Gay Pride on Stolen Land:
Homonationalism, Queer Asylum and Indigenous Sovereignty
at the Vancouver Winter Olympics

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Abstract

In this paper we examine intersections between homonationalism, sport, gay imperialism and white settler colonialism. The 2010 Winter Olympics, held in Vancouver, Canada, produced new articulations between sporting homonationalism, indigenous peoples and immigration policy. For the first time at an Olympic/Paralympic Games, three Pride Houses showcased LGBT athletes and provided support services for LGBT athletes and spectators. Supporting claims for asylum by queers featured prominently in these support services. However, the Olympic events were held on unceded territories of four First Nations, centered in Vancouver which is a settler colonial city. Thus, we examine how this new form of ‘sporting homonationalism’ emerged upon unceded, or stolen, indigenous land of British Columbia in Canada.

Specifically, we argue that this new sporting homonationalism was founded upon white settler colonialism and imperialism—two distinct logics of white supremacy (Smith, 2006). Smith explained how white supremacy often functions through contradictory, yet interrelated, logics. We argue that distinct logics of white settler colonialism and imperialism shaped the emergence of the Olympic Pride Houses.

On the one hand, the Pride Houses showed no solidarity with the major indigenous protest ‘No Olympics On Stolen Land.’ This absence of solidarity between the Pride Houses and the ‘No Olympics On Stolen Land’ protests reveals how thoroughly winter sports – whether elite or gay events — depend on the logics, and material practices, of white settler colonialism. We analyze how
the Pride Houses relied on colonial narratives about ’Aboriginal Participation’ in the Olympics and settler notions of ‘land ownership’.

On the other hand, the Pride Houses provided support for LGBT people filing asylum claims during the Olympics. The Pride Houses’ support for queer asylum relied upon imperialist logic about ‘Other’ homophobic nation-states which constructs Canada as the global, humanitarian ‘protector’ of same-sex rights. Thus, the Pride Houses actively promoted narratives of Canadian gay imperialism and liberal same-sex rights into the context of elite sport. We explore how these narratives about Canadian same-sex immigration rights naturalize settler colonial attitudes about British sovereignty which, again, makes current political debates about indigenous sovereignty disappear.

Thus, even as these settler colonial and imperial logics seem to be contradictory in political terms, they both functioned to uphold white supremacy in Canada. Further, we argue settler colonialism and imperialism were central to the formation of homonational gay pride on stolen land of the Vancouver Olympics.
“...my interest in theorizing U.S. national homosexuality, or homonationalism, is to map out the intersections, confluences, and divergences between homosexuality and the nation, national identity, and nationalism—the convivial rather than antagonistic relations between presumably non-normative sexualities and the nation” (Jasbir Puar, 2007).

“Two-Spirit critiques...challenge queer studies to complicate notions of nationhood and diaspora by paying attention to the specific circumstances of nations indigenous to the land bases the United States and Canada are colonizing” (Qwo-Li Driskill, 2010).

Indigeneity “functions...as a paradigmatic symptom that torques open such celebratory moments to reveal the undercurrent of colonialism and imperialism that infects ideas of affect and tolerance” (Byrd, 2009).

**An Olympics on Stolen Land**

In 2010, winter Olympic and Paralympic Games took place on the Lil'wat, Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations traditional and shared territories along the western coast of Canada. The territories of these First Nations include the city of Vancouver and the ski resort of Whistler where the winter sporting events took place. Across British Columbia, indigenous lands are unceded and non-surrendered because, in the process of colonization, British settlers failed to extinguish aboriginal title/sovereignty. Governments of the hosting First Nations signed a protocol agreement with the Canadian government to maximize
opportunities for their communities while agreeing to make the games a success. In contrast, many First Nations people strongly opposed the Olympics. In 2007, the Native 2010 Resistance formed to contest “Olympic poverty and homelessness, the theft and exploitation of Indigenous land, cultural appropriation and police violence” (Harrietspirit, 2008). Multiple indigenous protests followed as part of the major campaign ‘No Olympics On Stolen Native Land’.

Wherever the Olympics take place, the host city, regions and nation are expected to buy into a state of exception for a nation-building grand project. In Canada, the conservative government closed down parliament for duration of the Olympic games. This was an attempt to divert attention away from political pressure on Stephen Harper’s government’s alleged complicity in the torture of ‘detainees’ in Canada’s war on Afghanistan. The suspension of parliament also effectively stalled approximately 40 pieces of legislation, including a non-discrimination bill protecting gender identity. Across Canada there were protests against the proroguing of the government by the Conservative government. At the same time, people across Canada started protesting against the winter Olympics. In Vancouver, alongside the ‘No Olympics On Stolen Land’ campaign, there was a convergence of anti-Olympic protests focused on femicides of native women, migrant justice, environmental justice, poverty, militarism and queer rights. Interviewed on Democracy Now, Harjap Grewal (2010) of the Olympic Resistance Network explained:
“It’s a unique moment in history, because a call for a convergence normally happens at the G8, WTO and World Bank summits that happen around the world, and this time organizers have actually called for a demonstration against the Olympics industry. We don’t see the Olympics industry as being that much different than these other institutions that are unaccountable to the people of the world. The IOC is like the WTO. The IOC is like the IMF, is like the World Bank. And it encourages the transfer of wealth from public hands to private pockets.”

Despite significant local resistance and protests, the games went ahead. Typically at an Olympic games, many local provinces and participating nations set up ‘pavilions’, also called ‘houses’, that provide tourist information about a region, local food and drinks or a chance to meet athletes from that nation. Vancouver was no exception to this part of the Olympic machine. The Four Host First Nations held a pavilion at the Squamish Lil’wat Cultural Centre on Whistler Mountain. There were also pavilions, known as ‘Pride Houses’, showcasing gay athletes, and providing support services for lesbian, bisexual, gay and trans (LBGT) athletes and spectators. In fact, there were three Pride Houses—one on Whistler mountain, another in Vancouver’s LGBT community center and another in a bar in Vancouver’s gay men’s district. The fact that this was ‘the first time’ there had been Pride Houses at an Olympic Games led to much Canadian patriotism mixed with multicultural self-congratulation. This homonationalism was front and centre in Pink Triangle’s video the opening of the Pride Houses.
Here is Marion Lay, long time lesbian activist and Canadian Olympic Bronze Medalist 1968:

“There’s no safer place in the world than Vancouver to come out and make a really strong statement… To be our authentic selves, be true Canadians. To represent Canada. Be the best we can be.”

The Pride Houses also provided information about, and support for, people requesting asylum in Canada on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or HIV status (SOGIHS). Caryl Dolinko, InterPride, VP Operations, speaking at the opening of Pride House declared:

“Our message is diversity, acceptance and human rights worldwide and nothing else.”

The Olympic Pride Houses were a new moment in a ‘Canadian’ discourse of lesbian and gay inclusion and visibility. Vancouver, located on Canada’s west coast – sometimes referred to as the ‘left’ coast — became the place, the moment in Olympic history for lesbian and gay visibility, inclusion and human rights. Lesbian and gay athletes, spectators and their allies became respectable Canadians by supporting the Olympics; gained first-time recognition by Olympic organizations; and reinforced the nationalist myth of Canada being a safe haven for queer refugees.

The Pride Houses emerged from enthusiastic, nationalist support for the Olympics within lesbian and gay organizations in Vancouver. In this annexation
of queerness with olympism, we see the emergence of a new form of what Jasbir Puar (2007) termed ‘homonationalism’. In many ways, the Pride House represents what Puar “the convivial, rather than antagonistic, relations between presumably non-normative sexualities and the nation.” The Pride Houses materialized within a web of convivial relations between Vancouver LGBT businesses and non-governmental organizations; local and international Olympic organizations; First Nations, provincial and federal levels of government. In this paper, we examine the colonial and imperial discourses underpinning these institutions, and how the Pride Houses ushered in this new form of sporting homonationalism during the Vancouver Olympics.

The celebratory discourse about same-sex inclusion, along with the discourse about safe asylum for queers, at the Pride Houses were strikingly disconnected from activism for indigenous rights during the Olympics. That is, issues that led to protests against holding the Olympics on ‘stolen native land’ were not taken up as part of the political mandate for the Vancouver Pride Houses. This gulf between the homonationalism created by the Pride Houses and the indigenous protests against the Olympics reveals the depth of settler colonial thinking in the LGBT organizations and business involved with the Pride Houses. This meant that LGBT rights and visibility were hermetically sealed from Canada’s colonial history as a nation. In this paper we concentrate on the intersections between the emergence of LGBT Pride Houses, their advocacy for queer asylum and struggles for indigenous sovereignty. Specifically, we argue that the LGBT Pride Houses, rather than merely celebrating lesbian and gay rights
and queer asylum in Canada, reveal how white settler colonialism and imperialism were the basis of this new form of homonational gay pride.

