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# Indigenous Feminisms Roundtable

HOKULANI K. AIKAU, MAILE ARVIN,  
MISHUANA GOEMAN, AND SCOTT MORGENSEN

Daniel Rivers and Karen J. Leong, members of the Transnational Feminisms Summer Institute Program Committee, organized this roundtable to address the absence of Indigenous feminisms from feminist discussions of the transnational, even though many Indigenous nations in the Americas are themselves traversed by settler colonial nation-states, and most American Indians and First Nations peoples are binational, being citizens of sovereign states as well as citizens of settler colonial nation-states. We invited scholars Hokulani K. Aikau (Kanaka 'Ōiwi Hawai'i) from the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, Maile Arvin (Kanaka Maoli) from UC Riverside, Mishuana Goeman (Tonowanda Band of Seneca) from UCLA, and Scott Morgensen from Queen's University in Kingston to be part of this conversation, with Daniel Rivers as facilitator.

Prior to the roundtable, the participants collectively generated questions for discussion: (1) What are the relationships that currently exist between transnational and Indigenous feminisms? Are there overlaps and disjunctures between them, and what can they contribute to one another? (2) Are considerations of Indigeneity frequently erased by transnational concerns, and in what way are these transnational concerns articulated through settler colonialist logics? (3) What convergences exist between Indigenous feminisms and transnational feminisms that can offer critiques of existing heteropatriarchies locally and globally? How might these open up the possibilities of Indigenous transnational alliances that force settler colonialists and nation-states to be responsible for land theft and the injustices that ensue therein?

HOKULANI K. AIKAU

Aloha, my name is Hokulani Aikau, and I acknowledge and honor the ancestors of the Shawnee Delaware, Wyandot, and Miami Nations who were removed from this territory. These are still sovereign lands, and I acknowledge

that their descendants continue to live here unrecognized. But we recognize their lands and their ancestors. I ask them to be with us today and to let the knowledge of the ancestors, mind as well as spirit, guide us so we can see what needs to be seen and uncover the wisdom that is in the words we have to say.

I want to situate myself in relationship to my comments by recognizing that, even though I was born in Hawai‘i, in my homeland, my family moved to Turtle Island when I was a child. And it’s the lands of the Navajo, the Shoshone, and the Ute Nations that fed me. The word that we use for land in Hawai‘i is ‘āina, that which feeds. I returned to Hawai‘i in 2003 with an understanding of what it means to live in place, to live in a place of stories. I want to acknowledge these lands that fed me and made me feel full. I want to recognize that I write from an American university in occupied Hawai‘i at an institution that many people consider to be the “last plantation.”

My contributions today come out of work that my colleagues Dr. Noenoe Silva, Dr. Noelani Goodyear-Ka‘ōpua, and I, who comprise the University of Hawai‘i Indigenous Politics program (UHIP), have been doing in collaboration with our colleagues at the Indigenous Governance Program at the University of Victoria, Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred and Cherokee scholar Jeff Corntassel, with whom we’ve been collaborating for more than eight years. In 2006 we started hosting graduate seminar exchanges between our programs. We would take students to Victoria and they would bring students to Hawai‘i for academic and community engagement experiences. Three foundational principles guide the work that we are doing based on our understanding and practice of Indigenous studies. Although not marked as such, these principles reflect UHIP faculty’s collective political, methodological, and theoretical affinities with feminisms, Indigenous and otherwise. I want to frame my comments around these three principles, because I think they offer important insights into how we put our Indigenous feminisms into practice in the Indigenous politics program at UH Mānoa and how an Indigenous-centered approach can be put into productive conversation with transnational feminisms.

The first principle is that we must localize the struggle before scaling up the analysis to a regional or global scale—Jeff Corntassel calls this the need to resist the “free Tibet” syndrome where progressive, decolonial activists and researchers are eager to work in solidarity to free “fill in the blank with the third-world colonized country of your choice” but yet are blind to the decolonial struggles happening where they work and live. For our UHIP program it means grounding our analysis in the place where we work, stand, and dwell, by acknowledging the ways in which race, class, gender, sovereignty, and sexuality operate in “our own backyard” before scaling up the critique and establishing strategies for resistance and mobilization at the regional or global level.

As Kanaka scholars, activists, and feminists who live and work in Hawai‘i this principle may seem obvious and easy for us, but we also require it of all of the students that we work with whether they identify as Indigenous, Kanaka ‘Ōiwi, or settler, and whether their research focus is in Hawai‘i or somewhere else. Because we understand Indigeneity to be a political category that recognizes the connection of autochthonous peoples to their lands, and the transnational alliances and interconnections amongst peoples who identify as Indigenous, we must be attentive to how place matters. Indigenous studies, as we practice it and the ethic we use to train our students, begins with and is accountable to Kanaka ‘Ōiwi Hawai‘i, Oceania, and other global connections that historically and currently shape our lived experiences. Grounding our program, pedagogy, and practice in place-based Indigenous politics extends and deepens the discussions that we are starting to develop at this Institute.

When Indigeneity is placed at the center, when we turn our attentions in a material rather than a metaphorical way to the lands upon which we stand, to ‘āina, then we are able to challenge the fundamental legitimacy of the nation-state structure. If we acknowledge that the sovereignty of the land continues to persist and is Indigenous, then we have to challenge the legitimacy of the United States. This kind of approach asks us to pay attention to, work with, and be accountable to the ways in which global processes play out on Indigenous bodies in the places where we live rather than just in those places where we work. This relates to the conversation yesterday about what is the global, what is the local, what are the relationships between them—for us this is clear: place matters.

Second, we strive to bring people together to engage in critical learning and strategizing for radical social change *and* decolonization. When we bring our students together in our exchanges—we have Kanaka ‘Ōiwi students, First Nations students, and we have European and American settler students, and they are from varied geographical backgrounds—we are trying to engage them in a particular kind of Indigenous ethic and practice. So how do we do that? How do we build coalition across difference? We do this through the Hawaiian concept of kuleana.

