Anticolonial Biocultures: A Framework for Community Education, Biopower and Resilience

by

Yessica Dahiana Rostan

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, Social Justice Education
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Abstract

In this thesis, I describe colonial biopower in sciences, education, and society, and the ways in which Individual/Community biopower is maintained and reclaimed. I connect our biocultural relationships within settler colonialism and Indigenous Land movements of Turtle Island and Abya Yala. It is shown that biocultural sciences and biocultural knowledges in schooling and Community are vital to the reclamation of biopower. I connect five key concepts between Indigenous/ancestral/cultural/place-based biocultures and anticolonial thought to share a pedagogical framework which centers Human subjectivity, diversity, Community, co-learning/co-creating, and continual change. The anticolonial biocultures framework is meant to support mobilizing of biopower in Community learning, innovation, and change; strengthening biocultural relationships and Indigenous/ancestral/cultural/place-based biocultural knowledges; and the co-creation of resilient, sustainable Communities with(in) Nature.
For the Youth,

for the Water, the Land and the Living,

for mi Mama, mi Familia, and my Community,

for my Teachers, and Teachers around the world.

With special heartfelt thank yous for the support and encouragement to

George S. Dei,

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Francisco Villegas,

and the Latinx, Afro-Latin America, Abya Yala Education Network.
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Chapter 1
Emerging Biocultural Possibilities

“It’s the People that are uniting. We have recognized all nations, all faiths, one prayer...
That prayer is Water is Life. Mni Wiconi. We must unite during these times.”
- Chief Arvol Looking Horse, Oceti Sakowin Camp, North Dakota
(excerpt from a speech in Tkaronto in November 2016)

“Yu te mar, mar te yu”
- Charrua proverb and greeting, Uruguai
(Uno soy con todos, todos son conmigo)
(I Am one with everyone, everyone Is with me)

The teachers I met in Chihuahua, Mexico are best defined by one word: resilient. When I ask them what possibilities and barriers they see for social change, many of their answers touch on the neo-colonial foundations of violence so many nations and Communities face across the globe. They say there is lack of critical agency and Community education and that this makes it challenging to organize ourselves. They say there is lack of consciousness, that we observe reality without question or astonishment, that we do not challenge how we Live day to day. They say we must recognize that Youth Live in this violence but are capable of resisting. That we have to decolonize and grow our Community networks. They say we must build resilience.

I have felt these same ideas echo through various bursts of resistance demanding that Human Life be valued and that violent systems be dismantled, everyday acts of change happening on local and global scales where Individuals come together to act decisively as Communities. The list of these seemingly isolated but interlinked moments in history goes on farther than we can remember. I have heard these bursts of change described by different people in different ways: chispas (sparks), brotos (budding flowers), waves, drops in an Ocean. Parts of a whole that have been separated by time and space and imaginary lines. Seeds that were planted and have still not been harvested. A philosophy of unity that has yet to be embodied as a way of Life.

Estoy siempre aprendiendo. I am always learning.
This is the nature of being Alive – we learn, grow and develop through dialogue and interaction with our Selves, our surroundings, and each other. I hope, like so many others, that we can find the humility to realize this profound interconnectedness so that our chispas become a roaring fire, our brotos replenish the Earth’s forests, and our drops and waves become a force of movement and consciousness that crosses oceans and borders.

This thesis builds a framework of anticolonial bioculturas or biocultures. Biocultura is a word I first heard in the mountainous city of Chihuahua. During a teachers’ conference at the Institute for Critical Pedagogy, I met Federico Mancera-Valencia and mentioned that my work looked at the connections between anticolonialism and biology. He took me immediately to his office where he planted his book in my hands. In this book, “El Patrimonio Biocultural de Chihuahua” (“The Biocultural Heritage of Chihuahua”), Federico describes biocultura as the complex Human-Nature relationships between biology and culture, as well as the inheritance and creation of Indigenous/ancestral/cultural/place-based biocultural knowledge (2015, p. 24). He also writes about the ways Indigenous/ancestral/cultural/place-based biocultural sciences in Latin America have been silenced and ignored by Western sciences and colonial knowledge systems, suggesting the decolonization of sciences in education.

George Dei refers to colonialism as a continuous process of “imposition and domination” and describes anticolonial thought as an old idea with resurfacing, evolving or new political, cultural and intellectual possibilities that work with resistant knowledges (2006, p.2) from the point of view of the marginalized and subordinated (Dei and Asgharzadeh, 2001, p. 298). The African struggle for independence from Europe was a key site for producing much of the beginnings of anticolonial literature with the writings of Fanon, Cesaire, Memmi, Bhabha, Mbembe, Gandhi, Guevara, and others (Dei, 2006, p. 12). Over time, anticolonial thought has come to encompass and speak to the struggles of cultures in a much broader context and, simultaneously, for particular individual struggles within colonial relations (Kempf, 2009, p. 14).

We cannot deny that the dominant story of Living beings with(in) Nature put forth by Eurocentric and Western sciences has profoundly shaped our collective imagination and material organization. The impacts of colonial organization are felt on our sense of Self, our relationships to our Bodies, the Foods we eat, the Medicines we use and how we take care of our Self, our interactions with the Land, its Creatures, and how we relate with one another as People. It is felt
in our histories, our everyday Lives, and our emerging futures. Humxn biocultural relationships to Nature are at the Heart of this generation’s commitment to social change and innovation. Education today needs to make space for young People to express their Humxnity and to create Livable futures.

This thesis argues that since colonial biocultural organization is largely shaped by Western science and philosophy’s oppressive understandings of the Humxn with(in) Nature, new forms of organizing must begin with the interrogation and rebuilding of this biocultural relationship. The anticolonial biocultures framework described in this thesis is a tool to support educators in bringing colonialism ‘home’ for their students and engaging young People in the biocultural changes ongoing today.

The pedagogical framework proposed in this thesis is derived from shared themes between Indigenous/ancestral/culturally-specific ethnobiology and anticolonial thought. Its five concepts (subjectivity, diversity, Community, learning, and change) are grounded in conversations of current, real world biocultural challenges in our Communities and the Land movements ongoing where we Live. This framework also asks us to take the next step: responsibly co-creating projects that re-organize our Communities towards manifestations of Humxn-Nature relationships that are nurturing and sustainable, led by Indigenous leaders, Youth, sciences, politics, Life-views, and visions for the future. Within formal and informal learning and action spaces, an anticolonial biocultures framework is a powerful tool for learning and teaching how we co-create our worlds, and for understanding diverse biocultural Humxn identities and possibilities.

It is a time of revival, reimagining and co-creation. It is a time of biocultural resilience and reclamation. This work is a call to action that joins the calls of thousands on Turtle Island, Abya Yala, and millions around the world. The call is for us to denounce dis-connection, to seek the interconnections between our cultural and biological histories, presents and futures, and to Live differently, breaking the patterns that continue our destruction to build new ones that are Life-sustaining and relevant to today’s challenges. The invitation is for us to move beyond talk and ideas to seriously consider our ideological and material biocultural organization as Individuals and Communities, and to have the courage to breathe innovation and creativity into what is no longer of use. The answers exist in our heritages and relationships to our Bodies, Nature and the
Land; it is a matter of taking accountability and action in our re-learning, relating and re-organization. Co-creating resilient biological and cultural Communities means learning and creating as Communities.

As a student, an educator and Youth worker, I have had the opportunity to exchange ideas, experiences, feelings and hopes with Youth, teachers, learners, Families, Communities, Youth workers, artists, activists, and Elders in Toronto and internationally. This thesis is a personal reflection on the things I have witnessed and learned up until now, and the need to make relevant biocultural education available to the Youth of today so that they may build their Lives and the Lives of their Community with hope and enthusiasm. I offer these words without any claims to groundbreaking ideas, but as my evolving contribution to a constantly changing world, recognizing that this work is really made up of the inexhaustible interlinking ideas of Indigenous thought leaders around the world, and a collective Humxn consciousness – a collective dream. This dream is the Earth’s dream. It is the dream of ancestors, leaders and teachers recognized and unrecognized, as well as the Humxn and non-Humxn Community members who nurture our growth and learning along the way. This conversation is in no way complete or all encompassing; I acknowledge important theorists’ or activists’ voices may be missing due to my lack of awareness. I gather these ideas and offer this work as a call for us to move beyond the kinds of relationships we have been forced to have with our Selves, the Land, and one another, so we can reclaim our biocultural identities as Humxns, and what this means for learning, solidarity, mobilization and Community re-organization for biopower and resilience.

