Nishnaabeg Encounters: Living Indigenous Landscapes

by

Madeline Whetung

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Masters of Arts
Department of Geography and Planning
University of Toronto

© Copyright by Madeline Whetung 2016
Abstract

This thesis is an exploration of Nishnaabeg geography in what is now known as Southern Ontario that takes into consideration the dominating settler colonial context. Using a mixed method of textual document analysis, and embodied research, I develop a Nishnaabeg geography of a region colonized by a the Trent Severn Waterway (TSW), a large canal composed of several locks and dams that connect natural lakes, and dense settlement in the form of privately owned cottages. The TSW was integral to establishing settlement in the region and is commemorated as a part of Canada’s nation-building project over Indigenous lands. This research considers how the colonization of the water contributed to the creation of a built colonialscape and helped to spatialize Indigenous land relations as belonging “somewhere else.” I argue that in spite of these imagined spatializations, the Indigenous landscape continues to live on beneath the built colonialscape in geographical layers.
Acknowledgments

Chi miigwetch to my supervisor, Dr. Sarah Wakefield, for your constant support, and to my committee members Dr. Matt Farish, and Dr. Emily Gilbert. Thanks as well to Dr. Mariana Valverde for all your encouragement, and to Dr. Frank Tough for continuing to be a sounding board long after I was your student.

Thanks to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council for the CGS-M scholarship that supported this research.

To my MA comrades, the Delta crew, FEAST, and my fellow geographer buds, I wouldn’t have made it through this degree without you. Especially, thanks to Laura Bryson for putting your map-making skills to work for this project. Also chi miigwetch to my brother in law, Cliff Atleo for reading my thesis and offering such excellent feedback and support.

To Kitiga Migizi, you have become a great friend, mentor, and teacher. Chi miigwetch for joining me on this journey and for all the teachings you have shared with me.

To the Indigenous scholars and thinkers that have come before me, and continue to do incredible work both in and out of the academy, the greatest thanks is owed to all of you. Without your work this research would not be possible.

To my family, blood and chosen, human and non-human, you all teach me how to be a better relative each and every day. You have seen me through the darkest times, and been there for the lightest. Chi miigwetch for all your love and support.
# Table of Contents

**Acknowledgments** ................................................................................................................................. iii  
**Table of Contents** ....................................................................................................................................... iv  
**List of Maps** ................................................................................................................................................... v  
**1 Introduction** ................................................................................................................................................ 1  
**2 Indigenous Geography** ........................................................................................................................... 6  
  2.1 *Placing this Geography* ............................................................................................................................ 6  
  2.2 *What is Indigenous Geography?* ............................................................................................................. 6  
  2.3 *Who does Indigenous Geography?* ........................................................................................................ 13  
  2.4 *Literary Landscape: Relevant Academic Work* .......................................................................................... 20  
    2.4.1 *Property and Legal Geography* ........................................................................................................ 20  
    2.4.2 *Spatialized land Relations* ............................................................................................................... 26  
    2.4.3 *Between Water and Land* ................................................................................................................. 32  
  2.5 *Moving through this Geography* ............................................................................................................ 35  
**3 Encounters in Theory and Method** ......................................................................................................... 36  
  3.1 *Introductory Encounters* ....................................................................................................................... 36  
  3.2 *Encounters, in theory* ............................................................................................................................ 38  
  3.3 *Ethical Encounters (or Encountering Ethics)* ........................................................................................... 44  
  3.4 *Encounters as Research: Making Indigenous Moves* ............................................................................. 52  
**4 Colonial Land Relations in Nishnaabeg Territory** ................................................................................... 62  
  4.1 *The Land Between* .................................................................................................................................. 62  
  4.2 *Timing, Treaties, and the Trent Severn* .................................................................................................. 63  
  4.3 *Contemporary Administration of the Colonialscape* .............................................................................. 78  
**5 Doing Indigenous Geography** ................................................................................................................ 90  
  5.1 *Learning from the Land* ....................................................................................................................... 90  
  5.2 *Stepping into my boat* ........................................................................................................................... 92  
  5.3 *Up the rapids* .......................................................................................................................................... 99  
  5.4 *Through the locks* .................................................................................................................................. 103  
  5.5 *Blowing Home* ....................................................................................................................................... 107  
**6 Conclusion** .................................................................................................................................................. 112  
**References** .................................................................................................................................................. 115
List of Maps

Key Features of the Colonialscape over Mississauga Territory .........................................................p. 5

Fieldwork Region within Treaty No. 20 ..................................................................................................p. 92
1 Introduction

This system was intended to open up the interior of the province, and to promote agriculture, lumbering, and commerce.

Government of Canada Commemoration
Trent Canal, Bobcaygeon Locks

In the summer of 2015 a division of Parks Canada, the Trent Severn Waterway (TSW), issued a permit to several cottagers to “harvest” wild rice in Pigeon Lake. The lake is part of a set of inland lakes and rivers connected by dams and locks to form one canal system flowing from Georgian Bay to Lake Ontario at Trenton. The TSW, whose construction was completed in 1921, flows through the traditional territory of nishnaabeg peoples. Within the territory, several small reserves along the waterway are designated as First Nations land within Canadian law. Many nishnaabeg peoples make their homes on these reserves, and many others make homes off-reserve in the broader territory. I am a member of one of these communities, Curve Lake First Nation (CLFN), which is just a short paddle from the area where cottagers began to dredge (not harvest) wild rice after receiving their permit from the TSW.

One of my relatives, James Whetung, has been repatriating the manoomin in the lake for the last decade after its near-eradication, in part due to the construction of the dams that make up

---

1 Nishnaabeg refers to collective Anishinaabe peoples. My community is more specifically Michi Saagig (Mississauga) Nishnaabeg. When referring to the collective anishinaabe community I use the term Nishnaabeg. Often when I am speaking of more regional knowledge to my area I use the term Mississauga. When I use the term Anishinaabe I am referring to cultural ideas and perspectives.
the TSW. For years he has been seeding, carefully harvesting, processing, and selling the rice at the Peterborough farmer’s market. Manoomin was once a staple Nishnaabeg food source, and as such under the doctrine of Aboriginal rights, the 1982 Constitution protects it as a natural resource that requires consultation with Nishnaabeg peoples if it will be impacted by government action. Prior to issuing the permit to “harvest” wild rice, the TSW did not consult with CLFN, the nearest band council, or any of the other First Nations along the waterway. This lack of consultation prompted the Williams Treaty First Nations (WTFNs) to urgently communicate with the TSW the violation of their constitutional rights (WTFNs, 2015). In the months that followed the TSW and local First Nations engaged in discussions of each party’s rights and responsibilities that are ongoing (Williams, 2016).

The conflict over wild rice, which Al Jazeera has aptly named “Canada’s Wild Rice Wars” (Jackson, 2016), is the result of complex land relations that have developed through colonial land relations established overtop of Indigenous land-based relations. Original relations with settlers took place through trade that had little to do with land; when settlement of the territory became a directed project in the 1800s, the Crown began to make land cession treaties with the Nishnaabeg people of the area (Harris, 2008). Three treaties govern the Indigenous/settler relations in the region in question along the TSW: treaty 20 of 1818, the treaty of 1856, and the larger Williams treaty of 1923 that is currently being contested in the courts. In the opening statements of the Williams treaty proceedings in 2012, the Deputy Minister of

---

2 Aboriginal is a legal term within the Canadian constitution. When I use the term “Aboriginal” I am always referring to constitutionally recognized definitions of “Aboriginal,” and not necessarily to the broader Indigenous population. Similarly, the term “Indian” is a legal term that applies only to status First Nations peoples, and not to Métis, Inuit, or non-status individuals. “Indian,” is also sometimes used colloquially within the Indigenous community. These terms are not used interchangeably in this thesis, and I deploy them only when necessary to refer to specific legal categories, or when they have been used by others. Otherwise, I use the term “Indigenous” as a more accurate and encompassing term to refer to the descendants of pre-colonial nations.
Natural Resources stated that the Williams treaty was never intended to extinguish the hunting and harvesting rights of the Nishnaabeg peoples preserved in treaty 20. For nearly one hundred years, it was believed that the hunting and harvesting rights had been extinguished. After the Deputy’s statements, a flurry of activity took place to provide guidelines for hunting and harvesting within treaty 20 (WTFNs, 2014).

The treaty 20 area is characterized today by dense settlement in the form of waterfront cottages and private lots. Comprising most of what is now Peterborough County, the area is one of the most densely settled areas of Canada, with very little Crown land remaining. Aboriginal hunting and harvesting rights are not placed above the rights of private property owners, and as such the rights are restricted to Crown Land unless permission can be obtained from individual property owners. For the Nishnaabeg peoples of treaty 20, this limits harvesting areas to less than ten percent of the total landmass of the treaty area. Additionally, much Nishnaabeg harvesting takes place in swamps and waterways such as the now populated TSW. Difficulties arise when cottagers have a different vision for the waterway. For instance, in the case of the wild rice being dredged, the cottagers believe that they have a right to clear waters for swimming and boating due to their private property interests, while the Nishnaabeg believe that they should maintain their right to harvest in a public waterway. The governing body, the TSW, did not account for these rights when they issued the permit. The map, “Key Features of the Colonialscape over Mississauga Territory” on pg. 5 shows a visual depiction of the treaty area.

The settlement in the region has been formalized in property law for nearly 200 hundred years; it is taken for granted by cottagers and other settlers living in the region. My elder, Doug Williams, tells me that even as formalization of property happened, it was not always so difficult to practice rights as it is today. The continuing intensification of development in the form of
ever-larger waterfront summer homes\(^3\) continues to make hunting and harvesting ever more difficult, and to obscure the Indigenous presence. And yet, as the ongoing manoomin cultivating in the waterway demonstrates, Nishnaabeg peoples are continuing anishinaabewin\(^4\) in the region. As a young Anishinaabe person, I have become increasingly concerned with our ability to practice anishinaabewin in such a densely settled context that is the product of our ongoing erasure in our homelands. This concern is what led me to doing this research project.

I wanted not only to understand the complicated land relations that have developed in Mississauga territory, but also to understand how our anishinaabewin persists in such a hostile context. My two years in the MA program in Geography at the University of Toronto have allowed me to develop the four chapters that follow here. I am concerned not only with Anishinaabe land relations, but also the broader Indigenous context and studying through Geography has given me an opportunity to better understand global colonial relations, while also considering my specific context. I begin in Chapter Two with a discussion of the subfield of Indigenous Geography, and a literature review to situate my work. Chapter Three details the theoretical framework and methodology, as well as considers some of the ethical implications of doing Indigenous research within a colonial institution. In chapter Four I delve into the tricky land relations developed through historical colonial laws, and sustained through the spatio-legal and social relations, as well as the built environment these laws have allowed for. Finally, in Chapter Five, I consider how Indigenous landscapes live by telling a travelling story about paddling mississauga harvesting routes in the summer of 2015. These four chapters come

\(^3\) It would be ridiculous to refer to some of the houses that have been built along the lakes in my lifetime as “cottages.” Though they are still characterized as part of the long-standing Canadian tradition of “cottaging,” they are more aptly referred to as mega summer homes with several bedrooms, baths, and all the trappings of city life brought along.

\(^4\) Anishinaabe lifeways, cultural, social, economic, etc.
together to detail how the Indigenous landscape continues to live on through a densely settled “colonialscape” (Hunt, 2014).
2 Indigenous Geography

2.1 Placing this Geography

This chapter is intended to situate this thesis within the discipline of Geography. In particular I consider the continually developing subfield of Indigenous Geography, how my work fits within it, and where it diverges. I also survey literature that has identified Geography’s role in historical colonialism and the establishment of settler colonialism over top of Indigenous lands. Geography’s role as a colonial tool warrants consideration as it begs the question of the (im)possibility of producing Indigenous geographical knowledge through the colonial academic discipline. In the pages that follow here I consider not only what Indigenous Geography is, but who does Indigenous Geography as academic practice. In addition to parsing out the colonial origins of Geography and its response in Indigenous Geography, I consider scholarship that has worked to expose those historical colonial relations. This thesis, which attempts to consider the layered nature of Indigenous and settler geographies, must contend with Geography’s legacy of colonialism and take up the more recent call to decolonize (Shaw et al. 2006). As such, the shifting understanding of what constitutes geographical knowledge is brought into conversation in this literature review.

2.2 What is Indigenous Geography?

The colonial history of Geography as an academic discipline has long been recognized (Godlewska and Smith, 1994; Bell et al., 1995). Geography as both a profession and an academic field was intimately tied to the creation of the nation-state of Canada (Barnes, 2007). As many geographers have pointed out, western geographic approaches to land were integral to dispossessing Indigenous peoples of their land to establish a settler colony (Castledon et al. 2012; Howitt et al. 2009, Harris, 2008, 2004, 2002). Developing a collective understanding of
Geography’s colonial history has prompted scholarly energy towards “decolonizing the discipline” (Shaw et al., 2006), and contributed to the creation of a growing subfield of Indigenous Geography. With three progress reports in Progress in Human Geography (Coombes et al. 2014, 2013, 2012), an Indigenous Peoples Specialty Group (IPSG) as a part of the American Association of Geographers (AAG), and an Indigenous Peoples Working Group as a part of the Canadian Association of Geographers the interest in Indigenous geographies is alive and well, albeit still marginal (Shaw et al. 2006).

But what is Indigenous Geography? When I began this thesis project I believed that Indigenous Geography was a field in which Indigenous geographical knowledge is produced. However, a quick library search demonstrated that scholarship under the umbrella of “Indigenous Geography” ranges from health geographies of Indigenous folks in Australia (e.g., Harrold et al., 2014) to “allied” projects intended to educate settler peoples about Indigenous perspectives (e.g., Barker and Pickerill, 2012), and GIS and mapping projects of Indigenous land-use (e.g., Smith, 2008). It quickly became apparent to me that a study can be classified as Indigenous Geography if its subject concerns Indigenous peoples, places, or cultures. How does this differ from anthropological studies of Indigenous peoples? What about these geographies is Indigenous?

Answering the question of what makes Indigenous Geography Indigenous requires first asking what it means to be Indigenous. How to define “Indigenous” has been explored at length by academics, governments, and communities, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous (Corntassel, 2010, Castree, 2004). One thing is clear: that across various organizations, and within Indigenous communities, the need to hold an ancestral tie to place is required to be considered Indigenous (Corntassel, 2010). Other signifiers of indigeneity may include having distinct political, cultural,
economic, and ceremonial organization, having distinct language, and remaining in occupied homelands, all of which may be marginalized by a dominant colonizing group (Corntassel, 2010). I am concerned with this idea that to be Indigenous requires colonization, as it dangerously ties indigeneity to our oppression. Indeed, many of the definitions of “Indigenous” hinge upon determining what a people is not, rather than what a people is. As Noel Castree (2004) has pointed out, commonly accepted ideas, both within Geography and the broader world, of what it means to be Indigenous are located in the interaction of “tribal” societies with the “modern” world. In other words, Indigenous peoples are defined by not being “modern.” Following the tribal/modern definitions to their logical origins lead to the racist and imperialist idea that Indigenous peoples are somehow historical entities that will eventually disappear.

These historicizing logics have been employed in the legal erasure and assimilation of Indigenous peoples throughout the establishment of settler colonies such as Canada. Today, the doctrine of Aboriginal rights within the constitution continues to locate Indigenous practices in the past and requires pre-contact origin for a practice to be defined as a “right” within Canadian law (Slattery, 2000). This historicization represents ongoing trouble for Indigenous peoples whose cultural practices may have (necessarily) changed throughout contact with colonizers, but whose principles and ethics may remain (or be remembered as distinct). I am concerned with the link between contemporary Indigenous identity and Indigenous practices of a pre-contact moment because defining indigeneity in this way leaves open the assimilationist door. By binarizing between pre and post-contact, Indigenous peoples can only ever be defined by their relationship to colonization. Indigenous peoples are required to remain as they were prior to

---

5 See, for instance, the Indian Act, which throughout history until today has operated along racist and sexist blood quantum legislation (explored by Pam Palmater in her book, Beyond Blood: Rethinking Indigenous Identity), and ethnocentric ideas about “culture.”
colonization, or to become like their colonizers; to remain Indigenous requires being static through time.

The category of Indigenous at a global scale has evolved in response to colonial encounters. As Castree has pointed out, the category of Indigenous is a rather new project of the more recent half-century or so:

Though the various peoples who lay claim to the label can often trace their lineage back a very long way indeed, the term itself is a distinctly post-war creation out of bodies like the United Nations (UN) and the International Labour Office (ILO) during the 1950s and 1960s. Indeed, the term would arguably not exist but for the fact that the peoples who now fall under its description have had to reckon with the influence of ‘non-indigenous’ peoples past and present (2004, 152-153).

Castree’s argument aligns with the idea that Indigenous peoples can only exist insofar as they relate to their exploitation by their dominating colonizers. Indigenous peoples are still defined by having to reckon with the influence of colonizers. As I noted already, to be Indigenous requires not being dominant, and not having collective control over the destiny, reality, history, and territory of the people group. The lack of control Indigenous peoples have over their collective realities is important in how we understand what is representable as Indigenous, and who is able to represent it. This lack of control in representation is tied to the historicization and spatialization of Indigenous difference, and keeps the power to represent in the hands of the colonizer. So long as indigeneity is defined “against” the dominant world, it remains something that can be disappeared, and located outside of, the contemporary landscape.

But what if we, the Indigenous, were in control of the representations of our selves and our places? And what if Indigenous peoples were defined by what we are, instead of what we are not? During a Graduate Student Workshop hosted by Kwagulth scholar Sarah Hunt at the
I was struck by how she argues for “indigeneity on its own terms,” stating that Indigenous worldviews emerge out of our landscapes, and differ from western thought that operates along the Cartesian divide. Indigeneity is not because of our colonized relations, but because of our place-based relations. By this definition we can see that our colonized contexts expose our indigeneity but do not create it. Following this idea, what if our Indigenous geographies were traced across the formations of what we have built in place, and lived in place, instead of what has been removed by our colonizers? Perhaps then, our places, our regions, our stories, our geographies would be defined on our own terms. When we refuse the pre/postcolonial divide, we have to think about Indigenous knowledge creation as well as Indigenous knowledge continuance. How do we understand ourselves today? How do we understand and represent our geographies, in the face of colonial occupation, but not because of it? I for one, do not want to be defined only by my oppression, or only as a post-war creation in response to dominant forces. I want to be defined by the continuity of my peoples’ place-making here, in the face of incredible, and varied obstacles through history.

Our Indigenous geographies are too often defined against the dominant colonial Geography within the academy, and end on conclusions about our “differences.” When discussing indigeneity we often become preoccupied with ontological, epistemological, and methodological differences between western and Indigenous thought. Geographer Brian Murton, in his discussion of Maori concepts of landscape even goes so far as to suggest that “perhaps the only sensible way to present these very different representations of ‘landscape’… is as parallel texts, one using Maori sources and following Maori modes of representation, the other using European sources and associated modes of representation” (2013, 151). The notion that separating the two might lead to some kind of equal representation ignores the colonial power dynamic that is built into these representations. Moreover, ending on our difference, and
separating the two representations of the world, implies that the two worlds can be separated as if we are not simply representing the same physical geography in two different ways. They are not, in fact, parallel geographies. They are layered geographies, with colonial representations emerging on top.

Understanding difference is key, and many scholars have articulated Indigenous difference (e.g., Deloria, 1973; McGregor, 2013; Simpson, 2011; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999). I worry that in ending with difference we fall into a binary trap, much like what happens using pre and postcolonial timeframes to establish definitions of indigeneity. Allowing the two to “coexist” might seem promising, except that this does little to decolonize the hierarchical relationship between the two. Ending on difference halts the conversation instead of furthering it by allowing the differences to parade as if they stand side by side. There would be no need to continue the conversation if they were given equal representation, but Indigenous geographical knowledge remains marginalized and is required to stand up to western geographical thought. As I will show in my review of the literature on property, such colonial geographies are designed to exclude all other place-based representations. They cannot stand beside one another within the current power dynamic. Colonial land relations have settled over top of Indigenous land-based relations, not beside them, though colonial geographies have worked to spatialize these relations as belonging to separate places. By ending on separating out difference, these spatializations are upheld. Indigenous scholars today have an opportunity to build on the work that articulated difference by engaging with Indigenous knowledge on its own terms.

Within Indigenous Geography I want to separate out settler colonialism’s objective of disposessing Indigenous peoples from land (Wolfe, 2006), to properly conceptualize Indigenous and western geographies as distinct layers. By doing this I hope to avoid falling into binaries that
have been set up through time and space. I want to conceptualize the geographies as enduring in layers (often in contradiction) in the same land so that they are no longer analyzed across pre and postcolonial relations, and no longer separated side-by-side as Indigenous and settler geographies. In this way, the contemporary production of Indigenous geographical thought can emanate out of Indigenous communities whose societal relations are derived from their ancestral relationship to homeland. These relations exist on their own terms, but are often made visible through their difference from western (colonial) ways of relating to place.