Kuleana helps us prepare our students for their participation in deeply immersive, community-engaged experiences, because they help students situate themselves vis-à-vis place. Thus they are able to live their responsibilities, their authorities, and their obligations in one place. I see kuleana as the extension of or at minimum as a way to operationalize critical positionality and reflexivity. It is a useful concept because it challenges assumptions that when we talk about Indigeneity it is somehow essentialist. Kuleana is not static, is not fixed; it is about understanding yourself in relationship to the place where

you are. And you change places all the time. For instance, my kuleana changes the moment I leave my home and go to work; it's that fluid, and it can change that quickly. I'm linking it with concepts like responsibility, authority, and obligation. However, I haven't mentioned rights. In the Hawaiian-language dictionary, the word *rights* is part of a long definition for kuleana—in this particular understanding it references Native tenant rights that were separated out as part of the privatization of land tenure called the Māhele period during the mid-nineteenth century in Hawai'i. Kuleana is the process of assigning fee-simple land tenure to individuals. So in that sense it is about rights.

But we emphasize to our students that we are not going to focus on rights, we are going to focus on individual and collective responsibilities, authority, and obligations, and how that changes based on who you are, where you are, and what you are doing. Kuleana operates at the level of the individual but is always in relationship to the collective (the collective can include human and nonhuman relations, living or dead, past and future generations). For settler allies, it is important to know when and where to step up and when and where to step back or step out.

Third, we believe that critically engaged and insurgent education and scholarship must do more than critique structures of power such as settler colonialism from the classroom or the academy, but must actively engage with community. For our UHIP program, this means working collaboratively across the disciplinary silos *and* with community. This echoes the intervention made by Richa Nagar and Amanda Swarr, who assert that collaborative praxis “can become a rich source of methodological and theoretical interventions and agendas.”<sup>1</sup> For me, this third point is critically important as we are asking our students and pushing ourselves to go beyond the *why* of settler colonialism, heteropatriarchy, and heteropaternalism to the *how* of decolonization. This includes envisioning alternative *preferred futures* for the generations yet to be born. I am not saying not to focus on the why question but that we ask our students not to stop there. Rather, we want our work and the work of our students to contribute to Indigenous resurgence. As Leanne Simpson explains in *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, “the process of resurgence must be Indigenous at its core in order to reclaim and re-politicize the context and the nature of Nishnaabeg [we can insert Indigenous] thought. . . . Our ways of being promoted the good life of continuous rebirth at every turn: in the face of political unrest, ‘natural disasters’ and even genocide. . . . [It] provides us with the impetus, the ethical responsibility, the strategies and the plan of action for resurgence.”<sup>2</sup> Additionally, in order to access the knowledge needed for Indigenous resurgence, “we have to engage our entire bodies: our physical beings, emotional self, our spiritual energy and our intellect. Our methodologies, our life-

ways must reflect those components of our being and the integration of those four components into a whole.”<sup>3</sup>

For us, Indigenous resurgence as praxis holds the seeds of liberation only when we engage in a process of “speculating about the seemingly impossible, the actual transformation of the structures of domination.”<sup>4</sup> I borrow this statement from Alessandro Petti, Sandi Hilal, and Eyal Weizman of Decolonizing Architecture Art Residency (DAAR), an architectural collective in Beit Sahour, Palestine, who use the methods of architecture to rethink justice, equality, and decolonization and what these ideas mean for unthinking and imagining anew our physical, built environments. What they engage in is a series of projects that first imagines, then designs and models “the morning after” revolution when power is unplugged, when the occupier has vacated the premises.<sup>5</sup> As architects they are dealing with physical structures: prisons, watchtowers, and suburban homes. What do we do with these structures after revolution, after they have been abandoned? What do we do with the enemy’s home after they have abandoned it?

For me this is a timely question and concern. Right now the Department of Interior is in Hawai‘i asking Hawaiians if we want to proceed with the federal acknowledgment process or not. Although the majority of testimony by Kanaka and non-Kanaka alike has demanded the US to deoccupy our country and return the sovereignty of the Kingdom, I am ambivalent. Not because I don’t want the US out of my country, but because of the caution raised by DAAR. If decolonization were to happen tomorrow, what would we do with the structures and institutions that were left behind? I worry that we would just repurpose the nation-state and reproduce the colonial structures that have us where we are now. And that is a deep concern of Indigenous and global feminists. But this is no reason to not try, not to believe, in the words of Brandy Nālani McDougall, that “the chattering winds of hope that erode the harness of violence from the earth” can lead us to an alternative preferred future where “we are sown back into and born from Papahānaumoku green and tender once again.”<sup>6</sup>

Aloha ‘Āina.

MAILE ARVIN

In the Hawaiian language, ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, there are multiple pronouns for “we.” I don’t speak much ‘ōlelo Hawai‘i, but since my one Hawaiian-language class in high school, I have thought that this is one of our language’s and our epistemologies’ most beautiful and critical features. *Kākou* is generally the most broad, inclusive form of “we,” referring to “we, three or more,” which

could be everyone in a room, everyone in earshot, et cetera. There is also *kāua*, which is a “we” that means something more like “us two” or “between you and me.” Another pronoun, *māua*, is also a dual “we” but with more exclusive connotations, as in “you and I (and not anyone else).” *Mākou* is similarly an exclusive “we” for three or more. As Kanaka Maoli poet and scholar No‘u Revilla recently reminded me, as we worked on a collective project involving Native Hawaiians and Pacific Islanders located in both Hawai‘i and the US continent, each of these forms of “we” carries specific forms of responsibility, or *kuleana*, as they signify different types of relationships.