1.1 Purpose and Major Questions

Toronto is a place where biocultural diversity abounds. Young people have Families, biocultural histories and Life-views from all over the Earth and face particularly complex questions of identity and Community. As a young migrant from Uruguay who went through most of my schooling in Toronto, and as an educator and Youth worker in Toronto today, I know these questions are not being adequately addressed. Students are presented one Life-view (the EuroWestern one), one White-heteronormative-able-bodied social reality, one way to ‘succeed,’ and one way to be Alive and experience Humxnness. Colonial schooling denies identity and Community. We are taught Eurocentric sciences and Eurocentric arts in dis-connected,
Eurocentric ways; we are taught to silence subjectivity and our own biocultural knowledges, and we are taught nothing of Indigenous epistemologies that exist in Toronto and Canada. Dei and Asgharzadeh point out that, “the colonization process accedes a false status to the colonial subject through the authority of Western canons at the same time as local knowledges are deprivileged, negated and devalued,” (2001, p. 299). Diversity, which is embraced as a central rule in Indigenous and Land-based biocultural perspectives, is at best ‘tolerated’ in Western schooling and society.

In Toronto, one of the most multicultural cities in the world, diversity is often silenced in school and colonial hierarchies prevail. I first learned this the day my elementary school Spanish teacher (who was from Spain) told me I was pronouncing the words wrong, when in fact I was speaking perfect Spanish in my Uruguayan accent and dialect – the way I spoke every day with my Family. I will never forget the disappointment, isolation, and fury I felt when I was told my Spanish (which I had so proudly worked to stay fluent in) was WRONG in front of a class of English speakers. Suddenly a school subject that I had been excited for because I could identify to it personally became a power struggle in which my Lived experience and knowledge was invalidated and delegitimized. For weeks this embarrassing situation continued; I watched non-Spanish speakers awarded for their broken Spanish while my marks plummeted as I spoke my native tongue perfectly. Eventually, my Mother was forced to speak with the principal to see that my grades were corrected, but the lingering feeling of an education system meant to silence me stayed with me and kept me alert. Today, I am old enough to understand that colonial schooling functions with the intention of devaluing diverse Humxn knowledges and experiences, and it is for this reason that I consider the decolonization of education in Toronto to be an urgent matter: it impacts young People in profound ways.

Ania Loomba reminds us that “anti-colonial positions are embedded in specific histories, and cannot be collapsed into some pure oppositional essence,” (1998, p. 15). Each colonial situation is different in its manifestation and representation, and as such, the challenges, impacts and implications are different for different Communities (Dei, 2010, p. 4). On Turtle Island and Abya Yala there is in many places the specificity of settler colonialism, which is unique in that the colonizer has moved in and come to stay, building its own nation-states and ‘norms’ while killing, containing, and exploiting the original inhabitants (Tuck & Yang, 2004). This is a very
specific biocultural situation that has its own specific biocultural relationships within it. Tuck, McCoy & McKenzie (2014) explain that,

One of the notable characteristics of settler colonial states is the refusal to recognize themselves as such, requiring a continual disavowal of history, Indigenous peoples’ resistance to settlement, Indigenous peoples’ claims to stolen land, and how settler colonialism is indeed ongoing, not an event contained in the past…they do not consider the fact that they live on land that has been stolen, or ceded through broken treaties, or to which Indigenous peoples claim a pre-existing ontological and cosmological relationship (p. 7).

Settler colonialism is a persistent colonial situation seen across Turtle Island and Abya Yala, continually forcing Indigenous Communities to exist in oppressive dehumanizing relationships with settlers, diaspora and migrants, while their ways of Life and epistemologies, their biocultural Human identities, and the Land they Live on face genocide, destruction, and silencing. Settler colonialism is perpetuated directly by the control of knowledge and biocultural information in colonial schooling systems.

Marie Battiste writes that, “No educational system is perfect, yet few have a history as destructive to human potential as Canada’s with its obsession with assimilation,” (2013, p.180). Colonial education systems in Canada suffocate the knowledge systems of diverse Peoples, beginning with the knowledges of First Nations, Metis and Inuit Peoples. Our uniqueness, skills, talents and passions are dimmed instead of nurtured for the building of our Communities. The imposition of education systems that are identity-oppressing, culturally-unresponsive and disconnected from Living biocultural experiences in our Communities is colonial violence on today’s Youth. It is an imposition on our wellness and Livelihood, as well as our ability to fully develop the Humanity of our Selves, our biocultures and our Communities. School quickly becomes a place you ‘just have to get through’ as young People are systematically disengaged from learning when they begin to find that school has little connection to the world they Live in and experience. The complexity of our current historical moment in Toronto and across the continent requires comprehensive approaches to education that encompass our Individual and Community stories and imaginaries about what it means to be Alive. Education should invite us to learn, strategize, reorganize and co-create the biocultures of our Communities.
This thesis develops bioculturas anticoloniales (*anticolonial biocultures*) - an anticolonial theory, praxis and pedagogical framework that centers diverse Humxn relationships with(in) Nature – Self, Land and one another. This work contributes to anticolonial scholarship as a framework for engaging settlers, diaspora and migrants in Toronto (and similar contexts) in a conversation about their diverse locations and responsibilities within colonialism and potentials for Community re-organization. Although this thesis focuses on anticolonial education in Canada, it will also incorporate a more philosophical or big picture point of view regarding Humxn relationships with(in) Nature in the currently emerging world through a discussion on anticolonial biocultural Land movements happening across the continent.

I engage the paradigms of anticolonialism and Indigenous/ancestral/cultural/place-based bioculturas in order to unpack this particular anti/colonial moment, and to imagine possibilities for Community-centered pedagogies that strengthen Humxn-Humxn relationships and Humxn-Nature/Land relationships. This kind of learning will simultaneously improve the ecosystem relationships and biocultural resilience of Communities. Following calls to decolonize education using diverse and Indigenous epistemologies, an important part of this discussion includes the interrogation of Western science and education’s role in the maintenance of state biopower and settler colonial nations.

The aims of anticolonial biocultures are the reclamation of biocultural heritage and biopower, as well as the growth and the passing on of this biocultural information, or *Life-views*, to the coming generation. I discuss the ways nation-states attempt to seize and maintain biopower from the People and the Land, and the importance of reclaiming and sharing our biocultures at this critical time in Earth’s story as a way to regain Individual/Community biopower. The anticolonial biocultures framework developed in this thesis is derived from the communion of five key themes in common between Indigenous/ancestral/culturally-specific/place-based ethnobiologies or bioculturas, and anticolonial thought. The five concepts of subjectivity, diversity, interconnectedness/Community, learning, and co-creation are grounded in conversations of current biocultural sustainability challenges in our Communities and the Land movements ongoing where we Live. Anticolonial biocultures also urge us to take the next step: responsibly co-creating relationships and projects that re-organize our Communities towards manifestations of Humxn-Nature relationships that are nurturing and sustainable. Within formal and informal learning and action spaces, anticolonial biocultura is a tool for learning and
teaching how we co-create our worlds, understanding diverse biocultural Humxn identities, and accelerating possibilities for biocultural changes in the emerging future.

This thesis asks: How are we adapting our theories, movements, pedagogies and Communities to the ever-changing, ever-diverse biocultural ways of knowing and being, our interconnecting histories and future, and to the undeniable changes occurring in Humxn-Nature consciousness and biopower on a global scale? What are the possibilities of centering diverse, Indigenous, ancestral, culturally-relevant, place-based, and anticolonial perspectives in learning and Community spaces? How can these perspectives help us communicate and learn through subjective sites of difference, and to view the diversity among us as embodiments of healthy biocultural ecosystems (and possibilities)? How can anticolonial biocultures help learners locate themselves within settler colonialism on Turtle Island/Abya Yala and establish connections with(in) themselves, each other, and Land in ways that honour diversity, interconnectedness and center solidarity? in ways that foster Individual/Community action and re-organization? What role can anticolonial biocultures play in building responsibility and accountable relationships with First Nations, Metis, Inuit Community members, and how can we contribute to anticolonial and decolonial futures informed by Indigenous Life-views, sciences, politics, and visions for the future by addressing our biocultural relationships within capitalism? By helping to relocate ourselves with(in) Nature and our local and global Communities, what potential do anticolonial biocultures have for healing and for creative cultural, social, political, environmental and economic re-organization? These are some of the questions explored in this thesis.

1.2 Use of Key Words

Anticolonial: This refers to theory, praxis, work, revolutionaries, cultures, and pedagogies that aim to problematize and resist colonialism and oppression in all its forms. Anticolonial theorists “seek to work with alternative, oppositional paradigms based on the use of indigenous concepts and analytical systems and cultural frames of reference,” (Dei and Asgharzadeh, 2001, p. 301).

