by settler peoples. Pressure points are to be expected because tensions around land have not been resolved in ways that center Indigenous futurities. At the same time, these pressure points are necessary aspects of relationship-building because, when attended to, they bring settler people and Indigenous peoples into context-specific encounters with the complexities that underlie reconciliation and decolonial solidarities. In my work, as I have attended to pressure points alongside Wahéshon and Kahtehrón:ni, I have tried to bring to the forefront, on one hand, how I have tried to manage these tensions in a-relational ways, and on the other, that when we have collectively shared our experiences of these tensions, a sense of place has emerged.

Questions of land are present in processes of place-making because, as seen, they emerge out of pressure points that bring to the forefront relational struggles through which we have tried to *work through* ongoing dynamics of colonization. But the presence (of questions) of land does not mean that land, in the material sense, is actually centered. Land is always present through the recognition that I am always under the sovereignty of Kanien’kehá:ka (in Montreal) and of various Indigenous peoples (in Canada). But what does it mean to center land? Can land be centered in practices of *working through*, whether individual or collective?

In my relationship with Wahéshon, Sandra-Lynn, Kahtehrón:ni and others from Kahnawà:ke, I have learned a little bit more about their worldview. Our discussion of the Thanksgiving Address, for instance, has tangibly illustrated what it means to live out, from a young age all the way to elderly years, ancestral teachings. Kahtehrón:ni and I had a talk where I

shared my struggles to connect this project to Land: “does it truly bring to the forefront land?”. She shared her experience of living in BC for a few years, and she told me that until she heard the title holders of those lands share with her stories about the land, she did not truly feel connected. I have been present in conversations that she has had with others from her community and with Mi’kmaw who are presently residing in Montreal. When it comes to projects of resistance, I recall a Mi’kmaw woman telling them, “You pave the way, and we will follow because this is your land, and we are guests here”. Honoring the sovereignties of Indigenous peoples requires a recognition of their relationships with land, and an engagement of the ways in which they view those relationships—when they are willing to share with us. I have definitely been privileged to get a sense of how Kahnawa’kehró:non seen land. The education research ethics policy brings to the forefront land: it is all about securing a present and a future “For the Faces Yet to Come”. Even in the ways in which we have gathered into the space of this research, through our revisitations of moments of tension, we have made land present in our relationships. We have struggled to articulate the clashings of our own experiences in our relationships and collaborations, and again, because these ontological clashings reveal settler and Indigenous historical and contemporary struggles for land, we have tried to create relational places that account for the ongoing struggle. But is this centering land?

Land has been present in my mind since the conceptualization of this work. I have, for example, chosen to theorize *decolonial solidarity* in relation to decolonization but *not as* decolonization. This decision has been in recognition of the fact that decolonization cannot be equated with any project, however critical the project might. In my research, such a project is seen in the practice of *working through*. I have wanted so eagerly to center land that I have argued that *working through settler complicities* should be a practice that settler people engage

not just when we are working with Indigenous peoples, but also in the context of our everyday lives—alongside our own community of settlers. Leanne Simpson has inspired this thought, and I have echoed her thinking in this work to the point of articulating, in research question three, that *working through* needs to be engaged continuously across time and space to support processes of decolonial solidarity that account for the fact that all of Canada is Indigenous Land. I have asked: *How might working through settler complicity across time and space, in settler/Indigenous direct collaborations and in settler everyday life, elucidate a process of decolonial solidarity that accounts for the fact that dispossession is always at play?* I have invited my husband, the person with whom I hold the closest relationship in everyday life, to reverse-the-gaze on ourselves and account for past moments when we have perpetrated dominance while using our privilege to look away from our complicity. But at the core of this exercise, and as we have discussed a moment of complicity connected to the structure of racism in relation to a Brown Latina woman, I continue to struggle to respond to whether *working through* can center land.

I cannot offer an answer that bypasses the risks of domesticating the true meanings of decolonization, and I want to use this limitation as a generative tension through which to recalibrate the question, “does this work truly center land?”, to, “how can practices of working through bring me to honor **the struggle for land** from within the recognition that my relationship of privilege to the settler colonial order creates tensions in my efforts to center land?”.

I realize that, throughout this work, there are examples of how I have tried to center the struggle for land by modelling *working through settler complicities*. The visuals that I have added across some pages of this work at first appeared to be relevant aids for me, in my own

analysis, and for readers. But each visual quite tangibly brings to the forefront how land is at stake, how land is needed by a settler capitalist order, how modalities of conquest interlock to feed the processes of dispossession that secure land for settlers, and how, at the same time, these dynamics are met with resistance by Indigenous peoples—specifically here, by Kahnawa'kehró:non. The written analyses that surround those visuals aim to show myself struggling to reverse-the-gaze on myself towards (1) naming the modalities of conquest that take root in my practices while (2) working to understand their rootedness in processes of dispossession that inform settler colonial orders. These two parts are crucial in practices of working through. Naming is not enough. We have to be willing to dig into the roots of how and why our ways of being and knowing, as settlers, take root in the colonial order in structural and individual ways. Because the modalities of conquest that inform settler colonialism and settler complicities are varied, at times appearing to be unrelated to Indigenous struggles and questions of land, it is all the more important, as I argue in this work, to pay attention to settler complicities that unearth racism(s), anti-Blackness, extraction, patriarchy, classism, and islamophobia (among others). If we always just pay attention to tangible instances of anti-Indigenous racism and land struggles, we will bypass our responsibility to see and acknowledge that land theft is dependent on these and other modalities of conquest. As I have argued, the binarism of the field of settler colonial studies is itself recolonizing.