In thinking about how and where I, along with my Native Hawaiian and allied Indigenous communities and my academic fields (which are chiefly Indigenous studies, ethnic studies, and Pacific studies), enter into this space centered around transnational feminisms, I have been reflecting on what kinds of “we” will be applied here. The “we”s will certainly be multiple and embedded. On this roundtable, for example, with Hokulani Aikau, there may be times where we two could speak from a place of *kāua* or *māua* as Kanaka Maoli feminists. A slightly larger “we” would locate us within the Indigenous feminists present, with whom we already share in a long lineage of collaborations and solidarities between different Indigenous peoples and nations. So these solidarities might be thought of as “transnational” as Maylei Blackwell has described, or “trans-Indigenous,” in Chadwick Allen’s terms.<sup>7</sup> But the “we” that has been harder for me to specify beforehand is the “we” that includes both Indigenous feminisms and transnational feminisms. Though I am sure we are not the first to consider these overlaps, our particular “we” in regards to Indigenous and transnational feminisms will be a “we” forged over the next few days, and I am excited about considering with all of you what responsibilities, or *kuleana*, we each have to one another.

One of the things Indigenous and transnational feminisms share is the sense that feminism writ large is not a viable “we” because it is whitestream and so often the vehicle to further colonial and imperial projects. “Whitestream feminism” is a term used by Native feminist Sandy Grande after Claude Denis to draw attention to the whiteness embedded in mainstream discourses that claim to be universal, but often ignore the concerns of Indigenous peoples and communities of color.<sup>8</sup> Similarly, I would urge us to deepen the understanding of our “we” without attempting to merely “add” Indigenous feminisms to transnational feminisms, or vice versa. Part of this work is honestly identifying both what relationships currently exist or do not exist between Indigenous and transnational feminisms, and what relationships we can hope to create for the future.<sup>9</sup> Without presuming any singular outcome of that “we,” these are some salient starting points that came to mind.

One question that we may need to address from the outset is, Are transnational feminists willing to identify (in certain contexts) as settlers and/or *arrivants*?<sup>10</sup> Or, to at least commit to the idea that decolonization and return of land to Indigenous peoples in the US, Canada, New Zealand, Australia, and other locations, as Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang write, is not a metaphor?<sup>11</sup> I think these are very much open questions upon which Native feminists are awaiting further response. And I will urge us to consider this question not only as a matter of naming but also of kuleana, or responsibility to the land that we live on. I think settler or arrivant or other different names often make people uncomfortable, but I think that uncomfortability is productive. The argument is not about what we call each other, but actually what responsibilities we have.

Rather infamously, in response to a 2005 article by Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua that suggested anti-racist movements in Canada often erase the concerns of Indigenous peoples, Nandita Sharma and Cynthia Wright have argued that non-white people cannot be settlers.<sup>12</sup> Sharma and Wright also suggest that decolonization is not possible through Native nationalisms, because Native nationalisms are shaped by “neo-racist” thought that enacts a dualistic hierarchy between “Native” (in scare quotes in their writing) and “non-Native.” A lot of people know about these articles, and describe them as a debate, but I think it’s kind of false to call it a debate. From the perspective of Native feminists there’s not actually a debate here, because Sharma’s article dismisses Native concerns and Native nations from the outset.

Sharma and Wright make little acknowledgment of the fact that Native and non-Native dualities are rarely simply the product of Native prejudice against non-Natives (though of course such prejudice exists in certain contexts and deserves to be addressed), but rather are the product of centuries of having a settler nation-state define Native-ness in always diminishing biological fractions. As most Indigenous feminist writing could have informed them, Native nations are generally quite expansive in nature. Yet the imposition of blood quantum laws and tribal rolls by settler states have overlaid those more expansive notions with restricted, racialized, and gendered modes of membership.<sup>13</sup> The resistance on the part of Native peoples to these restrictions is constant and current. For example, over the past few weeks, the US Department of Interior has been holding public hearings on the possibility of federally recognizing Native Hawaiians, and the opposition to federal recognition has been stated over and over again with reference to the exclusive nature of being a “tribe” according to US laws. Many Kanaka Maoli have spoken instead of their support for an independent Hawai‘i that is guided by Kanaka Maoli forms of governance but is (like Hawai‘i was before the 1893 overthrow) a multi-ethnic, multi-racial nation.

Yet there continues to be unease and opposition to Indigenous sovereignty movements from scholars and activists of color who see such movements as nativist, anti-immigrant, anti-black, and otherwise exclusive. I have also sensed that at times Indigeneity is in some contexts essentialized or romanticized, points that I think Indigenous feminisms have really robustly disproven. However, there are also many examples of Indigenous studies scholars who frame support for Indigenous peoples and their critiques of anti-blackness and anti-immigrant sentiment as far from mutually exclusive. Two bodies of scholarship among many that are beginning to provide different models that may be particularly instructive as we work out our “we” here at this Institute include Asian settler colonialism and the recent work happening around intersections of settler colonialism and anti-blackness. Asian settler colonialism states that Asians can without a doubt be considered settlers in Hawai‘i.<sup>14</sup> The work on intersections of settler colonialism and anti-blackness has deepened our understandings of how, as Eve Tuck, Allison Guess, and Hannah Sultan have recently argued, “‘arrivants’ may also conceal the unique positioning of Blackness in settler colonialism and the complicity of white people and non-white people (including Native people) in anti-blackness.”<sup>15</sup>

While I hope we can talk to both these bodies of scholarship, I will share a little more about Asian settler colonialism and what it may imply for building an Indigenous/transnational feminist “we.” While Asian settler colonialism has existed as a concept since at least the 1990s, stemming from Haunani-Kay Trask’s insistence that Asian Americans in Hawai‘i are settlers, not immigrants, the project has more recently coalesced with the 2008 publication of the volume *Asian Settler Colonialism*, edited by Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Okamura.<sup>16</sup> I just want to point out that that volume came out the same year as Sharma and Wright’s article, but is rarely referenced. The contributors to the volume identify themselves as Asian settler scholars who are committed to respectfully confronting the ways that Asian Americans living in Hawai‘i have long erased Native Hawaiian claims to land and sovereignty. In contrast to histories that laud the first generations of Japanese and Chinese plantation workers as the foundation for the contemporary Asian American middle class in Hawai‘i,<sup>17</sup> these scholars seek to reposition themselves and their communities outside of a US national frame and within a squarely settler colonial one.

