



Living in Indigenous Sovereignty:

Colonialism, Indigenous Homelessness, and Non-Indigenous Engagement

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INTRODUCTION/OVERVIEW

- Acknowledging the territory and the struggle.
- Introducing myself and how I relate to today's content
 - Introducing Teddy Zegeye-Gebrehiwot
- Overview of the presentation
 - Indigenous Homelessness and settler colonialism
 - Film--*Stories of Decolonization: Land dispossession and settlement*
 - Addressing the root: Decolonization and living in Indigenous sovereignty
 - Discussion/Q & A
- The nature of the content



CONSIDER

- What does Indigenous homelessness have to do with the Dakota Access Pipeline protests in Standing Rock, South Dakota?
- With the Rooster Town Blockade at the Parker Wetlands here in Winnipeg?



THE CANADIAN OBSERVATORY ON HOMELESSNESS...

- Will release its full definition of Indigenous homelessness tomorrow. This definition includes 12 dimensions.
- Several of these dimensions have been previewed (<https://www.facebook.com/homelesshub/>), and they seem to all be related, directly or indirectly, to settler colonialism.



WHAT IS SETTLER COLONIALISM?

1. Canada (as well as the U.S., Australia, and New Zealand) is a settler colonial country.
2. Lowman and Barker (2015) describe three pillars of settler colonialism: (a) invasion continues through “the social, political, and economic structures built by the invading people” (p. 25), (b) settlers’ intend to stay which is characterized by their denial of Indigenous presence, and (c) “the settler society becomes so deeply established that it is naturalized, normalized, unquestioned, and unchallenged” (p. 26).
3. Wolfe (1999): “The colonizers came to stay—invasion is a structure not an event” (p. 2).
4. Taiaiake Alfred (n.d.) states, “Colonialism is the disconnection of Native people from the land, their history, their identity and their rights so that others can benefit” (para. 3).
5. LaRocque’s (2010) description of colonialism: (pp. 74-76)
6. Settler colonialism as the core foundational injustice of Canada.

LAND DISPOSSESSION IS A CORNERSTONE OF SETTLER COLONIALISM

- The second dimension, of the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness's definition of Indigenous homelessness is "An Indigenous individual's or community's separation from post-colonial Indigenous lands" (<https://www.facebook.com/homelesshub/>).
- Manuel and Derrickson (2015) write, "It is the loss of our land that has been the precise cause of our impoverishment" (p. 8). They calculate that in Canada, Indigenous peoples control .2 percent of the land, while settlers control 99.8 percent.
- Non-Indigenous peoples have, by and large, taken part in and benefitted from Indigenous land dispossession. This continues today.
- If a root of Indigenous homelessness is land dispossession, then critical strategies toward ending it are land return, supporting Indigenous land rights, and land protection. Thus, Standing Rock and Rooster Town.





SOME KEY CONCEPTS IN SETTLER COLONIAL THEORY (CANADIAN CONTEXT)

1. Within settler colonial theory, non-Indigenous peoples in Canada and other settler states are often referred to as *settlers*, a term that is meant to emphasize their continuity with values and worldviews of their ancestors who settled, and to denaturalize and re-politicize their presence on these lands.
2. Tuck and Yang (2012) contend, “Settlers are not immigrants. Immigrants are beholden to the Indigenous laws and epistemologies of the lands they migrate to. Settlers become the law, supplanting Indigenous laws and epistemologies. Therefore, settler nations are not immigrant nations” (pp. 6-7).
3. Simpson (2013a) describes the daily reproduction of Canadian colonialism. She writes, “Colonialism was and is a choice that Canadians make every day. It is a choice to maintain and uphold a system that is based on the hyperexploitation of the land and of Indigenous peoples” (p. 53).



FILM

STORIES OF DECOLONIZATION: LAND DISPOSSESSION AND SETTLEMENT

**[HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/WATCH?
V=ATRUP6R2CAA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ATRUP6R2CAA)**

LIVING IN INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY: AN ONTOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

- Canadian journalist, author, and activist Naomi Klein began her sold-out talk to a Winnipeg audience in April 2016 by acknowledging they were gathered on Treaty 1 territory. She continued, “It is not enough for us to simply say that this is Indigenous land. We need to *act* like it is Indigenous land” (25:36-25:46).
- I argue that decolonization requires a radical re-orientation of the way we understand ourselves and Canada, and of the way we relate to the land and to Indigenous peoples. It requires a great deal of personal transformation on intellectual, spiritual, emotional, and even physical/material levels.





LIVING IN INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY: AN ONTOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

- One way to understand this re-orientation is through the framework of living in *Indigenous sovereignty*, or “Living in [accordance with] an awareness that we are on Indigenous lands containing their own protocols, stories, [laws,] obligations, and opportunities which have been understood and practiced by Indigenous peoples since time immemorial” (Carlson, 2016b, p. ii).

LIVING IN INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY

Indigenous scholars on Indigenous sovereignty:

- Chiefs of Ontario <http://www.chiefs-of-ontario.org/faq>
- Simpson (2015): A description of sovereignty from within Indigenous political and intellectual systems, as articulated by Elder Gidigaa Migizi, is “at its core about relationships—relationships with each other and with plant and animal nations, with our lands and waters and with the spiritual world” (p. 18).



LIVING IN INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY

Indigenous laws and living in Indigenous sovereignty

- Johnson (2007) says, “When your ancestors came to this territory, *Kiciwamanawak* [my cousin], our law applied” (p. 27).
- Borrows (2005) writes, “Indigenous peoples in what is now Canada developed various spiritual, political and social customs and conventions to guide their relationships. These diverse customs and conventions became the foundation for many complex systems of law” (p. 190).
- McAdam (2015) writes, “In the spirit and intent of Indigenous sovereignty and treaty, and honouring Indigenous relationships; non-Indigenous people must begin supporting and encouraging Indigenous laws and teachings, in every aspect, and by whatever means possible. How this might look is up to the Indigenous nations working alongside these systems to intervene in colonial narratives, laws, and policies, and collectively work toward dismantling destructive and oppressive systems which have been imposed on Indigenous peoples through colonization” (p. 36).





RESISTING CHARACTERISTICS OF SETTLER COLONIALISM

One approach to decolonization is to challenge and transform these characteristics within ourselves, within our relationships, within the organizations we are part of, and within Canada—particularly when engaging with Indigenous peoples and lands

- Violence, coercion, and control
- Hierarchy
- Private property and capitalism
- Greed, entitlement, appropriation
- Supremacy, arrogance, narcissism
- Universalism and assimilation
- Benevolent civilizing mission
- Othering and representation
- Denial and invisibility
- Individualism
- Fear
- Extractivism and assault on the natural world



LIVING IN INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY

Support Indigenous land rights, land return, and land protection as a way of addressing a root of Indigenous homelessness!

FOR FURTHER LEARNING

- www.groundworkforchange.org
- Manuel & Derrickson's *Unsettling Canada*
- Lowman & Barker's *Settler*
- Leanne Simpson on youtube. *Niigaan: In Conversation*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5E2Rskkdi4>
- Niigaan Sinclair on youtube. *The Gift of Treaties*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KBp0-c0PIf4>
- Taiaiake Alfred's *Wasáse*
- Victoria Freeman on youtube. *Niigaan: In Conversation*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cFpHTEuvd6o&t=310s>
- Paulette Regan's *Unsettling the Settler Within*
- Sakej Ward on Vimeo:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KBp0-c0PIf4>





CLOSING DISCUSSION

Thoughts ?

Questions?

One action item I will take away from the day.

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