In this final chapter, I want to focus on the capitalized and bolded words found in the found poem shared above: “DECOLONIZATION **BRINGS ABOUT** THE REPATRIATION OF INDIGENOUS LAND AND LIFE”. The words “brings about” are more important to the overall meaning conveyed here—decolonization is always about land—than they first appeared to me. *Bring about* means “to cause something to happen” like a turn, or a shift. More recently,

Tuck & Yang (2018) wrote that “there are many practical efforts to rematriate Indigenous land and life, from restoring Indigenous foodways, to turning land out of the property system, to restoring languages” (p. 10). As a settler, I am not the one leading the restoration of Indigenous foodways or of Indigenous languages, but I recognize that, being privileged by the alienation of Indigenous relational meanings of land to settler property, I am called to engage in practices that *unmake* settler colonial nation-states. Unmaking is about *undoing the making of*, and, as I have shown through diversely positioned Indigenous and non-settler scholars, we know that the settler colonial relation is always in the making—always searching to re/make itself. Undoing the making of the colonial relation is about de-naturalizing its existence and ongoing workings so that, through this de-naturalization, we might collectively contribute to a shifting turn that brings to the forefront Indigenous sovereignties. **Undoing the making of** is about **bringing about** the repatriation of Indigenous Land and Life by engaging in processes of *struggle through which we, as settlers, work through our individual and structural complicities in an effort to defy colonization*. Undoing the making of modalities of conquest is a struggle that has no solution in sight because we do not inhabit an “elsewhere” yet, or at least a fully realized elsewhere. We still inhabit a settler colonial capitalist world, and I call on settlers to engage in practices of *working through* by recognizing that as “Decolonization defies ongoing colonization” (Tuck & Yang, 2018, p. 11), our participation in that defiance is ontologically constrained in who we are as settlers—privileged and conferred on rights that cannot simply be given up. Practices of *working through* are in many ways mired in the imperative to **bring about** Indigenous futurities—and this is itself mired in processes of deconstruction and *working through* that can bring into salience the clashing of settler consciousness and settler action, therefore making present the struggle for land that we continue to inherit.

In this final chapter, I have three major objectives, and the three are connected to my third research question. *How might working through settler complicity across time and space, in settler/Indigenous direct collaborations and in settler everyday life, elucidate a process of decolonial solidarity that accounts for the fact that dispossession is always at play?* I want to first illustrate how the practices of *working through* that I employed throughout chapters seven and eight can attend to questions of land by bringing to the forefront examinations of how varied forms of complicity emerge from—and inform—ongoing struggles for land in settler Canada. From here, I want to use the visual representation that will underlie this examination to demonstrate how *practices of working through* can be articulated in relation to infinite forms of conquest that shore up in settler ways of being and knowing. I want to restate my call to settler people, the intended audience of this work, to see applications of *working through* in their own lives. The third objective is to lead into a reiteration of how this work, and practices of *working through* might not escape the domestication of decolonization, even if they do require settler people to see how our complicities inform and are mired in the struggle for land. Under this discussion, I want to return to the relationships that have informed this work and consider how this conclusion is really just a beginning for me to keep thinking about my responsibilities.

9.2 Struggling to center Land by De-naturalizing conquest

Objective 1: Illustrating how my practices of working through across chapters seven and eight bring to the forefront complicities that inform and emerge from ongoing struggles for land across all of settler Canada.

9.2.1 When Land Appears to be Irrelevant

The conversation that Mark and I ended up discussing was not evidently related to questions of land because we were discussing an instance of complicity in relation to a Brown Latina woman. Racism is variously manifested, depending on how people have been racialized

in relation to whiteness (chapter four), but since we did not specifically discuss anti-Indigenous racism⁶⁵, what is really the relevance of our discussion in relation to questions of land? Why situate this conversation as an instance through which, as a settler, I have tried to sustain a practice of working through via which to elucidate that decolonial processes are not just relevant when I engage with Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéhshon, and Sandra-Lynn? I want to return to Glen Coulthard's words, which I offered in chapter one, to address this question. He writes that because "modalities of power" are multidimensional,

...any strategy geared toward authentic decolonization must directly ... account for the **multifarious ways** in which capitalism, patriarchy, white supremacy, and the totalizing character of state power **interact with one another** to form the constellation of power relations that sustain colonial patterns... [and] facilitate the dispossession of lands and self-determination capacities [of Indigenous peoples] (pp. 14-15, my emphasis).