If the call to decolonize the discipline is serious (Shaw et al. 2006), then western geographical thought must consider Indigenous geographical thought on its own terms. It is not enough to translate Indigenous land-based relations into western representations for the academy, or to simply discuss our differences. Representation of Indigenous geographical thought does not need to be defined against western geography. It simply needs to be represented. In spite of problematic institutionalized definitions of Indigenous that displace Indigenous land-relations by locating indigeneity in colonialism, indigeneity in fact emanates out of our place-based relations. We are not Indigenous in spite of outsiders’ geography, but because of our own geography. It is helpful to consider how Indigenous and colonial geographies live in layers in the same places, and how rising up the Indigenous landscape through the dominating layer is integral to the decolonial conversation. In this way carving out space for Indigenous geographical thought within academic Geography is most pressing. Moving forward with the above notion of who is Indigenous, and what Indigenous Geography is, I want to consider what thus far has constituted the academic field of Indigenous Geography. Who does Indigenous Geography, and how do they do it?
2.3 Who does Indigenous Geography?

In the previous section I asked what is Indigenous Geography, which led to a consideration of how “Indigenous” is defined. I have established how to determine who may be implicated in Indigenous Geography, but who is actually doing Indigenous Geography within the academy? The subfield has worked at defining itself and the aforementioned IPSG has a stated mission:

- to foster pure and applied geographic research and geographic education that involves the indigenous peoples of the world, past and present. To encourage approaches to research and teaching that empower indigenous peoples, and to help build relationships of mutual trust between communities of indigenous peoples and academic geographers (IPSG, 2010).

This statement demonstrates that the subfield of Indigenous Geography is not intended to produce Indigenous knowledge, nor is it intended to make space for such productions. In fact, the unwritten statement in the IPSG mission is that it is not Indigenous peoples producing geographic knowledge in Indigenous ways. Very clearly, Indigenous folks are interpreted as outside of the academy. Indigenous peoples are groups that research is done with, not groups that do research. By the above standard, academic research is conducted by non-Indigenous folks that are engaged in acts of relationship building and knowledge translations with Indigenous peoples that remain outside of the academy.

The IPSG statement prompts me to return to my earlier question about Indigenous Geography: how does this research differ from anthropological studies done with Indigenous peoples that have been condemned by Indigenous researchers as colonial (e.g., Deloria, 1969; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; Pualani Louis, 2007)? Jay Johnson and Soren Larsen (2013) argue that geographers have worked to create spaces where it is possible for Indigenous truths to be told. Additionally there is a growing acknowledgement in the field that “geographers are casting aside their past treatment of Indigenous peoples as victims of neo/colonial relations and are instead
detailing small triumphs in Indigenous service provision and in the other activities of Indigenous organizations” (Coombes et al. 2013, 692). These new “Indigenous Geographies” are the attempt of geographers to recognize the agency and humanity of Indigenous peoples. However, recognizing Indigenous agency within institutions is not sufficient and a broadening of the lens to consider acts of Indigenous resurgence would benefit the field (Coombes et al. 2013).

In keeping with the IPSG statement, or perhaps because of it, community/academic collaborations have become standard in Indigenous Geography. Such partnerships can create useful and often beneficial relationships for all involved, though often the knowledge produced amounts to little more than what I have come to think of as acts of translation: Indigenous knowledge that is translated into a western framework to highlight divergent worldviews or serve western institutions. The academy continues to value objectivity and universal knowledge over knowledge that is contextual and place-based (Johnson and Larsen, 2013). As such, it is easy to fall into the trap of simply translating Indigenous knowledge into terms understandable by the western institution. However, this does not constitute the production of Indigenous geographical knowledge on its own terms, and makes evident the need for Indigenous-produced geographical knowledge. The IPSG statement implication that researchers are not Indigenous peoples sustains the myth that Indigenous peoples hold no geographical knowledge. This type of erasure continues to centre colonial interpretations of the world and produces colonial geographies as dominant.

In spite of the stated mission by the IPSG, Indigenous folks are conducting research within the discipline and working to produce Indigenous geographical thought (e.g., Daigle, 2015; Hunt, 2015; McGregor, 2015, 2013, 2012). Johnson and Larsen (2013) point out in A Deeper Sense of Place that Indigenous research is unique from other critical scholarship. While
non-Indigenous geographers have worked to bring mixed methods such as storytelling and place-based learning into the field (Johnson and Larsen, 2013), the context and positionality of research changes when the researcher is a member of an Indigenous community. Indigenous positions, emerging out of not only place-based worldviews, but also out of ongoing generational experiences of colonialism, bring particular perspectives to research that non-Indigenous researchers do not hold. The different positionalities of settler and Indigenous-produced geographical knowledge warrant differentiating between the two within the academic discipline of Indigenous Geography.

Indigenous and western differences persist in spite of many Indigenous peoples being educated in colonial educational systems. Still, it is important for Indigenous scholars to mind the multiple positions we hold (Fermentez, 2012). By working within academia, we are, on an individual level, engaging the very knowledge system that has oppressed our collective Indigenous nations. Often, this creates an insider/outsider dynamic where Indigenous individuals continue to be community members while also being westernized researchers (Innes, 2009). The insider/outsider dynamic can bring about trouble for people in terms of their positionality, their identity even, as they may be challenged within their communities for being too “educated, westernized, modernized, brainwashed, whitewashed, and tainted” (Fermentez, 2013, 108). Sarah Hunt (2015) has described her attendance of the AAG conference like a dance, constantly trying to weave in and out of the different roles of an Indigenous person who is also an academic. While Indigenous peoples must be mindful of the dual positions they hold in community, we must be just as careful, though differently so, in the academy. Indigenous scholars may be trained in western research methods, but they have also worked tirelessly to bring their Indigenous worldviews with them into the academy, and many have worked to open
possibilities for using Indigenous methodologies within that system (e.g., Doerfler et al. 2013; Kovach, 2009; L. Simpson, 2014; Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008).

So what does it really mean to produce Indigenous knowledge in Indigenous ways? Indigenous methodologies vary across the diverse nations that are now considered as Indigenous and so there is no single universal Indigenous methodology that can be articulated against western methodologies (Pualani Louis, 2007). However, Pualani Louis has identified “four unwavering principles: relational accountability; respectful representation; reciprocal appropriation; and rights and regulation” (2007, 133). There is not enough space here to explore all Indigenous methodologies and these four principles in depth. But I want to articulate a fifth principle that is embedded within the above four principles that I believe warrants explication.

Based on the above definition of indigeneity as place-based, Indigenous methodologies are often connected to one another by emanating out of place. As Vine Deloria wrote: “American Indians hold their lands – places – as having the highest possible meaning, and all their statements are made with this reference point in mind” (1973, 62). Johnson and Larsen acknowledge that, “For Indigenous research, place is… central to the process of discovery, an active collaborator in the production of knowledge” (2012, 7). As such, Indigenous geographies are produced out of place-based perspectives. If western geographical thought was a tool to universalize spatial knowledge through surveys and maps (Barnes, 2007; Harris, 2004), then Indigenous geographical thought stands in opposition by holding place-based contexts above all else. We might begin to consider Indigenous geographies as living in place, requiring constant doing and redoing by Indigenous peoples themselves, taking into account not only ancestral presence, but also the contemporary challenges of remaining in an occupied territory.
If Indigenous thought is differentiated from western thought by emanating out of place, can Indigenous geographies really be produced by non-Indigenous folks? Does engaging Indigenous methods teach this place-based perspective? Though Indigenous methodologies can be used by anyone (McGregor, 2013), it is important to understand that this does not undo the colonial power dynamic. In theory, and if there were no colonial power dynamic between Indigenous and western knowledges, then the ideal of anyone employing Indigenous methods holds up, as it should be conceptualized as a knowledge system and not an built-in ethnic trait. However, in the current context that persists in valuing western voices over Indigenous voices it is my belief that only Indigenous peoples can truly produce Indigenous knowledge in an Indigenous way. This is not only due to place-based knowledge derivation, but is also because our perspective is shaped by ongoing marginalization within the colonial state; that is not a perspective that can be learned by engaging a methodology.

While non-Indigenous engagement in Indigenous methodologies holds potential for self-decolonizing and ethical research engagement (McGregor, 2013; Pualani Louis, 2007) it still does not lead to non-Indigenous peoples producing Indigenous knowledge. A practice of engaging Indigenous ways of understanding phenomena would certainly change the perspective of a settler, and allow for a different type of non-Indigenous geography to be produced of a place, which may also be charted by an Indigenous person. Learning how Indigenous methodologies work does not make Indigenous the knowledge production of non-Indigenous folks, nor does it unsettle the colonial dynamic. But engagement brings Indigenous methodologies to life for non-Indigenous folks and also leads to new and important lessons that have the potential to shift settler perspectives about the geography they share with Indigenous peoples. Settlers “can listen and learn and adapt [their own] ontology” (Herman, 2013, 68). While we might consider settler engagement in these types of thought exercises an important
step in the decolonization process, such engagements still require differentiation from Indigenous knowledge production.

Indigenous methodologies are being brought into the field by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous folks. However, considering both as “Indigenous Geography” is alarming as it holds the potential to misrepresent studies that are in fact translations of Indigenous knowledges into the western academy as Indigenous knowledge itself. Non-Indigenous folks, while able to shift their own perspectives by engaging Indigenous methodologies, cannot engage in the actual doing of Indigenous geographies in place. As such, it is my belief that Indigenous Geographies need to be recognized as separate from the settler produced geographical studies that make Indigenous issues their subject matter. They can be many other things; they may be allied, and they may be decolonial, or anti-colonial, but they cannot be Indigenous.

Calling geographies produced from these separate positionalities as all “Indigenous Geographies” is similar to, but perhaps a more insidious erasure that takes place when settler landscapes are layered over Indigenous landscapes. The naming of settler produced geographies as “Indigenous Geography” is evocative of the historical project of erasing Indigenous peoples from their landscapes to create settler belonging by obscuring Indigenous presences. Speaking on behalf of Indigenous folks instead of creating space for Indigenous peoples to speak keeps the power of representation in the hands of settlers. Homogenizing them all into the same category might allow academic acts of Indigenous knowledge translation to parade as Indigenous knowledge itself. Allying oneself to the causes of Indigenous peoples through community relationships in research does not eliminate settler positionality and grant Indigenous status. More importantly, allowing knowledge translations produced by settlers to call itself Indigenous Geography obscures the need for more Indigenous knowledge production done in Indigenous
ways. Space within academic Geography needs to be carved out for Indigenous representations of Indigenous geographical thought on its own terms. Differentiating between Indigenous and non-Indigenous produced geographies is useful in helping to hold space for Indigenous self-representation, and makes it possible to hear Indigenous voices across a field that has historically been so intent on our erasure.

But the question remains, if Geography is the *most* colonial, then why should Indigenous peoples engage in it at all? Perhaps our spatial questions are better served elsewhere; they have certainly been discussed at length elsewhere (e.g., Goeman, 2013). However, it is my belief that bringing living Indigenous geographies to the surface can illuminate answers to decolonial spatial questions. Decolonization’s intimate ties to land (Tuck and Yang, 2012) can only be reckoned with by uprooting Geography’s role in creating the layered geographies on the back of the big turtle. Geography was key in creating the myth that Indigenous territories were not peopled (Harris, 2004), and as such it seems that Indigenous peoples have no geography themselves. But Indigenous peoples *do* have geography. As I said before, we are in fact Indigenous *because* of our geography, because our places have been integral in shaping who we are as people and as nations. Bringing this to light through academic Geography holds decolonizing possibilities for both Indigenous and settler alike, but only if space is held for Indigenous geographies to be risen up through the dominant geography by Indigenous peoples themselves.

---

6 This is Anishinaabe terminology for North America. In more common usage is “Turtle Island,” but Doug Williams tells me that this is a Haudensaunee term and it is better to stick with Anishinaabe terminology.
2.4 Literary Landscape: Relevant Academic Work

The focus of this thesis is to produce a contemporary Indigenous geography that considers the colonialscape. Producing this geography includes giving consideration to the difficult realities of property, and the very real colonial relations that have been layered overtop of Indigenous landscapes. There are several scholars, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous whose work is useful to my project. In this final component of my literature review I consider three main themes that have informed my thinking: a) Property and Legal Geography, b) Spatialized Land Relations, and c) Water and Land-based Relations. These three sections survey a breadth of work that has explored how the colonialscape was established, and is upheld, on Indigenous lands.

2.4.1 Property and Legal Geography

Our contemporary understanding of property is most commonly traced back to John Locke (Blomley, 2003; Harris, 2004; Nadasdy, 2002; Rose, 1990). As the story goes, “in the beginning, all the world was America,” a land of plentiful nature ripe for “improvement” (Locke, 1680). Human self-interest then leads individuals to overexploit their plenteous environment as the modern economy develops; in turn, a government must be created to safeguard property (Rose, 1990). And so it is that the story of property has been normalized into society as not only natural, but the virtuous progression of human development (Moreton-Robinson, 2011). Lockean logic has been particularly important in colonial contexts, where societies viewed as savage have been dispossessed of their lands. As Cole Harris has written, “those who did not labor on the land wandered over what Locke called unassisted nature, land that yielded little and lay in common” (2004, 171). When European newcomers arrived to North America, they viewed the land as open for expropriation; they failed to recognize that the land was inhabited by “organized societies, with systems of tenure, access and resource management that amounted to ownership and

As such, the enactment of European conceptions of property on Indigenous lands qualifies as a particular kind of violence mobilized to erase preexisting relations to the territory to make way for new and “improved” ones. New and ongoing property relations constitute “a slow violence… that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is not typically viewed as violence at all” (Nixon, 2011, 2). By implementing European conceptions of land in North America, Indigenous societies were refracted from their territories, allowing for the continual reproduction of colonialism. The results of the implementation of property logic as law in North America has led to the violent dislocation and dispossession of Indigenous peoples that continue to call the territory home.

Property relations made dispossession possible (Blomley, 2003; Harris, 2004), but also make possible the continued reproduction of that dispossession. They remain more obscured from the public eye due to their normalized “everyday” quality wherein the boundaries of property lots and survey lines seem integral to the very functioning of human life. Yet they are only integral to the functioning of settler life, and in fact constitute invisible violences on an Indigenous landscape by layering over Indigenous place-based relations. These dispossessions are difficult to see because “property rights can seem geological in the way that they sediment norms and values of a place” (Pasternak et al, 2013, 65). Through property rights, new norms have come to dominate, as a hegemonic layer, over the previous place-based, reciprocal relations that Indigenous nations held with the land (Blomley, 2003; Harris, 2004).

Notions of property have been so normalized into Canadian minds that they function along the lines of what Bruce Willems-Braun (1997) has termed a “buried epistemology,” whereby
colonial logic is so deeply entrenched in settler minds that it is unknown to them that they are living their lives by it. Harris has pointed to the historical root buried epistemologies have, and how they have their basis in law:

settler’s property rights depended on the law, first the right to exclude, then to alter, sell, will, and so on. Even more than this, the law expressed and constituted what some legal theorists call a legal consciousness, a matrix of ideas, ideologies, and values that tended to be assumed rather than debated (2004, 177).

Property rights for settlers have shaped the contemporary “colonialscape” (Hunt, 2014) of Canada in both a material and conceptual sense. The overlaying of a property “grid” on the territory has fixed on the land, and in people’s minds certain ways of relating to the place, which are predicated on the violence of dispossession (Blomley, 2003). This ongoing slow violence needs to be taken up in a place-based way (Coombes et al. 2013), which is what this thesis attempts to do concerning the Trent Severn Waterway and the settler property relations in the Treaty 20 region. The doctrine of property is perpetuated not only through the ongoing physical private-proprietied development in the region, but also through representations of the region that have come to formulate the colonialscape in the spatial imaginary.

As Paul Nadasdy points out, “all theories of property are inherently political” (2002, 251). However, the Lockean private property system has become so dominant that its political orientation is obscured in the Canadian mind. Historical geographer Peter Usher (2003) has claimed that Indigenous peoples’ economies and governance are dependent upon holding land in common, and as such find their societies refracted by violences of private property. In this way,

---

7 I want to note, however, that this is a universalization of Indigenous modes of property ownership that does not hold true for every Indigenous nation. It is true that holding property in common is integral to Anishinaabe land
land titling is a political maneuver that secures the settler state, though it has also been taken up as a way to secure land for Indigenous uses (Blomley, 2014; Nadasdy, 2002; Slattery, 2000; Usher, 1997; Usher et al, 1992). Aboriginal title is a phenomenon of Canadian common law that takes its roots “either from First Nation people’s prior occupancy of the land or from legal and political systems that pre-existed the Canadian State” (Nadasdy, 2002, 248). Where lands have been unceded it is considered that, given the prior occupation of Indigenous peoples, Aboriginal title is a pre-given communal land holding and must be extinguished for the legitimate assertion of the legal fiction that is Crown radical title. However, the recent precedent-setting Tsilhqot’in case, which “granted” Aboriginal title to the Tsilhqot’in nation for approximately two percent of their traditional territory, has raised some questions about how Aboriginal peoples will hold their title under the law (Pratt and Smitheman, 2014).

Nicholas Blomley (2014) has indicated that the Crown usually assumes Indigenous nations will hold their title in fee simple, but Indigenous nations often see this as another form of land enclosure. Such land enclosures have been integral to the development of the capitalist economy (Polanyi, 1944). If Indigenous peoples depend upon holding their land in common (Usher, 2003), or do not conceptualize themselves as “owners” of the land (Nadasdy, 2002), such titling practices represent further assimilation into the Canadian state.

Blomley (2014) has pointed out that Aboriginal title held in fee simple is emerging as its

---

8 The ultimate or underlying title believed to be acquired when the Crown asserted sovereignty.

9 A form of freehold real property ownership considered to be the highest form of land ownership in English common law.
own “bracket” within Canadian common law, or what Nadasdy (2002) refers to as compartmentalization. While this particular trope highlights how Aboriginal title is being inscribed in a way that is supposed to allow Indigenous peoples to maintain the difference of their relationship to place, such brackets, or compartments, “ignore the fact that some of these different types of rights may be incompatible” (Nadasy, 2002, 256). Blomley also acknowledges that “legal categorization does not describe an external reality but helps create it” (2014, 9).

Bracketing is an artificial boundary, and one that eurocentrically paints the law as something that is neutral, when in fact it is upholding a set of relations to the world that has been integral to displacing Indigenous land relations. The bracketing of Indigenous relations to place into its own special place in Canadian law represents an attempt to assimilate the Indigenous world into the Canadian state. The act of making Indigenous relationships to land legible in Canadian law as a fee simple holding inserts land into the market, and fundamentally changes the material relationship.

Elsewhere Blomley has considered Indigenous peoples as “property’s outlaws” (2007, 132). By bracketing Aboriginal title into Canadian common law, we are transformed into a type of in-law, with an intelligible category; a place within the greater structure that is the extended family of Canada. This translation of Indigenous relations to place is also seen through the institutionalizing of the land claims process in its efforts to extinguish preexisting Aboriginal title for lands not yet “ceded.” The claims process “consolidates and accelerates the assimilation of Indigenous peoples and lands,” relegating compensation to monetary remuneration, as opposed to return of stolen land (Pasternak et al., 2013, 66). This type of “justice” granted by colonizers is a one way street of recognition flowing down to the colonized, and does little to modify the relationship between settler and Indigenous, and the place they now share (Coulthard, 2014; Pasternak et al, 2013). In fact, by bracketing out Indigenous land claims as a particular
section of Canadian law, the differential power relationship between settler and Indigenous is neutralized, allowing for “the production of the colonial landscape itself” (Pasternak et al., 2013), or what, in this thesis I consider as the “colonialscape” (Hunt, 2014).

The institutionalization of Indigenous relations to place in Canadian law is the development of a structure of legal violence. Though liberal states, such as Canada, tend to “locate violence outside the law” (Blomley, 2003, 121), the imposition of such structures is ultimately a violent act where it works to reformulate Indigenous place-based relationships. This violence is not immediate, nor is it readily seen; it is Nixon’s more radical notion of displacement, one that, instead of referring solely to the movement of people from their places of belonging, refers rather to the loss of the land and resources beneath them, a loss that leaves communities stranded in a place stripped of the very characteristics that made it inhabitable (2011, 19).

The establishment of Canadian jurisdiction over Indigenous territories is what Mariana Valverde (2009) considers a continuous exercise of power, where it plays out through institutions so commonly accepted that they form the basis of the very relationships between people. Property, as Blomley (2010) has argued, is ultimately a set of relations, also reliant upon the performance of those relationships by people as they are reinforced by the law.

The structural violence inscribed in the liberal colonial state is not an accident of colonialism, but is “central to the continued project of legalized colonization and racism in Canada” (Murdocca, 2010, 374). It is the dominant narrative of a place that has other stories that supersede in time and space the translations they take through property enclosures by Canada. Indigenous land relations are being massaged into the colonial legal system by institutionalizing them as their own brackets in the law specifically so as not to challenge or rework it. Though
property narratives have been so normalized that their relational workings are buried deep within settler minds, they are also everywhere, in that they formulate the colonialscape that continues to obscure Indigenous landscapes. It is important to draw these processes out, so as to make their slow violence visible. In working through the difference between Indigenous and settler relations to land, the political dimensions of property are revealed as merely one relational narrative of a place. That is, we can begin to understand that property relations are layered over the Indigenous landscape as the legal colonialscape, formulating the dominant, but certainly not the only way of relating to land in a particular place.