**Homonationalism, Settler Colonialism and Imperialism**

Following Andrea Smith’s (2006) framework, we argue that distinct logics of white supremacy—settler colonialism and imperialism—shaped the politics of the Pride Houses toward indigenous sovereignty and queer immigration. The Pride Houses came into existence in the same time and place as massive indigenous protests against the Olympics. The rhetoric of LGBTQ pride at the Vancouver Olympics ignored the long-standing indigenous protests against the development of ski-resorts and immediate mobilizations against the Olympics. The Pride Houses aligned themselves with the colonial Olympic venture and had no solidarity with the indigenous ‘No Olympics On Stolen Land’ campaign. In the first part of the paper, we expose how this is an example of how thoroughly both gay/lesbian politics and winter sports relied upon, and materialized, Anglo-Canadian settler colonialism. In the second part of the paper, we unpack how the Pride Houses’ support for queer asylum relied on the imperialist view of Canada as the Western, benevolent ‘protector’ of same-sex rights in contrast to ‘uncivilized’ homophobic nations ‘elsewhere’. Even as these imperialist and settler colonial logics seem to be contradictory, they both support a Canadian system of white, settler colonial supremacy within which lesbian and gay subjects forged some serious homonational gay pride during the Vancouver Olympic games.

Homonormativity was theorized by Lisa Duggan (2003) as a ‘new neo-liberal sexual politics’. Duggan’s notion of homonormativity critiques gay subjects
embroiled in “a politics that does not contest dominant heteronormative forms but upholds and sustains them.”\textsuperscript{15} The Pride Houses also relied upon liberal-multicultural and nationalist discourses about Canadian same-sex rights. In other words, the Pride Houses were designed to support, and in fact, produced homonationalist ‘Canadian’ lesbian and gay subjects. Puar (2007) detailed how types of homonationalism arise in relation to the patriotic inclusion of Western liberal gay subjects in the UK and in the US. Working the intersection of queer studies and Native studies, Scott Lauria Morgensen (2010) has taken up the idea of ‘settler homonationalism’. Morgensen centers “settler colonialism as a condition of the formation of modern queer subjects, cultures, and politics.”\textsuperscript{16} Taking our lead from Morgensen, in the first part of this paper we examine the Pride Houses in terms of Canadian settler colonialism. We expose how several settler colonial narratives—participation, displacement and disappearance of First Peoples and Nations—shaped how the Pride Houses materialized on unceded indigenous lands and who the Pride Houses were imagined to serve.

Toward the end of the paper, we unpack how the homonational celebration of same-sex rights in Canada was based on imperial attitudes towards ‘homophobic’ nations in the global south and the indigenous sovereignty of First Nations.

\textbf{Settler Colonialism, Stolen Land and the Olympic Pride Houses}

\textit{“Queers naturalize settler colonialism whenever the conquest and the displacement of Native peoples are ignored or appear inevitable”} (Morgensen, 2010).\textsuperscript{17}
Puar (2006) argued that homonationalism is exemplified in the depoliticized and consumptive ethics of lesbian and gay tourism industries. The homonational Pride Houses exemplified this depolitical relationship to First Nations resistance to the Olympics. But it was more than merely ‘depolitical’ – it was yet another iteration of Anglo-settler colonial gay neoliberalism. A significant factor was the fact that the Pride Houses evolved directly from privatized, gay winter sport tourism.

The idea for an Olympic Pride House was initiated by Dean Nelson and Ken Coolen, two gay businessmen, who invested CAN$100,000 of their own money. Dean Nelson is CEO of a gay and lesbian travel company called GayWhistler.com which serves as a “year-round promoter of Whistler to the gay and lesbian community, and produces GayWhistler ski week, and WinterPRIDE every year.” The first Pride House was set up in Whistler – a ski resort north of Vancouver city. This was, initially, a commercial response to the Olympics being scheduled at the same time as the WinterPRIDE ski week, which is operated by Nelsons’ company Alpenglow Productions /Gay Whistler. The commercial response was then justified as being an opportunity to raise awareness about homophobia in sport and give LGBT sports fans a friendly place to watch the Olympic events.

Nelson set up a steering committee to expand Pride House into three venues—the main site in Whistler Village, a resource centre at the Vancouver LGBT community centre and at ‘The Score’ on Davie, a pub within the city’s gay village. The LGBT community centre in downtown Vancouver, called Qmunity,
was converted into one of three ‘Pride Houses’ during the Olympics. The executive director of the Qmunity center, Jennifer Breakspear, was also chair of the Vancouver Pride House steering committee. She explained that the focus of the Vancouver Qmunity Pride house was to create a safe space for athletes to access social, educational, health and support services. Thus, the Pride Houses quickly came to involve for-profit sectors of gay and lesbian travel and entertainment industries working with a non-profit LGBT resource centre. This combination of non-profit and commercial LGBT organizations supporting the Olympics went ahead despite the numerous indigenous protests against hosting the Olympics in Vancouver and Whistler. This political separation is an important indicator of how settler colonialism functioned within the Pride Houses.

To understand this political chasm, we illustrate how participation, displacement and disappearance of indigenous people in the Pride Houses and the Olympics are key settler narratives about taking part and taking place. We look at examples of Two-Spirit people’s participation in, and also their displacement from, the Pride Houses. We also discuss the implications of elder Harriett Nahanee’s tragic death, who protested the Olympic highway that was also part of the context in which this homonational gay pride at the Olympics took place. Took place. What did this gay pride take the place of?

**Two-Spirit ‘Participation’ in the Pride Houses**

There was, of course, no neat line between indigenous protest against and settler colonial support for the Olympics. Not all First Nations constituents were opposed to the Olympics – many groups and individuals were involved and supported the
Christine O’Bonsawin (2010) describes how the Vancouver Olympic Committee (VANOC) and a non-governmental organization called 2010 Legacies made considerable efforts to ensure indigenous visibility and economic support in the organizing and hosting of the Games. Large sums of Olympic dollars were directed at indigenous programming and economic projects within communities, such as the creation of a Sustainability and Aboriginal Participation program. She writes:

“The inclusion of colonial narratives has tacitly been enshrined within the Olympic formula, and indigenous peoples have long served the performance needs of nations whose histories rest in imperial conquest. Such storylines position the subjugation and containment of indigenous peoples within national histories, thereby removing them in time and space from present-day realities,” (O’Bonsawin, 2010).

The organization of the Pride Houses had minimal structural involvement of indigenous people or groups. The Pride House Steering Committee had no formal First Nations representation. First Nations involvement with the Pride Houses seems to have been limited to reference to Corrine Hunt, a First Nations artist who is out as lesbian, and a welcoming ceremony by Sandra Laframboise, a Two-Spirited elder. Corrine Hunt, from the Komoyue tribe of northern Vancouver Island, co-designed the Olympic and Paralympic medals. Corrine Hunt was not one of four artists commissioned by the Pride House; rather, she was featured in a Pride House promotional video. Sandra Laframboise provided a Two-Spirited blessing at the opening of the Vancouver Pride House. Laframboise,
of the Algonquin-Cree people, is chief and elder of the Vancouver-based ‘Dancing to Eagle Spirit Society’ which is “dedicated to the healing and empowerment of aboriginal and non-aboriginal Two-Spirit individuals, their friends and their allies,” (Dancing to Eagle Spirit Society, 2008). Talking about aboriginal sport, Laframboise emphasizes the rite to play without competition:

“…games represent something very sacred and would require the Elder or the Medicine person to begin all preparation for the game to come. This was done in representation of being on the earth acknowledging there is only one Creator. Two-Spirited individuals are only beginning to re-acquire this rite in a modern society. There are now baseball teams being formed, bowling teams, square dance teams etc. It is the belief of many, that we are only beginning to come out of the suppression of Native American culture from the last 500 years of colonization,” (Dancing to Eagle Spirit Society, 2008).

The Two-Spirited blessing by Laframboise can be interpreted as an invitation to native and non-native LGBT people to remember and/or re-imagine a sacred potential for sports, and to dis-identify (Driskill, 2009; Muñoz, 1999) with corporatized, competitive sport. Her Two-Spirited welcome was also a call to the non-native LGBT community, emerging in the social space of the Olympics and the Pride Houses, to engage with the colonial realities of Vancouver, Whistler and Canada.

We foreground the Two-Spirited blessing of the Pride House as a moment of indigenous sovereignty within Vancouver’s queer community, and Two-Spirited anti-colonialism in the midst of ongoing colonization of the region, and
the mega-scale, (g)local colonization that is the Olympic games. We feel it is important not to read Laframboise’ ceremony as simply ‘participating’ in non-Native homonationalism that, we argue throughout the paper, permeated the Pride Houses. To view this particular Two-Spirited ceremony as merely participating, following Qwo-Li Driskill (2009), risks replicating a colonial perspective. Two-Spirit activists presence in non-Native queer spaces is less about joining those communities, suggests Morgensen (2010), than about holding them responsible to the distinctiveness of Native histories and reminding “non-Natives that colonization continues to shape contemporary life” (p. 122).

“Being a part of our nations and communities is actually an anti-assimilation stance against colonial projects…that have attempted to assimilate Native people into non-Native culture and tried to eradicate Indigenous sexualities and gender systems” (Morgensen, 2010).