Bioculturas/Biocultures/Ethnobiology: Biocultures are the sciences that look at relationships between Humxn cultures (ethno) and biology. There are significant differences between the
Western fields of ethnobiology and the Indigenous/ancestral/cultural/place-based notions of ethnobiology as ways of Life, or bioculturás. This is discussed in more detail in Chapter 2.2.

**Biopower:** This thesis differentiates between state biopower and Individual/Community biopower, defined as the sovereignty and freedom to choose your form of ‘normal’ Life expression and defend it. Biopower encompasses arenas of Life such as Food, Medicine, healthcare, education, the Body, etc. See Chapter 2.

**Humxn:** Anticolonial biocultura is a reclaiming of what being Alive as Humxn means. I use the word Humxn in juxtaposition to human to refer to the bringing forth of old-new Humxn relationships with(in) Nature. It is important to note that the use of the word Humxn does not mean to connote universality of the Humxn experience, but the diversity of Humxn experiences. The word Humxn highlights: 1) the common X chromosome among People regardless of gender or sexual identity; 2) the biocultural understanding that everything that is Alive, including Humxn and all aspects of being Humxn, exists on a spectrum of diversity and union rather than within narrow categories or binaries; 3) ethnobiological approaches, and our current lack of these approaches in education and politics.

**Indigenous:** This thesis refers to Indigenous Peoples as sovereign on their ancestral Lands. When thinking about biocultural heritages or Indigenous/ancestral/cultural/place-based ethnobiological knowledges, Indigeneity, “may be defined as knowledge consciousness arising locally and in association with long-term occupancy of a place,” (Dei and Asgharzadeh, 2001, p. 302). Iseke-Barnes (2008) offers that “The words Indigenous, Native, Indian, Aboriginal, and First Nations are all used by authors in the field [of Indigenous education]. Each term is a colonial creation that collectivizes distinct groups of peoples and therefore can be challenged as colonial tools. But each term also facilitates dialogue on particular political histories and is used in particular contexts. Each term also allows Indigenous peoples with distinct heritages to work collectively,” (p. 124, my parenthesis).

**Land/Nature:** When I use the words Nature and Land in this text I include People, Water, Animals, Plants, Fish, Bodies, Minds, Hearts, Food, Medicine, Moon, Sun, and all the interconnected aspects of the Living matrix. I purposefully capitalize words as reminders that we are Alive with(in) Nature, and as a way to honour the salient power of the Land and Living.
Capitalizing these words calls us to consider “not just the materiality of land, but also its ‘spiritual emotional, and intellectual aspects’” (Styres, Haig-Brown, & Blimkie, and Styres & Zinga 2013, as cited in Tuck, McCoy & MckKenzie, 2014, p. 9).

**Lands of Turtle Island, Abya Yala, Tkaronto:** I use Indigenous names for places as a way to call out settler-colonialism and decentre the Canadian narrative of Eurocentric white nationhood. For Toronto, I use the name Tkaronto which comes from Kanyen’ke:ha, the language of the Kanyen’ke:ha’ka People, or People of the Flint – one of the Six Nations that together make up the Haudenosaunee. The Haudenosaunee, also known as the Iroquois Confederacy, the Five Nations, or the Six Nations, are a confederacy made up of five original member nations – Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca – and others, including Delaware, Nanticoke, Tutelo, and Tuscarora as the official sixth nation (Hill, 2008, p. 43). In Tkaronto, Indigenous names for different locations are increasingly used in street signs, popular culture, art, education and more (Abraham, 2014) as a form of Land education that highlights ongoing Indigenous presence and resilience. I use the names Turtle Island and Abya Yala to refer respectively to the Indigenous Land and cosmologies of the North and Central/South ends of the continent colonially-called ‘America.’ The name Turtle Island comes from the Haudenosaunee Creation Story, “a detailed epic, taking days to tell in its entirety” in which there was only Sky and Water until Sky Woman and the Animals created Land on the Turtle’s back (Hill, 2008, p.24). Abya Yala, meaning “Tierra en plena madurez,” is the name given to the continent by the Kuna (Dule or Tule) People located in Panama, Colombia and the San Blas Islands. The name was suggested by Aymara leader Takir Mamani as a unifying term for political mobilization (Tone, 2010, p. 20). It is important to clarify that each Indigenous nation has different biocultures and thus different names for the Land they inhabit, particularly across colonially-named ‘Latin America.’ I use the terms Turtle Island and Abya Yala following the general, although not all encompassing, consensus amongst nations to strategize in solidarity for the Land using these names. My aim in using Indigenous terms is not to appropriate and fetishize Indigenous cultures, or make moves to innocence within settler-colonialism (Tuck and Yang, 2012), but to actively denaturalize settler-colonialism as the given norm or Life-view and simultaneously locate myself and the reader consciously with(in) it at every possible turn.

**Life-view(s):** In this thesis, I call Life-views the paradigms or understandings that we have about ‘Life’ and all things impacting ‘Life’ including our beliefs about our Selves, the Land and each
other as Living. It can also be thought of as your ‘worldview.’ Zainab Amadahy shows the relevance of our Life-views in the following passage: “A worldview is a set of beliefs that helps us make sense of the information we receive through our senses. This paradigm enables us to give meaning to and connect our life experiences. Our worldview sometimes gives us a feeling of security as it allows some predictability into our lives…For example, one worldview may have you predict that your headache will end in a few minutes because you’ve swallowed a pill. Another worldview would have you predict the end of your headache because you’ve participated in a healing ceremony,” (2013, p. 19).

**Resilience:** This thesis looks at the reclamation of Individual/Community biopower and Life-views as a form of resilience, particularly in Community education and schooling systems. Although resilience is “a concept that predates the arrival of Europeans in North America” (Stout & Kipling, 2003, p. 25), I offer a few definitions from different lenses to show the complexity and interconnectedness that I refer to when I speak of resilience in this thesis. “In biological systems, resilience is a dynamic process of adjustment, adaptation and transformation in response to challenges and demands. In adapting, the organism also usually changes its own environment. In psychology, resilience is commonly framed as an individual trait or process rather than emphasizing its systemic or ecological roots…it may also have collective, or communal dimensions,” (Kirmayer et al., 2011, p. 84). Community or cultural resilience “is the capacity of a distinct community or cultural system to absorb disturbance and reorganize while undergoing change so as to retain key elements of structure and identity that preserve its distinctness,” (Healy, 2006, as cited in Fleming and Ledogar, 2008, p. 3). Many Indigenous Communities across Turtle Island and Abya Yala show us that “culture and resilience intersect and help shape traditions, beliefs and human relationships,” (Stout & Kipling, 2003, p. iv).

**Science(s):** The word *science(s)* in this thesis does not mean “Western science” but speaks to a broader understanding of *sciences* as diverse and non-hierarchical ways of knowing that exist among different Humxn biocultures with(in) Nature. Western science is seen as one biocultural perspective and style of organization among many. In this thesis, Western sciences, Indigenous sciences and ancestral/cultural/place-based sciences are considered. They are regarded as culturally-specific and diverse ways of biocultural knowing that change constantly depending on place and context. See Chapter 2.2.
**Settler colonialism:** This refers to the specific colonial situation that exists in nations where the colonizer has settled on Indigenous Land and stayed there, constructing settler nation-states that thrive upon the genocide and continual destruction of Indigenous sovereignty, as well as the exploitation of Land and Water through methods of control and state biopower. It is the aim of an anticolonial biocultures framework to bring attention to and problematize this normalized social condition.

**Sustainability:** Sustainability in this anticolonial context does not refer to sustaining destructive settler colonial systems of biopower presently in place, but to re-organizing our systems so that we can sustain ourselves, our biocultural heritages, and our biopower as Living Communities, as well as learning to act within Land-specific ideals of decolonization and Indigenous political futures.

### 1.3 Overview of Chapters

In **Section 4** of this chapter, I describe my personal biocultural location as a migrant from Abya Yala to Turtle Island and my experiences within education and society that shaped my politics and my work as an educator.

**Section 5** connects present-day anticolonial biocultural Land movements across Turtle Island and Abya Yala, highlighting Indigenous leadership and Individual/Community actions that are reclaiming biopower by protecting Life, nurturing biocultural heritages, and building Community resilience.

**Chapter 2** theorizes biopower and the ways in which Individual/Community biopower is maintained and reclaimed. I describe colonial biopower in sciences, education, and society and it is shown that biocultural sciences and biocultural knowledges in schooling and Community are vital to the reclamation of biopower.

**Chapter 3** builds on an anticolonial biocultures pedagogical framework meant to support mobilizing of biopower in Community learning, innovation, and change; strengthening biocultural relationships and Indigenous/ancestral/cultural/place-based biocultural knowledges; and the co-creation of resilient, sustainable Communities.
Chapter 4 offers reflection, a summary of key points, and future outlooks for building Community education, biopower, and resilience.