The research discussed above highlights the resiliency of the settler colonial framework built over Indigenous lands. Understanding the inscription of common law property on Indigenous lands outlines the legal framework of the colonialscape as it manifests in our physical geography. Moreover, understanding this framework is integral to considering how place-based struggles over land occur in different geographies. Before considering specific struggles over land between Indigenous and settler, we must first understand the spatialization of indigeneity that contributes to the development of these struggles.

2.4.2 Spatialized land Relations

Within this thesis I consider how different places have been represented as either “Indigenous” or “settler.” I consider Indigenous and settler geographies to be layered, with the colonialscape overshadowing and dominant. However, Indigenous land relations are often spatialized, and located elsewhere. This spatialization formulates the colonialscape, which locates Indigenous bodies as outside of settler spaces, in some other place, such as the reserve. Sarah Hunt defined the colonialscape as representations of the space now called ‘Canada, which perpetuate and manifest particular
colonial) expressions of power. Such representations take not only visual forms (such as maps, paintings or photographs of ‘Indians’) but also textual (legal) forms within which western ontologies of space, race, gender and power are embedded. Just as landscapes appear to create a complete view of a particular space, colonialscapes create the appearance that a colonial spatio-legal perspective of ‘Canada’ is somehow ‘true’. Colonialscapes thus cover over other spatial relations and representations, as the colonial view blankets over these prior and deeper spatial orders (2014, 72).

Hunt is concerned with the violence of the legal order as it formulations the colonial landscape; I am as well. I want to extend this concept of colonial landscape to its material manifestations on the physical geography, wherein the spatio-legal representations actually help to create the physical world through the fences of property boundaries, or the dams of public infrastructures like the TSW.

As indicated in the previous sections, Geography has been historically implicated in the colonization of native lands by representing the lands on maps as empty space available for settler exploitation (Barnes, 2007; Blomley, 2000, 2003; Harris, 2004, 2002; Shaw et al. 2006). Additionally, through colonial law Indigenous peoples were physically sequestered on reserves segregated from settler populations, while lands were deeded and granted out to settlers in the form of private property (Harris, 2004). Hunt has pointed out that this colonial landscape is spatialized through the reserve system, where the reserve is the only fathomable Indigenous place and all other space is settler space. As such, when Indigenous bodies move through the non-reserve world (99% of what is now Canada), they are seen as strangers. “Indians” belong on reserves, and as Hunt says, “the ‘problem’ of Indigenous territorialities continues to be erased or neutralized within the colonial landscape by imagining ‘Indians’ as residents of reserve spaces no matter where they travel” (2014, 73). Moreover, settler people continue to perceive reserves as the most “Indigenous” spaces, despite their colonial origins, and the belief persists that Indigenous folks are absent from spaces that are considered settler spaces (Hunt, 2014; Razack,
The inscription of property on Indigenous lands has displaced Indigenous land relations and attempted to locate them as belonging to certain spaces, such as the reserve. The creation of reserves as native spaces, allowed for the rest of the territory to be considered open to settler development (Harris, 2004; Usher, 2003). Along with the technical surveying of Indigenous lands into abstracted understandings of the territory “the nation-building project in Canada depended upon powerful constructions of a diverse and dangerous northern landscape that reveals connections between geography and race” (Murdocca, 2010, 389). As such, the spatialization of what is now Canada has developed through technical impositions on the land in the form of surveys, boundary lines, maps and property deeds, and hinges upon the settler mythology that has located Indigenous peoples as outside of settler spaces (Hunt, 2014; Harris, 2004). Glen Coulthard has pointed out that struggles over land take place at multiple levels, due to a “constellation of power relations that sustain colonial patterns of behaviour, structures, and relationships” (2014,14). The spatialization of Indigenous land relations “somewhere else” (i.e., the reserve) forms part of the constellation that, when viewed in its whole, obscures the underlying Indigenous landscape across the entire territory.

A discussion about how Indigenous peoples have been spatialized within Canada prompts a return to the myth of the legitimacy of the Canadian sovereign state through Crown radical title that “entail[s] a parsing of history and geography” (Blomley, 2014, 6). Legal fictions are “facts” assumed by the courts that are intended to allow for equitable resolution of conflict; however, in this case, the legal fiction that is Crown radical title is the source of the conflict. It follows that within the Canadian state, the courts have been able to secure some protections for “cultural” rights, but have “repeatedly refused to challenge the racist origin of Canada’s assumed sovereign
authority over Indigenous peoples and their territories” (Coulthard, 2014, 41). As such, the continued legitimation of the Canadian state is intimately tied to the spatial dispossession of Indigenous peoples, whereby the starting point of Crown radical title assumes its predominance over the land. Reinstating Indigenous place-based relationships across the territory would represent a large-scale threat to the legitimacy of the settler state.

The preservation of cultural rights is an attempt to translate Indigenous presences into a language intelligible to a multicultural liberal state, while maintaining its territorial boundaries, and nullifying Indigenous claims to self determination. As Paul Keal (2007) has pointed out, the historical truth of Indigenous claims to self determination represents a great threat to the legitimacy of the settler state. Though settlers take Canada to be a stable entity, the reality of the difference of place-based relationships mean “this stability is tenuous, always threatening to fall apart” (Bannerji, 2009, 330). The focus on the preservation of culture as a placeless entity, helps Canada maintain its facade as a virtuous state, all the while displacing the land-based relationship that is integral to Indigenous cultures. By attempting to locate Indigenous place-based relationships in small segments of land, such as the reserve, the state spatializes the different relationships, drawing fictional boundaries that create Indigenous and non-Indigenous territories. Ultimately these arbitrary boundaries displace Indigenous land-based relationships and the place-based cultures that emanate out of them as they become restricted to small plots of land. Drawing out this spatial process highlights their critical role in the “constellation of power relationships” that Coulthard has pointed out.

Despite Indigenous challenges, the legitimacy of Canada is a widely accepted myth. The development of Canada as a nation of white settlers began with the imposition of surveys on the “frontier” which located Indigenous peoples as outside of the civilized spaces made intelligible
through maps of property (Blomley, 2003, Harris, 2004). From the very beginning, Indigenous spaces were regarded as separate and segregated from settler spaces. The creation of spaces of property “entails the legitimate act of expulsion, devolved to the state” (Blomley, 2003,130).
Through expulsions, the insidious violence of property comes to light, because the very construction of the property structure requires an Other to exclude from certain spaces. The creation of white settler spaces

thus works as an ideology of a nation-state. It can work most efficiently with an other/enemy in its midst, constantly inventing new signifiers of ‘us’ and ‘them.’ In the case of Canada the others, the First Nations, have been there from the very inception, modulating the very formation of its state and official structure (Bannerji, 2009, 332).

While Indigenous land-based relations often persist, and Indigenous bodies continue to move through this developing colonialscape, they are effectively “displaced-in-place” (Mollett, 2014). So while conceptually, Indigenous land-based relations have been relegated to one marginal space (i.e., the reserve), practically, Indigenous bodies often continue to go about maintaining Indigenous land-based relations.

Through historical spatializations the modern state of Canada has developed into one that allows settlers to conceive of their position as natural, justified and legitimate, while simultaneously locating Indigenous peoples as safely outside of their reality. Historically, the creation of reserves was one of the ways spaces were established that have come to be seen as homogeneously bounded Indigenous spaces that neutralized the threat to settler property claims. These spatializations form the colonialscape in both a legal and a material sense. They are legal violences that take place through the continuous invisible exercise of jurisdictional power (Valverde, 2009) but also through particular interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous bodies, where the settler is able to reinforce their belonging over both Indigenous
peoples and lands (Razack, 2000). For instance, wild rice harvesters from my community are often harassed by settler property owners when harvesting along shorelines, an issue that, as I pointed out in my introduction, has come to a head as a collective point of contestation due to settler belief in their right to land through property ownership and is now being mediated at a jurisdictional level. The Mississauga nations are defending the legal right to consultation over natural resources and to the right to harvest in the waterway regardless of who owns the shoreline. But such contestations, while necessary, often create opportunities for the reinforcement of the spatialized territorial relations.

In Canada, Indigenous land relations have been relegated to particular spaces to justify the dispossession of Indigenous lands. This involves the intersecting work of normalizing the narrative of property relations in settler minds and materializing property relations through technical and relational processes. As Sarah Hunt has said “processes of colonialism in North America involved representational strategies that transformed Indigenous peoples and their lands conceptually and materially, in order to facilitate their displacement and render them less than human” (2014, 29). Racist depictions of Indigenous peoples as “less than human” have shaped present settler ways of understanding the place they know as Canada, thus allowing them to commit repeated “epistemic violences” that they may be unaware are even happening (Hunt, 2014; Willems-Braun, 1997). However, for Indigenous peoples this epistemic violence, and repeated dislocation from their own place constitutes the norm of their embodied reality in contemporary Canada. It is the foundational racist narratives of not only the legitimacy of settler property, but of property as the only way to relate to land, which spatializes Indigenous relations to land within a dominant colonialscape, and renders the Indigenous landscape invisible.
2.4.3 Between Water and Land

I have already discussed the importance of place-based land relations to indigeneity. In response, colonialism is comprised of sets of place-based tools in order to do its work of dispossessing Indigenous peoples of their land (Harris, 2004) and layer the colonialscape overtop of Indigenous landscapes. One of the benefits of working through the broad global category of “Indigenous” is that overlaps in the place-based expressions of colonial dispossession become apparent. In my particular geography, Nishnaabeg place-based relations are intimately tied to our relationship to water, though the colonization of our waters as a tool for dispossession has not been a focus of academic study thus far. It has, however, been taken up by academics considering other settler colonial contexts (Mclean, 2014; Gibbs 2006, 2009a, 2009b). Exploring the way water colonization has shaped land dispossession in other colonialsapes informs my discussion of contemporary Nishnaabeg geography.

In my study, the spatializations of property are intimately tied to the way water was manipulated for historical colonial interest in land. Jessica Mclean (2014) discusses the impacts of damming the Ord River in Northern Australia to the Indigenous peoples of the region. The study mainly focuses on identifying “environmental values” to illuminate the differences between pre and post-dam life. It is clear through her work that people lament the building of the dam and the changes it has wrought in the ecological environment. This “postcolonial” geography identifies how the damming of a river dramatically changes the livelihoods of Indigenous folks. While specifically concerned with the place-based outcomes that damming the Ord has had, Mclean does little to consider the greater and more complex role that settler governance of water and land (either together or in isolation) have in colonizing Indigenous nations.
Again, out of Australia, Leah Gibbs’ PhD research considers environmental values surrounding water. Most importantly, Gibbs identifies the problems that arise out of categorizing the different approaches to a water system. She writes, “considering values separately is reductionist, anthropocentric and culturally specific… Attempting to consider them separately marginalises interconnections, mutual influence and embeddedness” (2006, 75). In the case of the Eyre Basin, Gibbs’ focus of her research, water governance was divided into a “management framework of economic, environmental and social sustainability that has gained prominence in sustainable development discourses and natural resource management since the 1980s” (2006, 75). The different valuations of natural resources such as water result in the governance over such bodies being subdivided across different jurisdictional lines. This separation can be tied to Blomley’s (2003) notion of bracketing whereby the governance of different aspects of the same entity may be separated. Attempts to simplify by identifying the different valuations may actually complicate by isolating values from each other. As Gibbs points out “In these hegemonic approaches to valuing water and nature, whole is reduced to part – whole systems to components thereof; interrelationships are reduced to service or commodity; living things are limited to humans; and humans to the western individual” (2006, 76). Further complicating this, in addition to the discrete categories developed to separate approaches to water and nature, there are pre-existing Indigenous governance systems that have different approaches to natural resources – in particular, they are the system-encompassing approaches that western categories disallow.

Consideration of water as shaping colonial land dispossession is spotty at best, though in many places it has (and continues to) feature prominently as a tool of colonialism. Rarely has water been considered as a driving force for settling land. Leah Gibbs indicates that she focuses “on water because it is vital to all life, central to the daily routine and ritual of people…” (2009a,
362). In particular she focuses on cultural relationships to water in Australia, giving credence to the Indigenous perspective on water. Gibbs identifies the integral role that manipulating the natural water system played in settling the Australian inland (2009b, 2964-83). The attempt to irrigate to allow for settlement in an otherwise arid country indicated the colonial government’s belief that water gives land value (2009b, 2968), so at first there was an attempt to bring water and land together to aid the colonial infrastructure. Gibbs points out that there is a separation between water and land at a bureaucratic level, a result of the historical attempts to “order nature” which disrupts “local variability and vital landscapes” (2009b, 2974). Such attempts to order nature as opposed to working with the ebb and flow of ecological relationships between bodies of water and land represents the importing of western values. Gibbs highlights the overriding of place-based knowledge with regard to water to emphasize the role its manipulation has played in upholding the colonial framework in Australia.

As I have shown in these last three sections the importing of common law property values as a part of the colonial project has been well documented. Establishing control over Indigenous lands by the colonial government depended on relegating Indigenous land relations to certain bounded spaces, such as reserves, thus leaving the rest of the territory open for settlement. This spatialization of different land-based relations is well understood across different settler colonial contexts, as I have shown above. Additionally the role of waterways in the establishment of such property systems is important. In this thesis the idea that water should be considered as an integral tool in the colonial project will be taken up through the empirical examination of the Trent Severn Waterway as one representation of water and land-based relations across the Indigenous landscape and the colonialscape.
2.5 Moving through this Geography

In the above literature review I discuss the importance in differentiating between Indigenous geographical thought and western geographical thought. I have also given consideration to the importance of work within Geography that contributes to a broad understanding of how colonialism established itself and continues to operate through spatial logics of dispossession and “displacement in place” (Mollett, 2014). The spatio-legal colonialscape is materialized through “slow violence” (Nixon, 2011) that has manifested in the physical geography through small scale endeavours such as fencing property boundaries, and the large-scale, long term construction of canal systems like the TSW. These physical manifestations of the colonialscape continue to obscure Indigenous landscapes and locate Indigenous land relations “somewhere else.” Understanding how Indigenous peoples were made strangers in their own lands has been integral to how I developed my theoretical framework and methodological praxis for this thesis. In the next chapter I go on to consider Sarah Ahmed’s stranger/native dynamic and how it has helped me understand Indigenous mobility within the colonialscape today.
3 Encounters in Theory and Method

3.1 Introductory Encounters

In the previous chapter I surveyed the literature that has shaped my understanding of Indigenous and colonial land relations within the discipline of Geography. Here, I will consider how these relations are made visible against the colonialscape through embodied encounters. For instance, a Mississaugua person ricing within a lake that is designated as a federal waterway and that is bounded by private property lots that hold cottages draws the Indigenous landscape up through the colonialscape. While the colonialscape is visible all around us through the built environment of dams, docks, and mega summer homes, the Indigenous landscape is only brought to the surface through the practice of embodied land-based relations against this backdrop. The manufactured visibility of the colonialscape obscures the deeper land-based relations and the longer Indigenous history of the place. Moreover the built environment is the physical manifestation of the spatio-legal rendering of Indigenous land-based relations, and Indigenous peoples, as belonging “somewhere else” (the reserve). As such, I am concerned with belonging, because locating Indigenous belonging “somewhere else” renders us strangers in our own lands and mediates Indigenous and settler relationships. Through reading Sarah Ahmed’s Strange Encounters (2000) I have come to think of the Indigenous/settler relationship as a stranger/native relationship within the Canadian nation’s colonialscape.

In this chapter I explore how Ahmed’s theory can be used to understand how Indigenous movements in Indigenous ways lead to embodied encounters between settlers and Indigenous folks that produce the stranger/native relationship while simultaneously
bringing the Indigenous landscape to life. In this case I understand Indigenous
movements as the kinds of practices that are integral to upholding Indigenous land-based
relations. Ricing along the waterway, paddling a traditional harvesting route, even the
travel and construction of temporary camps to enable hunting practices are the kinds of
“movements” I consider in this thesis; however, the dual meaning of “movement” as a
collective social process should also be foregrounded. While I consider individual
movements that lead to encounters, it may also be possible to consider collective social
movements\(^\text{10}\) within this framework. I do not take up collective social movements here,
though I think understanding movements as both individual and collective processes
holds potential for understanding Indigenous resistance.

This chapter is divided up into three sections that detail the theoretical framework,
consider the research ethics process, and the methodology I use to understand Indigenous
and settler encounters. I consider each of these as their own type of overlapping
encounter that bring to light embodied Indigenous life against the colonialscape. The
stranger/native dynamic across the Indigenous/settler divide comes about across
embodied encounters in different places, be that within the university, or on the
waterway. The theoretical exploration of the stranger/native dynamic provides an
interpretive lens for understanding the representational colonialscape explored in Chapter
Four, and the embodied research that I detail in Chapter Five. In this chapter I consider
how Indigenous geographical knowledge can be theorized and created through land-
based and embodied research.

\(^{10}\) Collective direct actions such as Idle No More come to mind, where the movement was made visible
through distinctly Indigenous practices like round dances.
3.2 Encounters, in theory

In Sara Ahmed’s (2000) *Strange Encounters*, she contemplates moments of meeting between “strangers” and “natives” as embodied encounters. In Ahmed’s theorization these encounters are racialized, with white settlers characterized as native to the nation-state, and people of colour and Indigenous folks considered strangers. Such a discussion is necessarily geographical, where there are boundaries drawn around certain places of belonging for certain bodies, what I discussed in Chapter Two as spatialized land relations through bordered entities such as the reserve. But Ahmed differentiates little between Indigenous Others, and “other Others,” examining all difference within the white settler state of Australia as a category that produces the white settler as native to the nation. Though Ahmed acknowledges that there are differences between the Others that the settler native encounters, they are flattened into strangers that produce settler belonging in the same way. Ahmed’s analysis does not account for the varied ways of coming to a place; for instance, the difference between Indigenous peoples and racialized Others that we might consider as “arrivants” (Byrd, 2011). These different ways of coming to a place produce how the people relate to each other and the place they share. As such, I want to consider how spatialized land relations form Indigenous strangers, and settler natives that produce embodied differences within a colonialscape.

I am concerned with who is a stranger and who belongs, because in settler colonial states Indigenous peoples and settlers live in neighbouring proximity, and yet they are strangers. Like Ahmed, I am interested in “local spaces of inhabitance - neighbourhoods - and the relationship between dwelling, strangers and the legitimation of certain ways of moving within space” (2000, 15). Despite proximity to one another, Indigenous and settler belong to different spaces within the nation-state (Razack, 2000).
As shown in Chapter Two the propertied relations and location of Indigenous bodies and land-based relations on the reserve presents settler and Indigenous land relations as if they neighbour one another. But Indigenous landscapes cannot be confined to tiny bounded reserve areas, and in fact, as Sarah Hunt (2014a) has argued, the reserve is a part of the colonialscape that layers over the Indigenous landscape. It does not produce neighbouring relations at all; it ensures the continuing strange(r)ness of Indigenous peoples that move off reserve land.\(^{11}\) Stranger/native relations between Indigenous and settler alter what was once only an Indigenous landscape, rendering a layered geography of colonialscape/Indigenous landscape.

The myth that Indigenous land relations belong on the reserve is integral to upholding the spatial relations of the colonialscape. It is the ability to locate Indigenous land relations “somewhere else” that brings to light the importance of understanding who belongs within the context of the Canadian nation-state. If settlers belong “here” and Indigenous peoples belong “somewhere else,” say the reserve, then when Indigenous movements become visible “here” they also make visible the Indigenous landscape through the colonialscape. If as Patrick Wolfe has noted “territoriality is settler colonialism’s specific, irreducible element” (2006, 388), then the need to locate Indigenous land relations as outside of settler spaces is key to the project. Indigenous movements through the colonialscape provide embodied challenges to its boundaries and settler belonging within them. The borders that pretend Indigenous land relations and settler relations are neighbouring and separate from one another produce a particular

\(^{11}\) Though it is not currently illegal for “Indians” to move off reserve, it is worth noting that historically under the Indian Act it was. The strange(r)ness of off reserve movements is the result of a legalized project of apartheid and displacement.
geography of settler belonging and Indigenous strange(r)ness within the nation-state. However, Indigenous movements highlight that the boundary is more vertical than it is horizontal with the colonialscape emerging as a dominant geography over Indigenous land-based relations that in fact live everywhere.

The ongoing colonial encounter may be exposed in moments of embodied encounters, where settler people are made aware of the layered colonialscape and landscape. If the materially hybrid and conceptually layered geography is exposed through encounters, what is the result of these encounters? What do encounters do to the belonging of the “native settler” or the “Indigenous stranger”? To understand these questions, I return to Ahmed's discussion that to be knowable as a stranger, one must have identifiable characteristics that make an Other. Ahmed points out, “the stranger is not necessarily known as an enemy, but may come to be known as a stranger, once she or he has become a friend” (2000, 57). It is this “knowledge” that settlers have of Indigenous peoples that make it possible for them to be strangers. This “knowledge” is often based on myths such as the ones discussed in Chapter Two; for instance, that Indigenous peoples did not make proper use of land, or racist notions that Indigenous peoples had no system of governance (Harris, 2004; Usher et al., 1992). When Indigenous and settler meet the encounter is informed by hundreds of years of “knowing” each-Other, but the knowledge is also shaped by the colonial power dynamic that has itself formed the stranger/native dynamic. Embodied encounters may uproot some of this settled knowledge, while bringing the Indigenous landscape up through the colonialscape.