To interpret Laframboise’s blessing as evidence of homonationalism, on a par with the settler colonial ideologies of the Pride House organizers, would be to erase the political and indigenous sovereignty of Laframboise’s deliberate presence. Rather, Laframboise’s ‘participation’ in the opening ceremonies of the Pride Houses reveals the structural indigenous/settler colonial relations upon which the Pride Houses were based. Naming this indigenous/settler colonial relationship starts to explain the Pride Houses lack of political solidarity with indigenous anti-olympic protests.
‘Displacement’ of Two-Spirited Youth from the Qmunity Centre

The LGBTQ centre in Vancouver, known as Qmunity, provided support services that were not available in the other Pride Houses—on Whistler mountain and at the pub in the gay village. However, this meant there was a displacement of local queers from the Qmunity Pride House during the Olympic games. A blogger called Beneath The Snow\textsuperscript{28} reported how ‘local’ queer youth did not feel welcome in the newly imposed Pride House and stayed away from the Qmunity/The Space:

“A Vancouver anarchist…mentioned that numerous safe spaces around Vancouver have been closed or have had their usage curtailed. For example, a place called The Space for at-risk queer and trans youth was renamed Pride House and is being utilized to showcase gays during the Olympics. The local queer and trans youth no longer feel welcome, and have nowhere else to go this month.”

After the event, Pride House organizers acknowledged there “was not sufficient programming targeting two-spirited, trans and queer youth” and that it would have been beneficial to have “representation of these groups on the Steering Committee, with responsibility for targeted programming” (Birch-Jones, 2010).\textsuperscript{29} Even apart from the Olympics, many Two-Spirited people did not think that the Qmunity centre was sufficiently involved with the Two-Spirit community in Vancouver, suggesting there could be a specific Two-Spirit room, program and staff on site (Ristock, Zoccle & Potskin, 2011).\textsuperscript{30} The displacement of local Two-Spirit, queer and trans youth from the Pride House reveals that their ‘temporary’
displacement was not anticipated ahead of time. It reveals how the process of taking over space, displacing ‘Others’ becomes naturalized when the Olympics comes to town. The temporary and permanent displacement of indigenous, poor and working class communities, the diversion of social programming and funding are major consequences of sporting mega-events, especially the Olympics (Ristock, Zoccle & Potskin, 2011). Such displacement, both temporary and permanent, is a central and ongoing mechanism of settler colonialism. In the context of Vancouver, however, the displacement of Two-Spirit, queer and trans youth by the Pride House illustrates just how familiar this process of settler colonialism is within the non-Native queer community. Surprise, and then regret, about the displacement of Two-Spirit, trans and queer youth from the Qmunity centre laminates onto the wider disavowal that Vancouver’s non-Native queer community exists on unceded land in a settler colonial city.

**Indigenous ‘Disappearance’ from Urban and Mountain Spaces**

Indigenous groups have long been protesting the development of ski resorts and access roads that decimate their sacred, medicinal and hunting grounds (Drapeau, 2010). The Whistler ski resort is located on unceded St’at’imc territory. The St’at’imc Nation have been resisting the development of other ski resorts on their land well before the Olympic bid. In May 2000, people from the St'at'imc Nation set up Sutikalh ['House-Of-The-Winter-Spirit'] camp to stop construction of a $530-million ski resort in the Melvin Creek area. NGR, the corporation seeking to develop the resort, is headed by Nancy Green-Raine who is a former Olympic skier and Canadian senator. She was instrumental in the development of the ski
resort on Whistler mountain, is still pursuing the Cayoosh development and was a powerful member of the Vancouver Olympic bid committee. The Nancy Green International Race Centre, at another ski resort called Sunpeaks, is located on Secwepemc lands. Secwepemc people have been protesting the clear-cutting of berry picking, hunting and medicine harvesting areas to expand this ski-resort (Sterritt, 2007).

Also, there were protests against the $600-million expansion of the ‘Sea-to-Sky’ coastal highway to create a transport corridor between Vancouver and Whistler. Harriet Nahanee was arrested in 2006 for protesting the encroachment and damage caused by this Sea-to-Sky highway at Eagle Bluffs. Harriet Nahanee held a traditional role as an environmental steward of the Pacheenaht [‘Sea-Foam-On-The-Rocks’] people with hereditary status from the ‘Chief Over All Chiefs’ Questo family. Harriet was arrested and, despite being a Respected Elder at the age of 71, she was imprisoned for 14 days in early 2007 during which time she contracted pneumonia. Harriett Nahanee died on February 24, 2007. Harriet Nahanee’s death indicates the violence inflicted by Olympic ‘development’. It is a stark and dreadful example of how colonial development necessarily involves displacement, disappearance and genocide of indigenous people and communities who resist. The Native Warrior Society removed the Olympic flag from outside Vancouver City Hall to honor Harriet Nahanee (Wonders, 2008).

In this section we have tried to juxtapose some of the realities facing First Nations people during the Olympics with several settler colonialism narratives – participation, displacement and disappearance of First Peoples and Nations – which shaped how the Pride Houses ‘took place’ on unceded indigenous lands and
who the Pride Houses were imagined to serve. In the following section we discuss these issues in more detail—firstly, indigenous perspectives on land stewardship in contrast to settler colonial systems of land ownership and, secondly, colonial myths versus indigenous realities of ‘participation’ in the Olympics.

**Discussion of Settler Colonialism, Stolen Land and the Olympic Pride Houses**

“…questions of living convivially at the expense of Indigenous peoples will continue to haunt us even as we strive to reorganize political structures in way that are inclusive for all. Until the ongoing colonization of Indigenous peoples around the world are recognized and redressed, the project of liberal democracy, no matter how inclusive it becomes, will remain a lost cause” (Byrd: 2009).35

Regionally and historically specific aspects of colonialism and settler colonialism operated during the Vancouver Olympics. These were derived from the Olympics’ incessant and roving colonization of cities and land; colonial narratives about land ownership in the winter sports industry; Vancouver as a settler colonial city and the Canadian settler colonial government’s political use of the sport-military complex. In this section of the paper we discuss how Canada settler colonial narratives about the displacement, participation and disappearance of Two-Spirit and Indigenous people were central pillars for the emergence of this Olympic lesbian/gay homonationalism. That is, we analyze how the ongoing
displacement and disappearance of First Nations on the west coast were naturalized by the Olympic gay pride that erupted in Vancouver.

Settler colonialism relies upon the rhetorical and material displacement, and ultimate disappearance, of indigenous people. That is, the rhetoric of homonational pride in Canada depended on forging ahead with the Pride Houses alongside, or in spite of, the First Nations’ protests not to hold the Olympics on stolen land. Veracini (2011) describes this ongoing need to disavow the presence of indigenous ‘others’ as a settler colonial ‘non-encounter’. The Pride Houses set out to provide pride, hospitality and support – they set out to be convivial spaces for LBGT people interested in the Olympics. Yet the invitation to reflect on the sacredness of sport from a Two-Spirit elder, the displacement of Two-Spirit youth alongside the death of Harriett Nahanees haunt these attempts to create gay pride during the Olympics. Chickasaw scholar Jodi Byrd (2009) explains how creating convivial spaces, in this case gay pride, that exclude or forget indigenous peoples and history will inevitably be haunted by the realities of indigenous people in that time and space.

From a decolonial perspective it is significant that there was little substantive, organizational or political ‘participation’ of First Nations in the Pride Houses. This absence is more than merely lack of involvement and representation—it is a central narrative in settler colonialism. Scott Morgensen (2010) detailed how settler colonialism refers to “the narratives that displace Native people while granting settlers belonging to Native land and settler society” such that “the very absence of Native people in a story is telling us a story about qualities of settler subjects, cultures, and social life.” The absence of Two-Spirit
and Native sexual minorities from the creation, organization and representation of the Pride House was a crucial part of the settler homonationalist narrative. We can see how this absence of Native queer communities in Pride House is a local consequence of the alignment of two types of LBGT pro-Olympic organizations—profit and non-profit—that were willing to maintain convivial, and profitable, and homonational relations with the Canadian government and the International Olympic Committee (IOC).

Christine O’Bonsawin (2010) detailed the indigenous/settler political history in British Columbia in the context of current opposition to the Vancouver Olympics. She explained the colonial reality that the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games were taking place on unceded and non-surrendered indigenous lands. In British Columbia, British colonialists failed to extinguish aboriginal title/sovereignty.

“It was not until 1973, in the landmark decision of Calder v. British Columbia that the Supreme Court of Canada ruled in favor of indigenous rights as it was decided that aboriginal title had not been extinguished through previous means, and therefore continued to exist in British Columbia. This decision would eventually assist with the establishment of a comprehensive lands claims process in Canada, which set the stage for modern treaty making.” (O’Bonsawin, 2010).

In the case of the Vancouver Olympics, we argue that the sovereign and persistent presence of indigenous people was the most significant threat to both the settler colonial governments of British Columbia and Canada, and the
colonial Olympic corporation. Thus lesbian and gay homonational subjects seeking assimilation into the Canadian state, tickets to the Olympics, or access to the Pride Houses were, and will continue to be, haunted by the absent presence of indigenous people, perspectives and sovereignty.