While criticism of the term “Asian settler” has denounced the potential for lumping Asians and Asian Americans along with white settlers into a category starkly opposed to Native Hawaiians, the Asian settler scholars of the volume repeatedly position their critiques as ones that do not seek to reproach Asian Americans in Hawai‘i for their presence there (or uncritically equate Asian American settlers with white settlers) but rather to challenge Asian affiliations

with the American nation-state. As Dean Saranillo states, for example: “Filipinos and other Asian settler groups are fed illusions that Hawai‘i, because it is portrayed as ‘America,’ offers escape from the poverty caused by U.S. imperialism. Yet as Native Hawaiians have argued, Hawai‘i is not America. Hawai‘i is under colonial occupation by the United States.”<sup>18</sup> Similarly, Martinican postcolonial theorist Edouard Glissant has reminded us that the “West is not in the West. It is a project, not a place.”<sup>19</sup> Following Saranillo, we can say that America is a project, not a place, not only in Hawai‘i but also in Alaska, the continent, and other outposts of the American empire. Thus the discourse of Asian settler colonialism asks Asian settlers to disavow the project, not the place, and for the place to be recognized as Hawai‘i nei, not America, and not a US state. Rather than an effort to name and divide populations into settlers and indigenes, Asian settler colonialism is a critique of, as Victor Bascara says, the use of “the success stories of Asian Americans” to erase both the conditions of empire that involved Asians in the racial-capitalist project of America *and* to mask the “new terms of empire” under the more recent names of multiculturalism and globalization.<sup>20</sup>

Asian settler colonialism is a political and scholarly response to Haunani-Kay Trask, who does not identify any longer as a feminist because of her critiques of white feminisms, but who I would nonetheless argue has been central to formulating Native feminist theories.<sup>21</sup> Following that example, I would urge us to consider that non-Native feminists cannot responsibly engage Native contexts without specifically engaging Native feminisms. Native feminists are leaders in the rich advancements that the Native American and Indigenous studies field has made in recent years, though they are rarely recognized as such. Too often individual Native feminist scholars get cited or parts of their arguments are taken up in other areas, but they are rarely identified as Native feminists (though they make this clear in much of their writing), making all Native feminist scholars appear to be individuals rather than part of a collective and long genealogy, and making Native feminisms appear to be a specialized subsection of Native or feminist studies rather than at their forefront.

Native feminist theories, as I have argued in a coauthored essay with Eve Tuck and Angie Morrill, are “those theories that make substantial advances in understandings of the connections between settler colonialism and both heteropatriarchy and heteropaternalism.” We emphasized “theories” over “theorists” in order “to highlight our view of this as an intellectually wide-reaching and ambitious field” and to underscore that the audience of Native feminisms is by no means limited to those who identify as Native and/or feminist.<sup>22</sup> To follow a point made by queer Indigenous studies scholar and poet Qwo-Li Driskill, if you live in a settler state and think Indigenous studies is not rel-

evant to your own scholarship, you likely need to reevaluate both your relationship to the land you live on (not the least of which involves identifying whose land it is) and what you have been led to think Indigenous studies is really about.<sup>23</sup> In our article, Eve, Angie, and I issued several challenges to practitioners of both “whitestream” and other types of feminism, of which I think the following may be most relevant to our discussions here: “Refuse erasure but do more than include” and “Craft alliances that directly address difference.” In building our particular form of “we” between Indigenous feminisms and transnational feminisms, I look forward to seeing how we might refuse erasures of many kinds and directly address our differences. Mahalo.

MISHUANA GOEMAN

I would just like to say that my talk today comes from my larger project in rethinking colonial spatial restructuring and the ways that this is not just about restructuring land but also bodies. I also believe it conditions the ways we interact with each other and our traditional ways of holding each other accountable. I am going to be talking about Native conceptions of geography in relation to transnational feminisms. In my ruminations, I thought about the cachet in mainstream academia of the term “transnational feminism” and its use, or limited use, in Native American and Indigenous studies and why that might be. I question our current use of allied work, or collaborative work, in relationship to Indigenous peoples as well (here I use “peoples” to refer to various nations). For Native feminists it is both necessary and productive to think about specificities in relations, because our Indigenous epistemologies have a lot to offer the fields of feminism, gender, and sexuality studies. I promise no answers here, but rather some postulations and early thoughts on how to take into account the very material reality of nation-states without recentering them as a given, permanent, or even legitimate entity. For those of you unfamiliar with Haudenosaunee history, long before the term “transnational feminisms,” my community spread across what is now known as Canada and the US, and I speak from that place of coming from a community of people who are taught as young children that we are the oldest democracy and it is thousands of years old. And while I am Tonawanda Seneca, which is a separate nation, we have kept that Confederacy in our primary relationships to each other, the Haudenosuane (Iroquois) Confederacy made up of six nations.

So when thinking about transnationalism, I want to think about resituating our genealogies and our understanding of mobility, territory, and political configurations. I really appreciate Maylei Blackwell’s comments where she resituated genealogies of transnational feminisms in terms of Indigenous femi-

nisms, third-world liberation, and so on.<sup>24</sup> American Indians often find themselves left out of these sorts of analyses in gender studies, women's studies, and feminist programs, and we just go about and do our thing of fighting colonization every day. Yet, I feel these experiences are important and have much to add to the academic discourse on transnational feminisms.