1.4 Personal Biocultural Location

We cannot afford to take being Alive for granted...seguimos aca (we are still here). I give thanks to my Mother and to the Mothers before her, my first teachers in resilience, love, and biocultura. I give thanks to my birthplace: the Land, Air, and Water that first nourished me, the Land that nourishes my Family, the Land of Charrua and Guarani Peoples before settlers, diaspora, refugees and migrants arrived. I am writing now from Tkaronto, so I give thanks also to this Land and its Peoples: Anishinabek, Haudenosaunee, Huron-Wendat and Petun First Nations, the Seneca, and most recently, the Mississaugas of the Credit River. I give thanks to the teachers who taught me, when others did not, that Tkaronto falls under the Dish With One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, an agreement between the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Confederacy of the Anishinabek and allied nations to take care of the territory around the Great Lakes, share what the Land offered and Live in peace (Hill, 2008). I give thanks to the Communities of People, non-Humxn Creatures, and the Life systems that sustain us.

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If you take a stroll along the Humber River trails in Tkaronto, you will be met with signs that warn you not to enter the Water. As a kid growing up in the city, I visited these trails often but I never wondered why the Water was off limits. I would swim anyways. Hanging out in Trees and swampy fields with my brothers, sisters and cousins, I learned that Tadpoles would morph into leaping Frogs and that out of tiny blue Eggs sprang forth bald baby Robins that soon grew wings and learned how to fly. The relationships I fostered with Nature provided a connection between my Self and the Living world. This connection that was so natural to my Child-self seemed to fade as I grew older and entered society. Even in my years as a biology student, observing Life from various macro and microscopic lenses, I Lived strangely dis-connected to my place with(in) Nature – to my Body, my Self, the Land, and others - except during brief moments when the connections became so clear that I was filled with awe, love, and sometimes, even fear.
The vital connection to my identity as a Living being was kept alive largely by my health. I was born with spherocytosis – a genetic difference that changes the cell membrane and thus the shape and function of my Red Blood Cells. The neo-colonial politics, economic and post-dictatorship conditions that created precarious healthcare systems in Uruguay were large factors in my parents’ decision to come to Turtle Island in search of treatment and the chance for me to survive. After 9 months of nonstop hospitalization, fear, and no answers, a doctor gave my parents the faint hope that I could be helped at Sick Kids Hospital in Tkaronto. Living with spherocytosis and feeling the dis-connection of myself from my birthplace and Family, I am reminded daily about the relationships of biology and culture that impact our Lives and identities. In a very real sense, one tiny chromosome changed the course of me and my Family’s Lives, and the Lives of all those we’ve come into contact with since. It is because I feel blessed to be Alive today that I cannot ignore my relationship and responsibility to my biocultural heritage.

My biocultural identity has taught me firsthand some of the complexities faced by diaspora and migrants in locating ourselves within colonialism, settler colonialism and Communities of resistance. For a long time, my history and relationship to colonialism was unclear to me, even though it was a large part of my identity in so many ways. In settler colonial Uruguay, Indigenous and African cultural roots are silenced to produce an image of Eurocentric national identity, even though it is in actuality a highly diverse place. This European identity is perpetuated by a violent narrative of Indigenous “extinction” and the exclusion of Blackness (Hugarte, 2014, Sztainbok, 2008), despite firmly rooted Indigenous and African cultures throughout Uruguay, such as: the daily tradition of drinking mate in Community, which is a Plant relationship which comes from ancestral Guarani Medicine traditions; the country’s name, titled after Rio Uruguay, which comes from the Guarani words urugua and y meaning “rio de caracoles” (river of shells); and the diverse Afro-Uruguayan candombe rituals and drumming traditions, dances and biocultures throughout the country, celebrated each year. These traditions are proudly taken up by Uruguayan People, but in my experience there is often little acknowledgment and/or a complete lack of sensitivity to their extremely colonial and racist pasts and present. This narrative also denies the Living cultures and daily Lived realities of Indigenous and Black People in Uruguay today. When I asked my Community about Indigenous People in
Uruguay I was told repeatedly that they did not exist after the genocide of Salsipuedes in 1831. This is what has been taught in Uruguayan schools and society for generations.

After substantial searching, through conversations in Community, recorded oral history, videos and books found back home, I learned about the work demanding Indigenous and African Peoples be given rightful place within Uruguay’s history, present and future (Sans, 2009 & 2011; Rodriguez & Gonzalez, 2010; Hugarte, 2014; Michelena, 2015). Indigenous descendants in Uruguay face substantial racism and dismissal but biocultural recovery and resistance has been growing since the end of the dictatorship era (1973-1985). Self-organized groups such as the Consejo de la Nacion Charrua (CONACHA) are working in cultural, political, educational and environmental spheres, displaying solidarity with Indigenous mobilizations across the continent, such as the Water protecting actions of the Sioux Nation in North Dakota and the Mapuche in Argentina and Chile.

From my research, I’ve learned that the People Indigenous to Uruguay are the Charrua macroethnic group that inhabit the midlands of Uruguay and includes the Guenoas, Yaros, Bohanes (also called Minuanes) and Charrua themselves; the Chana, located near the Rio Uruguay and the Argentinean border; the Arachan, who live closer to what is now called Brazil; and the Guarani, who arrived from the north near what is now Paraguay around the 14th century (Sans, 2011, p.196-7). Guarani is still spoken in many parts of South America, and is one of the main national languages of Paraguay. Indigenous Africans also make up part of Uruguay’s biocultural heritage. Africans likely arrived to Uruguay long before colonization, as they did in other parts of Abya Yala, but also during the colonial slave trade from the Congo, Angola, Ghana and surrounding areas, as well as Brazil (Sans, 2011, p. 198). After early Iberian colonization and independence in the 1830s, several migrations brought French, Brazilian, Spanish, Italian, different European and Mediterranean origins to Uruguay, particularly after the World Wars (Hugarte and Vidart, 1969 as cited in Sans, 2011, p.198).

The work of Monica Sans was crucial in my understanding of Uruguay’s biocultural heritage. She is a professor in the department of Biological Anthropology and Humanities and Sciences in Education in la Universidad de la Republica in Montevideo, Uruguay. She may not define her work as anticolonial biocultura but, in many ways, it can be described as just that. She uses genetic research in combination with historical, geographical, and census data to uncover long-
hidden truths and racist systems of Indigenous/African exclusion in the Uruguayan national identity. Her work supports the growing calls for revision of Uruguay’s national history and identity (2011, p.207). This kind of identity revision is being seen throughout Abya Yala, as national narratives are increasingly being interrogated by new generations.

As Guadarrama (2002) writes from Colombia: “La identidad latinoamericana no ha sido dada de una vez y por todas. No solamente existe, sino que hay que cultivarla, definirla, proclamarla a todas voces para su necesaria concienciación,” (“The identity of Latin America has not been given once and for all. It does not simply exist, it must be cultivated, defined, proclaimed with all our voice for its necessary conscientization,”) (as cited in Tone, 2010, my translation\(^1\)). I would add that to remember our biocultural identities and be responsible creators of them every day is a central part of anticolonial resistance, reclaiming sovereign biopower, and building biocultural resilience. George Sefa Dei (2006) reminds us that anticolonial praxis, “must be rooted in place, culture, and experience,” and that, “We must identify some solid ground on which to stand (and not be apologetic about this)...even as these cultures, histories, experiences, and spaces are being continually negotiated...Defining and creating such spaces for ourselves has become a matter of survival,” (p. 255).

Much of my information about my identity is still fragmented, and the diversity of lineages and People in Uruguay makes the storyline complex. These stories were not passed down to us in full details, and in migrating to Tkaronto I lost the everyday closeness with my Grandparents that may have naturally gifted me this information. Since my 20s, I became able to visit more often and I am a bit closer to my Grandparents today. As I finish school and am able to visit for longer periods of time, I am excited to spend more time with my Grandmothers in the coming years. In the meantime, my curiosity was nurtured by a genetic test which provided insights to my genetic makeup in regards to spherocytosis, as well as ancestral information. I learned that my genetic makeup is diversely European (Italy, Germany, Spain, and Switzerland) and also Indigenous from Abya Yala, West Africa, and Asia, which corresponds with the information I had found on the biocultural history of Uruguay and its Peoples today. This information confirmed my suspicions that my Family and I had similar relationships to the Land and People in Uruguay as

\(^1\) All English-Spanish translations in this thesis are my own.
we did in to the Land and People of Turtle Island. My mixed biocultures are due to settler colonization, slavery, genocide, wars, and refugee migration. And so is my biocultural privilege.