**Ecological Stewardship versus Land Ownership**

The First Nations protests against the development of ski resorts stem from indigenous ethics of land stewardship. This is profoundly different from settler colonial systems of land ownership. It is profoundly different to Olympic development and privatization of land that is relentlessly inflicted, every two years, on a new site. Olympic development projects are colonial grand projects, colonial in the violence of their land privatization, ecological destruction, forced evictions and criminalization of anyone who stands (on) their ground.

Ski resorts privatize areas of mountain ‘wilderness’, necessitate extensive access routes and increasingly utilize polluting methods of artificial snow production. Ski developments use the settler narrative of an ‘empty wilderness’ to disguise the unethical and, in British Columbia, illegal privatization of sacred and environmentally sensitive indigenous land. Indigenous groups had been organizing and protesting against the Olympic bid because the games would be located on ‘stolen land’ – that is, land that was never treated, or surrendered, to the British colonial government or subsequent Canadian settler colonial governments. Thus it was because of a settler colonial view of landownership—assumed by VANOC, the Canadian government and the IOC—that Dean Nelson’s commercialized gay and lesbian winter tourism business,
GayWhistler.com was able to ‘imagine’ and then finance the Pride Houses. This example supports Puar’s (2002) argument that there is a new national interest in gay and lesbian consumers which has been extended from airlines and hotels to tourist boards.\textsuperscript{40} Moreover, the partnership of for-profit and non-profit LBGT organizations that created the Pride Houses silently presumed existent settler colonial notions about public and private ownership of urban and mountain land.\textsuperscript{41}

The notion that land is property that can be owned, developed and controlled is a central pillar of settler colonialism. Andrea Smith (2011) argues that this notion that land is a commodity is also central presumption behind the heteronormative nation. Heteronormativity, in a national imaginary, installs boundaries and hierarchies designed to include and exclude.\textsuperscript{42} In colonial logic and law, land is to be claimed, mapped, titled and controlled. Ownership of land, Smith emphasizes, works to install colonial mechanisms and imaginations that support white, heteropatriarchal structures of ownership, property and belonging. The unreflexive private development of land for ski industries overrides, legislates against and does not respect indigenous or shared stewardship of the land. The Pride Houses emerged from such a process, started by the ski development corporations, boosted by the Vancouver and international Olympic associations and then capitalized by a gay winter tourism business. Hence, the homonormativity of GayWhister is founded upon British colonial legislation favoring previous mountain-land settlement and development. In contrast, Smith suggests that indigenous visions of sovereignty involve a “relationship with and
responsibility for land.”

Relationality and responsibility to the land are, for Smith, a way to queer the settler notion of heteronormative land ownership:

“Once land is not seen as property, then nationhood does not have to be based on exclusive control over territory. If sovereignty is more about being responsible for land, then nationhood can engage all those who fulfill responsibilities to the land.”

Private ownership versus shared responsibility for land create different ethical and practical ways to imagine and decide what might take place on mountains in St’at’imc and Secwepemc territory. Indigenous environmental stewards such as Harriett Nahanee clearly showed a way to halt the settler and Olympic colonization of this land. Whether homonational, settler winter sports operating on those territories will queer their prevailing privatization and commercialization of unceded, sacred land, for now, remains an unanswered question and an unthought thought.

**Absent Presence of ’Aboriginal Participation’**

There is a political and epistemological gulf between colonial myths versus indigenous realities of ’Aboriginal Participation’ in the Pride Houses and the Olympics generally. The discourse of aboriginal participation in olympism works to include indigenous peoples in the settler, multicultural imagination. This incorporation of First Nations, Inuit and Metis people into the Vancouver Olympics and Pride Houses disguises the contemporary violence needed for these Olympic games to ‘take place’, but more than this, the figure of the indigenous
body has been a foundational absent presence to the imperial project of modern olympism.

Across Canada, there was a celebratory, often placatory, liberal discourse about ‘Aboriginal Participation’ in the Olympic games, the Paralympic Games and the Cultural Olympiad. The bid to hold an Olympics in Vancouver was heavily dependent on the ‘inclusive’ pitch to have significant and meaningful ‘Aboriginal Participation’ in every aspect of the games and its legacy projects. Governments of the hosting First Nations signed a protocol agreement with the Canadian government which they agreed to “work together to fully participate in all aspects of the Games, while maximizing for their communities the opportunities and legacies,” to “ensure that the Games are successful” and that “the Nations’ languages, traditions, protocols, and cultures are meaningfully acknowledged, respected, and represented” (Government of Canada, 2009). This inter-governmental protocol was part of the ‘Aboriginal Participation’ commitment made in the bid to get the Olympics.

The Four Host First Nations were the overarching, structural representation of aboriginal government, economic and cultural participation in the games. As noted earlier, the Pride Houses did not even have any institutional representation from First Nations organizations. Thus, the Olympic bid process and political legitimacy of the Vancouver Olympics relied heavily on the rhetoric of aboriginal participation while it simultaneously disavowed numerous First Nations protests on multiple issues directly related to the Olympics. This is similar to Myla Vicenti Carpio’s explanation of how the political economy of a settler
colonial city, in her case the city of Albuquerque in New Mexico, relies on the absent presence of native peoples (Smith, 2011).  

As part of the colonial Olympic economy, $20-million was distributed to the Lil’wat and Squamish band councils which worked to divide communities, to buy off some, and to pacify others (No2012.com, 2009). Naomi Klein (2003) reported that the bid committee selected development-friendly leaders, and that submissions to the IOC by Native groups that opposed the games received no response. Rosalin Sam, a leader of the Sutikalh Camp, said “The IOC didn’t follow protocol, they should have called a meeting of all 11 chiefs so the chiefs could go the people. This structure has been there for hundreds of years.” (cited in Klein, 2003). Women from Native 2010 Resistance interrupted National Chief Phil Fontaine, accusing the Chiefs of selling out, while he proclaimed that Olympics could improve the lives of First Nations people at a press conference held by the Assembly of First Nations and the Four Host First Nations (HarrietSpirit, 2008).

The ‘Aboriginal Participation’ discourse animates several myths about First Nations cultural, economic and governmental input and structural representation into the organization of the Olympics. These myths are extremely valuable to the colonial mission of local and international Olympic organizations, and the nationalism needed to sustain their grand projects.

The existence of indigenous nations, argues Chickasaw scholar Jodi Byrd (2009), exposes the lie of an inclusive liberal democracy because Canada, like the United States, is founded the disavowal of state colonial violence. The indigenous
presence also exposes the myth of multiculturalism within the settler colonial state. Byrd explains how indigenous peoples trouble discourses of anti-racism by:

“reveal(ing) the assimilatory nature of multiculturalism that slips sovereignty into racial difference that can be solved through a diverse inclusion that depends upon the destruction wrought by colonialism and genocide.”

’Aboriginal Participation’ in the Olympic discourse was strongly rejected by many First Nations people. Their rejection of significant economic and cultural opportunities for participation reveals the limits to multicultural, in this case, aboriginal inclusion. It indicates the “collision between cosmopolitan inclusion and the very real historical ramifications of settler imperialism née colonialism” (Byrd, 2009).

Summary of Settler Colonialism, Stolen Land and the Olympic Pride Houses

So, to summarize, the Pride Houses relied on settler colonial logics about ’Aboriginal Participation’ in the Olympics and settler notions of ‘land ownership’. We suggest that this type of settler homonational gay pride was based on the literal and figurative participation, displacement and disappearance of indigenous peoples, especially Two-Spirit people. Sandra Laframboise’s Two-Spirit opening ceremony was not only a celebration, nor merely evidence, of aboriginal participation in the Pride Houses. It was an opportunity for non-Native supporters of the Pride House to directly engage with Vancouver’s history of settler
colonialism and the indigenous protests against the Olympics. In the final report, the Pride House steering committee acknowledged there was a lack of structural representation and involvement of Two-Spirit, LGBTQ First Nations organizations and individuals. Regret about the displacement of Two-Spirit youth from the Qmunity centre is linked to deeper historical processes of Vancouver’s settler lesbian/gay politics displacement of First Nations communities and indigenous politics. The ’Aboriginal Participation’ discourse was persistently used to demonstrate multicultural inclusiveness in Canada and the Pride Houses, while simultaneously disguising the ongoing realities of settler colonial displacement of and state violence towards indigenous people, perspectives and sovereignties.

Indigenous perspectives on land stewardship differ profoundly from settler colonial systems of land ownership. The development of gay ski tourism and a Pride House on Whistler mountain continued the settler, heteronormative system of owning and privatizing land. Thus the Pride Houses were built on settler homonormative foundations. Indigenous relationships with the same land have been ignored, legislated against and bulldozed out of the way. At the level of treaties, this land was never ceded to the British, treaties were not signed and the treaty process misinterpreted by original British colonialists. Recently, ski development corporations followed by the Olympic corporations have used settler land ownership to clear forests, sacred and medicinal sites in favor of black diamond runs, half pipes and hotels on this stolen land. The death of elder Harriett Nahanee, resulting from her attempts to share her wisdom about respecting the environment of the Olympic sites, remains a devastating loss caused by olympism’s violent colonization of land for transport and sport. Her death
symbolizes the necropolitics of the Olympic machine and settler colonial mega-events toward native peoples within settler colonial Canada.