Coulthard's message is that settler colonialism will not be confronted nor dismantled if those engaged in the struggle fail to see, unpack, and de-naturalize the "multifarious ways" in which modalities of conquest "interact with one another" to secure land for settlers. It is not enough to acknowledge that decolonization is about land if we do not acknowledge that, to center land, we have to undo the "constellation of power" that interlocks to subjugate variously positioned Indigenous and non-settler peoples, and through that, further erase Indigenous peoples' sovereignties. Leanne Simpson and Robin Maynard (2020, 2021) have spoken to this very point by acknowledging that Indigenous futurities are very much connected to Black futurities: "...I cannot possibly fully understand the impact of colonialism on my own people", says Simpson, "and all of life, actually, without understanding the historic, contemporary, and global structure

⁶⁵ Maite could have been Indigenous to other places, but we did not know this.

of slavery and anti-Blackness [and] to work not to be [implicated] in it...” (pp. 77-78). A similar point is made by Tuck & Yang (2018) who write that while Indigenous of rematriation of land and life and Black liberation are distinct projects, both are important to decolonization because settler colonialism is premised on concepts of property that dehumanize Black people and objectify Indigenous Lands (p. 6). Anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity are just two of examples of modalities of conquest that interact with one another to inform settler colonialism, but there are others, like different intensities of racism, that constitute not just a totalizing colonial order, but also the settler human who is granted unparalleled privileges through those very modalities. Therefore, my discussion with Mark about our complicity with racism in relation to Maite represents an example of an issue that might appear to be secondary or irrelevant to decolonial solidarities but that are opportunities to *go to the root of why racism exists, and how it interlocks with other modalities of conquest to reify the settler colonial order as well as inform our settler privilege*. This analysis, a key aspect of *working through*, serves to bring to the forefront how struggles for land are naturalized by the very colonial premises that confer privileges to settlers and erase the sovereignties of Indigenous peoples.

9.2.2 Learning to Relate Under Indigenous Sovereignties

Settler complicities can also take place even in contexts where settler people use our knowledge to articulate practices that we deem to be critical and, specifically, accountable to Indigenous peoples. For example, I had the knowing that relationship-building with Wahéhshon and Kahtehrón:ni can be burdening even though the back-and-forth that underlies such processes is highly valued against the extractive history of colonial research. Yet, this knowing brought me to center my agency, therefore looking away from the relational aspects that guided our engagements into moments of place-making. Although place-making does not mean a place

where struggles of/for land are reconciled, as I have worked through some of my complicities alongside Wahéshon and Kahtehrón:ni, they have also worked through resulting pressure points—and this has brought into salience that relating is inevitably mired in tensions because of tensions around land. Specifically in the contexts discussed, Land is present in projects of resistance like the education research ethics policy since it emerges out of the self-determination of people from Kahnawà:ke with the aim of ensuring a healthy future for the present and future generations of Kanien'kehá:ka. In this context, neither are the stakes nor the relationships to land the same for Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéshon and me. From our insider/outsider relationship, as Wahéshon stated, there are so many community dynamics that make their experience distinct from my own. But even among them, two community members, experiences vary depending on their responsibilities and roles. These considerations inform our processes of relationship-building, highlighting, our struggle to relate across differences, power dynamics, and pressure points—and within the specific sovereignty of Kahnawa'kehró:non.

Because it is now recurrently said that (research) collaborations should yield a material benefit for Indigenous peoples, there is an implicit assumption that, as long as this condition is met, settler people can assume that our processes of engagement and collaboration were positive—perhaps even reconciliatory and decolonizing. But this reductive view places much emphasis on the power of settler consciousness (being educated to make critically accountable decisions), on settler intentions (to stray away from recolonizing practices), and on the relationships that we might have, over a period of time, with Indigenous peoples. These elements are not unimportant, but they can elide the ways in which our aspirations are still regulated—because we exist as settlers in a colonial order that benefits us—by the modalities of conquest that take root within our subjectivities and practices.

When I invited Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéhshon and Sandra-Lynn to revisit moments that we have shared in the context of our collaboration and relationship-building more generally, my intention was to zoom into the ideas and language recorded in my discourse, while attending to their accounts and experiences, in order to respond to *pressure points* that I might not have picked up in the way they might have. From there, I wanted to make connections to *why these pressure points come to be, which requires me to examine how aspects of my being take root in forms of dominance that, while unintended, can have recolonizing effects*. I wanted to show that settler consciousness, however necessary, can also become a self-regulating tool through which I attempted innocence, which had a-relational effects that, in turn, obscure the fact that relationship-building is meant to be unsettling because it is about learning to relate under the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples. An examination of the pressure points might appear to be insignificant in that, as seen in chapter seven, they did not overdetermine our relationships by centering *just* my settler dominance and by displacing the self-determination of Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéhshon, and Sandra-Lynn. But it is precisely because these examinations unearth small forms of complicity that I argue that this practice of *working through*, in the context of settler-Indigenous collaborations, is important. Small as they are and met with passive and active forms of Kahnawa'kehró:non self-determination as Kahtehrón:ni and Wahéhshon do, these complicities reveal the mundane and commonsensical ways in which settler colonialism unfolds and remains active. Naming and working through these complicities will not result in the rematriation of Land to Kahnawa'kehró:non (and Indigenous peoples in general), but because the exercise shows how settler consciousness and action clash with Indigenous peoples' ways of resisting and surviving, we can see *land becoming relevant in the way we collectively struggle to relate with each other*. It is amidst this struggle that I have argued place-making is made, not

despite the pressure points, but inspite of them. Seeing and working through the pressure points shows that the relational aspects of giving and receiving among Indigenous and settler peoples is mired in difficulties that cannot be reconciled—or rather worked through—without the unique contexts of consent and friendship that come to be from the commitment to struggle together. Wahéshon has said to me many times that they did not have to engage in a relational back-and-forth with me. They could have issued instructions and overseen my work without the tightness that we co-created across layers of relationships. This possibility resulted from the unique contexts of our meeting-each-other, and these were the relational contexts that provided a foundation for *working through* apparently insignificant pressure points— individually and collectively—and for bringing into salience the relevance of land in struggles to relate despite the difficulties.