Moments of awareness of Indigenous strangers may also reinforce a sense of settler belonging in the nation. Indigenous peoples are strangers to settlers because of their knowable difference, and imagined removal from the land. This settler project of
recognizing the Indigenous Other takes place within these two contingent imaginations: 1) settlers have inherited the land through conquest, and actively imagined a new (rightful) national community on the stolen land, and 2) the erasure of the Indigenous national communities on the same land. These imaginations create “the dynamics of invisibility and hypervisibility, the myths of emptiness generate unimagined-or at the very least underimagined- communities” (Nixon, 2011, 165). As such, Indigenous movements are unfathomable, and recognizable as strange, and outside of the ways of belonging to the settler nation. Imagining Indigenous nations off of their lands and “somewhere else” makes Indigenous movement through the colonialscape more visible, due to the resulting invisibility of the Indigenous landscapes. Settler colonialscape actually make Indigenous movements recognizable, so that they can be sure to reinforce the borders of their imagined space when transgressed by strangers. Today this colonialscape exists in both the national Canadian imaginary and the shared physical geography, rendering Indigenous movements, even movements as benign as paddling a canoe through a built waterway, strange.

By moving Indigenously through the colonialscape, and making Indigenous landscapes more visible through embodied encounters, settlers are granted an opportunity to reconsider their “knowledge” of Indigenous peoples. What they knew of “Indians” might become uncertain, and moving in ways that we know are Indigenous but are strange to settlers might make them ask, “what does an Indian look like anyway?” This is the question my mother would ask of tourists to the reserve when they would protest that she simply did not look “like an Indian.” Her question was intended to expose the engrained cultural signifiers and racisms that make historical, fixable traditions as “the unit of analysis” of Indigenous identities (A. Simpson, 2014, 74). For if Indians do not
look like Indians, how are settlers to know who they are? How can settler power of naming be reinforced? My mother’s question was a quiet resistance, a small movement within the colonialscape, as she refused to be defined on settler terms. The attempted fixing of indigeneity simply contributes to the historicization of Indigenous peoples, and continues to define us by our colonization at a fixed moment in history, rendering our self-definitions impossible under the settler colonial structure.

Rather than defining indigeneity by a certain set of stereotypical appearances and practices, we are better off to turn toward our communities to learn our governance principles, our nations’ ideals and consider how those can be practiced given our settler colonized context (L. Simpson, 2011). For those of us who do not fit settler notions of what an “Indian looks like” we embody a certain kind of resistance to colonial naming every time we claim our citizenship in our nation. When we practice our “rights,” in any form that remains true to our nations’ governance principles, we embody resistance. By making visible the continuity of Indigenous presence in our landscapes we challenge the colonial/post-colonial binary. Scholars have tended to focus in on the colonial/post-colonial binary to make temporal placements, Sarah Ahmed included. And while I agree with Ahmed that “post-coloniality allows us to investigate how colonial encounters are both determining and not fully determining of social and material existence” (2011, 11), I return to Sarah Hunt’s (2016) argument for “indigeneity on its own terms.” We do not need to be defined by colonial relations, but by how we continue to live Indigenously in place.

So I return to my mother’s question: what does an “Indian” look like anyway? What do “Indians” do anyway? Who decides? The settler colonial dynamic is set up so that the power lies in the hands of our colonizers to determine what Indigenous
movements are. And yet, Indigenous peoples move through the colonialscape every day in ways that disrupt, give pause, open questions about who they are. Settlers, at some point, are each likely to have a moment where they question what they know or have been taught about Indians (or they are questioned). These may be the result of collective and ongoing movements, such as Idle No More, or they may be quiet and individual movements, as with my mother’s question to tourists. Big or small, these encounters operate along a spectrum of violence that is engrained within the structure of settler society. It is in their momentousness that encounters become reproductions of a larger structure characterized by “slow violence” (Nixon, 2011). Wherever the violence is, it cannot be located in the moment, in its place, so it becomes an uncomfortable and locationless experience. Except that each of these encounters occurs with a location, and in fact, because of it. The conflict over wild rice in Pigeon Lake happened in place, but also because of that place, because settler natives believed deeply that they belong on the land through ownership (or the land belongs to them), and Indigenous strangers carry ancestral belonging that challenges that ownership. Through embodied encounters, grand or banal, the landscape and the colonialscape intersect. What “Indians look like” and what “Indians do” become visible through embodied encounters, and unless those momentous encounters are located not only in their geography, but as constitutive of it, they simply hang there, as if placeless.

This project attempts to locate encounters between individuals in place to render the conflict more visible, and to recall the layered geographies of the place by bringing Indigenous landscapes to the surface. As Keith Basso says, “placeless events are an impossibility. Everything must happen somewhere” (1996, 87). Considering encounters as moments of resistance that call attention to moments of colonial violence, we can work
to understand how possible the notion of living Indigenously, or practicing anishinaabewin is. To bring this theoretical understanding of how Indigenous strangers and settler natives move through and constitute the colonialscape, Indigenous researchers can engage in a process of being in place. In doing so we might invoke the ongoing nature of the strange encounter between Indigenous and settler by bringing to the forefront the history and development of the landscape through the stranger/native relationship. By focussing on encounters we can consider whose landscape is represented and to what end? Moreover, we can think through the ways that our geography makes our indigeneity. I want to consider how engaging with place by moving through the colonialscape might inform an account of the living layers of a geography and help all of us, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, build a deeper knowledge of our places. This is why, as I describe in the next two sections of this chapter, I turn to doing in place as an ethical method of ethnographic inquiry, to consider the strange encounters between “settler native” and “Indigenous stranger” and understand how encounters constitute our layered geographies.

3.3 Ethical Encounters (or Encountering Ethics)

This section considers the role of research ethics protocols in conducting Indigenous research. As I discussed in Chapter Two, the calls to decolonize research continue (Shaw et al., 2006; Pualani Louis, 2007; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999), but what does this look like through the institution? What can Indigenous researchers do? For my project, what people can do, or the movements people can make matter, because if different people are allowed different access, different abilities to do in place, landscapes of the same space
are different for different people. And, if as Brian Murton (2013) has pointed out, landscapes are represented differently from different cultural origins, then materializing particular doings in place makes certain types of representation possible or impossible, visible or invisible. Doing in place is tied to how we see the world, and how our world is represented and representable. The question, then, is who is represented in a given landscape? Who is seen in a place, and whose doings are visible? Colonial accounts of Canadian history show that, when land for settlement became an issue, a large part of the project was making Indigenous presences invisible so as to allow for legal seizure of the land (Hunt, 2014; Harris, 2004). It would seem then that making Indigenous movements visible through doing in place is important in bringing Indigenous landscapes to life.

As Keith Basso points out “geographical landscapes are never culturally vacant” (1996, 75), and the notion that what are now Canadian lands were empty and unoccupied has been dismissed. More recently, we have seen acknowledgements of Indigenous presences and a growing liberal politics of recognition (Coulthard, 2014). The new Canadian prime minister hopes to revive the "nation to nation" relationship (Liberal Party of Canada, 2016), but it remains to be seen how this changes the landscape (in both a representational and physical sense). Acknowledgement of pre-existing presence does not undo the colonial past, nor does it revive past landscapes of difference. With the only representations in the colonialscape that of belonging to the reserve, or at the very least being outside of settler places, the Indigenous landscape remains invisible. Indigenous peoples are faced with recovering and redoing relationships to place in order to keep Indigenous representations alive in the face of a new landscape of surface acknowledgements, and a rhetoric of “coexistence” that continues to place Indigenous and settler folks as neighbours on our separate plots, despite a geographically layered reality.
Through doing in place we can bring Indigenous geographies to the surface, and uncover their livability beyond the colonialscape.

What does doing in place look like as research? And who is involved? These are the types of questions I had to answer to pass the University of Toronto's research ethics protocol. So how do we make Indigenous movements as researchers in a colonial institution? Previously, I have been a researcher conducting interviews within my own community, mostly because I was taught through my Native Studies education that this was the most ethical way to access knowledge, and attribute the proper recognition to individuals who have contributed to the project. Because there exists a historically fraught relationship between Indigenous peoples and research (Deloria, 1969; Pualani-Louis, 2007; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999), that has been reified through ethnographic encounters in anthropology, there has been a growing movement to conduct research that allows the Other to speak for themself. It is believed that interviews grant the opportunity to hear the Other’s voice so they can provide their own perspective and interpretation of events to researchers, and are more in keeping with Indigenous ways of accessing knowledge, such as storytelling.

Attempts to conduct more ethical research have made it standard to bring community members onto projects as participants and co-researchers, especially in the planning phases. As Rob Innes points out “an important component of AIS [American Indian Studies] methodologies is for the researcher to clearly articulate how he/she will be responsible or accountable to both the researched group and the Native community in general” (2004, 136). The call for responsibility to communities has resulted in a shift in how data gathered using standard academic techniques (such as structured or unstructured interviews, focus groups, or participant observation) is handled after
collection. Those of us doing research in Indigenous communities are inducted into a set of academic rules that have been institutionalized which include: developing reciprocal relationships, allowing data and transcriptions to be checked by interviewees, and distributing the research in forums accessible to the community (Government of Canada, 2015). Through such research “ethics” Indigenous peoples are identified as vulnerable populations that must be protected from exploitation through the development of “relationships”. This is a deeply racist assumption, first that Indigenous folks are not present in the academy, and second that their knowledges require some kind of paternalistic protection by the colonial institution and that this protection can be developed through a relationship.

The inscription of the necessity to develop human relationships as a component of research in institutional rules is a curious phenomenon. I contend that the very development of the rule constitutes the supremacy of western knowledges. By identifying Indigenous peoples as vulnerable populations whose knowledge requires protection, and whose “world view” needs to be taken into account, it sustains the idea that the western institution is the epicentre from which knowledge emanates. The relationship-building rule assumes that the researcher will be non-Indigenous and the relationship will be one across ontological boundaries. While such a process is well-meaning at an institutional level to prevent appropriations of Indigenous knowledges, it also serves to constitute the very stranger/native dynamic it hopes to avoid through the “ethical” development of relationships. The assertion that relationships lead to ethical engagement ignores the many examples we have of relationships that are in fact abusive and domineering; it is often the intimate nature of relationships that can obscure abuses. There is nothing stipulating that warm feelings and friendships automatically constitute ethical ways of
relating to one another. In fact, the inscription of such a relational process as ethical for research simply creates a universal checklist which researchers can measure themselves against in order to feel reassured that they are not being exploitative and extractive westerners. By standardizing the need for Indigenous/non-Indigenous relationships the relationship becomes a means to an end by which a researcher may continue to use the traditional western methodological means to extract knowledge from a community so long as the “relationship” is in place.

Under no circumstance then, whether a researcher is Indigenous or non-Indigenous, can we suppose that relationships as a foreground to research inherently lead to the production of ethical research. In this way, the method itself becomes the object of examination, not the mode of access to the community. The question then shifts towards how the data is gathered, or by what means knowledge is accumulated, not only how it is represented once it is in hand, or how “relational” the interview process was. In following the institutional rules of the academy’s predetermined ways of accessing knowledge we are reinforcing the colonial power of the academy as the place from where legitimate knowledge emanates. If we take such predetermined modes of accessing knowledge as the only way of conducting legitimate research we are already defaulting to colonial ways of thinking. It seems to me, that no matter the efforts put into translating knowledge back to the community, by allowing western filters to be applied from the beginning, we have already limited knowledge-gathering possibilities. While much of the postcolonial

12 Similarly there is nothing stipulating that being an “insider” researcher would prevent abuses or exploitation of knowledge. However, communities tend to have their own ethics and guidelines surrounding consequences if an insider abused community knowledge, or relationships. Just as it should not be up to the state to determine who is or isn’t Indigenous, it is not up to the academy to govern relationships between Indigenous community members.
critique of the dominance of western knowledge’s hegemony is tied up in representation (Hunt, 2014; Said 1978), I want to think about the routes to the knowledge that is represented. In choosing one path we have already chosen not to walk down another (or several others), and we cannot represent what we cannot have gathered by limiting ourselves to ways of accumulating knowledge that have been sanctioned by our colonizers.

Such limitations are what Sarah Hunt has termed an “epistemic violence,” whereby “the work and discourse in creating and sustaining boundaries around what is considered real and, by extension, what is unable to be seen as real (or to be seen at all)” (2014, 29). In order to conduct ethical research we need to transgress the epistemic boundaries that have been erected by academia and contemplate other ways of accessing knowledge. Following Said we need to work against “the common ways by which contemporary scholarship keeps itself pure” by stepping outside of “distinct and intellectually knowable lines” (1979, 13). I believe we might do this by turning to “theory from life” as Dian Million calls it: “Theory, theorizing is… a verb, an action” (2014, 32).

As such, theory and methodology are intimately related because they are both things that we do in order to access knowledge. And ethical research might require us to do otherwise, or do differently in order to decentre western knowledge, or challenge epistemic violences. It is through disallowing modes of access, recognition, and subsequent representation that have been determined by our colonizers to dictate the terms of knowledge accumulation that we might achieve a small shift in the structure of how we access knowledge.

The challenge then, if we are going to turn to “theory from life” lies in deciding what counts: how do we know when something should be represented to contribute to our
collective knowledges? If we are not going to use interviews, or participant observation, then what is the research going to be? Many Indigenous scholars have advocated working through stories “as culturally nuanced ways of knowing, produced within networks of relational meaning-making” (Hunt, 2014b, 27). Some of the most ethical research by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars works through Indigenous storytelling methods, such as the ethnographic account of the Western Apache’s place-based relations by Keith Basso (1996), or Leanne Simpson’s (2014, 2011) use of storytelling to write knowledge for us as Nishnaabeg peoples. Stories then, are important representations of accumulated wisdom and make Indigenous theoretical frameworks different from western ones.

Additionally, ethical research has to take into account some knowledges that should not be brought into the academy. Leaving some parts of the work outside of the academy is an “ethnographic refusal,” whereby researchers and communities alike withhold parts of the research, making only a part of the story available to the institution, and acknowledge the impossibility of telling the whole story (A. Simpson, 2014).

In order to think outside of the current reality, we cannot begin with a framework that emanates out of the oppressive institution itself, and so I turn to being in the world, in our communities, so that we might know our places and hear what people in our communities deem to be important for us as a collective in which we, the researchers, are included. In an ironic twist, an ethical form of knowledge gathering and accumulation can closely resemble ethnographic methods that were the original cause of the problematic research relationship between Indigenous and settler, or stranger and native. Of course, “ethnography” conducted by an insider researcher, such as myself, is going to be shaped by a different relationship to place and community, than that of a complete outsider to the community. Simultaneously though, my role of gathering research as a
member of the academic community implicates me within the western knowledge paradigm. I am already constricted by the time restraints of moving towards degree completion, years of schooling in the academy, and the ultimate use of a recognizable form of representation that will be the end product of a thesis. As Rob Innes (2009) has pointed out, Indigenous researchers work within a borderland where we are both insiders of the community, but our membership in the academic community makes us outsiders as well.

I would say that this in-betweeness makes our ethical responsibilities especially anxiety producing, and has led me to contemplate at great length how best to do research within and for my community. As young Indigenous scholars we are faced with speaking up as “Indigenous and scholar, though it feels impossible to be heard as both at the same time” (Hunt 2014, 28, my emphasis). To do justice to my dual membership in the Indigenous community and the colonial academy, I developed the methodology of this particular project around the notion that Indigenous geographies can be brought to life through Indigenous movements, and to bring to our attention the hybrid nature of our geographies by alternatively representing our landscapes in the context of the colonial landscape. Such alternative representations begin, as I have advocated, from different methodological starting points that allow us to conceptualize a world outside of the already worn intellectual pathways of western theories and methods. They also hinge on the development of our own research ethics in collaboration with our communities, regardless of the institutional hoops we have to jump through simply to work in our own communities.

My research ethics protocol was remarkably simple, and filled with several notations that certain aspects did not apply to me as an insider researcher. It was difficult
for me to conceptualize the paddling ethnography I describe in the next section as “research.” Letting go of the colonial institution's definitions of how knowledge is accumulated has been difficult, but ultimately worth it. As Renee Pualani Louis has written “decolonising an Indigenous mind is a beautiful thing” (2007, 130). Making Indigenous movements in the landscape as research that make Indigenous geographies visible through the physical colonialscape finds its parallel through making Indigenous movements in the academic colonialscape. Traditional research protocols emulate Indigenous erasures from the geographic colonialscape by assuming that Indigenous researchers are absent, and assuming certain methods to access Indigenous knowledges. As with representations in the broader colonialscape, assumptions about indigeneity limit what can be represented within western paradigms. The creation and continuance of Indigenous geographical knowledge within the academy is possible, but only if Indigenous researchers continue to contest and refuse colonial dynamics through Indigenous movements. In the next section I describe what Indigenous movements look like as a research method and the kinds of movements I engaged in for my project.

### 3.4 Encounters as Research: Making Indigenous Moves

The method to complete this project has been two-tiered. I have attempted to understand the colonialscape and the Indigenous landscape. It is important to me to engage both, because of the material realities that the colonialscape has in our physical geography. For instance, a pre-colonial geography had portages where there are now TSW dams in Mississauga territory. The dams are here, and the management bodies that come with them are here as well. A contemporary Geography that ignores these realities would not do justice to the ways that these components of the colonialscape impact our ability to
live Indigenous, and make the Indigenous landscape visible. As such, I consider both the colonial documentation and embodied encounters in the colonialscape. Moreover, I use the documentation to inform how we understand our movements through the colonialscape, what these kinds of documentations mean for the Indigenous landscape, and how the colonial power dynamics (in)form our geographies. While it is tempting to produce a Geography that only considered Indigenous movements, it was impossible to do so in such a densely governed and populated region. I cannot move in my homeland without running up against some aspect of the colonialscape, and so I have to try to understand it, and how it affects my movements. Understanding how to contend with the colonialscape does not undo the project of living the Indigenous landscape. And that is why I begin here with how I developed my own methodological ethics within the bounds of Indigenous knowledge as a separate endeavor from a document analysis.

As an Indigenous person, I can only learn my geography by going out and being in it. As Anishinaabe poet Richard Wagamese says, “our geographies become us, the more we inhabit them” (2011, 70), but we too, become our geographies. By being in our places, they become ours again, and we may rediscover our landscapes as liveable places. Moreover, if academic work is intended to build bodies of knowledge for “society”, as Indigenous peoples we need to consider what work might help build bodies of knowledge to add to Indigenous societies. For much of our shared history with settlers our movements have been responding to the overlaying of settler ways, laws and regulations on our lands. Making Indigenous movements by doing in place might help to work through some of the possibilities of living in and around settler presences as active resistances to assimilative structures. Doing as method hinges upon the idea that rights and recognition mean little when we cannot materialize our difference. We may have to
live within the settler state, and new assimilative processes may be continually devised, but we may discover that there are some modes of ongoing resistance that can be engaged to keep Indigenous geographies alive (and liveable).

Leanne Simpson (1999) wrote in her dissertation that learning by doing is a well-recognized method of acquiring knowledge in Anishinaabe society. This can be applied not only to acquiring traditional knowledge, but also to how we understand the colonized world we have to contend with now. By doing we might better understand and create our Indigenous landscapes, as they have lived on through the colonialscape. By engaging the landscape in this way, “the ethnographic challenge is to fathom what a particular landscape, filled to brimming with past and present significance, can be called upon to ‘say,’ and what, through the saying, it can be called upon to ‘do’” (Basso, 1996, 75). Not only is it our doing in place that works to challenge or resist, or ethnographically refuse dominant representations, but how these doings allow us to develop contemporary representations of Indigenous geographies that account for the material colonialscape as much the representational colonialscape.

It might appear that I am seeking the kind of settler recognition Coulthard (2014) says we should reject by attempting to form representations of Indigenous landscapes by making Indigenous movements visible. But settler recognition is not what makes Indigenous geographies live; they live of their own accord. The Indigenous landscape lives beneath the colonialscape whether anyone, Indigenous or settler, chooses to look for it or not. It is not recognition I seek, but visibility. Visibility does not require settler power to recognize the doings as Indigenous. Indigenous movements can be made visible so they might disrupt the continuity of the colonialscape, not to ask settlers to recognize our Indigenous landscape. Intelligibility and state sanctioned recognitions are ultimately
inconsequential to the question of how Indigenous landscapes live. Though some recognized Indigenous practices might be engaged (e.g., Aboriginal rights), it is simply the process of making Indigenous movements as we understand them ourselves that make landscapes both lived, and liveable. How to move as Nishnaabeg people through a hybridized landscape is one of the most pressing questions we can ask as researchers today. While settler recognitions might be inconsequential to our understanding of the Indigenous landscape, Indigenous peoples must still move through the colonialscape, and these movements often prove to be dangerous to Indigenous peoples (Hunt, 2014). Understanding how our movements are visible is a matter of utmost importance, as the colonialscape persists in its dominance.