How might the Pride Houses share responsibility for the environmental and spiritual damage inflicted for the sake of Olympic winter sporting events, as well as the death of Harriett Nahanee? What sort of gay pride might have emerged from sharing responsibility for, rather than commodifying, this land? These settler discourses about indigenous inclusion and land combined on the unceded, shared territories of the Lil’wat, Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations to produce part of the sporting homonational pride during the Vancouver Olympics. In the second half of the paper we turn to examine how this sporting homonationalism also emerged from imperial, settler perspectives about same-sex immigration and queer asylum that were quite central to the Pride Houses mandate to provide support services.

Gay Imperialism, Queer Asylum and the Olympic Pride Houses

“Imperial narratives are those in which force is narrated as a gift, as if empire is what gives the other freedom, what brings the other into modernity. The languages of freedom, equality, civility, diversity and light become associated with whiteness, as being what white subjects (queer or not queer) will give to others” (Ahmed, 2011).
“The cacophony produced through U.S. [Canadian] colonialism and imperialism domestically and abroad often coerces struggles for social justice for queers, racial minorities, and immigrants into complicity with settler colonialism” (Byrd, 2011).

In this section, we analyze how the Pride Houses’ support for queer asylum during the Olympics drew on gay settlers’ imperialist narratives about ‘civilized’ Canada and ‘the West’, and how this narrative formed another pillar of sporting homonationalism. Providing support for people seeking asylum on the basis of sexual orientation, gender identity or HIV status (SOGIHS) was a central discourse used to justify the Qmunity Pride House. In fact, it was publicized as one of the three primary goals for Pride House:

“…to be a catalyst for Human Rights to protect gays and lesbians in countries of conflict where governments have laws that openly discriminate against homosexuals” (Birch-Jones, 2010).

The Qmunity Pride House worked with several LGBT immigration and refugee support groups to provide information; train volunteers to deal with asylum inquiries; and check procedures with Canadian immigration and border control agencies. The Pride House organizers anticipated that:

“Given the large number of visitors, temporary workers, athletes, and families travelling to Canada, LGBT immigration or refugee related inquiries were likely ” (Birch-Jones, 2010).
Gay entrepreneur Dean Nelson who initiated, and to a large extent, financed the Pride Houses proclaimed that:

“All these huge sporting events—gay or straight, it doesn’t matter—people do request asylum from established western nations, so we just anticipate that if we’re being so public about having a Pride House that some of these athletes that are having such turmoil back home about their sexuality, this could be an opportunity to escape that legitimately. We’re there to support them” (Barsotti, 2009).

Nelson contrasts the superiority of ‘establish western nations’ with ‘athletes that are having turmoil back home’. This repeats the setter narrative that Canada is now an ‘established’ and ‘Western’ nation. Same-sex rights in Canada are showcased and contrasted with ‘turmoil back home’—with ‘back home’ being ‘countries in conflict’, ‘non-Western’ ‘developing’ nations in ‘turmoil’.

Nelson’s homonational commitment to supporting queer asylum seekers was tempered. Nelson expressed concern over the potential for a governmental diplomatic crisis, or protests to IOC over Canada being too ‘encouraging’ about accepting queer asylum claims.

"The one thing we have to be very careful of is we aren’t encouraging asylum either…We can’t, because if we do that, then some of the nations where they may have polices in place that are really stringent and discriminate against homosexuals, they may protest to
Thus smooth relations between the IOC, the Canadian government and ‘nations that are really stringent and discriminate against homosexuals’ triumph over the gay imperial wish to offer Canada as a refuge to ‘imperiled’ non-Western queers. His concern to maintain ‘convivial’ relations with both the Canadian state and the IOC reveals a more obvious aspect of the pro-olympic homonationalism cultivated within the Pride Houses.

Not all organizers or groups involved in the Pride Houses expressed homonationalism in the way Nelson did, yet the Pride House materials and steering committee relied heavily on ‘international’ gay and lesbian rights discourse. This discourse of western LGBT organizations defending lesbian and gay rights internationally is what Joseph Massad (2007) called the ‘Gay International’. This benevolent view about Canada’s asylum system for LGBT people was a Western imperial narrative within the homonationalism that emerged from the Pride Houses.

In 2009, Canada was the third largest recipient of asylum applications among 44 ‘industrialized’ countries with 33,300 new requests registered during 2009. This included an increase in Hungarian and Czech asylum claims that was offset by fewer Mexican and Haitian asylum applications (UNHCR, 2010). However, due to extremely strict refugee asylum laws, Western countries, Canada included, actually grant asylum to a smaller proportion of the world’s refugees than many Asian and African countries (Grewal, 2005). Sexual orientation and
gender identity are not formally recognized as grounds for asylum by the United Nations High Commission on Refugees (UNHCR, 2008). Currently, UNHCR only works from a guidance note that recognizes that individuals being persecuted due to sexual orientation and gender identity should be considered as “fleeing due to membership of a particular social group.” The United Nations intends to revise its refugee policies to ensure that the particular vulnerability of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex asylum seekers and refugees is recognized; however, the extent to which sexual orientation and gender identity will be formally incorporated into UNHCR policies is still far from clear (Flemming, 2010). The first recorded successful refugee claim based on sexual orientation in Canada occurred in 1992. Since then, Canadian Immigration has not kept statistics about to sexual orientation, gender identity or HIV status refugee claims (Hughes, 2007). The context of asylum claims filed during a sporting mega-event are more specific because of the type of people who are in a position to travel—as athletes, as temporary workers or as spectators—to events such as the Winter Olympics. The Olympic Charter has a designation of ‘Olympic family’ that includes athletes, support staff or sponsors. Under the Olympic Charter, these visitors don’t have to obtain the usual visas to travel to Canada. Twenty-two people who came to Vancouver during the 2010 Olympics filed refugee claims, although none of these were on the basis of sexual orientation or gender identity. The claimants came from nine different countries: Ghana, Hungary, Mongolia, Russia, Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Nepal and Japan (Theordore, 2010). Seven asylum requests came from individuals designated as ‘Olympic family’—including two from Japan, one from Russia and four from Hungary (Dvorak, 2010).
claimants is minuscule compared to the average of 25,000 refugee claims a year,”
said Catherine Dauvergne, Canada Research Chair in Migration Law at UBC
who went on to say that the majority of people privileged enough to participate in
the Winter Games simply aren’t in need of protection in their own country
(Theodore, 2010).67

The Qmunity Pride House did handle four refugee inquiries on the basis
of sexual orientation; however, these were made by people who did not travel to
Canada for the Olympics but had heard about the Rainbow Refugee Committee
through Pride House publicity (Birch-Jones, 2010).68 Ultimately, there were no
requests for asylum based on sexual orientation or gender identity made by
athletes, Olympic ‘family’ or people who came to Vancouver for the Olympics.

A range of Canadian immigration and refugee organizations, committed
to queer and LBGT communities, were represented on the Pride House steering
committee. These included the International Gay and Lesbian Association
(IGLA), EGALE Canada, the Lesbian and Gay Immigration Task Force
(LEGIT), the Rainbow Refugee Committee (RRC) and the City of Vancouver's
LGBTQQI advisory group. This level of organization around asylum and
refugee assistance for queers reflects the long history of support and advocacy for
LGBT immigration in Vancouver. The Rainbow Refugee Committee was
formed in 2000 because the Canadian same-sex partner immigration lobby group
LEGIT was receiving more individual queer asylum related inquiries each year
(Birch-Jones, 2010).69 The Rainbow Refugee Committee began to hold
information drop-ins at the Qmunity centre in Vancouver in 2001. Within the
Pride House, LEGIT and the Rainbow Refugee Committee were most directly
involved in outreach and training volunteers how to respond to someone asking for asylum.

There was concern amongst Pride House organizers that mainstream Canadian media would sensationalize the possibility of any gay or lesbian asylum claims made during the Olympics. Pride House organizers were aware that the “media tended to focus on the remote, but sensational, possibility that an athlete would make a refugee claim based on sexual orientation” (Birch-Jones, 2010). The media did report heavily on the Pride House during the Vancouver Olympics and Paralympics, with ‘queer asylum’ being a prominent storyline. The long history of LGBT immigration support in Vancouver enabled the Pride Houses to defuse some of the sensationalist media about ‘queer asylum’. As a result, Rainbow Refugee and LEGIT worked to “refocus on the importance of promoting knowledge and access to immigration rights for LGBT persons” (p. 13) Nevertheless, dealing with queer refugees was the major, non-sporting political mission for the Qmunity Pride House. This recycles a settler, imperialist discourse that Canada is one of the ‘safest’ nations in the world for same-sex subjects and, due to recent same-sex rights in both immigration and marriage, can provide a ‘haven’ for queer subjects seeking ‘shelter’ from homophobic violence in ‘other’ repressive part of the world.