Feeling dis-connected from my Family and biocultural heritage in Uruguay was confusing to my identification process, especially later in Life when it came to social justice learning and action. When I learned of my European ancestors, I was ashamed of my roots. It took time for me to understand that my complex identity holds a kind of privilege, power, and responsibility. Because we are safer in anti-Black, anti-Indigenous social spaces, Community members that are ‘whiter’ or mistakenly perceived as white can move undetected into spaces not meant for our People. We can infiltrate and start difficult conversations in institutions and systems meant to silence us. This is captured powerfully in a poem co-written and delivered by Tkaronto poets Jennifer Alicia Murrin and SPIN El Poeta of the Toronto Poetry Slam team at the 2017 National Poetry Slam Group Piece Finals in Denver, Colorado. The poem goes,

We are Trojan horses that get ushered in parties, boardrooms, old boys clubs,  
Don’t get it twisted.  
Our silence at your jokes is not compliance, its strategy.  
We bite our tongues waiting for the right time to strike…  
Our People come in all different skin tones….  
Blood memory from our ancestors make us resilient,  
capable of thriving behind enemy lines,  
Warriors hiding in skin that infiltrates the most hostile of spaces.  
This Trojan skin right here is just a distraction to get your guard down.  
Don’t sleep. We are among you.

I learned from Community that we have important roles to play as white-perceived and/or mixed Peoples, however I could not fully grasp these responsibilities and opportunities for resistance until I came to terms with who I was and where I stood within interlocking systems of race, sex, gender, ability, class, etc.

Anticolonial learning begins with locating yourself so that you can ground your framework for action where you stand. For many young People who inhabit mixed, diasporic, migrant and refugee realities in Tkaronto, the process of identification and achieving the confidence to meaningfully take up space in Community can be a challenge. Youth are often without culturally relevant resources, elders, mentors or conversations on how to navigate these identities within society and within education. Colonial narratives taught me to silence so many aspects of my identity that I did not know who I was for a long time. It wasn’t until Chicano professor and
friend Francisco Villegas said, astounded, “You going to give up your Latinidad that easy?!” that I began to look much closer at my history of mixed origins and migrations, until I learned (through building Community) that even to identify as “Latina/o/x” maintains the colonial idea of “Latin America” by erasing the pueblos originarios (Communities of origin or original Communities) and the Indigenous cultures that have existed since long before European colonization and subsequent migratory waves. By healing and strengthening relationships in my Family, Community, and through learning, I have been slowly regaining information and connection with my ancestors and with myself. This alienation from our biocultures and histories is a very common experience for diaspora, refugee and migrant Youth in settler colonial and Eurocentric schooling/society (Dei, 2006, p. 254). I’ve come to understand that in order to locate myself meaningfully I must do so in relation to Land and the People who inhabit it. I now call myself Sanducera, referring to Paysandú, the Indigenous Land by Rio Uruguay where a long history unfolded before I was born and continues to unfold today.

Growing up in Tkaronto, I face the challenges of a migrant in many ways, but I cannot deny that I benefit from the privileges and implications of what Tuck & Yang (2012) call diaspora and migrant people of colour: “subordinate settlers,” (p. 18). Many anticolonial peers have disagreed with me on this, arguing that settlerhood is exclusive to whiteness and colonial privileges we will never know as colonized diaspora or migrant Peoples. This incommensurability (Tuck and Yang, 2012) must be addressed since it is a major aim of this thesis, and an anticolonial biocultures framework, to center settler/neo colonialism in learning, particularly with diasporic, refugee and migrant Youth in Tkaronto and Turtle Island. Schooling in Tkaronto alienated me from my culture. Additionally, in my Lived experience as a migrant within settler colonial schooling, I learned virtually nothing of the First Nations, Metis, or Inuit People of Turtle Island, and what I did learn of them was a violent story of erasure and racism. I did not know First Nations People were in fact so great in numbers, and so diverse and rich in cultures. I also did not learn of the shameful treatment of Indigenous Peoples which permeates Canadian society. The deliberate and disgusting ignorance I was fed through settler colonial schooling enabled my incapacity to locate myself within settler colonialism for a long period of my Life. I see this ignorance as a form of settlerhood, particularly if I consider the privileges I have had and continue to have due to settler colonialism as a system, and the material reality of place and Land in settler colonial relations. At the end of the day I still have biocultural privileges that are a direct result of the genocide and
destruction of Indigenous Land and Peoples by the nation-state of Canada. At the end of the day, many social justice causes that benefit me as a migrant/permanent resident/citizen completely ignore First Nations, Metis, and Inuit Peoples, and continue to uphold and reproduce settler colonial systems.

Another argument I face when I speak about responsibilities of settlerhood as a migrant or refugee is that what migrants or refugees ‘get’ are at best basic human rights (at worst, imprisonment in cages and family separation) and cannot be classified as ‘privileges’ compared to what white settlers ‘get’ which is a socioeconomic cultural hierarchy that works in their favour, every time, every day. However, if we consider that there are Indigenous Communities without access to basic things like safe drinking Water, or the alarming levels of violence these Communities face, then the argument that migrants often have some settler privileges in Canada does not seem so far-fetched. Migrants can have privileges that Indigenous People do not, particularly if they are migrants with mixed identities that can be perceived as white. I have seen this for myself and believe it must be accounted for in order to move forward in an honest and responsible way. I know I have responsibilities beyond migranthood, refugeehood, and colonial victimhood in Canada. I have responsibilities within this identity of “subordinate settlerhood” that Tuck & Yang (2012) describe – even if, as many migrants or refugees might argue, my ancestry, my arrival on this Land, and my ignorance were due to colonial historical forces outside of my control.

This framing of migrant settlerhood is not about blame; it is about the specificity of settler colonialism in this place, this Land, and this Body. It is about responsibilities I have today and how I live my Life. Physically, my Body is still here in this place, on this Land, within this history and present biocultural reality. My presence implicates me in the oppression of Indigenous Peoples and their cultures, whether I intend it or not, whether my parents or my ancestors intended it or not. I can relate with the “ambivalence” of diaspora and migrants in the face of settler colonialism. The very identity of diaspora and migrant People is built on precarious grounds of violent dis-location, dis-connection and ambivalence (Bhabha, 1998, p. 34). Homi Bhabha writes about the anxiety of this displacement and describes it as a “transition where strangeness and contradiction cannot be negated and must continually be negotiated and worked through,” (1998, p. 35). These contradictions are forever present in our Bodies as diaspora, refugees, and migrants on this Land. This contradictory identity with(in) both Turtle
Island and Abya Yala - and the doubts it has produced - have been pivotal in my theorizing of anticolonial biocultures, as well as my ability to understand and act on my responsibilities. These and new contradictions will continue to develop my biocultural praxis and pedagogy.

I share these reflections, raw and embarrassing as it is to admit I didn’t know who or where I was, because they show that for mixed, diasporic, refugee, and migrant Youth, locating ourselves within settler colonialism on Turtle Island can require resolving years of internalized racism, colonial narratives, and assimilation to whiteness, as well as attempting to uncover histories that have been long lost and undiscussed in our Families – often oceans away. In many cases this process of assimilation began generations ago back home. In *This Bridge Called my Back*, Cherrie Moraga writes that as diaspora and migrants our theories develop in our attempts “to separate the fibres of experiences we have had as daughters of a struggling people. Daily, we feel the pull and tug of having to choose between which parts of our mothers’ heritages we want to claim and wear and which parts have served to cloak us from the knowledge of ourselves,” (1983, p. 24). Locating ourselves and understanding our biocultural relationships and responsibilities requires dedicated investigation of our biocultural relationships to our Self, Families, colonized homelands, and new locations on Indigenous Lands.

Through this personal work and my collaborations with Youth and Community, I have come to understand that there is a spectrum of identity politics we navigate as diaspora and migrant People on this Land. On the far right of the spectrum, we have little to no consciousness of our colonial locations, or we have incorrect ideas/histories created by generations of national colonial schooling. On the far left, we are so keenly aware and self-conscious about lacking clarity in this ancestral biocultural information that we feel immobilized and unworthy, and do not know how to proceed. We become alienated from ourselves (Dei, 2006, p. 254) and even our health and wellness can suffer if our dis-connection takes us too far from our Communities. But in the center of this spectrum of contradictions, after much inner work and healing, we can find a balance that allows us to reclaim our identities and responsibilities, and begin to build relationships so that we may take action in new and meaningful ways in Community that challenge settler colonialism and invite re-organization.