In *Dancing on our Turtle’s Back* Leanne Simpson (2011) wrote that Indigenous thought “maps a way out of colonial thinking by confirming Indigenous lifeways or alternative ways of being in the world. Ultimately Indigenous theory seeks to dismantle colonialism while simultaneously building a renaissance of mino bimaadiziwin.” She leaves us with a question: “What if this was our collective focus?” (2011, 31-2). It is this question that guides my methodological inquiry. How do we focus our work on dismantling colonialism and building up our alternatives? In order to keep those dual aspects of Indigenous theory in mind moving forward with my project required seeking the guidance of an elder in my community. I turned to Doug Williams and I explained to him that I was questioning the research process: the conventional method that I had used before of conducting interviews and developing themes for interpretation. Like Linda Tuhiwai Smith discussed about her first research report (1999), I felt that it was quite likely that I did not do justice to those I had interviewed for that first research project. I needed help from someone who could teach me about the history of our territory, how
and why we lived there, and how our relationship with the place has developed through time if I was going to better understand our geography.

“But I don’t want to just interview you,” I told him. “I want you to teach me; I want you to be given a place in the project that seems more in keeping with the kind of knowledge that you have” (Fall 2014). He was interested, and so we agreed: I would keep in touch from Toronto, and he would help me as much as he could. Tuhiwai Smith wrote that elders are sometimes appointed or self-appointed to act as a “guardian of the researcher” (2014, 139). I was hoping that Doug would come onto the project to guide me as a teacher, in more of a teacher/apprentice capacity, than a researched/researcher dynamic. By invoking this traditional Nishnaabeg way of teaching, Doug could teach how to decipher through a Nishnaabeg lens what questions I should be asking and how I should find the answers. I wanted Doug to help me because, after doing interviews in my own community previously, I felt alienated and confused. I thought maybe I was asking the wrong questions; and I wondered if I was creating myself as more of an outsider than I am, and than I should be. Much like the research ethics protocol I critique in the previous section, “most research methodologies assume that the researcher is an outsider able to observe without being implicated in the scene” (Tuhiwai Smith, 1999, 137). I felt through the research design and the interview process that I was extracting knowledge from the community, when really, I wanted to be contributing to the body of knowledge of our community. By bringing Doug onto the project the researcher/community member relationship had to be modified. We went, in a short conversation over tea in a Tim Horton’s in nogojiwanong from academic researcher and community elder, to Nishnaabeg student and Elder teacher. We made a small move to reverse the relationship
which holds academic researchers as the center of power and community members as a vulnerable population from which knowledge is extracted.

I hoped, by relocating the center of knowledge, Doug and I might subtly shift the heavily inscribed notion that Indigenous knowledges remain fundamentally alienated from the academic world. I hoped it would resolve the fragmented sense of self that research made me feel, whereby at times I moved as an academic and others as an Indigenous community member, but never able to embody both together (Hunt 2015). If I was being advised, guided and taught by a teacher from within my community, whose knowledge has largely been taught to him within the Nishnaabeg tradition, then my work would be held not only to the standards of what the academy counted as knowledge, but also to our own standards. I felt less disembodied and closer to both my research, and my community by structuring the project in this way. However, I also knew that having him on the project did not reduce at all my implication within the colonial institution of the university and did not drastically modify the university’s role in legitimating certain knowledges. But we both felt it was a small but important step.

If he was going to be a teacher, an advisor, as opposed to an informant among other informants, what would I do? How would I find out what I wanted to know? When the question is how do we make Indigenous movements within the colonialscape, then we have to go out and move. To do that, I had to engage in the practices that might make our landscapes live by engaging our geography in culturally specific Nishnaabeg ways. To rise Indigenous landscapes up through the colonialscape I had to engage the deeper land-based relations that are integral to our Indigenous difference. I developed my research methodology around a contingent process of doing and reflecting within our territory. I planned to engage in a series of land based activities to determine how we might “live
Indigenously,” and in doing so make the Indigenous landscape visible. In practice the method looks a lot like traditional ethnography and auto-ethnographic processes, but it diverges from traditional ethnographies because of my insider role within the Nishnaabeg community. While the research has been shaped by the guidance of an Elder teacher, it has also been shaped by growing up in Nishnaabeg territory, being taught by Nishnaabeg family members and other relatives and by explicitly being told on occasion what it is that “Indians do.” I did not move to a community to “immerse” myself in a Nishnaabeg way of life. I chose to move my Nishnaabeg body in culturally specific ways and engage those movements as moments that might reveal an important point of discussion for the community.

In the context of Sarah Ahmed’s native/stranger dynamic, I have come to think of this like an intentional process of making strange through doing differently. While settler geographies and conceptions of the landscape dominate our territories at present, Indigenous geographies remain, though they are less visible. By making Indigenous movements in the colonialscape through enacting Indigenous practices, I am also following the “intimate turn” in Human Geography in order to consider what “productively unsettling potential” such bodily encounters might have (Price 2012, 578). This auto-ethnographic move makes embodied experience the site of research, and is also intended to consider how our geographies live through us, and we in turn, live through our geographies. By working through experience and the questions that have arisen through my own embodied reality as an Indigenous woman, I aim to avoid the polarizing debate that often paints Indigenous peoples as “heroes and champions of avant-garde politics or vulnerable casualties of colonial pasts” (Coombes et al. 2012, 697). I am more interested in considering living Indigenous geographies today.
This project uses embodied experience to consider how Indigenous geographies might live through practices. I contend, that while of course, I might be able to conduct interviews to indicate what those practices should be or could be, it is through attempting to do them that we as a collective might fully understand how possible they are in the colonialscape and what kinds of productive gaps are created by moving Indigenously through a settler colonized world. Moreover, by employing a method of doing Indigenously, I have tried to refuse the automatic inscription of my role as researcher as an outsider. Much like Audra Simpson’s (2014) refusal to do ethnography that tells the “whole story,” I have tried to refuse dominant methods of accessing knowledge that fragment my insider identity, and position my work within a body of colonial knowledge. By engaging in practices the research becomes about expressions of us, as opposed to academic observations of them; it is my way of trying to do justice to the project and the community, and balance my position as a community member.

Embodied experience is also a methodological response to the call to action that has emanated out of Indigenous scholarship in recent years (Alfred and Corntassel, 2005; Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2011). Focussing in on embodied encounters as research engages what Patricia Price has termed a “politics of proximities” and brings to light their spatial qualities through their occurrence in place (2012, 579). By ethnographically engaging in practices it is also a methodological engagement of Ahmed’s stranger/native paradigm, wherein we might test how our encounters as “neighbours” produces different people as either strangers or natives in and through the layered geographies that have been made in this territory. Thus by making movements through the colonialscape we might consider how Indigenous geographies live and are liveable in a hybrid, albeit settler dominated landscape. The starting point is neither our position as survivors or
pitiful victims of colonialism, but the complexity of a space that has been turned into
different places for different bodies, thus restricting or allowing certain kinds of
movements. The questions that can be explored through embodied experience consider
how we move Indigenously where the colonialscape has been fixed in space and time,
and the Indigenous landscape is invisible.

Indigenous movements for the purposes of this project became paddling parts of
the Trent Severn Waterway within the Treaty 20 region, to access different traditional
harvesting areas. These movements were not intended to determine or establish a “pure”
or essentialized method of living Indigenously, but are instead designed to bring to light
the hybridized nature of our layered geography. By paddling a waterway that has been
colonized in both a discursive and material sense, and fixed in settlers’ minds as theirs,
Nishnaabeg movements make the Indigenous landscape more visible through the
colonialscape. As Sarah Hunt (2014) pointed out, the colonialscape is comprised of both
the legal and social landscape that has been superimposed on our territories. In an effort
to reckon with what is here now, I also explored the legal and social colonialscape as it is
depicted in the documentation by different governing bodies. Instructions on how to
engage with Indigenous folks and various governance reports from organizations like the
Ministry of Natural Resources and the Trent Severn Waterway allow insight into the
spatio-legal colonialscape that contributed to the shaping of our material colonialscape.
So in conjunction with embodied encounters, I have conducted a document analysis of
different institutional literatures. I pair textual representations from the different
jurisdictional bodies together to show if and when they talk to each other, to expose the
layers where they diverge and the overlaps when they converge.
While for me, the Indigenous landscape lives in my mind, and all around me, much of the population of Mississauga territory sees the land as Southern Ontario. Settler geography is characterized by jurisdictional boundaries that I, and each Indigenous person, have to move through as we live in our territories. So, while I paddled first and explored documentation later, in the next two chapters I reverse the order, and first discuss the colonial documentation of the territory, and then discuss the paddling ethnography after. I do this for two reasons. First, because I think that it will help to geographically situate ourselves within the colonialscape before we begin to contemplate transgressions of it. Second, the project is intended to make Indigenous geographies more visible, and stick them in our minds. By ending with embodied Indigenous practices I want to make a representative move that the Indigenous landscape is, in spite of all other representations, final. For me, the Indigenous geography is the ending point, the part that lasts.
4 Colonial Land Relations in Nishnaabeg Territory

4.1 The Land Between

In 1929 the Trent Severn Waterway (TSW) was designated a National Historic Site of Canada. Now a recreation project governed by Parks Canada, the tourism literature for the TSW is plastered with this commemoration, and at each lock stands a plaque proclaiming its historic status to the world. These commemorations formulate the material manifestation of a colonial project. They are physical manifestations of a legal landscape that shape the world all people move through. The lock structures form a colonialscape over top of the Indigenous landscape. These structural expressions have fundamentally altered the physical geography of the region, leading to a new hybrid geography that houses both the colonialscape and the Indigenous landscape in layers.

This chapter will consider the contingent relationship between textual representations and landscapes, with particular focus on how colonial representations have shaped, and continue to shape our material world today. For instance, the commemoration of the Trent Severn Waterway as a National Historical Site of Canada inscribes the construction and continued existence of the canal in the grand narrative of the Canadian nation. The canal physically reinforces the Canadian colonialscape and represents Crown jurisdictional authority over the waterway. The built environment and the representations in the legal and bureaucratic institutions of the Canadian nation-state form interlocking ideals that make the colonialscape the most visible layer of geography.

The inscription of the jurisdiction of the TSW happens in both embodied social contexts and through written representations. The embodied experience of people in this
territory has been shaped by the construction of locks to manipulate the water ecology in the interest of settlement. This colonialscape is the result of a long political process of lobbying for investment in what has come to be known as a “land between.” (see Angus, 1988, The Land Between, 2012). There are a number of historical texts in the form of legal decisions and correspondence that contributed to the ultimate physical construction of the waterway, and a number of contemporary texts that continue to reify the legitimacy of the colonialscape. In the first section of this chapter I discuss historical treaties in the context of the construction of the waterway in order to draw these two features of the colonialscape into conversation with one another. I then go on to consider the way these historical texts are incorporated into Crown administration of the spatio-legal colonialscape to uphold jurisdictional legitimacy. I examine textual representations as they form brackets in law (Blomley, 2014) that separate out different areas of governance to different departments, both historical and contemporary. Spatialized land relations are formed and reinforced through colonial textual interpretations of the landscape that in turn render native practices as strange in the context of the Canadian nation-state. This chapter highlights the role of colonial documentation in making this colonialscape real in the physical geography.

4.2 Timing, Treaties, and the Trent Severn

This section is intended to construct a simple timeline of events, a task easier said than done for Southern Ontario’s sloppy settlement history. I do not intend to construct a comprehensive history of the area; rather, I plan to link together several historical facts of the region that are usually separated (bracketed) to show their contiguous development. The purpose of this is to show that it is sometimes the very bracketing of issues in law
that lead to messy overlays in the geographical landscape. Attempts to separate issues and continuing to deal with them in isolation obscures their material entanglement, all the while creating infrastructure through which they can be dealt with separately. By timelining the development of water and land-based relations in Southern Ontario, we gain insight into how the governance of the colonialscape developed by bracketing out legal categories to construct the rules of engagement that supported settler interests as they shifted through time. In E.H. Carr’s *What is History?* he asks, “what is the criterion which distinguishes the facts of history from other facts about the past?” (1961, 10). This chapter is about pairing the facts that have been inscribed in colonial documents alongside “other facts about the past” that originate out of Nishnaabeg teachings and the landscape itself, to illustrate the historical (and contemporary) gaps in the construction of the colonialscape.

Though it is tempting to try to reveal an ultimate “truth” of the land relations by providing a comprehensive history, that is not the purpose of this section. Rather, I draw on particular overlapping instances of engagement with Indigenous land rights and title with the simultaneous erasure of Mississauga presence, to illustrate some ways in which the colonial framework developed in the region. In particular, the documents show that there was a discrepancy between the colonial and Indigenous interpretations of land and water based understandings of the territory. For instance, much of Mississauga life happens along the waterway and the shoreline, and the colonial focus on land dispossession ignored this reality. This was aggravated by the bracketing of Indigenous/colonial relations to an Indian Department, which allowed other branches of the colonial government to forge ahead with developments such as constructing the TSW
that would ultimately impact Mississaugas without considering what these impacts might be. Bracketing happens both in the simultaneous recognition and erasure, but also happens through time, as particular land relations are relegated to particular moments in history.

Despite the Royal Proclamation of 1763’s recognition of everything west of what is now Quebec as under the purview of Aboriginal Title, the treaties for Southern Ontario continued to lack written documentation for the rules of Indigenous/non-Indigenous engagement in the territory. The general consensus from both the Crown and Indigenous perspective, is that the Royal Proclamation was intended to recognize pre-existing Aboriginal title that would have to be extinguished before settlement could occur. The settler modus operandi was to focus on securing land to deed to settlers, and this could only occur through land cession by treaty. As such, the historical documents that I focus on here are Treaty 20, one of the first land cession treaties signed by the Mississauga nation in 1818, and The Treaty of 1856, to cede the rights to islands in the waterway. These historical documents serve as orienting landmarks to explore the surrounding activities of settlers that, all the while treaties were (or were not) being established, ignored Mississauga presence. Pairing these treaties with some of the outside documentation of the political intentions in the land relations at the time it is possible to (re)construct the framework that allowed for the development (both representational and material) of the colonialscape.

The 1818 Treaty cedes a tract of land comprising what is most of Peterborough County today. The text deals specifically with an area of land that is functionally quite small, though is most of the immediate territory surrounding what is now Curve Lake
First Nation, and a significant chunk of what was to become the Trent Severn Waterway. The treaty is one of the early land cession treaties signed between First Nations and the Crown that refers to specific boundaries, though it is still woefully lacking in other specifics. Like many of the other treaties of the time, it does not allocate a reserve territory to the signatories, a reality that would become troublesome for communities whose reserves fell within the boundaries of the treaty in future relations with the Crown. As with all treaties of the time, the Crown perspective was that after signing they held ultimate jurisdiction over the entire territory. My task here is not to interpret the intentions of signatories of the treaties, but to consider how what was left out (either intentionally or through sheer ignorance) helped to create an uneven reality between settlers and Indigenous folks.

For instance, the lack of reserve allocation meant two things for Mississauga peoples. The first is that they were effectively “displaced in place” (Mollett, 2014) having no rights to title in the land they were continuing to live on, and maintaining only rights to limited use across the larger territory. The second is that the boundaries of the territory on which they settled, which was eventually to become classified as their reserve in colonial documentation, fluctuated and shrank due to settler activities off the reserve, namely, the construction of the Trent Severn Waterway. Yet, because the Mississaugas effectively had no claim to their reserve, the colonial government was able to evade accountability for the ecological changes inflicted on their new land base. The dispute between Mississaugas and the colonial government over loss of reserve land base was one that would continue for over a hundred years, and has yet to be settled today. These “events” demonstrate the material effects colonial documentations had on the lives of
Indigenous peoples, and perhaps more importantly, the *cyclical* power relations that result in the colonialscape emerging as the dominant geography.

I want to consider how this cycle works; it is a difficult one to identify because it develops both across great distances and through long periods of time. The Treaty of 1818 contains no provisions for a reserve for Mississauga peoples. Aside from begging the obvious question of “where are they to go?”, the lack of reserve allocation also allows the colonial government to say many years later that the Mississauga peoples cannot claim that damages to their reserve are owed to them. This is exactly what happened after petitions were made due to flooding from the construction of the Trent Severn. Following the chain of correspondence between government Departments and the Mississauga Indians shows how the law is set up to both create reality and (re)enforce the reality it creates. My interpretation traces the petition for compensation for flooded lands by the Mississaugas of what is now Curve Lake. Contextualized by the Treaty of 1818, the denial of compensation highlights how the brackets of law continually do the work of dispossession through time. I have come to think of this ongoing dispossession through law as state-sanctioned “slow violence” (Nixon, 2011). It is not spectacular, nor instantaneous, so it requires tracing the long documented exchange to illuminate the “constellation of power relations” (Coulthard, 2014, 14).

On the 3rd of April 1909 the Secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, J.D. Mclean, wrote to the Secretary of the Department of Railways and Canals, L. K. Jones, requesting his attention to the Mississauga claim that their lands were flooded:
…damages are also claimed in behalf of the Indians of the Mud Lake (or Chemung Lake) Indian Reserve for a tract of land in their reserve which was flooded by the raising of the water in connection with the Trent Valley system, and for Islands in some of the Lakes which have been similarly damaged. I shall be obliged if your department will take this matter into consideration with the view of ascertaining the extent of the damage suffered and the compensation which should be paid for the same to the Department in [sic] behalf of the Indians… (LAC, RG 43, Vol 1554, File 7435).

This request would spark a chain of correspondence over the course of twenty years, between the two branches of the colonial government and the Council at Chemung Lake. In this particular letter the power to ascertain the extent of the damages is located with the Department of Railways and Canals, as Mclean requested their stock to be taken of the damages. Also, importantly, if the claim was found to be valid, the compensation would be made to the Department of Indian Affairs on behalf of the Indians, thus re-inscribing colonial jurisdiction over the lands in question. But as the correspondence went on it is clear that it was the bracketing of jurisdictional powers through time that ultimately prevented the compensation for flooded lands at that time (and may still today prevent it), no matter to whom the compensation was made.

Over the course of several years, the Department of Railways and Canals responded with a regular refrain: this matter will receive attention. In a letter of April 13th 1909, L. K. Jones replied to J. D. Mclean:

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt of your communication of the 3rd instant, in which… you put forward a claim, on behalf of the Indians of the Mud Lake (or Chemung Lake) for… damages to a tract of land on their reserve, said to
have been consequent upon the raising of the water in connection with the Trent Canal (LAC, RG 43, Vol 1554, File 7435).

This simple acknowledgement prompted J. D. McLean to respond on June 24th 1909 and request that Jones please indicate what action would be taken to reconcile the claim. Jones responded with a simple non-response quite quickly, stating on June 29th that “the Department is unable to give any information in the matter at the present time” (LAC, RG 43, Vol 1554, File 7435). Half a year later with further prompting from Mclean about the Department of Railways and Canals’ response to the claim, Jones responded on December 4th 1909 with a simple refusal to engage the claim. “I am directed to say that there do not appear to be any legal grounds for the said claims, and the Department, consequently, does not propose to take any action in the matter” (LAC, RG 43, Vol 1554, File 7435).

It was two years before Mclean again reminded the Department of Railways and Canals of the claim of the Chemung Indians. His letter of February 11th 1911 acknowledged the receipt of a transfer made for the similar claim of the Rice Lake Indians for compensation, and requests that attention again be paid to the Mississaugas at Chemung. The acting Secretary of the Department of Railways and Canals, J. W. Bugsley, responded on February 16th acknowledging the request but again saying nothing else, and thus the pattern was ignited which would carry on for the next few years. This time the letter was forwarded to J. H. McLellan, the Superintendent of the Department of Railways and Canals upon L. K. Jones’ return to office. The Superintendent assured Jones in a letter of the 27th of February 1911 that upon the valuators return to work in April, the matter would “receive due attention” (LAC, RG 43, Vol 1554, File 7435). By
this standard the valuator would be assigned to assess the accuracy of the claim made by the Mississaugas at Mud Lake and then the claim could be reconciled.

Yet still, the year passed by and the matter required more prompting from J. D. Mclean to be passed upwards to the Superintendent of the Department of Railways and Canals through Jones, where it came out that the lands had still not been valuated. In fact, while a year earlier Mclellan had claimed that the valuator would be working in the spring, he now claimed that:

…in order to make a satisfactory examination, and report of the condition of the lands at Mud Lake, it is necessary to do so when the ice is sufficiently strong enough to allow men to travel around the whole island. The recent cold spell made good ice there, and at the beginning of next week, I will have the land examined, and will be able to make a full report to you as to the amount of damage, if any, which has been done to their property (LAC, RG 43, Vol 1554, File 7435).

It is difficult to say whether the Department of Railways and Canals was simply delinquent in paying attention to the matter, or was actively evading responsibility. Given the disjointed nature of the construction of the Trent Severn (Angus, 1988), it is quite plausible that the Department was simply scattered, disorganized, and quite frankly, poor. This time, a valuator, R. J. Kidd, did visit the Mississaugas at Chemung and on February 3rd 1912, Alfred McCue, Chief, and Daniel Whetung, Secretary, signed a claim stating they would accept $1650.00 as compensation for 275 acres of flooded lands.