Discussion

In the next sections, we examine how the Pride Houses’ support for queer asylum relied upon imperialist logic about ‘Other’ homophobic nation-states which constructs Canada as the global, humanitarian ‘protector’ of same-sex rights. Thus, we argue, the Pride Houses’ imperial narratives about same-sex
immigration and LGBT human rights, internationally and domestically, were another pillar of the pro-olympic, sporting homonationalism.

In *Queer/Migration: An Unruly Body of Scholarship* (2008) Eithne Luibhéid argues for a more sophisticated understanding of queer migration and the use of the queer migrant in immigration and human rights discourses. Luibhéid summarizes the problems surrounding these issues when she states that:

“Gay asylum claims have been taken up by mainstream LGBTQ and human rights organizations in sometimes problematic ways, including to reinforce their claims for civic status and legal protections within liberal, neoliberal, or homonormative frameworks.”

Luibhéid is wary of queer migrants and asylum claims being used in these ways because these frameworks work to silence queer migrants, homogenize what being a queer citizen or migrant might mean, and construct queer migrants as lacking subjects compared to queer citizens of a liberal democracy. It is this queer migrant/queer citizen dichotomy which controls what can and cannot be said in any attempt to make a queer asylum claim. But also, the homonational support for queer asylum claims during the Vancouver Olympics, produced a queer citizen/indigenous citizen dichotomy. Indigenous notions of sovereignty and, thus, the basis for citizenship in Canada was not part of the framework used by the Pride Houses in their support for queer asylum claims.

Queer migrants were previously unacknowledged and asylum claims based on sexual or gender identity are still thoroughly interrogated. Sharalyn Jordan (2009) conducted a qualitative study with queer asylum applicants attending
Rainbow Refugee drop-in meetings. Jordan is keenly aware of the difficulties faced by queer migrants as she had volunteered for five years with the Committee before conducting the research project. Jordan finds that most queer asylum applicants struggle not only in their countries of origin but also with Western narratives of gender and sexual identity throughout the asylum application process.

Queer asylum applicants must prove they are LGBT to a panel of officials who demand a Western narrative of these sexualities and gender identities. This process of narrating an intelligible self to a committee is a common Western institutional practice. This expected autobiographical narration can be seen in everything from a job interview to the ‘born in the wrong body’ narrative that trans people seeking hormonal and/or surgical treatments are compelled to perform. Queer migrants are asked to demonstrate knowledge of Western LGBT life and also prove that they are involved in sexual relationships and/or non-normative gender practices that put them at risk of imprisonment or death in their county. Queer migrants must also work to situate themselves within the narrative of Anglo Canada as a liberal, progressive democracy. Sherene Razack (1998) described this expectation succinctly in reference to refugee applicants who are women of colour when she states that “the simplest and most effective means of doing so is for the claimant to present an image that recalls the old imperialist notion of the barbaric and chaotic Third World and, by implication, the more civilized First World.” Canada must be described as a queer friendly haven in relation to an intensely homophobic and/or heterosexist country of origin to complete the portrait of an acceptable queer asylum applicant. This narrative
erases Canada’s status as settler colonial nation and also a military nation in the so-called ‘war on terror’. It also surfaced quickly as a key narrative about queer immigration within the Olympic Pride Houses.

**Turmoil Over There: Queer Asylum and Gay Imperialism**

Provincial and federal governments are not the only institutions involved in constructing narratives about refugee status and later citizenship for an individual. “The mechanisms for refugee asylum in the West,” points out Inderpal Grewal (2005), “work through the production of knowledge generated not simply by the state but by a number of non-state transnational organizations and institutions that created transnational connectivities.” Neocolonial racial, gendered, classed and, we need to add sexual relations, underpin the humanitarian discourses about immigration and asylum that circulate between individuals, groups and NGOs. Western imperializing discourses about lesbian and gay rights are imported and exported from Canada by international gay rights organizations, such as the International Gay and Lesbian Association (IGLA). This discourse about international same-sex rights was introduced into the sporting, Olympic context of the Pride Houses by several, established advocacy groups such as Rainbow Refugee Committee, LEGIT and EGALE. These non-governmental organizations function in relation to, on the one hand, international lesbian and gay rights groups and, on the other hand, Canadian federal immigration policies which, in turn, are related to the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.
The Pride Houses relied heavily on the International Gay and Lesbian Association for ‘information’ about homophobic persecution in ‘other’, ‘non-Western’ countries. The Pride House website linked to IGLA’s interactive map of “Lesbian and Gay Rights in the World” showing the countries where male to male relationships are ‘illegal’. A special version of the ‘World Rights’ map showing discrimination in countries participating in the Vancouver Olympics was prepared, with banners of the map displayed in the Pride Houses. The queer asylum narrative emphasized that:

“there were more than 14 countries participating in the Winter Olympics and Paralympics where LGBT people face persecution or are not protected by their states from violent forms of homophobia or transphobia” (Birch-Jones, 2010).

The organizers’ reliance on IGLA to justify the emphasis on queer asylum in Canada specifically, illustrates what Gada Mahrouse (2010) terms ‘benevolent engagement’ that is bound to both liberal rights and white supremacy. Joseph Massad (2007) argued that the mission of organizations such as IGLA, and in this case the Pride Houses, to defend LGBT rights internationally assumes that gays and lesbians are universal categories that can be applied, legislated and defended globally. He referred to this as a ‘gay international’ discourse. Thus the Pride House’ emphasis on queer asylum relied heavily on an imperialist gay discourse.
about Canada being one of the ‘safest’ places in the world for same-sex immigration.

Foregrounding the Pride House’s role in ‘helping’ queers who might make claims for asylum demonstrates how this imperial imagination about ‘other’ homophobic ‘countries’, ‘cultures’ and therefore ‘peoples’ was readily taken-for-granted as part of the homonationalism at the Vancouver Olympics. The ‘ease’ with which this logic was uncritically accepted as true, on the basis of the benevolent mission of IGLA, indicates just how easily imperialist thinking persists in narratives about international same-sex rights in Canada. Thus, taking on the imperial colonial ‘white man’s burden’ to save people from ‘turbmoil back home’, and therefore becoming benevolent gay imperialists, was part of the Canadian homonationalism that emerged in the Pride Houses.

**Out at Home: Same-sex Immigration and Settler Homonationalism**

Another reason the queer asylum discourse was readily accepted and promoted by Pride House promoters was because it represented a ‘progressive’ position on same-sex immigration within Canadian domestic politics. This progressive image of same-sex immigration is closely entwined with settler phantasies of Canada as a ‘progressive’ and ‘humanitarian’ nation.

During and after the Vancouver Olympics, the settler image of ‘liberal multicultural’ Canada was being actively eroded by Stephen Harper’s conservative government’s anti-immigration policies. Harper’s conservative government consistently introduced laws that made asylum and refugee process in Canada even stricter. In 2010, Jason Kenney introduced the ‘Balanced Refugee
Reform Act’ followed by the ‘Protecting Canada’s Immigration System Act’ in 2012.\textsuperscript{81} The government website proclaimed that:

“Canada’s asylum system is broken… Canada’s existing asylum system is crippled by an ever-increasing number of new unfounded claims and it can take years to deal with them… This reduces our ability to help those who truly need our protection. Not all asylum claimants are in need of Canada’s protection,” (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2011).\textsuperscript{82}

In 2012, Kenney proposed to base asylum claims solely on the designation of the country of origin, and also give the government minister responsible for immigration power to designate a ‘safe’ country without referring to expert opinion about the actual human rights conditions in a country. Thus deciding which countries are ‘safe’ will be increasingly guided by political motives related to trade and foreign policy (Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers, 2012).\textsuperscript{83}

Moreover, homophobic and transphobic violence often co-exist with constitutional protection for lesbian and gay citizens with a nation. The Rainbow Refugee Committee (2012) advocate going beyond nationality to assess each individual claim through full hearings because using the ‘safe’ country designation alone undermines fairness.\textsuperscript{84} Bill C-31 also shortens processing times in ways that disadvantage claims based on sexual orientation and gender identity. The bill was dubbed the ‘Refugee Exclusion Act’ and, at the time of writing, a campaign was being mobilized by the Justice for Refugees and Immigrants Coalition (Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers, 2012) to oppose this legislation on the grounds
that it contravenes the Canadian Charter and international refugee law.\textsuperscript{85} The 2012 May Day labor celebrations and protests, led by the Toronto-based group No One Is Illegal, concentrated on preventing the ‘Refugee Exclusion Act’ being passed by parliament.