In the midst of political resistance towards the education reform in Mexico, I was asked to present the culminating ideas of my peers during a teacher’s conference because they felt I could
convey their words with equal emotion in both Spanish and English languages. At that moment, I experienced what Tone (2010) describes with the Andean symbol and philosophy of “la Chakana.” Referring to the Quechua and Aymara meanings of la Chakana, he describes it as: “‘cruce’, ‘encuentro’, ‘conexión’, ‘síntesis’, ‘unión’, en fin, aquello que acoge y da cabida a lo opuesto o antagónico en su mismo seno, sin que por ello renuncie a su originaria y autentica exigencia identitaria: ser sencillamente ‘puente,’” (“La Chakana as a cross, encounter, point of connection, synthesis or union, that which welcomes and makes space for the opposite or antagonistic in its same breast, without renouncing its necessary origins and authentic identity: to be simply a bridge,”) (p. 23). It is precisely because we embody and have to come to terms with these contradictions that diaspora, refugee, migrant and mixed race Youth, educators and Community members have the ability to act as bridges for and between our Communities. As Gloria Anzaldua writes, “Caminante, no hay puentes, se hace puentes al andar (Voyager, there are no bridges, one builds them as one walks),” (1983, p. v).

Working with anticolonial biocultura as my praxis and pedagogy has allowed me to connect diverse Humxn identities, stories, and Communities to Land movements led by Indigenous People across Turtle Island, Abya Yala and the Planet. The ongoing processes of biocultural learning with(in) the Land, space, and time we Live today continues to change our world with every step we take.

1.5 Biocultural Movements Across Turtle Island and Abya Yala

Anticolonial thought, praxis and pedagogy must center Indigenous resistance on the Land and its current manifestations. Anticolonial biocultures do this by focusing on the connections between biocultural relationships of Humxns with(in) Nature and on Land. Across Turtle Island and Abya Yala, Indigenous sovereignty and environmental concerns are rising amongst diverse groups, led by Indigenous Youth, Elders and Community leaders. With increasing urgency, political and corporate entities are being asked to answer questions that have been ignored for too long. Indigenous and Youth-led movements across the continent are “shaping political practice, framing international legislation, and destabilizing assumptions about stateness,” seeking “the redistribution of rights as much as the uprooting of the concentration of power in the state,” and challenging notions of state authority and sovereignty (Picq, 2014, p. 30). Complementing
Humxn movements and re-organization around the globe, the Canadian environmental stage is quickly becoming a space for biocultural exchange between Communities with anticolonial, decolonial and environmental visions for the future.

Robert Lovelace of Ardoch Algonquin First Nation wrote “Notes from Prison: Protecting Algonquin Lands from Uranium Mining,” in 2007 while imprisoned in Lindsay, Ontario for peaceful actions to defend the Land. He writes: “Environmental and Aboriginal justice converge on many levels and often share ground during direct-action events. At the heart of the injustices that these groups hope to eliminate are the tenets of colonialism,” (2009, p.xvii). He affirms that in their unified hopes they are fighting to transform the colonial norm that “supports the Canadian dominion as a system that claims the privilege of pillaging the earth and displacing the original human beings for its own wealth and security,” (p. xvii). Susan Hill shares similar thoughts when she writes that the Haudenosaunee Creation, Kayaneren’kowa and Gaiwiyo histories are “relevant to the topic of land and environmental ethics” (p. 28) and that “decisions affecting the land of one or more nations were deemed to affect all.” (2008, p. 27). Despite diverse histories and identities, there is a shared responsibility to defend the Humxn relationship to Life and Land from destructive neocolonial pursuits that is moving People to do the difficult work of finding ways to address power relations between them and learn to work together.

On November 29th 2015, in the wake of the Climate Talks in Paris (COP21), the world saw the largest global climate demonstrations in history with over 2,300 events in over 175 countries with more than 785,000 People. The People of the world sent a clear message to the state leaders at COP21, with protests in Paris coming together even despite recent attacks and a sensationalized fear of terrorism earlier in November, just weeks before the Climate Talks. At Queens Park in Tkaronto, Crystal Sinclair, Cree Woman and Idle No More organizer, called for an end to anything that is destructive to the Land as she spoke to hundreds of People that gathered and marched in defense of systemic changes that honour Land, Nature and Life on the planet. Idle No More is an Indigenous sovereignty and environmental movement, started by four Women (three Indigenous and one non-Indigenous) in Saskatoon, Canada in 2012 (Tuck & Yang, 2014, p. 13). It mobilizes continuously against continued destruction of Land, Life and Indigenous People and inspires “expressions of solidarity and recognition from around the globe as cities, towns and campuses hold teach-ins and circle dances to learn, to organize, to tell the story of pipelines, of sovereignty, of the future and Indigenous futurity in a different way,”
Tuck, McCoy & McKenzie (2014) write that, “Idle No More has already taught the world about what we hope a land education does and will do: that is, to remind people to place Indigenous understandings of land and life at the center of environmental issues and other (educational) issues; provide an explicit critique and rendering of settler colonialism, treaties, and sovereignty; invite and inspire acts of refusal, reclamation, regeneration, and reimagination; and theorize pathways to living as ‘separate sovereignties on shared territory,’” (Simpson 2013, as cited on p. 19). Increasingly, People are re-organizing, re-learning, relating, and co-creating actions in their Communities to stop Land and biocultural destruction, and nurture the future.

At a talk in Tkaronto, Mohawk Clifton Arihwakethe Nicolas described the 1990 Oka Crisis in which the Quebec government released troops on a Community action protecting a 300 year old sacred cemetery from being turned into a golf course. He is creating a film called The Long Shadow of the Pines to pass this chapter of history on to future generations, noting that this project is especially important because the Oka Crisis “was a moment that sparked a thousand fires,” (Nicolas, 2015). Susan Hill also writes that the 1990 Oka Crisis “inspired an increase in Indigenous activism in Canada,” (2008, p. 38). Various Land and Water movements are ongoing and growing throughout Canada.

Since 2009 the Unist’ot’en clan of the Wet’suwet’en First Nation has been strategically and peacefully blockading various plans to build the Pacific Trail and Coastal Gaslink oil and gas pipelines through their traditional territories. There are at least six invasive pipelines being considered by the government of British Columbia. In the summer of 2015, the oil and gas companies (TransCanada, Enbridge, and others), along with the RCMP, heightened their efforts to gain access to the Land. Despite threats of RCMP officers to arrest and physically remove the camp, Unist’ot’en members and supporters are determined to Live on the Land as a Community in order to keep it safe. They host camp programs where participants practice direct non-violent action strategies, learn to sustain themselves and care for the Land, grounded in Indigenous biocultural knowledge. They are also building a healing center for Unist’ot’en and surrounding First Nation Communities. Freda Huson, the main organizer, says, “It impacts everybody. It impacts these people who have the same concerns we do. All our waters are connected; the globe is round, and the streams flow into the rivers, the rivers flow into the ocean,” (McSheffrey, 2015). Freda speaks honestly about the impending collapse of our current economic systems and
the need for People to begin to learn how to Live sustainably on the Land. She points out that we can’t expect the government to sustain the Earth and our Livelihoods for us because they never have (2015).

Throughout the summer of 2016, the young People of Standing Rock Sioux Nation of North Dakota strengthened their refusal of the Energy East Dakota Pipeline, which passes through seven states, threatening the Water, People and Animal Life of mostly Indigenous Communities, but also non-Indigenous Communities. A camp of Indigenous Water Protectors from across Turtle Island and Abya Yala, gathered at Standing Rock raising international awareness of Indigenous anti-pipeline solidarity. Violent police attacks using dogs, gas, rubber bullets, water cannons, and arrests were made in attempts to remove the protectors, who remained in peace and prayer. Mass media depicted the peaceful actions as violent in nature, attempting to uphold racist colonial notions of Indigenous People and protect corporate interests of the nation-state. Social and alternative media were vital tools for the release of live updates directly from the camp and solidarity demonstrations ongoing throughout Turtle Island, Abya Yala, and around the world. Countless actions were held in Tkaronto and across Canada, led by Indigenous Youth and leaders who stand in solidarity to demand that Water, Indigenous Land and People be respected. As awareness was raised, more and more People and companies divested from banks that funded the pipeline.