I undertake this discussion by putting in place a Haudenosaunee model of analysis that works toward decentering settler nation-state formations. In particular, I am asking what forms of analysis or actions can take place by centering Indigenous conceptions of land as connected, rather than land as disaggregate parcels at various European-conceived scales, which is a project of accumulation. I want to look at multi-scalar ways of thinking about land as divided up into different domains and which carries the weight of the colonial and its ongoing consequences. I refer to these multiple scales as reservations, nation-states, continents, hemispheres, and so on that come into play with these projects of accumulation. And what if we position land and water as always connected? What if we think of waterways in the way my Pacific Islander colleagues, particularly Vince Diaz and Alice Te Punga Somerville, have positioned water as connected with the currents rather than water as that which divides continents, islands, and land?<sup>25</sup> How might these anticolonial postulations create new possibilities? What if we extend the rafters, a Haudenosaunee term, to rethink and decolonize these terms in scholarship as matters of connection—a connection that in no way erodes our specificities, complex histories, and tribal centers, but rather enriches us to bring new information and technologies and ways of living in the world where we thrive in connection? This is a dramatic departure from how difference has been positioned even in gender, women's, and feminist studies. This is a departure from transnational feminism, which often conceives of difference in terms of social, cultural, and political with a concentration on the human.

For instance, the complex Idle No More movement embodies the trans-Indigenous life of Native activism. It is a movement led by telling and creating the rooted stories of anticolonial actions to protect land, water, and bodies through the use of social media and through collaboration and transnational ally work. Here I hope to elaborate on the connection between land, water and body, but not in a way that too easily equates Native body to land in romanticized visions that cause harm. My students are often eager to hear romantic stories of Natives living in idyllic pre-capitalist worlds free of violence and full of Native love, or to use Hulleah Tsinajinnie's words, a Vermillion Romance.<sup>26</sup> These sorts of telling make possible settler narratives that elide the very hard work it takes to make healthy and responsible communities, communities that take into account not only the human but nonhuman. There are

numerous examples of Native people who have protected not just *their* water and lands, but *all* of our water and land. The water at the heart of the Tar Sands controversy, for instance, affects all along its corridor that flows south not just Indigenous peoples, not just Canadians. The Idle No More movement is compelling as it addresses the consequences of living on desecrated land and drinking polluted water. This binding of land and water to the political, cultural, and social life of Indigenous peoples requires an ethics of care and responsibility. This ethics is foundational to Native epistemologies and the cornerstone of many of our politics—though unfortunately not all the time, and in recent times Indigenous politicians have been complicit.

Thinking through the transnational raises many questions about how to decenter the nation-state. At times transnationalism centers the nation-state as the primary mode of analysis while Native nations become minority cultures within the space of the settler nation. In other cases of scholarship, transnationalism allows the Indigenous to be elsewhere and never within asymmetrical relations of power. Settler colonialism, as Patrick Wolfe says, is not an ongoing event but a structure that we here all exist in today. How might we center our connections that we have with each other as Indigenous peoples with those who are now living on our lands? Chadwick Allen defines trans-Indigeneity as “the acknowledgement of mobility and multiple interactions of Indigenous peoples.”<sup>27</sup> He carefully states that trans-Indigeneity would not displace the specific, local, or precise tribal traditions but rather it could lead us to consider “different kinds of conversations.” I extend this conversation to think through the various kinds of actions that trans-Indigeneity might inspire in us to fight against intrusions and violence. What if in conceiving of a trans-Indigeneity rather than transnationalism as our model we centered our goals on relationships to land and water?

I contend we need to center the ethics of care as land that is always already connected. Land is a keyword with much currency often utilized by Native American, First Nations, Pacific Islanders, and Aboriginal scholars to invoke responsibility, rights, sovereignty, and belonging. From the physical homelands of Indigenous peoples stem a production of our social, economic, and political relationships to our community, other tribal nations, and nation-states, yet this does not mean a lack of mobility or travel. Maintaining relationships to the land is at the heart of Indigenous peoples’ struggles, and it is a struggle that benefits all who rely on water and land to live. Many tend to undertake this in the places they reside as well as their homelands. This act of transnational/trans-Indigenous feminisms is a practice and ethics of care. First, many of us (though certainly not all) recognize it is another nation’s land where we might grow, gather, and sustain ourselves and families. I

flesh this out elsewhere and postulate that we need to “go beyond an affiliation with land and water to arguments with political heft: What do we mean when we talk of land and water? In what circumstances and setting are the words evoked and take on different values?”<sup>28</sup> In thinking through transnational feminisms, I suggest a closer interrogation of these multiple social, cultural, and geopolitical meanings that make land and water a key concept in Indigenous political struggle and also feminist struggle.

As I have spoken about previously, a consequence of colonialism is the flattening of land with property, a process that contains Indigenous bodies and land into colonial categorizations. Noelani Goodyear-Kaōpua states that “containment can manifest in geographic forms as reservations or small school spaces, in political forms as legal-recognition frameworks that seek to subsume sovereignty within the settler state’s domestic laws, and in ideological forms . . . that allow a sprinkling of Indigenous history and culture only to maintain its marginality.”<sup>29</sup>

An example of land as property is a belief that reservations are the only Native spaces. Yet, there simply isn’t an unconnected place. The reservation, too often positioned as a place of authenticity for the very reason of its isolation, containment, and racialization of Indians, is often used to discipline Indians. What if we were to (re)write the map? What if we were to see this place of presumed authenticity as such because it is a repository of knowledge but that knowledge is always already a place that is connected to other spaces? What if the importance of this locale is such because it is a place determined and imagined into existence through Native geographic stories? And if we think about these Native places as ones existing through our own geographical desires, doesn’t that give us the ability to imagine other spaces beyond that demarcated by the state? For Native peoples, whose geographical imaginations and everyday realities are altered by political domination and the maps of the state, the power of resistant geographies grounded in a history of knowing the land versus a maneuvered legal claiming over it can be powerful and open up possibilities that may seem inconceivable to dominant society. It can certainly open up new strains of thinking in transnational feminism.