9.2.3 Juxtapositions and the Matter of Across Time and Space”

Objective 2: Attending to the matter of “across time and space”. Taking the visuals from chapters four, seven, and eight to juxtapose them to illustrate how settler complicities in contexts of everyday life (with Mark) and settler complicities in contexts of relationship-building with Indigenous peoples (Kahtehrón:ni, Wahéshon, and Sandra-Lynn) *interlock* to naturalize a settler-colonial-capitalist order.

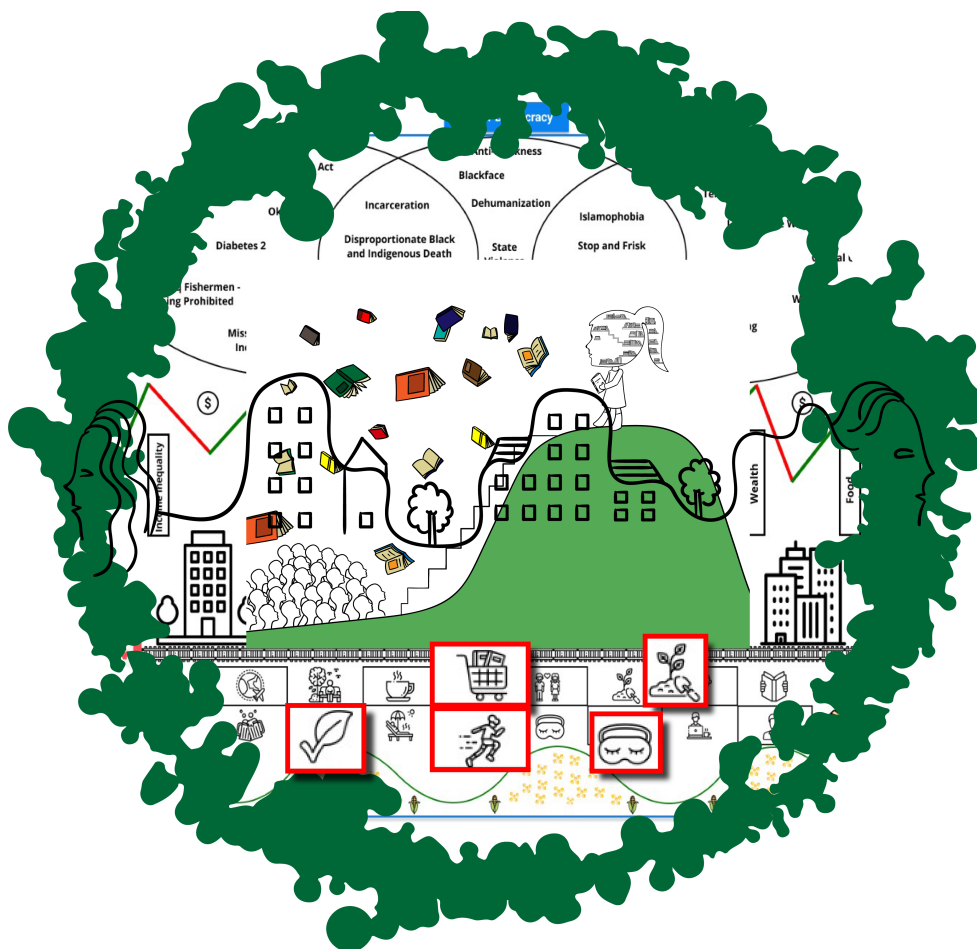


Figure 1. A juxtaposition of the complexities inherent in processes of decolonial solidarity through practices of working through settler complicities.

Image designed and digitalized by Janani Narahenpita

In this collage, the reader might recognize grains of corn at the bottom, which I placed within the shape of hilly lands to specifically situate my work in my relationships in Kahnawà:ke. You might see the train tracks that represent the coming together of settler Canada as a Confederate Nation, a red and green outline of the capitalist market, and the three circles that overlap at the top to show the interlocking modalities of conquest that inform settler colonization. The red squares are meant to highlight some of the aspects of everyday settler life—those that underlie settler privilege and settler being. I place them in red as these are examples that I will use below to show other applications of practices of *working through*.

[From chapters three and eight]: The visual of a multidimensional settler Canada that I describe here is obstructed with two visuals that I presented in chapter eight, when I discussed the particularities of settler complicity in relation to settler-settler co-enabling dynamics, but also in terms of how Mark and I *use* knowledges of struggle and resistance in re/colonizing ways. The books, which represent my own education elitism, can be seen falling from a settler head onto the background of settler Canada, and this is meant to show that knowledge can be a tool of conquest through which settler people not only reassert our dominance but also contribute to the naturalization of settler colonialism. The juxtaposition of this visual against the skyline of settler societies shows an interrelated relationship between the structural aspects of settler colonialism and settler being. This is because settler colonialism, while being structural, is not a totality that operates outside of settler agency (and vice versa), and throughout conquest, this hegemony has been secured by establishing knowing as a right that solely belongs to the so-called rational, settler human. Because of the way in which settler people reassert our dominance vis-à-vis a colonial order through knowledge-producing dynamics, *working through* diverse settler-settler interactions can yield understandings of how and why our complicities with interlocking modalities of conquest reify settler hegemony *over Indigenous peoples' struggle for land*.