Fighting the conservative federal government for same-sex refugee rights domestically bolstered the settler homonationalist imagination of a humanitarian, ‘non-homophobic’, ‘developed’ nation. It’s necessary to point out that some members of the Rainbow Refugee Committee were LGBT activists with knowledge of the intersectional complexities facing racialized LBGT communities and thus would have been aware of the wider politics of colonial exclusion facing indigenous queer, Two-Spirited people in Canada. They were, however, board members of the Vancouver Pride Houses. Supporting the Pride Houses required a strategic decision to supporting this type of LGBT visibility, while possibly being aware of the tensions this would create for Two-Spirited individuals and the broader ‘No Olympics On Stolen Land’ protest. Some board members probably had to make strategic decision to focus on queer asylum, separately from issues of indigenous sovereignty underpinning ‘No Olympics On Stolen Land’. This points to the ways in which possible solidarity with indigenous issues was compromised ‘progressive’ domestic politics of the Pride Houses.

**Indigenous Rights and Settler Homonationalism**

The Pride Houses’ support for same-sex immigration, internationally and domestically, had no overt solidarity with aboriginal rights; rather, queer asylum was lauded in direct opposition to indigenous protests against the Olympics being
held on their traditional lands. In this section we argue that this lack of solidarity with aboriginal rights was yet another aspect of the settler homonationalism undergirding the Pride Houses. It reveals how same-sex immigration ‘rights’ became another part of gay pride on stolen land during the Vancouver Olympics.

Advocating for same-sex asylum and immigration, both internationally and within Canada, were seen as a legitimate issues of minority rights by the Pride House organizers. In contrast, the ‘No Olympics on Stolen Land’ protest was seen as a separate issue of aboriginal rights, not related to the ‘human rights’ concerns of the Pride Houses. It also points to limits in using human rights discourses to challenge the historical legacies of settler colonialism (Turner, 2006).

What, then, are the links between ‘refugee rights’ and ‘Indian rights’ in Canada? How have these very different ‘rights’ to citizenship been framed by the colonial Canadian nation-state, and subsequently taken up in homonational GLBT politics? In this section, we briefly review how aboriginal rights and same-sex rights have been legislated in Canada. We explore how these seemingly separate discourses about citizenship—aboriginal rights and same-sex immigration—both work to uphold white, settler assumptions about Canadianness. We then discuss how these ‘minority’ rights discourses actually worked to perpetuate settler colonial ways of thinking within the Pride Houses.

In the Canadian context, both aboriginal rights and sexual orientation/gender identity rights can be accommodated and adjudicated as ‘minority rights’ under the Charter of Rights and Freedoms, section 35. The colonial use of aboriginal rights precedes the Charter. In This is not a Peace Pipe, Dale Turner (2006) unravels three main, colonial approaches to aboriginal rights
in Canada—Jean Chrétien’s ‘White Paper’, Allain Cairns’ ‘Citizens Plus’ and Will Kymlika’s ‘Minority Rights’—which all used Western liberal political theory. The 1969 White Paper proposed to remove any ‘special’ recognition for Aboriginal peoples in Canada, assimilating them fully into mainstream Canadian society and thereby getting rid of the ‘Indian problem’. Aboriginal people were outraged and immediately protested the White Paper because it used liberal theory of the individual to argue that “To be an Indian is to be a man, with all man’s needs and abilities’. This liberal policy about equality and freedom made sense to many non-Aboriginal people, but for Aboriginal people it represented another deeply colonial policy as didn’t recognize any Indian rights or historical importance of sacred treaties. The White Paper was, as Cree activist Harold Cardinal wrote, “a thinly disguised programme of extermination through assimilation. For the Indian to survive, says the government in effect, he must become a good little brown white man…”. Turner then explains how Allain Cairns, in Citizens Plus, tried to balance ‘unfair’ colonial policies of assimilation with ‘unreasonable’ indigenous demands for sovereignty. Turner critiques how Cairns failed to seriously deal with Aboriginal views about rights and nationhood, and did not address the colonial basis of the Canadian state. Thirdly, Turner describes how Will Kymlicka defended the Aboriginal right to self-government but on the basis of ‘cultural rights’, not rights that stem from legitimate status of indigenous nations. Thus, Turner really exposes how liberal political theories and government policies about Aboriginal rights, both in the Indian Act and the Charter, have failed to:

1. deal with the legacy of colonialism;
2. regard indigenous rights as unique and flowing from indigenous
nationhood, rather than minority rights that can be ‘bestowed’ by the
settler colonial Canadian state; and,

3. question the legitimacy of the formation of the Canadian state.

In 2010, Canada eventually signed on to the UN Declaration on the
Rights of Indigenous Peoples but only after initially refusing along with the United
States, Australia, and New Zealand. In Canada, Aboriginal and treaty rights have
yet to be affected by the UN Declaration, while they are protected to some extent
by the Charter of Rights and Freedoms; however, many aspects of indigenous
people’s lives in Canada are still regulated by the colonial, patriarchal Indian Act
1876 including the designation of ‘Indian’ status.

Eliminating sex discrimination from the patriarchal Indian Act is an
immediate priority for many feminist activists, although removing the colonial
Indian Act entirely is a key part of decolonizing the settler government’s power to
regulate indigenous people. The patriarchal designation of ‘Indian’ status has
been, and continues to be, challenged by native women activists such as Jeanette
Corbiere Lavell, Yvonne Bedard, Sandra Lovelace and Sharon McIvor. Harper’s
conservative government, via Bill C-3, is ‘reforming’ how ‘status’ can be claimed
via the matrilineal, rather than patriarchal, line of descent. This government bill
purports to ‘fix’ sex discrimination in the Indian Act by providing Indian status
to descendants of Aboriginal women who were previously ineligible. Day and
Green point out how the act will not give women equal registration status to men,
thus “descendants of women will still have less ability to transmit their status than
the descendants of men.”
Again, the Pride Houses were not aligned with feminist or Two-Spirit activism to reform or dismantle the Indian Act. Is this asking too much for a stretched group of volunteers setting up a new, celebratory space during the Olympics? One could argue this. But this fits with settler colonial logic that presumes that the existent basis for Canadian citizenship, enshrined within the Charter, is good enough. It fits with the notion that a new gay and lesbian space can use existing, settler narratives about same-sex rights on unceded land, ignoring multiple indigenous protests and closely related struggles over citizenship.

**Indigenous Sovereignty and Settler Homonationalism**

The Pride Houses homonational focus on lesbian and gay immigration sidestepped the current political debates about indigenous citizenship and, indeed, the underlying issues about sovereignty\(^92\) in Canada. The Pride Houses’ emphasis on queer asylum naturalized the wider settler colonial attitude that Canadian citizenship necessarily stems from British sovereignty. James Sékéj and Youngblood Henderson (2002) remind us how indigenous peoples delegated authority to the British via treaties.

> “While the Aboriginal signatories shared with the unknown guest who was supposed to be regulated under the spirit and terms of the treaties, the colonialist turned their backs on the treaties and became oppressors under their delegated power of self-rule. Self-rule was transformed into the colonization of the Aboriginal other.”\(^93\)
The *sui generis* notion of citizenship recognizes that indigenous people are always already citizens of Kanata, and that the colonial Canadian state, rather than conferring ‘Indian status’ needs to acknowledge their status as ‘visitors’ sharing First Nations’ traditional territories.

> “The rights of aliens to Canadian citizenship are derived mostly from the Aboriginal sovereign’s conditional permission to the British Sovereign to provide for settlements, rather than is frequently argued, from British sovereignty alone and delegated legislative authority.”

Hence, homonational claims about Canada’s progressive same-sex immigrants and citizens rhetorically ‘disappeared’ indigenous notions of citizenship, nationhood and sovereignty. Thus, Pride Houses’ celebratory rhetoric about Canada as ‘civilized’ and ‘established’ nation, on the basis of progressive same-sex immigration rights, maintained existing settler colonial relations with the Tsleil-Waututh, Musqueam, Squamish and Lil’Wat Nations. It also sedimented the settler imagination about LGBT subjects within the colonial Canadian nation, with no consideration of legal or sovereign relations with First Nations, Metis and Inuit more generally. Such colonial distortions about the historical basis of indigenous treaties with British settlers, colonialists and the British ‘Crown’ need to be exposed, to begin decolonizing settler relations in the lesbian and gay communities of Vancouver with the Coast Salish peoples.

Indigenous notions of citizenship and sovereignty could have, but were not, guiding principles and political issues of solidarity for the Pride Houses.
Indigenous-settler solidarity could mean linking both international advocacy for queer asylum and domestic activism against the Harper governments xenophobic ‘reform’ of refugee legislation with the dismantling the patriarchy of the Indian Act and centering indigenous, rather than British, notions of sovereignty and nationhood. This would, of course, disrupt the logic and common sense narratives that produced the type of gay pride which flourished in the Pride Houses. Political solidarity with indigenous protests against the Olympics would have meant confronting many settler colonial myths and narratives.