On Nov 5th, 2016, over 6,000 People marched, drummed, sang, and danced in prayer in Tkaronto, beginning at Queen’s Park and culminating at City Hall. In response, Elder Arvol Lookinghorse of the Oceti Sakowin Camp in North Dakota came to speak at the University of Toronto (OISE) on November 28th. He assured those gathered that Standing Rock is just one of many camps that are growing around the world, hinting at the mounting action against the Kinder Morgan and Enbridge Line 9 pipelines in Canada. We must all ask ourselves in what ways we are responding to this growing solidarity across Turtle Island. In what ways are we working to protect Land and Life and learning from Indigenous Community leaders so that we can respond accordingly to the injustices they continue to face? In today’s current state of affairs, an anticolonial theory, praxis and pedagogy must speak to and align with these biocultural Land movements, otherwise it misses the point entirely. In the context of settler colonialism on Turtle Island, Indigenous resilience and futurity must be central in anticolonial thought.
Movements that denounce settler colonial, neo-colonial and Life-destructive systems have been building for decades in Abya Yala as well. On November 5th 2015, two Samarco Mining Company waste dams from an iron-ore mine collapsed in Bento Rodriguez, Brasil, contaminating and killing all of Rio Doce across two entire Brazilian states and reaching the Atlantic Ocean in a mudslide of toxic chemicals. The disaster left over 600 people without homes and up to 13 dead, as well as contaminating the Water of over a dozen towns along the River. This took days to hit international news but was circulating social media and alternative media sources much sooner with footage of fishermen sobbing as they boated slowly by dead Fish floating belly up, mud-caked houses and the Bodies of Animals covered in the toxic orange sludge. Everything in the River is now dead. The Land which the Indigenous and rural families farmed and survived on, the Water, the habitats that nursed endangered species in Brasil’s forests - all of these are now extremely toxic. The Krenak People and other affected Communities began blocking railroads in protest actions, with Krenak leader Geovani Krenak saying “Morre Rio, morremos todos,” (“The River dies, we all die,”) (Kawaguti & Senra, 2015). Researchers Lucia Maria de Barros Freire and Soraya Gama de Ataide Prescholdt published the article “Reverse Development and Socio Environmental Degradation by a Mining Company” in September 2015 – just two months before the Rio Doce disaster. They write precisely about the aggressive, unsustainable, neoliberal nature of multinational corporations and their research explicitly lists the Samarco mine in Bento Rodrigues as a case example. They show that local mine workers face aggression on their health, on the Communities they belong to, on the traditional sustainable economies in the region and on their environment (p. 477). They argue that the truth of these businesses are concealed not only from the public, but also from regulatory agencies, and that the current economic development policy in Brasil favours irresponsible multinational corporations, causing a global crisis of environmental and social disasters (p. 477). What is important about this biocultural research, this example, and so many others like it coming from Abya Yala and Turtle Island, is that they recognize the multifaceted and interlocking biological, socio-cultural, and also political economic factors of the “socio environmental degradation” they’re addressing.

Sitting in Tkaronto, reading the empty apologies of the mining companies and the already-broken promises of the Brazilian government, I struggled with my location and responsibilities, particularly with the knowledge that Canadian mining corporations are directly involved in these violations of Human rights: “about 75% of the world’s mining companies are registered in
Canada, and most operate in so-called Global South,” (Deneault et al., 2012, as cited in Picq 2014, p. 30). Described as one of Brasil’s largest environmental disasters in history by various news sources, the death of Rio Doce is only one of many. There are countless and often unrecorded instances repeating stories of settler colonial erasure, genocide and poverty due to loss of Land and Water.

At a talk in Tkaronto on mining resistance, I met Francisco Ramirez Cuellar, who confirmed that Colombia has the highest rate of key activists and Indigenous leaders jailed and assassinated in the past 25 years, and that there are over 5 million people internally displaced due to violent dispossession of their homelands because of multinational resource corporations that come in to exploit the Land (2015). Ramirez is a Colombian union activist, lawyer, and author of the book *The Profits of Extermination: Big Mining in Colombia*. He has survived eight assassination attempts and there is currently an action ongoing to demand his protection from paramilitary groups. Manuela Picq in Ecuador details in her work how “Indigenous resistance has been the target of severe government repression, ranging from judicial intimidation to assassination of activists,” and the declaration that protests against the extraction industries is illegal (2014, p. 28). Francisco Ramirez urged action and solidarity between Northern and Southern continents. He spoke about New Brunswick Power, a Canadian company which imports coal from the Cerrejon mine, located by Rio Rancheria and the village of Albania, Colombia which has seen resistance from the Indigenous and campesino (rural) people who live on the Land. The mine is owned by several multinational mining corporations, among them BHP Billiton – one of the same companies apologizing for the November 2015 mining disaster in Rio Doce, Brasil.

In Uruguay, there is also a fast-growing movement against extensive mining and fracking plans, unsafe Monsanto farming practices and unsustainable corporate activities which are disastrously regulated, if at all (Zibechi, 2013). It was reported that pesticides were being sprayed in farms dangerously near rural schools, with no way of knowing the effects of these practices on Children and Youth. Resistance and organization of Indigenous People in Uruguay has grown. In June 2015, Charrua Communities celebrated ten years of the Consejo de la Nacion Charrua (CONACHA). They are taking the lead on Uruguay’s Indigenous and environmental activism and sustainability education, with organizer Monica Michelena speaking internationally at the United Nations, organizing collaborative movements as well as Community education and media efforts that support Indigenous resistance across the continent (Michelena, 2013).
Recently in Uruguay, the Water was found to be contaminated and unsafe to drink for over two million People by Río Santa Lucía due to toxic drainage over a period of more than 10 years from Monsanto farms and other industries (Zibechi, 2013). Various Water sources in the country are facing contamination by agrochemicals, including those near my birthplace of Paysandú, where part of my Family lives, and those by my Mother’s home in Sauce de Portezuelo. Part of the concern is that the state is spending a lot of money treating the Water and attempting to poorly ‘fix’ the damage rather than solving the underlying issues and fostering sustainable practices. These concerns begin to sound familiar across the continent. There is a growing realization that governments have not taken appropriate measures to take care of the Land or the People, and that Community resilience and self-sufficiency is becoming indispensable to survival. During a recent contamination in the area’s potable Water provided by the state (OSE – Obras Sanitarias del Estado), my Mother’s neighbours in Sauce de Portezuelo relied on the Water that came from her house because it is pumped directly from the Land. To me, this felt like a preview of what Life could be like in the not-too-distant future if we refuse to take Land and Water movements seriously. Nation states, by their very nature, are simply not interested in the health of the People, Land or Water. We have little option but to take things into our own hands.

There are growing transnational connections between social, cultural, economic, political and environmental degradation and the consequent resistance that is being seen. In “Self-determination as anti-extractiveism: How Indigenous resistance challenges world politics,” Picq writes about the complementary mobilizations in Ecuador, Guatemala, Bolivia, Mexico, Chile, Peru, Argentina and other nations across Abya Yala and Turtle Island: “From Canada’s Idle No More movement to the protests against damming the Xingu River Basin in Brazil, Indigenous movements are rising and demanding they be allowed to participate in decisions affecting their territories,” (2014, p. 27). Picq adds that, “In 2013, the Fifth Continental Summit of Indigenous Peoples of Abya Yala encouraged communities to step-up resistance in light of the threat posed by state-sponsored extractivism,” (p. 27). At Standing Rock, there were over 700 Indigenous nations, from Abya Yala, Turtle Island and the world, gathered in solidarity to protect Water and demand that People always come before profit. State-sponsored extractivism is a growing threat, particularly considering the corporate investments of Trump’s white supremacist cabinet in the U.S., and Canada’s Justin Trudeau, who has moved forward with the Kinder Morgan pipeline
Despite unsatisfactory consultation with First Nations Communities and widespread national protests against the project. Conflicts concerning Life, Land and Water “should not be dismissed as only concerning Indigenous peoples…They encompass larger debates about the role of extractivism in politics and contest a development model based on the corporatization of natural resources,” and “based on predation and usurpation,” (Picq, 2014, p. 29-30). These conflicts speak to a necessary re-organization in the way Humans relate to Nature and one another, leading to an understanding that Land and Water exploitation is no longer (and ever was) a viable strategy to ‘create jobs’ and finance the ‘progress’ of nation-states. Questions of Land and Water are questions of settler colonialism, since many “entrepreneurs promoting mining today are the scions of the same oligarchical families that have controlled Indigenous land and people for centuries,” (Casaus 2007 as cited in Picq, 2014, p. 30).