Mclellan forwarded the valuation to Jones on February 8th 1912, and despite the valuators report that the Mississauga claim had been found legitimate, Jones continued to evade the compensatory obligations. Jones wrote to Mclean on March 9th 1912 “that the
matter is to be allowed to stand in abeyance until a new Valuator is appointed in that
connection” (LAC, RG 43, Vol 1554, File 7435). By October of 1912, Fred Wilkins of
Norwood was appointed as valuator and strictly instructed by Jones, now both Deputy
Minister and Secretary to make his valuation report “direct to the Department” (LAC, RG
43, Vol 1554, File 7435, emphasis in original). And then, nothing happened. The file lay
dormant, at least in official records, for over a year. It was not until the spring of 1914,
that J. D. Mclean wrote again to the Department of Railways and Canals referring to
Jones’ letter of March 9th 1912 that indicated there would be a valuation of the land, and
asking when action would be taken.

The Mississaugas were not so readily accepting of this run around, and Daniel
Whetung wrote directly to L. K. Jones on April 13th 1914. In his letter he referred to the
visit from R. J. Kidd during which the lost land was valuated, and the claim recorded. By
the understanding of the Council at Chemung, the $1650.00 the valuator assessed the
land at should have been placed into their credit with the Department of Indian Affairs.
When Whetung received the general report of the account, which according to his letter
he received annually, he saw that the money had not been transferred and took matters
into his own hands. Instead of going through the Indian Department as was customary,
Whetung went directly to the source to find out what was going on. His letter was
acknowledged without any real answer to his direct question. The Assistant Secretary of
Railways and Canals, J. W. Bugsley, replied stating that the matter was receiving
attention (LAC, RG 43, Vol 1554, File 7435). At this time, the Department of Railways
and Canals did increase their efforts towards valuation, and on June 16th 1914 they
received a six page hand-written report from Fred Wilkins, which took into account the
land ownership throughout time and the construction of the dam, along with some ecological considerations of the changing landscape. This report is notable in containing all of these details because this is where and when the character of the conversation about compensation for lost lands through flooding changed completely. The dialogue was no longer about the loss of land use due to actions of the Crown; it became about who owned the land when, and what rights accompanied the type of ownership.

After receiving Wilkins’ report, L. K. Jones requested that copies of the deeds held by the N. E. Company be sent to Railways and Canals, and he also requested copies of the Mississauga surrenders. Mclean originally refused, but eventually acquiesced after further years of correspondence between the two departments. Upon reading these documents Jones sent the following to the Department of Indian Affairs:

… from the copies of Deeds on file here, it appears that your Department did not acquire the lands in question until 1898 and 1900, many years after the lands were flooded by reason of the Buckhorn Dam, and your Department could have no claim for damages previous to that time, not even if the Deeds purported to transfer a right of action in respect to such flooding, which, in point of fact, they did not. Such a right of action is not legally transferable between private parties, and certainly not against the Crown. It would appear that, previous to the lands coming into possession of your Department, the Crown had a prescriptive right to flood the same, and the Indians obtained them subject to such a prescriptive right.

It is not understood that there is any claim or basis of claim for damages since 1898 or 1900.

It does not, I am to say, appear that the Indian claim is well founded.

(LAC, RG 43, Vol 1554, File 7435 February 5th, 1917).
Though Jones was the Assistant Deputy Minister of the Department of Railways and Canals, and not legal council, he formed the opinion that his department was under no obligation to pay based on the property structure put in place. He referred directly to the deeds made through time that designated the land for certain uses, and to the surrenders that “allowed” for the designations and the Crown’s “prescriptive right.” Due to the institutionalized process for compensating individuals for flooded lands in the construction of Canals, the department maintained sole jurisdiction in determining the validity of these claims. The claim remains outstanding, as the Crown continues to stall its negotiations with the First Nation (Curve Lake, 2014, October 31).13

What does this story say about the development of the colonialscape in both its materiality and representation? It is clear from the nearly decade long historical correspondence that regardless of whether the Department of Railways and Canals believed the Mississauga claim or not, they would go to great lengths to avoid legal culpability. The purpose of tracing the specifics of this historical correspondence over a seemingly simple property dispute is to highlight how it is the very bracketing out of the different branches, issues, and categories intended to simplify that renders the issue too complicated for resolution. These documents demonstrate who held the power and when, but also, makes visible the colonial constellation that these historical relations overlaid on the land and continue to structure our embodied encounters in and with the colonialscape today. The documents are both the actual creation of and representations of colonial

13 In 2012 Hiawatha, Curve Lake and Scugog Island did receive a multi-million dollar settlement for loss of Islands due to flooding to construct the Trent Severn Waterway. The $71 000 000.00 transfer was shared between the three reserves and represented an historic moment in the relations between Mississaugas and the Crown. The Curve Lake Flooded Land Claim is a separate claim altogether from this finished one.
relations in that they contain the original content of conduct and they appear to be an uninterrupted cycle of reinforcing paradigms that have led to material consequences. Interrupting the cycle requires us to question not only the world as it was, but the world as it is. What do we do with the long-term material effects of actions taken long ago? Where do we locate justice for such slow violence?

It is also useful to consider what was not represented in the documents that allowed the law to be applied in ways that supported the Crown. It might be that the violence was not so slow; rather, it was the material effects of the violence of the law that took time to become visible. For example, The Treaty of 1818 contains no provisions for reserves for its signatories. In fact, it reads “the Chippewa Nation inhabiting and claiming the said tract of land as above do freely, fully and voluntarily surrender and convey the same to His Majesty without reservation or limitation in perpetuity” (Chamberlin, 1891). Reading this document as “plain on its face,” as the Crown is apt to do, then the issue could be interpreted as all said and done; the land relations are settled and besides, the Mississaugas (Chippewas) “freely, fully and voluntarily” surrendered. It says nothing about where the Mississaugas are going to go, an omission that was “reconciled” by deeding the New England Company, a religious mission, the lands that are now Curve Lake in 1837 (Whetung-Derrick, 2015), which the Mississaugas had been residing on since before the signing of the treaty and never left. This inadequate resolution created the bracket that allowed for the above-described interpretation of the Mississaugas as having no right to compensation because neither they nor the Department of Indian Affairs held the deed. Additionally, nothing is laid out in the treaty about the code of conduct between the two parties except that the Crown would pay “yearly, and every year
forever, the said sum of seven hundred and forty pounds…”14 (Chamberlin, 1891) The two main points of the treaty are that the Mississaugas were surrendering their land to the Crown, and that there would be a yearly payment forever, signed by representatives from Indian Affairs and several Chiefs of the Nation. The treaty itself is a scant document allowing for a wide variety of interpretations, but meeting the basic provisions set out in the Royal Proclamation of 1763: secure land surrender.

Speaking now with my elder, Doug Williams, demonstrates that there was a lot of discussion at the treaty negotiations that was not contained in the final treaty. For instance, Doug tells me that at the treaty negotiations, the Mississaugas indicated that they wanted to retain their rights to all the beaver houses. What might this entail? How would the Crown represent such a request in the treaty? There is nothing in the treaty that indicates the Mississaugas retain their rights to anything contained in the tract of land, be it animal-made, or waterborne. The treaty itself can be interpreted in divergent ways, even without any outside documentation. And the treaty has been reinterpreted throughout history. But what does this treaty have to do with the correspondence one hundred years later concerning compensation for lost lands? It is important in that it is the original surrender for the land that was claimed to be lost through flooding for the Trent Canal. It is even more important in the context of Doug’s oral history lesson about rights to the beaver houses. The treaty could be interpreted as the Mississaugas granting rights to full use of the land, with what sounds like a rent payment “forever.” Additionally, from

---

1 There is a clause attached to the treaty that breaks down these payments into a $10.00 annuity per person so long as the people living when the treaty was signed were alive. The Crown issued this “clarification” to the meaning of the treaty to rectify what they meant by “forever.” There are no signatures on this clause.
an Anishinaabe legal perspective, I interpret the absence of the discussion of rights to the beaver houses as the absence of provisions for who has the rights to the waterway. If there is no provision in the treaty for rights to the waterway, then regardless of what land was flooded and who held the title to the land, the rights to the waterway still lay with the Mississaugas. By this interpretation, the dams were completely illegal.

Mississaugas don’t have the power to say that, which is why recognition is sought through the law, and outside documentation is brought in to allow for reinterpretation, and recognition is sought through the law. The law grants the power, but who granted the power to the law? Many have tried to reinterpret the legality of the law by bringing other records of the same events to prove wrong-doing, or fraud, to gain recognition by the very laws that made the power, that they were in fact illegal. This is a project best left to legal minds, which consent to play in the field of law. Here, the project is merely to establish how the colonial interpretation of the treaty and property documents themselves have created the colonialscape through which we move. By focusing on only the documents that the land relations have been based on, we can begin to see how they have “made real” the colonialscape. We can reach back through history and point to the moments that have accumulated and risen up through time, much like the dams themselves rose up through space. All the while the Mississauga claims were ongoing, the physical geography of the territory was being changed by settler development. The waterway was already well under construction, and in fact, was nearly complete at the time of the Crown denial of Mississauga compensation.

The only other treaty that could come close to broaching the subject of the waterway prior to the TSW construction is the Treaty of 1856. But this treaty merely
secured the surrender of islands in the waterway, not the waterway itself (Chamberlin, 1891). Concurrently with these treaties, legal action was being taken to begin the construction of a waterway to encourage settlement on the land (Angus, 1988).

Throughout this time, the Mississauga presence in the area was ignored, with petitions for funding for the construction of the TSW indicating that there are only a few people living in the area (Angus, 1988). A water highway appeared to be the only way to encourage settlement in the region and increase the value of the land. While the land had been ceded in 1818 without provision for a reserve, the Mississaugas continued to reside in the area and for all practical purposes, life continued as before. That is, until settlers began to make large institutional changes to the landscape, like the TSW, bringing the spatio-legal colonialscape into the physical geography to make real their ownership of the territory.

The colonialscape itself depends on the brackets of law. The separation of the Indian department, and Railways and Canals department, and a Lands department allocates different tasks to different groups that are supposed to govern the same space. As the decade-long correspondence concerning the flooding shows, even when the different branches are corresponding, they are not necessarily collaborating. Communication does not equal collaboration, and it is the bracketing itself that allows for communication to take the place of authentic collaboration. The Railways and Canals branch was able to source their own interpretation of the treaties and communicate that they were, in fact, not responsible for the flooding due to the particular land holder and type of holding at the exact time of flooding. Never mind the long-term outcomes, or the continuing shifts in the ecology of the area as the development of the canal continued over the course of one hundred years. The water flowing over the land can be pinpointed
as changed only at the time of the construction of the Buckhorn dam. Therefore, only the legal context at the time of its construction was taken into account in interpreting the Mississauga claim to damages.

The deferral of the Mississauga claim, and those early moments of treaty administration can be linked through time to today’s administrative context. The 1818 treaty became a part of an administrative process that continues to be entrenched in the Canadian bureaucracy. The deferral of Mississauga claims against the Crown has contributed to the ongoing claims that persist in the region today, but simultaneously laid out the framework for the way those claims are interpreted and accounted for. In the next section I move on to consider the contemporary context and the ways in which historical relations are interpreted by the government and local landholders today, and how this impacts the relations in the colonialscape.

4.3 Contemporary Administration of the Colonialscape

Today there remain a number of governing and interested parties engaged in the Treaty 20 region. The province of Ontario is responsible for the administration of Crown lands, where First Nations hunting and gathering rights are legally allowed. This means that the Ministry of Natural Resources (MNR) is responsible for much of the official embodied engagement with Indigenous peoples as we navigate the colonialscape. Knowing this, I obtained a 2010 Consultation and Accommodation Practitioner’s Handbook from the MNR. I consider this textual representation alongside a 2008 Report on the Future of the Trent Severn Waterway, “It’s all about the water.” Notably, the lands in the region are governed provincially, while the waterway in question is governed by a federal branch of Parks Canada. Additionally, there is the added layer of Treaty 20 relations in the area,
which were reinterpreted in the opening statements of the Williams Treaty Court Case in 2012. Of course, each of the reports and guides are too long to be considered in their entirety, so I have drawn on particular illustrative instances in each to draw out the colonial framework they uphold.

The Ministry of Natural Resources, a provincial branch of the government, is responsible for consulting with Indigenous peoples about government projects that might impact their lands, and as such, their lives. To uphold this “honour of the crown” they issue guides to employees that are responsible for consultation. This particular guide is intended to help practitioners understand when their duty to consult is “triggered” and how to proceed with that duty. There are two main guiding principles at play in this document. The first is that the honour of the crown is a legal duty, not a moral duty or a political duty. The second is that the Crown has the final say over when consultation and subsequent accommodation is necessary. These documents and the guiding principles within, are implicitly based on the surrender of land through treaties, many of which remain contested (such as the Williams Treaty of 1923). As such, these documents represent certain guidelines for engagement that may be based on ad hoc representations elsewhere that themselves remain unsettled. What is notable here is that the Crown’s final acting power resulting from the duty to consult and accommodate being triggered, is based on the original assumption of unilateral Crown control of the territory. First Nations never effectively gain control to stop any of these actions; they may be consulted but are not consenting agents in a process that will affect lands that they bodily depend on.
In the introduction of the Practitioner’s handbook, a brief interpretation of the historical relations between Indigenous folks and European settlers is offered. The paragraph reads:

At the time of contact with Europeans, the indigenous peoples of North America belonged to nations with laws, governance systems and recognized territories. After contact, in most of what is now Ontario, First Nation and European representatives entered into solemn agreements (treaties) that were considered by both parties to be mutually beneficial. Over the course of time, however, this balance of respect and authority eroded. The Indian Act supplanted First Nations’ traditional governance systems and Aboriginal people were subjected to discrimination… (2010, 1)

I draw attention to this here because there are two glaring absences in this discussion. First the initial relationship is described as reciprocal, and then treaties were made, and the relationship “eroded.” This sequence of events is without reason or cause in this discussion, begging the question, why did the relationship erode? This brings me to the second glaring absence, which is a discussion of land. The relationship changed when obtaining land became the goal, and treaties became about surrender, instead of peace and friendship. The relationship did not “erode,” rather it was represented differently in ways that caused it to be embodied in the landscape differently. It was not just that the Indian Act displaced First Nations governance, it was that the Indian Act was a legal process that was geographically tied to the reserve. Missing from this discussion is that the treaties were geographically tied to the broader territory, and that the dispossession from that territory created opportunity for the erosion of Crown respect for Indigenous lives on that land.
How loss of respect occurred in the above passage is ambiguous and presented as something that simply eroded between mutual parties. But the document goes on to indicate that the consultation process is not mutual, and that respect is in fact, flowing down from the power of the honour of the Crown. The Handbook states “the Crown… has the duty to act with honour and integrity… It is from this principle of the ‘honour of the Crown’ that the duty to consult derives” (2010, 1). By obscuring the fundamental relationship to land, the document is able to locate the duty to consult in specific areas of Aboriginal and Treaty rights, which have ties to land-based practices, but do not necessarily encompass entire tracts of land, or are relegated to particular jurisdictional areas, such as Crown Land. As such the Crown is able to parse out circumstances in which First Nations should be consulted through the recognition of Crown laws. Practitioners are thus told that they should consult with First Nations when “Aboriginal-specific issues arise in any of the work that the MNR does” (2010, 11). Rather than being told that Indigenous livelihoods are land-based, and the impacts of projects that change the ecology of the area will surely affect the Indigenous practices in the place, the focus is on when the legal duty is triggered. These engagements are not about respect and relationship building; they are about legal duty under colonial law.15

The representation of land-based relations in the law is effectively landless, and renders it very difficult to link the embodied relations to their legal representations. The Practitioner’s handbook indicates that “the Crown must make the final assessment about

---

15 This is not to say, of course, that none of these processes contain respect and relationship building. Some may; the guidelines, however, are not about nation-to-nation engagement. They are about reaffirming the Crown’s legal responsibility, and this power.
the adequacy of consultation” (2010, 24), and “the government will make the final
decision about what accommodation measure will be implemented” (2010, 25). This kind
of consultation has all the power operating only one way within the relationship and
ignores the reality that these relationships represented on pages are acted out in embodied
ways on the land. The land is itself the body whose consultation is being denied, and the
land from which Indigenous practices emanate form the Indigenous landscape which is
either validated or discounted in consultation and accommodation processes. Imagine for
a moment someone’s request to touch your body, to alter it. Would it be appropriate to
simply consult? Would the requester maintain the power to determine whether their
request was adequate, and also the power to determine that they can override your
objections if their touch was determined by them to be beneficial? This is the standard of
consultation in Canada, and it does not even meet the minimum standards for consent.
The respect that was eroded through land cession treaties, continues to be transcribed in
laws today, and while the nation-to-nation relationship may be proclaimed by either side,
the Practitioner guide places decision-making power squarely in the government’s hands.

The Practitioner’s handbook is intended to indicate the rules of engagement
between Crown agents and First Nations. It is the translation between the colonial laws
themselves and the embodied engagement on the land. I have considered it here to
demonstrate that gaps may become visible when we consider embodied engagement (and
an example of embodied engagement will be taken up in Chapter Five). But of course,
the Practitioner’s handbook is attached to particular jurisdictional areas, both in
geographic terms and rights-based terms. For instance, the MNR’s primary jurisdiction is
over Crown land. In the particular treaty area in question, Crown land makes up only a
small percentage of the area, and certainly not all of the rights-practicing areas in question (see “Key Features of the Colonialscape over Mississauga Territory” on page 5). For instance, the TSW is governed by a completely separate part of the government, Parks Canada, through its historic status and recreational purposes. The waterway is one of the primary areas for the practice of Mississauga fishing and harvesting rights. The management body of the waterway has never given credence to the Indigenous claims to the waterway, a point which I discussed in the previous section through the historical records surrounding the impacts of flooding Mississauga shorelines.

In the case of the waterway, there is no prescriptive legal duty to consult with respect to management. The framework for engagement with respect to water management in the region can be sourced back to the political motivations of settling the territory. The notion that the TSW was a settlement project, is celebrated in nearly every document concerning the TSW, including public historical monuments, such as the one depicted in the epigraph at the beginning of this thesis. The TSW can be thought of as both a legal agent in the representations of the colonialscape as well as its own national imaginary of dominance over the land. The waterway represents both a practical jurisdiction, and a monumental feat securing the material representation of nationalist narratives. In this way, the TSW forms a dangerous component of the colonialscape as it simultaneously holds a position as a jurisdictional body, national imaginary, and a material reality. The report “It’s All About the Water” (2008), while not a legal document, summarizes the TSWs multiple roles as an economic, recreational, and water regulation project in the material and discursive colonialscape. The report proposes something resembling a co-management scheme for the waterway, in which different
stakeholders would have a say in the governance of the waterway as part of a “heritage project” (2008). Putting aside the question of whose heritage is being celebrated through such a scheme, nearly ten years later, the waterway continues to be unilaterally governed by the TSW, and, as the most recent controversies surrounding wild rice demonstrate, Parks Canada is doing no better with accommodating the Indigenous landscape than the historical Department of Railways and Canals did in 1909.

Much like the historical approach to the construction of the waterway, which ignored Mississauga presences, the contemporary report continues to view waterway use as part of a collective landscape from which Indigenous peoples are excluded. This colonialscape “provides a reliable source of drinking water for communities and individual homes throughout central Ontario. It enables water-based recreation and maintains water levels that controls flooding. It generates economic opportunities, including supporting 18 hydro-electric plants” (2008, 30). The waterway is viewed as a recreational experience, or a natural resource and Mississauga land-based practices are ignored entirely. This is not anomalous in the Southern Ontario context, but it is noteworthy insofar as it is not made note of. The continual erasure of Mississauga presences continues to render the Indigenous landscape invisible. More than that, it relegates the management of the waterway to questions of water levels and cleanliness that allow for swimming or power boating, and divert the conversation away from water levels and cleanliness that support the growth of, say, Indigenous food sources.

In fact, as the recent controversy about the growing of wild rice in the lakes demonstrates, the view of the waterway as recreational is in contradiction with the Indigenous waterway as a source of food. Cottagers have proclaimed that growth of wild
rice inhibits their ability to swim and boat and enjoy the manufactured purpose of the waterway (Jackson, 2016). More than this, as shown above, the TSW continues to operate much like it did during its construction: *as if Mississauga people are not even there.* This means that the Trent Severn Waterway continues to manage the waterway unilaterally without consulting with local First Nations. Returning to the ideas put forth in the MNR practitioner’s consultation guide, the TSW, like any other government body should be required to consult over natural resource changes that might impact First Nations interests. The governance of the waterway does not even meet this minimum, colonial standard of recognition.

Consultation presents itself as unavoidable at the initiation of large-scale projects, such as a new mine or oil field, but what about when the large project is the ongoing governance of a dam that was completed one hundred years ago? How would the governance body of the waterway apply the duty to consult to the situation? The duty is triggered by the governing agency to determine how impacted the First Nation will be by their management, but there was no obligation to this duty historically. Now, due to the nature of the waterway flowing across the territory and the requirement of constant management, it is difficult to locate the duty to consult in space and time. First Nations’ only have the power to ask for consultation when it is clear that their already recognized rights have been violated (or will be). Water management is not viewed as an inherently colonial structure, though in the case of waterways such as the TSW, it is constantly reasserting this colonial relationship that has been both materially and representationally structured into its existence. Importantly, the 2008 assessment of the waterway indicates that Parks Canada is not equipped to manage such a waterway, and it should be viewed as
a “single water user among many” (2008, 32). It is clear that Parks Canada is ill-equipped to manage the various stakeholder interests, and, though it is a branch of the federal government, it does not have the mandate to engage appropriately with First Nations consultation.