[From chapter seven]: All around the visual, the reader might recognize the outline of the image that I presented in chapter seven when I discussed the complexities of relationship-building processes in Kahnawà:ke. The position of this green outline is meant to highlight the Sovereignty of Kahnawa'kehró:non and of Indigenous peoples in general, and the aim is to show that it is over-encompassing, since Indigenous resistance and resurgence unapologetically challenge the colonial order while dealing with its ongoing effects internally, at the level of community. **[From chapter eight]:** Then, in the middle of the visual, we can see the larger

outline of a more flowy skyline, the one that has Mark and I looking away from each other, and so, from our involvement in the reproduction of colonization. This “looking away” meant to show, on one hand, how our structural positionings, as settlers, enable us to choose to opt out of working through our complicities by employing techniques of disavowal. On the other, this “looking away and towards the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples” is meant to show how we contribute to recognition politics—to the race forward (Palmater, 2017)—for, how can we claim solidarity with Indigenous peoples when we refuse to reverse-the-gaze on ourselves? In our specific case, we look away from our own complicities in the perpetuation of racism towards Maite but while discussing this racism as a system of conquest that happens in a nebulous out there. As shown in this visual, the implications of looking away from multidimensional forms of complicity can be, specifically when we show an interest in de-naturalizing our own dominance, to rather reassert our dominance while the colonial order goes unchallenged. The looking away and towards the green outline that represents Indigenous sovereignties is meant to reiterate that these forms of complicity are always connected to questions of land because they are setup to conceal settler peoples’ subjective investments in belonging (as innocent), which reifies settler sovereignties and further erases Indigenous sovereignties. Therefore, even though practices of *working through* might take us into “rabbit holes” that appear to be tangled in questions of justice but not really to land, as long as modalities of conquest exist, so will the colonial order.

9.3 A Call for Settlers: The “I” and the “We” in Settleness

Objective 3: Restating my call for settlers, the intended audience of my work. Looking towards an area of the collage that has not been a part of my analysis to show the infinite ways in which practices of working through might be sparked from naming and de-layering modalities of conquest.

I have titled this section *The “I” and “We” in settleness* to encourage settler readers to examine how, in dialogues with settler people, we might use knowledge to prove that we are

cultured or critical instead of engaging knowledge to make present our own involvement in the colonial order. As I have explored in chapter eight, even though Mark and I met to revisit a moment of the past aiming to be critical of our complicities, we ended up self-distancing from our role as perpetrators by looking at the moment as if we were not involved in it. Because of this, I argued that we co-enabled each other—we egged each other on to further ourselves from our complicities by engaging in a back-and-forth that was purely intellectual but not accountable.

Daniella: grab
the meaning of
decolonization,
in my hands,
make sure that we ,[settlers and I],
exit that conversation
in a different place

Sandra-Lynn: factory
Pushed out and get to “here”
sit on a shelf, [a]
mental self
and it’s going to get stuck
there.
shelved mentally or physically in your dissertation

While my experiences in graduate education have been immensely beneficial in terms of giving me the *language* to do this work, I have misused this privilege to perform knowledge on settler people instead of *sharing to engage* in collective forms of *working through*. I want to use the example of my own complicity to search for pedagogical processes through which settlers can engage each other in rabbit-hole-discussions wherein we might ask more and more questions, seek to see more and more connections, and in this way, always strive to de-naturalize the **modalities of conquest that interact with one another** “to facilitate the dispossession of lands and self-determination capacities [of Indigenous peoples]” (Coulthard, 2014, p. 15).

9.3.1 Working to Stay in Rabbit-Hole-Conversations Beyond this Work

In order to show how practices of working through can be used to name and unpack the various ways in which settler complicities are wired to reproduce dispossession, what kinds of observations can we offer as starters for an engagement in other rabbit holes? Let me restate that dispossession depends on variously interlocking functioning modalities of conquest and that, to

this extent, it is imperative to understand how the question of land—and of *decolonial solidarity*—is largely dependent on settlers’ concerted effort to see and unpack our settler involvement with a “web of power⁶⁶”. Thus, it is necessary for settler people to *opt into* the most taken-for-granted-aspects of our settler life and, again, ask: how do our everyday practices—our thoughts, emotions, discourses, understandings, words—reproduce the colonial order? What privileges and benefits enable me to have access to privileges and rights that take root in the colonial relation?

In the following snapshot of the collage presented above, I have highlighted in red four visuals that represent mundane activities of settler life. We see a plant, a shopping cart, a person running, and a sign for veganism. Why are these practices problematic? How does their rootedness in a colonial order make them a function of settler privilege? Most importantly, how can we begin to acknowledge the ways in which they might point to forms of complicity? There are multiple pathways for addressing these questions, but I want to draw attention to the way in which they might converge with the theme of being environmentally conscious by brining settler people to research the brands we support, take care of our health and wellness, care for the Earth, and privilege vegan/natural/organic diets. For me, this seems like a relevant point of departure since there seems to be an increase concern for our Planet, the Water, the lack of equitable conditions of work where children continue to be indentured so countries of the Global North can have a life of luxury, and for more natural and local diets. In 2019, 50000 Canadians joined Greta Thunberg to walk the streets demanding for carbon emission reductions, and for the

⁶⁶ I am using “web of power” in relation to the idea that, as seen in chapter three, “conquest” acts as an analytical lens through which to observe how power and dominance operate in locally specific ways—such as in settler contexts—but not disconnected from a web of power that emerges with the discovery of the Americas and “links together” territories and peoples within a hierarchical system of racial capitalism (e.g., Quijano & Wallerstein, 1992, p. 550).