Unfortunately, in a lot of transnational work we have Indigenous places that are subject to the “logic of containment.” But there are other spaces besides reservations that are transnational spaces since time immemorial: Ohio was a meeting place for Indigenous peoples from many nations; Chicago was a meeting space, as were Albuquerque and Oakland.<sup>30</sup>

On a larger scale, nation-states such as the United States and Canada are co-constitutive. Yet they are not co-constitutive with Indigenous peoples living within their established borders. The fiftieth parallel disrupted transna-

tional Indigenous organizing—an intentional strategy to disrupt political power. This is yet another example of political geographic power and the logics of containment. Even nations were not natural or self-evident. Rachel Adams has noted that continents were part of practices of colonization and dispossession.<sup>31</sup> Even hemispheres are marked off with trade agreements, such as NAFTA. Understood as a set of transnational and neoliberal policies, NAFTA is too often overlooked, but it profoundly affects Indigenous peoples who are on the front line. It has affected Native lands in Canada, and has contributed to the environmental devastation we see with the Tar Sands, and the destruction of land and water not only for Native communities but for everyone. This is a matter for transnational organization and relationships that we've not had before. So I encourage you to rethink how the hemisphere works, include Canada in your formations, and to see how the Idle No More movement demands our consideration as an important site of allied transnational feminist work.

These scales are how I look at the logics of containment that still exist within transnational theorizing. I have found by not considering Indigenous concepts of land and water, transnational theory doesn't upset colonial logics of containment. I want to remind you that Indigenous feminism is at the forefront of unpacking not just statist conceptions, but also in our examinations of the radical relationship to land. Until transnationalism takes this seriously, we risk a continuation of the dispossession of Indigenous land and bodies, and erosion of our political power.

Aboriginal scholar Irene Watson is acutely aware of statist spatial configurations and asks us, in regards to treaties and reconciliation, "Are we free to roam?" and if so, "Do I remain the unsettled native, left to unsettle the settled spaces of empire?"<sup>32</sup> By asking this important theoretical and material question and upsetting the status quo of packaged Indigenous bodies and land, Watson importantly ties questions about Native mobility to how we organize politics and our relationships to various geographies. This line of questioning demands that in transnational feminisms we seriously consider land and water in a different light from politically accepted forms of territory or property. To continue to do so continues to not only assert Indigenous feminisms as "the sprinkling" of liberal multicultural forms of belonging but does not take seriously all of our relationships and reliance on land and water.

So, what are alternatives? Again I want to resituate genealogies of feminism and transnationalism so we may get to those alternatives. What about Seneca Falls, the formation of what is seen as feminism? Whose land was it on? It was on my land! They were in conversation with those around them. White feminists asked, "Why do these women have power and we don't?" And here I would say it is because of different genealogies, ones that examine the rela-

tionality between people and land, land and animals, the human and nonhuman, as well as different genealogies of gender relationships.

At a different scale, we can consider Guswentah. Two canoes, one representing the Haudensaunee, and one representing the Europeans, move down the river side by side, but not touching. Neither community tries to take over the other's canoe, because these canoes represent one's own law, customs, and traditions. Yet we share the water, no matter who violates the treaty. This rejects the nation-state mentality based in conquest and colonization, and instead affirms mutual respect and effort of different values and ways of life. Yet, if we consider the land and water there remains a relationality between different states. Destruction of the water would mean the uselessness of either canoe.

No matter what government systems we live under, we are all living on the same land. With the ethic of responsibility, listening to those who have fought to keep the land healthy is necessary for transnational feminisms. Land and water are foundational to peoples' cultural practices, and if we define culture as meaning-making, rather than culture as differentiation and isolation in a multicultural neoliberal model, and then think through land as a meaning-making process rather than a claimed object, the aspirations of Native people are apparent and clear, as is the shared importance to all living beings, human and nonhuman.

It is colonialism that attempts to force stagnation, immobility, and disconnection from each other. It is sharing of our stories amongst our family, clans, tribal members, and other Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples that thwarts the completion of colonialism that seeks to eliminate tribal knowledges and structures and make land and water nothing more than commodities to be developed. So as we go forward with our work, I encourage transnational feminist studies to rethink the spaces they live on and move through in their work.

SCOTT MORGENSEN

I am honored to be speaking today alongside my colleagues about Indigenous feminist leadership in the work for Indigenous decolonization and in the formation of anticolonial alliances. My words will address the implications of this work for academic feminism: work that I approach in Canada as a white settler who is answering Indigenous feminist scholarship and the political moment of Idle No More. I want to begin, however, by recalling Maylei Blackwell's recognition of the key contributions of Indigenous feminists to anti-racist and transnational feminist thought and praxis. In the US, as Blackwell explained, third-world feminists drew upon Indigenous feminist transnation-

alism when crafting the transnational directions of their work.<sup>33</sup> As well, Canadian critical race feminism bears a distinctive history of racialized and Indigenous women theorizing white supremacy, settler colonization, and settler and global capitalisms interconnectively. Sunera Thobani and Sherene Razack among other scholars ground their work in asking how racialized migrants are subject to the white-supremacist, capitalist, and border-policing logics of the settler state and yet inherit aspects of its power over Indigenous peoples, notably if Canadian multiculturalism ties their inclusion to sustained Indigenous elimination.<sup>34</sup> Such projects show how feminist anticolonialism and anti-racism have formed spaces for addressing Indigenous critiques of colonialism. Among the many meanings that their works might bear for us, I invoke them as a genealogy to which white settlers should respond. If white settlers take up a critique of white settler colonialism, we should recall that even if white settlerhood becomes a central problem, our theorizing will not be central to its displacement. Rather, we are responsible to the legacies of Indigenous and racialized people, in solidarity and struggle, already forming ties on Indigenous lands that are committed to decolonization. Perhaps one part of our work at this Institute is to learn to what extent transnational feminism may perform the responsibility to decolonial theory and praxis demanded by Indigenous feminism.