The 2008 report identifies that the collective understanding of the waterway as integral to a tourism and boating economy is obscuring the true economic influence in the region, which is now waterfront homeownership. The waterway has in actuality become a “lifestyle amenity” for those who live, or cottage, along it (2008, 38). What this means is that the logic of property ownership now supersedes all other logics of governance in the area. More than this, as private homeownership and municipal taxes become the driving forces for economy, what happens to the duty to consult? The land and shorelines that line the waterway are for the most part privately owned and private property is explicitly not negotiable in comprehensive claims processes. The waterway becomes part of an aesthetic accent to real estate, as opposed to its previous designation as a natural resource, or even a transportation system of its own accord. Private property owners, municipalities and townships have no duty to consult with First Nations, so as developments are devolved from a large scale government canal to small scale shorelines, not only is the Indigenous landscape further obscured, but any legal reach Indigenous peoples had within the colonialscape is lost. This is where the historical and contemporary land-based relations along the waterway line up. As Angus (1988) showed, the waterway was constructed to support settlement in the region, and now the settlement in the region supports the maintenance of the waterway as it is. The two form each other through both
time and space, becoming the dominant definition of the region and further obscuring Indigenous landscapes in both legal forums and the physical geography.

“It’s All About the Water” recognizes the historical Indigenous landscape, and indicates that this is a part of the story of the TSW. However, it does not recognize the contemporary Indigenous landscape. While it evokes images of historical wild ricing (2008, 45), there is no mention of contemporary wild ricing. While First Nations communities are recognized as existing throughout the report, little consideration is given to contemporary waterway uses, or the Indigenous landscape. In this context, the First Nations presence is viewed as a “cultural resource,” and First Nations are not recognized as collective peoples with continuing unique interests in the waterway. These types of representations build upon the historical settler notion that Indigenous peoples did not have adequate claim to the territory to make full use of it, and while the report is not a legal document, it is a textual representation of the embodied engagements occurring within the territory along spatio-legal lines. Representations that relegate First Nations to the category of cultural resource function as the Canadian nation-state’s way of reclaiming indigeneity as a part of its national identity. Indigenous cultures are separated from their land-based governance, or fixed in “artifacts” (not in bodies) so that its practices are rendered placeless and the fact that Indigenous peoples still live here is not represented.

What comes to live “here” are residents, cultural artifacts, a “lifestyle amenity,” private property lots, all with their various representations. What does not live “here” are land-based practices or contemporary Indigenous livelihoods because they cannot or have not been fixed in their place through representations in texts. As such the practices and
the bodies that practice them live “somewhere out there,” they cease to belong to their place, and “out there” is either in history, or simply “somewhere else,” but certainly not “here.” Or somewhere is “over there,” as in, on the reserve or on a tiny square of Crown land. The practices, being unrecognizable, become *disembodied*, without a place, and as such when they become visible they are believed to not belong “here.” Landowners and governments alike try to relocate the embodied engagement somewhere “out there” again. The lack of representation of Mississauga claims makes it difficult for Indigenous landscapes to be seen by outsiders as continuing to belong “here.” Much like the lack of historical representation of Mississauga claims to beaver houses in the treaty, the lack of representation of ongoing Mississauga land based practices displaces the Indigenous practices. The Indigenous landscape’s invisibility continues.

The trouble with the waterway is that Indigenous practices are made visible, and they come to live “here” again in a moment, but unable to be fixed representatively like the colonialscape they continue to be strange to settlers. Indigenous practices, ways of moving through the colonialscape become strange because, for all practical purposes they simply *do not* belong “here” *any more*. This displacement is because of the representations in law, because of the historical treaty, because of the change in the waterway and the present day TSW governance. Mississauga displacement is reinforced over and over again in different forums and in different ways. Continually locating Indigenous practices as “somewhere else” either in space or in time, is the representational attempt to make the two landscapes live side by side, when all along there is only the one land base. As much as the colonialscape attempts to relegate the different geographies to properly neighbouring places, they continue to overlap. The
ecology of the waterway does not recognize the colonial map, and it does not care how
many representations are bracketed out in law and social relations, the water continues to
flow in and around and over those brackets. And the Indigenous people that engage the
waterway otherwise find their bodies between the brackets as well.

I have detailed these historical and contemporary texts to demonstrate some of the
gaps between the representational brackets in law through both time and space. In this
instance, we see how both the formation of these brackets and operating through them
serves to obscure the very land base they are attempting to make meaning of. While
colonial law has attempted to lay out the rules of engagement with Indigenous
interpretations of the landscape across water and land, the brackets without the base form
a complicated colonial framework that leaves gaps. A return to the Indigenous landscape
may bring clarity, but the Indigenous landscape must still contend with the built
environment of dams and property lots that are the product of colonial legal
representations. Bringing the Indigenous landscape to the surface through embodied
practice is my attempt to make sense of the brackets laid out in colonial law, or at least
demonstrate that there are unrepresented realities between them. This discussion of the
representative and physical colonialscape is intended to situate the example of Indigenous
movement discussed in the next chapter.
5 Doing Indigenous Geography

5.1 Learning from the Land

The previous three chapters have provided some academic context, an interpretive lens, and described how the physical colonialscape has developed and been sustained by spatio-legal representations. In this chapter I adopt a storytelling framework to detail a paddling trip which traced two traditional harvesting routes nearby Curve Lake First Nation. Storytelling is well recognized as a Nishnaabeg way to share knowledge (Doerfler et al. 2013) and has been used previously by Nishnaabeg scholars to convey both personal and traditional learnings (Simpson, 2011). Recently when I spoke to an undergraduate research class at Trent University, a student asked me about paddling the harvesting routes and what became my “data.” I told them that any observation along the trip could have become “data,” and that one of the important things about Nishnaabeg geography, much like stories, is that the landscape can be interpreted in different ways by different peoples. Each person will have their own personal understanding of a story (Simpson, 2011), or a geography. What is written in this chapter is taken from journal entries recorded during the trip, and from memories that have stuck with me as particularly important.

That said, those things we find important as individual Nishnaabeg out on the land can be useful to others. Without my elder, Doug Williams’ extensive knowledge of our territory and Nishnaabeg teachings, I would not have been so successful on my trip. Doug has taught me where several traditional harvesting areas are, and where my family’s harvesting territory is. Doug has also taught me a lot through his stories about how to handle a canoe, and which side of the lake to paddle on (both metaphorically and literally). Much of those teachings are not included here; they remain Nishnaabeg knowledge that I withhold from the academic setting. Those teachings have a place out on the land, not in a thesis. Doug taught them to me while we
travelled together, ate together, and in a generally informal storytelling setting while we were out and about doing things. They would become flattened and placeless recorded on a page, and so that knowledge remains to be (re)taught in a land-based setting.

What is written here then, are my observations about what it was like to move through the colonialscape. I have taken note of what the physical geography now holds, and the kinds of people I met along such a populated waterway. To do this I paddled two traditional harvesting routes: Nogie’s Creek and Emily Creek, both depicted on the map “Fieldwork Region within Treaty No. 20” at the top of p. 92. This thesis is about how Nishnaabeg geographical knowledge can be brought to life in the contemporary colonialscape, and the continuity of the Indigenous landscape in my home territory. I have focused on details that highlight the interplay between the colonialscape and the Indigenous landscape, or the moments that exposed just how strange Nishnaabeg movement appears to settlers along the waterway.
5.2 Stepping into my boat

A short day’s paddle from my mom’s house on Chemong Lake lie the traditional hunting grounds of the Whetung family. One paddles around the tip of the reserve through Pigeon Lake along the west side of Big Island, over the Bobcaygeon rapids (or through the locks, as the case may be) and through Sturgeon Lake to the mouth of Emily Creek. From there southward to Emily Lake, the creek and lands surrounding it were all described by Joseph Whetung in treaty negotiations as our hunting grounds (Whetung-Derrick, 1976). The land is all private property now. If I paddle instead to the mouth of Nogie’s Creek, up the creek several miles, over the rapids that still live there, in time, I would reach some Crown land in the northeastern-most tip of the Treaty 20 area. Here I would be able to camp, hunt, fish, and harvest in that tiny sliver of
Crown land. That area is not a part of my family’s hunting grounds, though it is an old Nishnaabeg route.

A week before I was scheduled to head out in my canoe to paddle back these routes, I sat down with Doug to determine what the route would actually be. He pointed to spots on the map, and on the TSW charts, explaining the places we had travelled to already in his old Toyota Tacoma, showing me where to camp, pointing to the safest routes. All I could do was trust that his intricate knowledge of the land would translate onto the maps we poured over. We discussed how long it would take me to get from spot to spot, and planned out the days I would be on the water and sleeping in my tent: five days. Five days travelling these routes: not hunting, not harvesting. I would merely be visiting, talking to the places, and listening for the call back from the ancestors. Doug questioned me that day in his living room about my reasons for doing this. “Why this way?” I told him that it was for the land, to see the difference, to look back at all that had been done to our territory.

“But it is also to connect to those ancestors?” He pushed me. “Yes, yes.” I said, feeling uncertain that would happen. I was just as afraid that I would not feel them, as I was that my skills would be inadequate to solo in my canoe for five days. I was worried that the built up settler geography all around me would have obscured our presence so completely that I would be unable to feel our own landscape. I was more consciously worried that I would find, that though I had been brought up on the shores of these lakes, I did not know our waters well enough to get where I needed to go. In a way, it felt like a new geography I was discovering for myself, and I felt a pit in my stomach that I was just now learning to navigate these waters on my own. This geography should feel old to me, familiar, not new. I had all the usual fears about what this might say about my identity, and my belonging in my community if I was unable to do this, both
technically and emotionally. What kind of anishnaabekwe would I be if I could not travel the land of my ancestors and see myself reflected in it?

I left little time to dwell on these fears. Instead, I focused on what I had to do to prepare. There might have been a time when I let this fear overcome me, to prevent me from asking the questions that I needed answers to in order to live anishinaabewin, but young Nishnaabeg have little time to waste on fearing that path back to our Indigenous knowledge ways. The path to anishinaabewin requires an urgency of purpose to learn that is difficult to find the balance in. With all the demands made of us simply to survive within the colonial, capitalist framework built over our lands, it is difficult to find the time to dig beneath that. This is why it is urgent, because we are constantly being drawn down different paths by our dire material circumstances, and a dominant economy that demands our participation in order to secure our basic survival. But this too, is why we must be patient on our paths to learn what we need to know to secure not only our survival, but a thriving anishinaabewin in our homelands. The many demands on Nishnaabeg today require us to be gentle with ourselves when we do not have all the teachings of our ancestors, and truly, under what circumstances would we ever have all the answers?

The first morning of my trip, I woke up at my mom’s house and packed my gear. With my mom’s help I carried my supplies through our backyard to where my canoe was flipped over on the shore and put the boat gently in the water of our little swamp that leads out to the lake. Loading the gear into the bow, and me into the stern, we tried to take a few pictures but the skimag were so vicious I was ready to motor out of there. As soon as I was out on the open water, I had a moment to pause and feel what I was embarking on. That day, the importance of living in our homeland resonated with me, as I was able to stroll out of our door and into our waterways where the Nishnaabeg landscape was wide open to me. A short paddle across
Chemong Lake I would be at the tip of the Curve Lake peninsula, our ancient gathering place, turned reserve.

I did not exactly know which way to go once I got around the peninsula to the bulrush stands growing out in the water. I paddled into them to be out of the wind and waves of passing by boats, and pulled out my charts, studying where I was, and how to get where I needed to go. I knew Fox Island was just off the western side of the reserve, and remembered spending days on it the summers my mom put us in day care at the reserve. Which way to go around it? As I snacked and perused the projection of my home waters on the chart in front of me sparrows flitted around in the bulrushes going about their business as usual. This process of solo-navigating the waterway was far from business as usual for me. That first day I was well aware that I could paddle in completely the wrong direction, so I used my charts and my compass and paid attention to where the sun was beating down from. I chose to go around the southwestern edge of Fox Island where I would join up with the main channel of the Trent Severn Waterway (TSW), and headed on my way.

Paddling through the channel between Fox Island and the main shore, I encountered another boater, fishing, and he greeted me with a friendly hello. I “good morning”ed back at him and carried on paddling between him and the shore. To my right was Fox Island, a big white sign declared it reserve land to the world, as did the obvious lack of cottages. To my left was the main land that was packed with the homes, and summer cottages of other people. The houses had sprawling lawns and boathouses as big as suburban garages; cookie-cuttered out on the land, they loomed over the waterway. I cannot emphasize enough how much the waterway functions like a highway in this area. When I looked to my left, I felt as though I was a stranger in a neighbourhood not belonging to me. When I looked to my right, I saw the land of my ancestors.
This juxtaposition would be no less pronounced as the trip continued.

I made note of multiple for sale signs along the waterfront. As I came around the western side of the islands I came face to face with a for sale sign taller than me, with the gooey smile of a real estate agent pasted across it. It loomed above me offering “acreage and waterfront!” The embedded nature of private property stared me in the face. I remembered my academic readings: “property rights can seem geological the way that they sediment the norms and values of a place…” (Pasternak et al. 2013, 65). Is Curve Lake perpetuating the property complex with the large reserve territory signs, just as much as our settler neighbours with their for sale signs and ownership displays of family names pasted on their docks and boathouses? It seems important to differentiate between the moves we make through the system to protect ourselves, and the active perpetuation of the dominant system. While land claims, reserve boundaries, and the tightly demarcated land designations of what is Indian and non-Indian do insert us further into the colonial framework (Pasternak et al., 2013), in many cases the choice to pursue such things have been made under the impossible circumstances of colonial coercions. In order to preserve some (tiny) areas for us to be ourselves, we have had to mark our territories to prevent even further encroachment.

Everywhere I looked I saw signs of our heavily propertied context and the Canadian nationalism that it seems so deeply tied to. Canadian flags rose up off the shorelines of many of the cottages I paddled by, declaring not only an individual land ownership, but a certain collective understanding of property as well. That day on the water, there was not a moment when there was not a Canadian flag within eye range. Everywhere I look I see the evidence of our colonization and the perpetuation of Canadian mythologies in the symbolic form of a flag that is only fifty years old. Canada is such a new state, it is a wonder to me that it’s domination
of this place is so strong.

Canada’s flags announced the colonization of our landscape as readily as the for sale signs along the shore. The omnipresence of Canadian symbolism highlights the ever looming presence of the colonialscape over top of the Nishnaabeg landscape. When historical settlers arrived and saw no fences, no flags, no guarded boundaries in our lands, they interpreted this as emptiness, lack of ownership and attempted to carve themselves into our place; one of the biggest evidences of this is the built waterway on which I paddled. The flags staring me down along the waterway are Canadian assertions trying to do their work of discouragement, to declare this land as something it is not, and to obscure Nishnaabeg presence further. In order to see beyond these flags I have to delve deeper into the territory, and understand the history of this place, which is not so readily written on the face of a flag. In spite of what these Canadian flags declare on the surface, just past them are the stories and pathways of my ancestors.

Knowing this, I see the dualistic landscape all around me and recognize that I am engaged in a long tradition of Nishnaabeg place-making. Of course, even my pathway as a nishnaabekwe is invisible to those cottagers peering out at me from the shore as I paddle by, so the question remains of what my individual movement does to disrupt the surface layer of settler colonialism I am moving through. If the settlers looking on don’t know what I am doing, if they simply see their flags as the final word, what difference does my paddling make to our landscape? At this moment, it may not make a difference to them, but it brings something alive in me; against all the fears I had, I can feel the ancestors brushing up against me as I paddle. This particular paddling trip is one of the small ways that Indigenous peoples “are forever performing… that reproduce and express [our] own sense of place – and also, inextricably, [our] own understandings of who and what [we] are” (Basso, 1996, 110). It may be invisible to the
untrained eye, but in and amongst this colonized landscape, we continue to make our Nishnaabeg places.

Of course, just weeks before, my eye was similarly untrained. Growing up Indigenous in Southern Ontario, I was fortunate enough to have a fierce mother who taught me about where I came from, about our Indigenous history, and how to stand up against colonial versions of our world when the mainstream education system did not recognize us. But I remained untrained in some of the more intimate details of the land. I have Doug Williams to thank for picking up my education in nishnaabewin when I asked him for support and helping me to begin storying back this place. As I mentioned before, Doug is the one who drove with me to visit my family’s traditional harvesting and hunting territories. Patiently and with lots of laughter he reminded me of the beauty of our culture and how it is tied to our place. As much in how he teaches as what he teaches are intricate lessons about anishinaabewin, which I will always be learning. But that first day on the water, I found that my Nishnaabeg landscape is not so un-navigable to me, so long as I pay attention and look both ahead and behind me.

When I reached my campsite near the mouth of Nogie’s creek after seven hours in my boat, I was dehydrated, tired and restless to swim in the lake I’d been traversing all afternoon. As the afternoon dwindled into evening I expected to be alone, but just as the sun was setting a car door slammed and around the trees walked Doug. A truly unexpected surprise, I greeted him with a hug and we made chit chat by the water, until he declared that he should probably take me into Bobcaygeon for an ice cream. We got into his car and off we went, talking about paddling and the events of the day. A lot can happen to a person when out on the water all day, and there was much to share. When we returned to my site, ice creams in hand, and sat there in the old Mercury, I told him that I could feel the ancestors around me that day. “I was afraid to admit that
I was looking for them as much as looking at settlement,” I told him. He nodded and told me, “150 years, does not erase 10 000.”

And with that, he left me with a gift of maple sugar from another one of his students, Christine Sy, and sent me back to my little tent. I fell asleep laughing to myself about the juxtapositions at play in my homeland. All day I paddled through the waters of my ancestors while I looked at the built environment of settlers. All that day I could feel them welling up around me as if my movements on the land were drawing their geography to the surface. Doug is right; what has been built here in the short term does not erase what we are and the way this place has been made by us. I can travel through my homeland the way my ancestors intended, and at the end of the day my elder can take me to get an ice cream. This we can laugh at, and in a humorous fashion, the complicated nature of our landscape is brought home to rest another day.

5.3 Up the rapids

The business of living is different in camp life. When settled at home, everything has its place; but when on the land everything is packed safely and pulled out as needed. Rising early in camp to eat and drink and begin paddling takes time and patience, and the ability to light a camp stove before having any coffee; a dangerous task given my brainpower before caffeine, but I managed on day two and was on the water prepared to head up Nogie’s creek by 8am. The water was calm as it usually is in the mornings in July, and I made my way to the mouth of the creek. As one enters Nogie’s Creek from Pigeon Lake there is a highway bridge across the water, and a little convenience store called Pirate’s Cove, which I stopped at for a brief moment to ask how late they would be open into the evening. Reassured I would be able to pick up some supplies on my way back to my campsite that evening, I carried on my way.

Paddling under the bridge I found myself in a calm channel that wove its way through beds
of wild rice. A mama duck with her two little ones greeted me as they jumped up the blades of grass to nibble on the rice. Winona Laduke (2005) has written that the ducks play an integral role in the life cycle and cultivation of wild rice, and I smile at those little relatives floating in the water alongside me. I wondered to them how thick the rice might be if the settlers that lived along the creek were not motoring up it with powerboats day in and day out. Would the rice be right across? Would I be poling my canoe through instead of paddling? The creekside is almost more densely settled than the lakefront, with both large and small homes jutting up against one another.

In time I passed by a cottager standing on the end of his dock, casting a fishing line out into the water. We greeted each other and commented on what a hot day it was set to be. There is a more neighbourly attitude between cottagers and boaters than there is between homeowners in suburban neighbourhoods and other passers-through. That is, so long as you remain in the “common” territory of the waterway. Cottagers do not take kindly to shoreline “trespassing,” as the “wild rice wars” have demonstrated. This truth of property-owning attitudes deeply impacts Nishnaabeg safety of movement in our waterways; it is part of why Doug had to show me carefully where to camp, and why we had to plan so specifically the length of time it would take me to get from place to place. I could not simply pull up on a property owner’s shore to take a break if need be, for as far as property owners were concerned, I was the stranger in this land (Ahmed, 2000).

Also, my fairness of skin, youth and femininity all shapes how people interpolate me into the landscape they interpret as their own. How much of the friendliness I received as I moved in Nishnaabeg ways was due to others’ belief that I was a young white woman? I wondered how I might be perceived if I was older, presented in stereotypical ways Canadians understand.
Nishnaabeg, or as a man. Doug tells me that the vast majority of people are all right, “but you never know.” It’s possible if I were read as more “Indian,” I would be perceived as a greater threat to the security of settler land ownership. But the racialization of Indigenous bodies seems to meet in that complicated territory between practices and appearances and on the border of what is considered public and neighbourhood space (Ahmed, 2000). Making Indigenous movements within settler territory is unwelcome because the practice as much as the people is viewed as belonging “somewhere else” (Razack, 2000). Issues arise when Indigenous movements implicate or transgress the boundaries of private property. For instance, when ricers come close to shore, or when the practice requires a temporary camp. My canoe was respectably far away from the shoreline and my embodied presentation such that I was viewed as a benign passerby.