These frameworks for justice presuppose alternatives to extraction and exploitation, yet remain dehumanizing at the most general level, because they are disconnected from Indigenous peoples' leadership and activism. But the work of unweaving the specificities of this contradictory practices, one rooted in settler complicities, is one that I bring into salience to interpellate settler readers to see different applications of practices of *working through*. For instance, why would defending the Earth be anti-Indigenous? Or rather: how is it that this form of activism, entertained by settler progressives, reproduces Indigenous erasure? We need to look towards our own everyday practices to understand our involvement in capitalism, but we also need to acknowledge that any form of justice that is not rooted in account of Indigenous futurities may only reproduce conquest. The settler colonial order is too complex to be reduced to veganism, recycling, contesting on the streets, watching our consumption of water. What about the processes of conquest that require Indigenous land and that draw from racist, capitalist relations to produce hierarchies of humanity that benefit the settler?

The practice of working through that I am trying to articulate is as important as when settlers work directly with Indigenous peoples—as I have shown in my own contexts of relationship-building—as well as when settlers reverse-the-gaze on our contradictory lives, understandings, and practices. Across these contexts, struggles for land can be centered, at best, in the way settler people attempt processes of decolonial solidarity by acknowledging the deep “webs of power” that underlie and regulate our efforts to be socially conscious and just.

Thus, I offer the juxtaposition of visuals used across this work as an extended “coda” of the kind of opening that I hope this work can yield—particularly in terms of encouraging settler people to engage in experimental but robust applications of *working through* in the most mundane contexts of settler life practices. This is part of how, as settlers, we can live out our

commitment to support decolonization towards Indigenous peoples in general, as well as with those with whom we hold place-specific relationships through collaborations. As well, I wish to reiterate that, as settlers, we always and already reside on Indigenous peoples' land—so how are we engaging practices of working through in relational ways? Working through takes different forms, in part given that Indigenous peoples are not homogenous, not even within their own communities. While I have aimed to show this through my relationships in Kahnawà:ke, settlers have a responsibility to account for the specific histories of the places they/we occupy—and that is done, importantly, by bringing into salience the voices of specific Indigenous peoples.

9.4 “Decolonization is not a Metaphor”

In this final section, I return to the following recalibration: “does this work truly center land?”, to, “how can practices of working through bring me to honor **the struggle for land** from within the recognition that my relationship of privilege to the settler colonial order creates tensions in my efforts to center land?”. To guide this discussion, I offer a brief summary of how Indigenous peoples view Land against the colonial capitalist view of land.

I have capitalized *Land* in some instances of this chapter to emphasize, on one hand, Indigenous peoples' relations to the natural world, and on the other, to acknowledge that within these reciprocal relationships, Indigenous peoples see Land as having agency, as deserving respect⁶⁷. This belief has been tangible in the actions of Land defenders across Turtle Island⁶⁸,

⁶⁷ Scholars to have directly evoked a differentiation between Land and land are: Styres, Haig-Brown, and Blimkie (2013). Styres later expands in her book *Pathways for remembering* (2017), see chapter one. To see the meaning of Land versus land, you can access the following works where Indigenous scholars offer a critique of settler colonialism and the capitalist nature of expansion that is anti-Indigenous. See Coulthard, 2014, pp. 13-14 on his discussion about land's “intrinsic” and capital value through a critique of Karl Marx and pp. 51-78 on “grounded normativity”; see also Simpson's (2017, pp. 145-173) discussion of land-based pedagogies. Through her account of *Binoojinh Makes a Lovely Discovery*, she elucidates the experimental, experiential, and community-based modes through which Nishnaabeg intelligence is fostered from a young age, and all throughout life (pp. 146-153). Simpson & Coulthard also have several conversations on “grounded normativity”: for example, *Grounded Normativity/Place-Based Solidarity* (2016). See also Tuck, McKenzie & McCoy (2014).

⁶⁸ To name a few of the movements that demonstrate the activism of land defenders, consider the following: the Oka Crisis of 1990, Standing Rock (ongoing), Wet'suwet'en resistance (ongoing), Idle No More (ongoing under several Indigenous-led organizations).

but also across the globe. For example, in recent years, the people of Sarayaku have challenged Ecuador's constitution to demand a recognition for the forest's Spirits and agency, aiming, in this way, to halt extraction of the forest by challenging western/colonial views of land (with a lower "I") as external capital value⁶⁹ (presented by the Amazonian Kichwa People of Sarayaku, COP 21, 2015). Land is alive in the way Indigenous peoples speak their language, engage in traditional practices of food systems, tell stories of their ancestors, do ceremony, burn tobacco, hunt, gather, fish, trap (e.g., Simpson, 2017). In her master's thesis (2016), Kahtehrón:ni links the reciprocal nature of language revitalization to a "recovery" of her peoples' relationships with the natural world (p. 19). Language is such an important aspect of culture—one might even say *is* the culture (pp. 74-75)—so it is a relationship through which Kahtehrón:ni has described the essence of "carrying the voices of [her] ancestors" as a way of staying connected to the land (p. 7). Through these brief and diverse recognitions of Indigenous peoples' relationships *with* the Land (see Simpson, 2017, p. 150 on "with"), we see that Land is an essential aspect of Indigenous being, and because of this, it is impossible for settlers to consider solidarity work without thinking about the contradictory power that settlers have, often, *over* land.