This line of thought returns me to the lessons I have learned from dialogic responses to Indigenous feminist critiques in the academy and in social movement. I want to invoke in particular the leading recent call by our colleague Maile Arvin, writing with Eve Tuck and Angie Morrill in their 2012 essay “Decolonizing Feminism.”<sup>35</sup> Reviewing an array of works by diverse Indigenous feminists, their essay presents five key concerns that they argue need to be addressed, both in what they call “whitestream” feminism and in anti-racist and transnational feminisms that seek to engage Indigenous feminist stakes. They are as follows: (1) “Problematize and theorize the intersections of settler colonialism, heteropatriarchy and heteropaternalism.”<sup>36</sup> (2) “Refuse the erasure of Indigenous women within gender and women’s studies and reconsider the end game of (only) inclusion.”<sup>37</sup> (3) “Actively seek alliances in which . . . relationships to settler colonialism are acknowledged as issues that are critical to social justice and political work.”<sup>38</sup> (4) “Recognize the persistence of Indigenous concepts and epistemologies, or ways of knowing.”<sup>39</sup> (5) “Question how the discursive and material practices of gender and women’s studies and the academy writ large may participate in the dispossession of Indigenous people’s lands, livelihoods, and futures; and . . . divest from those practices.”<sup>40</sup> In the Department of Gender Studies at Queen’s University, this call has informed efforts to reformulate our curriculum so that Indigenous feminist

theoretical paradigms become central to student learning. Our emphasis on these works also highlights students' responsibilities to Canadian critical race feminism, which as I've indicated already interrogates white settler colonialism as a practice of solidarity with Indigenous feminism, making that central to how comparative, border-crossing, anti-racist, and anticolonial feminist work on Indigenous lands might proceed.

These demands upon academic feminism in Canada have been heightened in the current moment of Idle No More amid its calls upon non-Indigenous people to form a responsible relationship to the work of Indigenous decolonization. As explained by the contributors to *The Winter We Danced*, where the Kino-nda-niimi Collective has gathered essays from the first months of Idle No More, #INM called Indigenous people and all non-Indigenous people in Canada to reject idleness in the face of the extension of white settler colonization as a project tying global capitalist exploitation to the erasure of Indigenous peoplehood.<sup>41</sup> The co-founders initially joined to educate one another, Indigenous communities, and the Canadian public about federal Bill C-45, which removed environmental protections from nearly 98 percent of waterways in Canada, undermining Indigenous land tenure and opening traditional territories to mining, forestry, and oil industries. The co-founders' call for a first Day of Action on December 10, 2012, led to marches, road and rail closures, and round dances across Canada and beyond in the winter of 2012–13. Their legacy is sustained today by the movement's active facilitation of Canada-wide, hemispheric, and transoceanic ties among Indigenous activism. I want to introduce Idle No More, however, in its distinction from prior movements in Canada in having been founded and guided by women working on behalf of their peoples. The movement challenged the specifically gendered procedures of settler colonialism in Canada in three significant ways: (1) its growth from what the co-founders called "the grass roots"; (2) its origination outside modes of state "recognition" of Indigenous peoplehood; and (3) its call for the resurgence of Indigenous modes of governance and women's leadership within them.

In these acts, Idle No More challenged the distinctly gendered power of white settler colonization, which Indigenous scholars Bonita Lawrence, Pamela Palmater, Martin Cannon, and Joanne Barker trace in particular to the Indian Act. In 1876 the new Dominion of Canada confirmed its devolved governmental power by creating the Indian Act, thereby inventing a new, racialized population—"Indians"—for regulation through the assignment of "status" and division into bands. The Act (1) overwrote traditional methods for determining belonging; (2) separated people of the same nations and interfered with nation- and confederation-based organizing; (3) channeled gov-

ernance through the state-mandated band councils; and, of course, (4) appropriated lots of land for use by settler capitalism. Yet as Bonita Lawrence explains, it did so precisely by imposing heteropatriarchy. It elevated male leaders within bands as intermediaries with the state, which also specifically denied the traditional authority of women as leaders and decision makers for their peoples. It imposed patrilineal inheritance when it defined Indian status as heritable only from a father with status. At once, status was rescinded from any Indigenous woman who married a person without status, which prevented her from passing her natal status on to her descendants. As non-status Indians, women and their descendants lost access to their nations' reserve lands and often were compelled to migrate to cities. There they often became progenitors of mixed-blood urban Native communities that remained unrecognized by the state. At once, others of their descendants across four or five generations may have been left with little or no knowledge of their heritage.<sup>42</sup> With over twenty-five thousand persons having lost status between 1876 and 1985, Lawrence estimates that anywhere from one to two million of their descendants subsequently were "lost to their nations" and became incapable of asserting any legally recognized Indigenous identity in Canada.<sup>43</sup> When the Act forcibly reduced or dispersed Indigenous constituencies in size and space—reorganizing kinship and belonging, obstructing traditional governance—it acted as a project of Indigenous elimination. Yet Indigenous people today are challenging the colonial power of the Act and its legacies by practicing what Jeff Corntassel and Taiaiake Alfred have called the "resurgence" of Indigenous peoplehood and governance.<sup>44</sup>