**In/Conclusion**

Both supporting queer asylum and not supporting indigenous land struggles reflect settler colonial perspectives within the Canadian lbgt community. Each is an example of how white settler colonialism in Canada continues to produces modern queer subjects – athletes and non-athletes, supporters and dissenters, citizens and refugees. These settler politics within Vancouver’s lbgt commercial and non-profit communities articulated to produce celebratory, patriotic spaces within the Pride Houses. Marion Lay, Canadian Olympic medalist in swimming and activist against homophobia in sport, voiced this pride at the opening ceremony:

> “There’s no safer place in the world than Vancouver to come out and make a really strong statement…To be our authentic selves, be true Canadians,” (Pink Triangle Press, 2010).\(^96\)
A new form of sporting homonational subject emerged on the stolen land of the Tslei-Wauthut, Musqueam, Squamish and Lil’Wat Nations within the Pride Houses’ material and discursive spaces. These new LGBT Olympic supporters and advocates were proudly Canadian, more visible than ever at an Olympics, occupied new spaces on Whistler mountain and in the city of Vancouver. They also welcomed queers from across the globe who might seek sanctuary and asylum in Canada. In the specific context of the Vancouver Olympics, this sporting homonationalism was built upon historically specific pillars of British settler colonialism and a Canadian/Western gay imperialism. This new gay subject may well be transplanted in quite similar forms to future sporting mega-events within Canada. It has the potential to become sedimented into the multicultural settler imagination about Anglo-Canada elite sport heroes and spectatorship. From an anti-colonial perspective, this is worrying enough. However, this new form of Canadian settler sporting homonationalism also has the potential to exported as sporting mega-events endlessly rove around the global north and south.

How might queer settlers decolonize their relationships with indigenous peoples who hosted and resisted the Olympics, with gay imperialism internationally and with same-sex rights within the liberal multicultural Canadian state? Non-native queer politics in sport needs to act in solidarity with indigenous activists, knowledge holders and peoples. The ethical challenge for settler colonial subjects is to seek out alliances and solidarity with Indigenous and Two-Spirit knowledge holders, via indigenous peoples who Dale Turner (2006) refers to as word warriors. It also means letting go of mainstream fights for LGBT civil and
human rights, and “going after colonial nation-states and challenging the racist and heterosexist foundations of theft and genocide they support and reproduce” (Driskill, Finley, Gilley & Morgensen, 2011). It means not only critiquing and confronting colonial nation-states such as Canada. In the global context of endless Olympic, grand prix and world cup soccer mega-events, it also means challenging the roving colonization of transnational sport empires such as the IOC and FIFA.

Within the settler colonial nation-state of Canada, Taiaiake Alfred (2010) advises non-Native settler and arrivant people to:

“Ask indigenous people about the promises that were made by your ancestors, the commitment that allowed for your existence here... Live up to the basic tenets of justice: Do not tell lies. Give back what you have stolen.”

This is an ethical invitation issued to queer the homonational gay pride that emerged on stolen land of the Lil'wat, Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations during the Vancouver Olympics.
Notes


5 The Paralympic Games and the Cultural Olympiad are formal parts of the Olympic Games. We start by referring to both the Olympic and Paralympic Games, but for ease of reading, subsequently refer to the Olympic Games.


7 The Canadian federal parliament was prorogued for 22 days thereby extending the regular parliamentary December break until March 3, 2010.


Author 1: As a white, Anglophone settler in Canada, I had some awareness of my white English racial and colonial privilege when I got information about LEGIT in Vancouver to figure out how to apply for same-sex permanent resident status in the early 1990s. Some level of ‘awareness’ about being a guest on First Nations’ land and their sui generis status has always been with me; however, the depth of my colonial thinking means that I am always having to unlearn layer upon layer, listening first and deciding how to act.

Author 2: I am in an ambivalent position in a settler colonial state such as Canada due to my ethnic, gender and sexual identities. My working class grandparents and parents from Italy, Ireland, and Wales came to Canada in the late 19th century and the middle of the 20th century to escape poverty, loss, and despair. They found working class employment in Canada and homes on land that they eventually discovered had been taken from First Nations people. My grandparents and my mother experienced racism, sexism, and classism throughout their time in Canada because they were visibly Italian. This demonstrated to me that one can be both victimized and complicit in the expansion of a colonial empire. In addition to this knowledge several other incidents have raised my consciousness with regard to the oppression of First Nations people including: the first-hand accounts of the abuses inflicted upon First Nations children in residential schools,
the brutal murder of Helen Betty Osborne and the poorly conducted investigation that followed her murder, seeing the Oka crisis in Quebec unfold in 1990, and observing that some white LGBTQ activists have made no attempt to act in solidarity with First Nations people. All of these instances have convinced me that Canadians are continually trying to violently displace First Nations people. As a self-identified gay male who is visibly non-normative in terms of gender I think marginalized people should be working to understand each other’s struggles with sensitivity and intelligence. In this paper, I am following my co-author’s lead in contemplating better ways to build solidarity with First Nations people.

13 Smith, Three pillars of white supremacy, 67.


17 Morgensen, GLQ, 121.


20 O'Bonsawin, Christine. ‘No Olympics on stolen native land’: Contesting Olympic narratives and asserting indigenous rights within the discourse of the


22 Laframboise, Sandra. The rite to play without competition. Dancing to Eagle Spirit Society, accessed on October 28, 2011,

http://www.dancingtoeaglespiritsociety.org/play.php

(2008).

23 “Dancing to Eagle Spirit Society.”


27 Author 1 thanks Michael Wallner for reviewing Scott Morgensen’s *Spaces Between Us*, and drawing my attention to the ways that Two-Spiritedness is profoundly unassimilable to non-ative LGBT identity category or politics. See Morgensen, Scott. *Spaces between US: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press (2011): 86.


30 Ristock, Janice.; Zoccle, Art & Potskin, Johnathon. *Aboriginal Two-Spirit and LGBTQ migration, mobility and health research project* (2011). Downloaded from the internet on April 12, 2012, 

31 Ristock, *Aboriginal Two-Spirit and LGBTQ migration.*


33 Sterritt, Angela. Indigenous anti-Olympic movement in solidarity with Tyendinaga Mohawks. Speech downloaded from the internet, 

34 Wonders, Karen. First Nations: Land Rights and environmentalism in British Columbia, Canada. (2008). Downloaded from the internet, March 7 2011, 
http://www.firstnations.de/indian_land/ ecological_stewards-harriet_nahanee.htm

See Veracini (2011) for his distinction between this settler colonial ‘non-encounter’ as a mirror of, although analytically distinct from, the colonial ‘encounter’. Veracini, Lorenzo. Introducing Settler Colonial Studies. *Settler Colonial Studies*, 1, 1-12: 2.


Morgensen, *GLQ*, 121.


Public land in Canada is often referred to as ‘Crown’ land.


Smith, Queer theory and native studies, 60.

Smith, Queer theory and native studies, 60.


No2012.com is a web-based information hub maintained by “indigenous rebels in occupied Coast Salish Territory” (p. 1). They detail how the BC government and the local Olympic organizing committee (VANOC) established the Four Host First Nations as an official ‘Indigenous Olympic’ organization (p. 9). See No


48 No2012.com, Information against the Olympic industry, 9.


52 Byrd, Cultural Studies Review, 14.


55 Birch-Jones, PRIDE house Legacy Report, 2.

56 Birch-Jones, PRIDE house Legacy Report, 12.

Barsotti, “Vancouver Pride House planned for 2010 Games”.


http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49c3646c4d6.html


http://www.unhcr.org/48abd5660.html


Hughes, R. Refugee Claims Based on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, or HIV Status. Vancouver, BC: Out/Law Online. Retrieved from the internet:


http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703862704575100022805978154.html

Theodore. 22 people make refugee claims.


Birch-Jones, PRIDE house Legacy Report, 11.


Birch-Jones, PRIDE house Legacy Report, 12.

Massad, Desiring Arabs, 167.

Jason Kenney was the conservative Minister for Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism.

In the Canadian parliamentary system, legislation is often referred to by the number of the ‘Bill’. Bill C-11 The Balanced Refugee Reform Act is known as Bill C-11 and Protecting Canada’s Immigration System Act as Bill C-31.

Citizenship and Immigration Canada. Balanced Refugee Reform, (2011). Downloaded from the internet on April 6, 2012,

Canadian Association of Refugee Lawyers. The Minister says one thing: His Bill says another. Downloaded from the internet on March 26, 2012, http://refugeelawyersgroup.ca/theministersays

Rainbow Refugee Canada. (2012). Impacts of Bill C-31 on GLBTQ asylum seekers. Downloaded from the internet March 26, 2011,
http://www.rainbowrefugee.ca/A.N.Blog


Bill C-3 refers to ‘An Act to promote gender equity in Indian registration by responding to the Court of Appeal for British Columbia decision in McIvor v. Canada’ registered by Indian and Northern Affairs in 2010.

Day and Green. Sexist Bill C-3.


Author 1: I use the term ‘visitor’ as an initial way to refuse ‘lies’ that settler Canadian government uses to claim it’s permanent authority and paternalistic ‘fiduciary responsibility’ towards indigenous peoples. I recognize this is my own, initial attempt to re-think indigenous and settler relations.

Sákéj and Henderson, Citizenship Studies, 420.

Pink Triangle Press, Queering the Olympics.

Turner, This is not a peace pipe, 72.