As Tuck & Yang tell us that decolonization is the rematriation of Indigenous Land and Life, they explain that "When metaphor invades decolonization, it kills the very possibility of decolonization; it recenters whiteness, it resettles theory, it extends innocence to the settler, it entertains a settler future" (2012, p. 3). While this work does not yield the materiality of giving land back to Indigenous peoples, the practice of *working through* requires us to consider the

⁶⁹ See also these Indigenous and settler authors who emphasize that Nature should have rights: Cormac Cullinan <https://orionmagazine.org/article/if-nature-had-rights/> and Cormac Cullinan *Respecting the great law* (chapters 6, 7, 9), and Eduardo Kohn, 2017.

ways in which whiteness gets recentered, knowledge is misused as a self-regulating tool, benevolence is pursued in the very interactions that we hold—and this, despite (or perhaps even in spite of) settler consciousness. What I mean is that the risk of domesticating decolonization, as I have presented it in the introduction of this chapter, is actually an opportunity to think more deeply about the ways in which practices of working through can, through this very limitation, come face-to-face with the unfolding systems and dynamics of settler capitalist conquest that settlers enable (Haiven, 2020, p. 310). We need to search to unearth and unmake the colonial modalities of conquest that (1) inform extraction and dispossession and (2) take root in settler consciousness and action.

I created a found poem based on my reading of Leanne Simpson’s chapter “Nishnaabeg anticapitalism” in *As we have always done* (2017), and I want to share it here to re-emphasize the framework through which practices of *working through* can invite settler people into a de-layering of conquest that reveals stakes around Indigenous land (pp. 73-76 and 80-81):

...the **hyper-extraction** of natural resources on INDIGENOUS LANDS ...
 Societies based on **conquest** cannot be sustained...
 If a RIVER is threatened, it’s the end of the world for those FISH.
 It’s been the end of the world for somebody all along...
Extraction [as Capitalism] and **assimilation** [as Colonialism] go together.
 My **land** is seen **as a resource**.
 My RELATIVES in the plant and animal worlds,
 My CULTURE and KNOWLEDGE,
 My BODY,
 and my CHILDREN,
 [seen as] a resource.
 Colonialism has always extracted.
 [Divided to extract]:
 ...reserve and city [are] an **artificial colonial division**.
 We are all related, and this is all Indigenous land.
 The alternative to extractivism is deep reciprocity.
 It’s respect, it’s relationship, it’s responsibility, and it’s local.

The bolded words are meant to highlight the interrelated nature of colonialism and capitalism: “Colonialism has always extracted”. But this interrelatedness is itself enrooted in centuries of ongoing conquest: “It’s been the end of the world for somebody all along” because residual practices of imperialism and conquest inform settler formations⁷⁰. The fact that conquest is met with constant Indigenous resistance does not mean that Indigenous peoples hold the how-to of decolonization, or rather, that they do not have to grapple with frictions as they find ways of articulating decolonial action (see Tuck, 2009). There is complexity in and around decolonization (as a noun) and decolonizing (as a verb) (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 2), and this is because settlers, Indigenous peoples, and noon-settler peoples are positioned within the struggle for alternative worlds outside of the colonial order in different ways—across a spectrum of colonization that impacts us unevenly.

Sandra-Lynn: ...you're trying to push yourself into this mode of decolonizing. But inherently the thing is colonial, everything is. Even trying to deconstruct it....I'm colonized, I live in a colonial society. You're colonized. You live in colonial society. There's not really a structure in place to decolonize, to change the entire system that's built on white supremacy. So we can't just pretend that it doesn't exist. It's not the root of everything, but I feel that it almost is...

Daniella: See, you just said that there's no structure to decolonize... everything is colonial and it's built into white supremacy. This makes me go back to [the saying that] the first step to decolonization is consciousness. But it's also... not the only step. Like it's insufficient on its own. But then when I hear you say [this], and I think, ‘well, what else

⁷⁰ Access her commentary here: <http://mexmigration.blogspot.com/2014/01/decolonize-this-joanne-barkers-critical.html>

is there other than consciousness?’....I want to think that I am building this practice of working through settler complicity in my work that [recognizes] that everything is about land, even when the question of land is not directly evoked. [It’s about] thinking and rethinking and making ... connections, but in the end, it’s still consciousness. It’s still just working through that understanding.

Sandra-Lynn: And I think consciousness is the entirety of your work, right?...that’s why I still don’t like that decolonial/decolonizing because it dissociates so much from lived realities...

In the struggle to center land with the kind of significance that needs to be afforded, my work remains partly situated in the realm of raising consciousness. But if we are all colonized, to varying degrees, as Sandra-Lynn here says, then this limitation is simply the reflection of the fact that related as we all are through this mess (“We are all related”), the alternative to colonial extractivism, which Simpson posits as “deep reciprocity”, is meant to be a relational struggle.