Idle No More practiced resurgence by undermining these gendered and racial methods for establishing settler state sovereignty. Grounding a movement at the Indigenous "grass-roots," the INM co-founders appealed to Indigenous people in their diversity and against the divisions created by the Indian Act, such as reserve versus urban, status versus non-status, full-blood versus mixed-blood, or recognized patriline versus unrecognized matriline. This effort by women leaders was a profoundly reconciling act, in that it potentially helped renew ties among diverse Indigenous peoples against the multigenerational legacies of the state making sexism "a tool of colonial policy" (in Martin Cannon's terms).<sup>45</sup> At once, this effort unhooked activist leadership from sole or even primary reference to state-recognized First Nations or their band council representatives. While the co-founders did not present Idle No More as in conflict with the Assembly of First Nations or with elected chiefs, they did foreground the need for Indigenous people to represent themselves outside of the state politics of official "recognition" that has been critiqued by Glen Coulthard.<sup>46</sup> At once, the growth of Idle No More linked crucially to

actions by AFN leaders, notably those of Attawapiskat First Nation Chief Theresa Spence. Her six weeks of protest hunger strike helped sustain visibility on issues first raised by Idle No More, which a number of Indigenous commentators have discussed as having resituated her elected role from settler modes of rule toward Indigenous governance. In her talk titled “The Chief’s Two Bodies,” Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson argues that Spence highlighted the colonial conditions Indigenous people endured, from the time of her first call for a state of emergency at Attawapiskat in 2011, by using her hunger strike to make *her own body into* the state of emergency: a body that, for Simpson, presents “the dangerous possibility of reproducing Indigeneity and most dangerously, other political orders . . . other sovereignties.”<sup>47</sup> Spence’s acts also resonate with the support of Idle No More for national resurgence that acknowledges women’s prior and sustained leadership. Idle No More co-founder Sylvia McAdam addressed this point on December 3, 2012, when she joined other co-founders at an early rally at Saddle Lake Reserve on Treaty 6 territory.<sup>48</sup> She clarified that Cree women chiefs long held an authority over land that men could not usurp and that could not be erased; yet when treaties were negotiated, the Indian Act had already driven women chiefs and their authority “underground.” McAdam highlights that if at treaty-making women did not agree to cede land, then even if Canada understood land to have been ceded, it *never was* according to the terms of traditional Cree governance. In these varied ways, exposing the colonial and gendered logics of state power, perpetrated through the racial methods of the Indian Act, opens significant pathways for protecting the land and pursuing decolonization.

Idle No More presents clear calls to action in academic feminism that would challenge the forms of erasure, tokenistic inclusion, and investments in dispossession that Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill challenge. Just as Idle No More challenged the authority of settler sovereignty, academic feminists might ask where settler sovereignty reproduces how we determine the content, order, or travels of academic feminist knowledge. So, keeping Maylei Blackwell’s questions in mind, if feminist knowledge is repositioned as transnational, how would our work shift if our purpose were to answer Idle No More, and then challenge the institutional ties that bind us to the authority of a settler state and that obstruct our capacity to engage with the relational modes of governance presented by resurgent Indigenous peoples? How do both Indigenous feminism and Idle No More call academic feminism into responsible relationship to the Indigenous peoples of the lands where they are situated, as well as to their relational modes of governance? Idle No More teaches that on these lands, life—academic included—is relational and responsible to modes

of governance that precede and exceed the modes of rule established by the settler state. These modes of governance already disrupt any perception of the state's singularity, coherence, or permanence, and invite understanding subjectivity and relationship beyond the colonial strictures of Western thought or law. Academic feminism can respond by answering calls such as those of Indigenous feminists and Idle No More and by critically investigating white-supremacist settler colonialism, its gendered and racial procedures, their economic and political functions, and the many ways that these processes condition feminist knowledge and mobilization.

#### NOTES

1. Amanda Lock Swarr and Richa Nagar, eds., *Critical Transnational Feminist Praxis* (Albany: SUNY Press, 2010), 3.
2. Leanne Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence, and a New Emergence* (Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring, 2011), 20.
3. Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, 42.
4. Alessandro Petti, Sandi Hilal, and Eyal Weizman, *Architecture after Revolution* (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014), 36.
5. Petti, Hilal, and Weizman, *Architecture after Revolution*, 34.
6. Brandy Nālani McDougall, "The Second Gift," in *The Value of Hawai'i 2: Ancestral Roots, Oceanic Visions* (Honolulu: University Press of Hawai'i, 2014), 250–53.
7. Maylei Blackwell, "Transnational Feminisms Roundtable," *Frontiers*, current issue; and Chadwick Allen, *Trans-Indigenous: Methodologies for Global Native Literary Studies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2012).
8. Sandy Grande, *Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2004); Claude Denis, *We Are Not You: First Nations and Canadian Modernity* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).
9. For instance, it seems to me that a significant difference may exist between the stakes in the identity claims of Indigenous and transnational feminisms that we would do well to be mindful and respectful of.
10. *Arrivants* is a term used by Jodi Byrd, borrowed from Kamau Brathwaite, to note that though non-Native and non-white people may have arrived to settler states not by choice, they may still play a structural role in settler colonialism. See Byrd, *Transit of Empire: Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011).
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12. Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua, "Decolonizing Antiracism," *Social Justice* 32,

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14. Candace Fujikane and Jonathan Y. Okamura, eds., *Asian Settler Colonialism: From Local Governance to the Habits of Everyday Life in Hawai‘i* (Honolulu: University of Hawai‘i Press, 2008).

15. Eve Tuck, Allison Guess, and Hannah Sultan, “Not Nowhere: Collaborating on Selfsame Land,” *Decolonization*, June 26, 2014, <http://decolonization.wordpress.com/2014/06/26/not-nowhere-collaborating-on-selfsame-land> (accessed June 30, 2014). See also the full *Decolonization* blog series on settler colonialism and anti-blackness at <http://decolonization.org/index.php/des/announcement/view/446>.

16. Fujikane and Okamura, *Asian Settler Colonialism*.

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19. Glissant quoted in Victor Bascara, *Model-Minority Imperialism* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), xxiii–xxiv.

20. Bascara, *Model-Minority Imperialism*, 2.

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23. Qwo-Li Driskill, “Doubleweaving Two-Spirit Critiques: Building Alliances between Native and Queer Studies,” *GLQ* 16, nos. 1–2 (2010): 69–92.

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36. Arvin, Tuck and Morrill, "Decolonizing Feminism," 14.

37. Arvin, Tuck and Morrill, "Decolonizing Feminism," 17.

38. Arvin, Tuck and Morrill, "Decolonizing Feminism," 19.

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