As I made my way north that day, I observed some of the monstrous new builds going up along the creek: development in action. I counted at least three new homes being built on the waterfront, alongside the already numerous and large homes. They became sparser as I paddled upwards, until I came across a cottage right at the foot of a set of rapids. Chatting with the man sitting in his lawn chair there, I asked if I could carry my canoe over, and he replied “of course.” Hopping out of my boat, I walked against the running water, guiding my boat over the rocks. After the first set, hopping in and paddling to the next set, and then pulling my boat over again, in a rinse/repeat fashion I leapfrogged up the rapids until I came across a beaver dam. I paused for a moment, and pulled my boat well up onto the shore. Something inside me was compelling me to stop the day there. At almost noon, I was unsure how much further I would make it up the creek before I had to turn around and head back to camp.

Perching next to the dam, I contemplated my options. I did not know how far I had come:
the struggles of not having travelled up this route in this fashion before, and I was off the Trent Severn route, so my charts were useless at this point in time. I also knew, that I would have to carry my canoe over a couple of beaver dams, and some tricky forested terrain. While I am confident carrying my boat, I was very aware that I could slip and fall in these rapids and break my leg. Whatever it was that was urging me to head back, I decided to listen, and turned and headed south again. As I came down the rapids, a young woman called from her porch excitedly. “How far up did you go?” We chatted briefly about going up the rapids, and she told me she had just moved there, and had yet to paddle up it. She also told me the water was a foot low, which explained the repeated need for me to hop out and pull the boat. She also offered me some water, which I declined. I continued on my way and over the next set of rapids I encountered the man I originally spoke to, also asking me how far up I had gone. I told him “to the beaver dam,” and he informed me that I was maybe a third or a quarter of the way up before it opened up again. Good to know. Now when I paddle back with a partner I will have a better gauge of how far we would have to go to reach Crown land.

Arriving back at camp much earlier than I expected, I wondered what I should do for the rest of the afternoon. But the answer was obvious: simply enjoy the heat and the lake. When I was eleven or twelve, I began working for my grandfather in the garden he kept on the reserve. I remember, we would get to the garden around 9:30 or 10, and work for two or three hours. He would call to me sometime around noon and we would go to the old tearoom at the shop for lunch. Afterwards, we would continue the break under a tree by the garden. “Too hot to work right now,” he would say. After some time, we would head back into the garden and work for another couple of hours. As the years went on, we would get into his old Lincoln at noon hour and head back to the house where my granny would make us lunch, and we would take long afternoon breaks. Perhaps he had carefully thought through what he was trying to teach me at
that time, or perhaps the value was so deeply engrained in him, he did not know what he was showing me, but I believe there was a lesson in anishinaabewin in those afternoon breaks. My grandfather showed me how to take time with my work, and taught me the importance of taking breaks. I believe that on a hot sunny afternoon, even hundreds of years ago, my ancestors would take a break and enjoy a swim in the lake.

I poured over my charts that evening in anticipation of paddling through the locks the next day. I was more nervous to do that than anything else on the journey. I planned to be on the water as early as possible, conscious of the heavy boat traffic and the seaworthy ships that pass by canoes with little thought or pause. Some of the boats that the locks allow to travel the waterway are much too big for the little inland lakes. A reflection of the endless capitalist tendency to accumulate more and more, these boats could house several families. As I have already discussed, bringing such large ships inland was one of the motivations of settlers in constructing the waterway, and this feat of engineering is commemorated as a national historic landmark for the way it “opened up” the inland territory. Of course, the waterways were already well-travelled routes. With the right tools and technology Nishnaabeg could reach the depths of this territory, and go places that a steamboat never could, and never will be able to go, like the creek I had just paddled. When I head out into the main lake, though, I have to share the waterway with them, and safety is always first and foremost in mind, especially when sharing the route with people so unconscious of the surrounding landscape. I think I barely slept that night, in anticipation of what lay ahead the next morning.

5.4 Through the locks

I woke up feeling differently. Mississaugas never ceded the rights to this waterway, why should I feel fearful travelling it? I had been worried about not having a pass for the locks already, and
stressed about the idea of having to pay to get through to my family’s harvesting territory. But I gathered the strength of the ancestors I had been feeling the last two days tightly around me, and was in my boat by 7:30, heading toward the locks. I knew I could carry my boat over, if I wanted, but I was also curious about the experience of going through the locks in my canoe. I arrived before the locks opened at 9, loaded all my gear onto the shore and lifted my canoe out. On my way to visit the lock washroom, I spoke to one of the attendants and he informed me that they could lock me through, but I would still have to pay by the foot for my canoe. Returning to the boat, I lifted it back into the water, loaded my gear back in and paddled up to the blue line, for boats locking through, to wait for their signal to move ahead.

I was the only boat in the locks as I went through, and the attendants made pleasant conversation. Where are you from, where are you going type questions. I told them I was from the reserve and that I was travelling to my family’s traditional hunting territory. Little was said, but in a sudden turn of events, they did not ask me for payment for my passage through and I was able to carry on my way out of the lock. On the other side of the lock I met another canoeist on his own journey and he told me he was travelling around the world with no motors. It was scheduled to take five years. He and his canoeing partner had started in Toronto, and were paddling up north. We paddled our boats along side by side for a time, chatting about the territory, our different work, and I was struck by their awareness that they were travelling through Indigenous territory. That awareness jutted up against their lack of knowledge about whose territory it actually was and how to conduct themselves as guests. Perhaps I woke up instilled with the generosity my ancestors had for those original ignorant settlers, as I did not feel angry or frustrated at their ignorance. I encouraged them to get to know whose territories they would be travelling through on their long journey.
They paddled on ahead just before reaching the mouth of Emily Creek. As I came alongside the parkland before entering the creek I encountered another man in a boat who exclaimed emphatically over my beautiful canoe. Each person I met as I paddled was incredibly surprised that I was travelling alone. This man in particular seemed impressed, surprised and excited to see a solo woman paddler. He went on and on about how Canadian I was, so much so that I could not even get a word in to explain that I was in fact, Nishnaabeg, and a researcher, and that I was paddling to my family’s traditional territory. His pleasant demeanor exemplified what I have come to refer to as “friendly colonialism.” In Canada the tendency to declare in well-meaning ways certain activities as “Canadian” perpetuates the mythology that Canadians made this place. Much like shoreline flags might work to obscure Nishnaabeg presences on this land, the idea that canoeing originated within “Canada” works to obscure Nishnaabeg technologies and intelligence. That man was mistaken, I was not travelling the waterway alone, or in a Canadian way; I was travelling in the way of my ancestors, and with them.

All in all, this encounter does not appear violent. It was a mostly humorous run in, which I continue to laugh at. However, I did not take the time then to confront him about his Canadianism, and challenge the notion that I was doing something “Canadian.” This particular man may have remained his good-natured self had I corrected him, but safety is always an immediate concern for Indigenous peoples challenging Canadians about their claim to this place. I did not want to bring on the fight, or even a “friendly” debate about the place of travelling by canoe in Canadian culture or Nishnaabeg culture. I was happy to, as Doug has said of our ancestors avoiding encroaching settlement, simply “paddle away.”

But I want to call attention to the microviolences at play in even the most good-natured assertions of Canadian claims to things that originated in Indigenous cultures. In that moment
when he declared me Canadian, he erased Nishnaabeg from this place. Erasure is the work of settler colonialism. It was not simply to make the “Indian” like the “white man,” but to claim the worthwhile technologies of the Indian as their own, so as to perpetuate the racist myth that Indigenous folks were less-than white settlers. Even in that friendly moment, I was acutely aware that if we were to add up a string of erasures such as that, it would constitute colonial violence. Such statements work in conjunction with the property-owning, the lock-building, and the continual settler development in the territory as interlocking pieces of a colonial puzzle. Even this small statement played its role in the slow violence enacted over our territory. It was not eventful, or impressive, rather it washed like a wave against a rock and disappeared back into the lake, so quickly that one might not be sure it even happened until the next wave hits.

I was able to carry on that day in my happy fashion, but I am well grounded in my knowledge that this is Nishnaabeg territory. If I were less sure of myself, the cumulative effects of such friendly colonialism might make me believe that things are not so bad, that this is the natural order of things, and that our colonization was inevitable. But I was not willing to be made into a stranger by Canadian nationalism that day, and as I paddled away into a creek well travelled by my ancestors, I knew it was me that belonged here. Settlers may not know that their private property, powerboats, and dams are not the natural order of things, but I do.

I may have belonged out there on the water in my canoe, but I was well aware that as I entered the Creek, the land on either side was long occupied as private property. Not a millimeter of Crown land to be found along that southbound creek. The wide channel of the creek, however, was blanketed with wild rice and I was even more excited to see that much of the property on either side remained undeveloped. I saw only one or two houses, and wondered why it was so? I dipsy-doodled down the creek between the wild rice stands, until I passed under a bridge. On the
east side of the shore lay several cottages, and the west side a small trailer park marina. After that it was just me and the shugwuk all along the creek until I reached Emily Lake, which is more of a large pond really. Once I reached the end I found that farm fields sprawled along the far side of the lake and saw one or two farmhouses. Exhausted, having already been in my canoe for eight hours, I was ready to turn around and head back, pleased that I had made it the entire way down the creek when the day before I had been unable to make it all the way up Nogie’s Creek.

Paddling out, I could feel a tired relief in my body, and as I reached the parkland where I was planning on camping, I could not wait to hop out of my boat and into the water. I had planned on spending the night there. In fact when I began my paddle that morning, I had not been planning on heading down Emily Creek that day at all. When Doug and I had made the plans, I had only been scheduled to paddle from Nogie’s Creek, to the mouth of Emily Creek and camp in the public area there for the night, and paddle the creek on the fourth day. But getting to the mouth of the creek early, I had decided to carry on, feeling strong, and ready for a good long day of paddling. As I came back to the site where I had planned to camp, I looked at the sun in the sky. I knew I had time to make it back to the Bobcaygeon lock, and if I did, I knew I would easily make it home on the fourth day by mid afternoon if the wind was with me. So I climbed in my boat and carried on, reaching Bobcaygeon just as the sun was setting. I pitched my tent next to a friendly family with their power boat moored at the far end of the lock, wrapping up a full thirteen-hour day on the water.

5.5 Blowing Home

I let myself rest in my tent the next morning, and did not carry my canoe across the lock until 7:30. In Bobcaygeon I planned to treat myself, and buy a coffee from the coffee shop when it opened at 8am. I was in no hurry to head on my way, with the wind blowing from the west, the
paddle home would be quick. I carried my canoe the two hundred meters to the lower end of the lock, much to the chagrin of observing boaters at the locks. After delivering my canoe leeside, I took down my tent, packed my gear, and made the two trips back and forth to drop it all off with my canoe before getting my coffee. As I arrived with the last of my gear, I got into conversation with a friendly boater. He told me that he had been out on these waters for forty years and exclaimed about how unsafe it was to travel some of the areas in a canoe. I laughed to myself, with him not fully knowing the project I was undertaking, and me knowing the historical truth that these waterways were well travelled in canoes.

I began to wonder though, who was more the stranger to these waterways? This white Canadian man who had spent forty years motoring across them, or me, the young nishnaabekwe paddling the routes of her ancestors alone for the first time? He had more cumulative lived experience on these waterways, but I had the knowledge of the routes of Nishnaabeg people on these waters. I had a canoe that moved with the water so that I might be able to feel the changes in the weather, not just in the air, but up through the boards of my boat. It may be that he thought he knew those waterways, but he focused on how dangerous they were, while the last three days I had seen how gentle they could be. We stood on different ground that morning, and we knew different places.

The truth is, we were strangers to each other. Meeting along the waterway, as travellers, we were the embodiment of the strange encounters between Indigenous and Canadian. I told him my story about travelling from the reserve to harvesting territories and back and he accepted it unquestioningly. Neither operating from defensive positions, we recognized our differences and the complicated nature of our ways of coming to this place, and moving across the land. As Ahmed has written: “to talk literally about such migrations is to complicate rather than reduce
the meaning of migration: it is to introduce questions of context” (2000, 81). Face to face interactions across these cultural differences bring to the surface the layers of geography that live here. Our different contexts were brought to the waterway that day, and by operating out of a place of generosity, the encounter unfolded diplomatically. This generosity is one of the gifts given to us in Nishnaabeg governance teachings, and, in being on the water those days I found the diplomacy that the ancestors carried with them when settlers first arrived here.

While discussions of Indigenous movements between settlers and Indigenous folks often occur in hostile environments, that morning I was fortunate enough to gain some insight into what is possible if settlers accept our difference, and our ways of being here. The tiniest sliver of hope shone through in that casual conversation as we compared our travels and waterborne experiences. Of course, this embodied moment, is simply one among many. It could have been different; it could have been hostile, as is more likely the case in our current geographies. But that morning, I was sent a little bit of insight into what our geographies could be, and what might be possible if settlers learn to operate collectively from a place of generosity. That conversation also highlighted to me, the importance of moving Indigenously in our territory, for our own wellbeing and to make the Indigenous landscape more visible. Feeling so connected to my territory after three days of paddling, I had more genuine generosity, something which is difficult to maintain in my urban life in Toronto where connection to the land feels more difficult.

Leanne Simpson is right, “the land must once again become the pedagogy” (2014, 14). By turning into Nishnaabeg culture, our people will find a wealth of knowledge. By going out on the land, and learning from it in creative ways, we can access all the knowledge that our ancestors have stowed away here for us. These lessons will help us move forward as a nation, and keep Nishnaabeg geographies alive. The settler world may have been built up all around us, and
settlers’ versions of this place may dominate, but Nishnaabeg geographies are not buried so far beneath. As just one nishnaabekwe, I found our geography alive in that waterway. In spite of the constraints placed on it by the locks, the powerboats, and the private propertied lots, the water holds so much of us still. Canada might have attempted to declare itself with the locks as “spectacular statements that new nations were literally soaring toward development by mastering rivers and reaching for the sky” (Nixon, 2011, 166), but these surface statements cannot erase the Nishnaabeg landscape.

As I loaded into my boat, I continued chatting with my strange new friend. “Can I take your picture?” he asked me. “Then I can show people the girl just paddling her little heart out back to the reserve.” I let him take my photograph, laughing to myself about all of the people that were shocked and disbelieving that I was undertaking this journey by myself. The reality is that I did not feel alone out there for one minute. Paddling into the channel and out into Pigeon Lake the wind swept up and blew me all the way home. It was as though I was carried back in the arms of my ancestors.

It is difficult to admit that we are searching for our ancestors. Growing up, Southern Ontario did its work on me, to make me believe the colonial myth that we were less-than, and that our ways had been lost. The dominant geography is so strong that it is easy to believe our resistance has little effect, and that no matter how we move we will remain invisible. But built geographies cannot replace deep geographies. Part of my fear in searching for our geography, was that I might find that our ancestors had turned away from us; that our paths had diverged too far from their teachings. My friend and colleague, nehiyaw scholar Michelle Daigle, quoted an elder she works with at the 2016 Decolonial Futures panel we were both a part of at the AAG
conference in San Francisco: “does aski\textsuperscript{16} recognize me?” Does the land recognize me? This question evoked the very same concerns I had when I began to paddle. My sister, Olivia, who was also on the panel, asked me what I thought of this question in light of my paddling method. I told everyone that I felt like aki did recognize me when I was out paddling. Not only did it recognize me, it fortified me, and I carry that geographical truth with me when I have to move through the colonialscape in my daily life.

Perhaps it is something about being a water people. As Deb Mcgregor has noted, “water transcends time and space. In some respects, the waters we interact with in the present are the same waters our ancestors experienced…” (2015, 72). It may be this truth that allowed me to feel the deep geography of Nishnaabeg through the dominating colonialscape. But my paddling experience made me believe our land-based movements can connect us across the boundaries of settler society to the ancestors that are there waiting. To any young Nishnaabe who wonders about her people, I would say, go out on the water. You will find that you do not have to dig for the ancestors at all. They will be welling up all around you.

\textsuperscript{16} aski is the Cree word for land. In anishinaabemowin we say aki.
6 Conclusion

*it is with great regret that we are writing on behalf of the michi saagig anishnaabeg to inform you that you will not be permitted to build your lift locks, canals and hydro dams here because this is the place where we come to sit and talk with our aanikoobijiganag.*¹⁷

Leanne Simpson

Islands of Decolonial Love, p. 113

There is much that this particular research endeavor did not engage, and as such much more could not be revealed. To travel and visit our traditional places is not the same as being able to make use of them. There was no attempt by me to hunt or harvest, nor was there any moment of overt assertion of Indigenous sovereign territory. It is possible, likely even, that my safety would have been endangered, and my presence challenged aggressively had I made such moves. This of course harkens back to Ahmed’s (2000) question of whether one ever moves freely. It is possible for me to travel quietly, for the most part choosing my engagements with settlers and eking through and around their activities. Is this enough to bring the Indigenous landscape to life? As I said before, it is not our movements that make the Indigenous landscape live, it lives of its own accord, but our movements can bring that geography to life *for us.* The quiet ways of engaging the landscape, such as paddling traditional harvesting routes are just one small way of reconnecting to the Indigenous landscape, but it is not a large-scale resistive action.

Time and time again, we have seen how Indigenous attempts to challenge settler claims to land have led to confrontations, and across the big turtle right now, such confrontations are occurring in different places. What I have done here has not been on the front lines of defense

¹⁷ Ancestors.
against settler encroachment; rather, it has been an assertion of a geography settlers have long believed dead. Too often I hear settlers proclaim that there are no Indigenous peoples in Southern Ontario, but this small movement of resurgence brings up the Indigenous landscape. Not only are we still here as contemporary Nishnaabeg, but our Indigenous landscapes live on. Gathering the strength of that knowledge all around us, our communities can continue to be place-makers in this territory. However, to truly unsettle the built geography of settler society, we would have to assert outwardly our rights of movement in Indigenous ways, something which is happening at a more collective level through the 2015 wild rice consultations. And yet, as Mishuana Goeman has written “embodied geographies… become pivotal to address in decolonization projects” (2014, 12). In travelling these waters as nishnaabekwe, I felt the geography of my ancestors come alive, if not for the people around me, then at least for myself. How individual embodied and collective movements work together would be an interesting question to explore through another project.

As Indigenous peoples, if we go out into our territories and feel our geographies all around us, we will connect to the geographical knowledge we carry within. These landscapes cannot be learned from academic contexts, nor can they be brought to life by non-Indigenous folks. Parallel to my argument about the creation of Indigenous Geography within the academy, learning Indigenous geographical knowledge through creation is an Indigenous project. The preceding chapters come together to highlight that the erasure of Indigenous peoples from academic spaces, jurisdictional spaces, and our literal geographic space form related parts of the ongoing settler colonial project. This erasure creates Indigenous peoples as strangers in their own lands by displacing them from places that they hold deep ancestral ties to. However, imagining Indigenous geographies out of their places is not enough to make them disappear, and Indigenous landscapes continue to live on beneath the colonialscape.
By moving through the colonialscape both within the academy and the broader world, Indigenous presence is made visible. Though Indigenous engagement with our landscapes does not undo settler presence, it does connect Indigenous peoples through time and space in our place-making efforts. The colonialscape may be fixed in both colonial representations and the physical geography, but attempts to spatialize Indigenous and settler land relations cannot physically separate out the geographies. While colonial representations continually attempt to locate Indigenous peoples “somewhere else,” Indigenous presence persists and the layered nature of our geographies is exposed through Indigenous movements. Though settlers may view us as strangers in our own lands, and we ourselves have real fears that this may be true, by moving through the colonialscape it is possible to see how deep our Indigenous geography goes, and to gather that up around us.

Indigenous peoples continue to hold their ground and assert belonging to spaces from which the colonialscape has worked to erase Indigenous presence. In these types of Indigenous movements it is useful to understand how pervasive colonial relations are across different spaces. In seemingly distant fields that are bracketed out from one another, say in the field of law, or in the academy, or in our particular geographies the continual location of Indigenous peoples “somewhere else” form the different points of colonial constellation. Tracing lines between them by following colonial representations in different contexts demonstrates how they form a web overtop of Indigenous lands, making it difficult to deconstruct. This is why I have opted to focus on Indigenous movements and engaging the Indigenous geography to highlight how we move in and around the colonialscape to keep Indigenous landscapes alive. Though understanding the colonialscape we contend with is key, to truly bring Indigenous landscape to life, Indigenous movements must be made to create our geographies. How to make our Indigenous geographies live on can only be learned from creation.
References


Library and Archives Canada. Department of Railways and Canals Correspondence with the Department of Indian Affairs, Mississaugas of Mud Lake Claim. Record Group 43, Volume 1554, File 7435.


peoples and the Crown in Canada, in *The Governance of Common Property in the Pacific


*Social and Legal Studies* 18:2, 139-157.


Mississauga Community of Curve Lake: Origins of the Curve Lake Anishnabek. An

Area, Vols I-III. Curve Lake, ON: Published by Curve Lake Indian Band #35.


http://www.williamstreatiesfirstnations.ca/about/

Rice – Pigeon Lake, ON – Treaty 20 Territory. *Curve Lake First Nation September 2nd
Newsletter*. Retrieved from