Decoloniality of perception⁷¹ refers to the active process through which people who have been colonized variously work to *notice colonial and racial modalities and then go to the root of why these modalities exist, and what they do in terms of ensuring that a settler colonial, capitalist order goes on*. Maldonado-Torres pairs his view of decoloniality of perception with a form of “radical generosity” and calls on various people to imagine new forms of relating and thinking that refuse the logics of inclusivity and diversity that presuppose the colonial order. Because settler people can afford to look away from the empty promises of justice offered by

⁷¹ Nelson Maldonado-Torres, a scholar whose work has been featured throughout my writing given his expertise in decolonizing and race theories, uses the term “decoloniality of perception” during an interview (2020) with Adrián Groglopo. You can access the interview via this link: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7rpFb1_gblk. If you want to see what he says regarding the question “what is to decolonize”, go to the 45 minute mark. There, you will hear his thoughts on the discussion that I now summarize in relation to my purposes.

settler states, I also situate practices of *working through* as a form of radical generosity—one where we are called to *struggle to see, unpack, and imagine modes of being, knowing, relating, and living that center Indigenous futurities*. In my work, this radical generosity is articulated as *settler responsibility* because of the ways in which “generosity” can interpellate settler people to center our benevolence, and therefore re/colonize the radical qualities of deconstructing the present order by working from within the normative order. For example, it would be insufficient for me to simply acknowledge that writing the Thanksgiving Address, as explored in chapter seven, is a form of complicity. Why is this *boundary crossing* re/colonizing? What are its effects for me, as a settler, for Wahéshon and Kahtehrón:ni, and in relation to a colonial order? How is this form of complicity manifested despite the fact that I have known that writing the Thanksgiving Address is variously problematic? And what are the regulating mechanisms that come into play when I have tried to be critical of this complicity in this work, through the writing phases? These are the kinds of questions that have guided my practice of *working through*, and which have not only revealed how and why this complicity emerges despite my “knowing”, but which have also revealed that “deep reciprocity” has been—because it is meant to be so—a generative struggle.

The most important element of this work, the one that gives substance and meaning to the limitation of being insufficiently accountable to what decolonization wants—giving Land back—is that it is rooted in mutual relationships. The back-and-forth collaboration with Sandra-Lynn, Kahtehrón:ni and Wahéshon, but also Mark, add value not because the contents of this work can be said to be devoid of problems and blind spots (for instance, though they had a say in the process. I am fully accountable for this work); the value is seen in the way we have privileged a

process of *unweaving* and getting through the tensions, knowing that it is ongoing, and that, as Wahéshon recently communicated to me,

...The lesson there is that despite doing excellent research, breaking down the apparatuses and de-layering, you still reproduced those harms in the relationship. It isn't about being the perfect friend or collaborator, it's about investing enough time, energy, respect, and humility that you can appropriately navigate those pressure points and challenges—that you can be trusted to make the wrongs right that will inevitably happen, whether you are aware or not. If we never had the conversations to revisit the moments, you may not have known that you crossed boundaries. Otherwise, you would just be another settler like the ones we eliminate from our lives (as Sandra-Lynn discussed [as seen in chapter seven]). This isn't something that you can ever champion or move on from. You will now have to learn to live with it all in a more profound way than ever before.

To this extent, seeing that the inevitability of mis-stepping is recognized as an inherent part of working through, relationship-building, and solidarity reiterates the importance of looking for the inconsistencies, the contradictions in the knowledge-practice gap that exists and benefits settlers. As Alissa Macoun states in her own work regarding the value of naming and unweaving our complicities, settlers must be willing “to grapple with the conflicts we are engaged in, to try to understand them and how they perpetuate, and to think about strategies for keeping these conflicts visible in the face of ongoing white attempts to erase, suppress or even transcend them” (2016, p. 88). One of the strategies that I think should be explored further is the work that settlers can do with our own community of settlers: how do we challenge each other *while implicating ourselves* in this very exercise? Most importantly, and because this exercise is not devoid of

complicities (as seen), how do we keep coming back, over and over and as long as needed, to topics and practices that we feel we have mastered just because we have started to grasp the surface of their rootedness in conquest? How do we unpack the very structures of conquest that foment our being, as settlers? In raising these questions—questions that I have respected in my own methodology—I wish to end by hoping that this work will be read as an effort situated at the intersection of the contradictions, and that, in this way, I do not claim to understand decolonial solidarity but rather to show *a* process of decolonial solidarity—one that is rooted in the contexts of this work.

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Appendix

Artists of Flaticon Emojis Used on the Visual in Chapter Four

Grains of corn: Corn icons created by imaginationlol - Flaticon

Corn: Corn icons created by Freepik - Flaticon

Ship: Boat icons created by max.icons - Flaticon

King: King icons created by Freepik - Flaticon

Travel: Travel icons created by Good Ware - Flaticon

Sitting on a bench: Bench icons created by Eucalyp - Flaticon

Cheering: Beer icons created by dDara - Flaticon

Vegan symbol: Vegan icons created by juicy_fish - Flaticon

Cup of coffee: Food icons created by Freepik - Flaticon

Sun bathing: Resort icons created by Freepik - Flaticon

Shopping cart: Shopping cart icons created by Smashicons - Flaticon

Running: Exercise icons created by photo3idea_studio - Flaticon

Love: Relationship icons created by Freepik - Flaticon

Sleeping: Sleep icons created by Freepik - Flaticon

Planting: Planting icons created by Freepik - Flaticon

Birth: Birth icons created by Darius Dan - Flaticon

Socializing:

Working: Home office icons created by nawicon - Flaticon

Education: Graduate icons created by Freepik - Flaticon

Reading: Reading icons created by Smashicons - Flaticon

Skyline: Urban icons created by Freepik - Flaticon

Trees: Trees icons created by Freepik - Flaticon

Train tracks: Railway icons created by DinosoftLabs - Flaticon

