

Settlement for Whom? And
Settlement for What?

Decolonial Possibilities for Settlement Work

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Moving Beyond Territorial Acknowledgements

“Moving beyond territorial acknowledgments means asking hard questions about what needs to be done once we’re ‘aware of Indigenous presence’. It requires that we remain uncomfortable, and it means making concrete, disruptive change”

Chelsea Vowel

(<https://apihtawikosisan.com/2016/09/beyond-territorial-acknowledgments/>)



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Acknowledgement of Indigenous Presence, Life, Learning, Resurgence

One of the things birds do in our creation stories is they plant seeds and they bring forth new ideas and they grow those ideas. Seeds are the encapsulation of wisdom and potential and the birds carry those seeds around the earth and grew this earth. And I think we all have that responsibility to find those seeds, to plant those seeds, to give birth to these new ideas. Because people think up an idea but then don't articulate it, or don't tell anybody about it, and don't build a community around it, and don't do it.

So in Anishinaabeg philosophy, if you have a dream, if you have a vision, you share that with your community, and then you have a responsibility for bringing that dream forth, or that vision forth into a reality. That's the process of regeneration. That's the process of bringing forth more life—getting the seed and planting and nurturing it. It can be a physical seed, it can be a child, or it can be an idea. But if you're not continually engaged in that process then it doesn't happen (Leanne Betasamosake Simpson in Klein, 2013, para 34 & 35).



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As I reflect on this acknowledgement and what it means in the context of this presentation, I centre myself on questioning whether the choices that are made on behalf of communities/people when it comes to “settlement” and “integration” actually brings forth more life.

What would a decolonial policy position on settlement look like?

What is Decolonization?

“Decolonization is more than a struggle against power and control; it is also the imagining and generating of alternative institutions and relations.”

Walia, 2013, p. 249

How do we ensure decolonization is not just another buzzword?

The promises of “equality,” “justice,” “citizenship,” and “full participation.”

How does decolonization make an impact that is different than/complementary to EDI, anti-racism, GBA+/intersectionality, or multiculturalism when it comes to settlement work?



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Decolonization is not a metaphor...

We know there are no boats waiting in the harbour to take all of the non-Natives back someplace. We know people are not going to get on planes and say, “Oh well, we didn’t get this country so we will go somewhere else.” The non-Natives are all going to be here after negotiations. And so are we. What I want to leave behind is the injustice. I wish that we could start again.

– Steven Lewis Point (Xwě lī qwě l těl, Stó:lō, former lieutenant governor of British Columbia, former provincial court judge, former Chief of the Skowkale First Nation, chair of advisory committee for Missing Women Commission of Inquiry), Foreword to A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas (2001)



Settlement for Whom and Settlement for What?

Basic questions:

- Who defines what settlement and integration are?
- Who do those definitions benefit?

What is your “working” definition of settlement and integration?
Where do they come from?

Settlement for Whom and Settlement for What?

If we follow settlement policy around, then where does it go?

Who does **what** with it (politicians, organizations, practitioners... how about Indigenous peoples, newcomers, the “public”)?

What are the contradictions that emerge? And are they signs of a system that needs to be fixed or a system that is working exactly as was intended to function?

Settlement for Whom and Settlement for What?

Settler complicity versus settler privilege (Dhamoon, 2015, pp. 24-25)

Settler moves to innocence (Tuck & Yang, 2012)

Settlement for Whom and Settlement for What?

What does epistemic disobedience mean in practice?

Dreaming of decolonial possibilities....

- The settlement worker cannot replace, or do the work of, being in relation with indigenous peoples/communities/nations
- Not fixing people into categories and asking them to
- Rethinking the “credentials” required to “do” settlement and integration work
- Rethinking the terms settlement and integration
- Playing the politics of refusal (Simpson, 2014) and refusing damage-centred research (Tuck, 2009)
- Supporting the diversity of epistemic locations and not just looking at social location
- Newcomers as thinking partners; rethinking what “citizenship,” “success” and “belonging” look like



Thank-you!

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