There is a growing anticolonial biocultural front across the continent that increasingly recognizes biocultural Human relationships and responsibilities with(in) Nature. This front is the victorious continuation and strengthening of centuries of Indigenous and rural resistance. It is made up of complex ongoing histories and relationships, and as such, it is not devoid of Human error, ignorance and power dynamics. There is much listening and learning and work to be done. However, this resistance includes all Individuals and Communities Living here, and at the very least hopes to achieve common ground on the most fundamental level—the interconnectedness and integrity of Living. Métis scholar Kathy Hodgson-Smith (1997) writes that to be in good relation “requires us to know one another, to acknowledge our relation now and historically to each other, to all things living and nonliving, especially to the earth that sustains us physically, intellectually, emotionally and spiritually” (as cited in Haig-Brown, 2009, p. 13). Each of us, individually, must come to understand our biocultural implications and responsibilities within our colonial experience of the world and move towards reimagining these relationships with our actions every day.
Chapter 2
Reclaiming Biopower

Possible to be possible
Possible to be
A whole unto one
A nation with lots of fish to eat
And fruit that offers itself
it is possible to be
it is possible to
Struggle against blocks
of inertia
Against conquistadors’ wishes
lurking in blood nervous system
Nightmaring dreams
Dogs that come bark at the
beautiful dance
It is possible to be
pure fresh river water
We are bird that sings
Free

-Victor Hernandez Cruz, Nuyorican poet
Excerpt from “Areyto” (1991)

2.1 Biopower as the Politics of Life and Death

This chapter discusses the ways life and power relate to one another, and looks at the ways in which Individuals, Communities, and nation-states hold and strengthen power by defining life.

Michel Foucault outlines biopower as “a power over bios or life,” where the Lives of individuals and groups of the population are ‘managed,’ (Taylor, 2014, p. 45). Foucault sees two interconnected levels of disciplinary and regulatory power functioning at the individual Body and population, or species-Body (p. 50). Taylor explains that, “While at one level disciplinary institutions such as schools, workshops, prisons and hospitals target individual bodies as they deviate from norms, at another level the state is concerned with knowing and administrating the norms of the population as a whole,” (p. 45). State biopower is in the intricacies of the government’s attempts to “manage” and “administer” Life through “norms rather than laws…internalized by subjects rather than exercised from above through acts and threats of violence…dispersed throughout society rather than located in a single individual or government
body,” (Taylor, 2014, p. 43-46). Foucault (1990) claims that it is this “taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave power its access even to the body,” (as cited in Taylor, p. 43). State biopower resides in the conceptualization of the Individual Body as machine, as well as the supervision and regulation of Community Bodies.

The nation-states accumulate and reproduce their biopower, through their ability to ‘manage’ and ‘normalize’ certain conditions of Life, fabricating colonial biocultures that maintain settler colonialism. The hierarchies created are used to confer power and punishment in what Cameroonian theorist Achille Mbembe describes as necropolitics—the politics of Life and death (2003, p. 17). Morgensen (2011) writes, “As scholars increasingly theorize biopower as definitive of our times, we must confront our inheritance of settler colonialism as a primary condition of biopower in the contemporary world,” (p. 52). Settler colonialism utilizes biopower in numerous ways to silence and normalize the oppression of People and Life. It works to legitimize the settler as “holding dominion over the earth and its flora and fauna, as the anthropocentric normal, and as more developed, more human, more deserving than other groups or species,” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 6). Violating treaty agreements between nations, taking unceded Indigenous Lands, and using it to produce unsustainably to maintain the settler identity of “civilization” is a form of biopower since it declares the settler’s Life more valuable than both Indigenous Life and the Life of the Land and its non-Humxn Creatures (p. 6).

Not only does the state use biopower to propel itself materialistically; it also propagates and normalizes ideologies about Humxns and Nature, Land, Life and People that include colonial ideas of species, race, gender, sexuality, and ability, as well as ideas of mental, physical and spiritual wellness or unwellness. Analyzing Foucault’s notion of biopower, Mbembe (2003) writes that biopower and sovereignty are “the capacity to define who matters and who does not, who is disposable and who is not,” (p. 27). The state’s biopower is built on racism (Foucault 2003 as cited in Taylor, 2014, p. 50), so it is critical to note Dei’s reminder that anticlonal approaches must necessarily be antiracist. Dei writes that, “The Empire was founded upon the construction of racist and colonizing hierarchies,” and these are “continually being produced and reproduced,” (2009, p. 252). He adds that, “The link between state policies/practices and racist/colonial exclusions has been demonstrated time and again. Such hierarchies today continue to be the basis of distribution of rewards and punishments,” (Dei, 2009, p. 251). Anticolonial frameworks must draw connections between current colonial/racist manifestations of state
biopower across the continent. Anticolonial and antiracist praxis must consider the biocultural complexes of specific places because these questions of biopower affect every aspect of Living and resilience. We do not have to look far to see manifestations of racist/colonial biopower around us.

In Canada, laws and policies largely deny environmental racism: “They do not reflect the reality that some communities in this country are more likely than others to be home to harmful industrial facilities and are less likely to have their views taken into account during the consideration of these projects,” (Mitchell and D’Onofrio, 2016, p. 328). Environmental racism is described in this study as a “pattern of disproportionate exposure to environmental hazards faced by communities with low socio-economic status and communities belonging to historically disadvantaged groups in Canada,” (p. 307). This particular article, however, titled “Environmental Justice and Racism in Canada” failed in that it attributed environmental racism to “historic factors such as colonialism and poor land use planning,” “coupled with contemporary indifference,” (p. 327). In reality, environmental racism is caused by the continual processes of ongoing settler colonialism and persistent racism that give shape to state biopower; these “factors” are not in the past. Living Biocultural contexts such as: many First Nations Communities’ inaccessibility to clean drinking Water, the toxic Air pollution of Chemical Valley in Sarnia, Ontario, the Water crisis in Flint, Michigan, the use of chemical farming agents and toxic run off near rural Communities across Abya Yala, and current cross-continental pipeline and extraction corporations that endanger Indigenous and racialized Lives most. In Canada, the federal government has made numerous promises to end long-term First Nation water advisories but a study by the David Suzuki Foundation reported that the “‘small steps’” being taken “‘fall short of the strides that are needed for this government’s promises to become reality,’” (as cited in Barrera, 2018).

Another example of environmental racism is seen in the Anti-terrorism Act, 2015, or Bill C-51. Passed by the Conservatives and Stephen Harper, it claims to “protect Canada’s critical infrastructure” and permits environmental Indigenous movements to be labelled as terrorist and criminal activity. A leaked Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) report titled the “Critical Infrastructure Intelligence Assessment: Criminal Threat to Canadian Petroleum Industry” reads: “Due to the environmental and land-use implications, the antipetroleum movement, most notable
in New Brunswick, Ontario and British Columbia, has been able to align with violent aboriginal extremists,” (RCMP 2014, p. 11).

Freda Huson, spokesperson of the Unist’ot’en anti-pipeline encampment in British Columbia, has turned this “critical infrastructure” terminology on its head, asserting that what Unist’ot’en is doing is protecting their own critical infrastructure of Water, Salmon, Berries, and Medicines. These biocultural movements are far from “violent extremism.” We must recognize that these narratives are used to silence (and ultimately justify violence against) People protecting Community biopower and biocultural relationships to Land and Water. The numerous instances of Individual/Community resistance and resilience detailed in this thesis show that the reclamation of biopower and sovereignty begins with(in) Individual and Community Bodies with(in) Nature. Biopolitics must also consider self-organizing groups as “increasingly significant actors” made up of People who create their own understandings of themselves as Humxn Individuals and Communities, or as “‘somatic’ individuals” and “‘biological’” citizens (Rabinow 1996, Rose & Novas, 2004, as cited in Raman & Tutton, 2010, p. 719). Individuals and Communities have the power and sovereignty to define Life and Life norms for themselves-within biopolitics exists (and existed long before the colonial state) the power of the Living in and of themselves to create and Live according to their own Life-views.

2.2 Biocultural Sciences: Knowledge and Power

2.2.1 Biopower in Sciences and the Threat of ‘Universal’ Legitimacy

We have described colonial state biopower as the managing of Life and Land through discipline and regulation, and the construction of ‘universal norms’ that attempt to define Life on Earth and Humxn identities. We can expand these ideas by looking at Sardar (2008), who writes:

“…the dominance of western culture, and its globalization through this dominance, should not be confused with universalism. Just because a particular discipline or a discourse is accepted or practiced throughout the world, it does not mean that discipline or discourse is universally valid and applicable to all societies. After all, as I have written elsewhere, burgers and coke are eaten and drunk throughout
the world but one would hardly classify them as universally embraced, healthy and acceptable food: what the presence of burgers and coke in every city and town in the world demonstrate is not their universality but the power and dominance of the culture that produced them,” (p. xvi).

Sadar is calling attention to the way materials and ideas become globally disseminated by colonial power as ‘norms’ and confused as universal. There are many ways of interpreting his example, but I chose it because it speaks to another crucial aspect of being Humxn and Alive that goes unquestioned every day – the biopower of Food. Eating is deeply rooted to Bodies, Lands, Water, People, Plants, Animals, Biomes, ancestry, our health and wellness. It is a vital part of the Humxn-Nature relationship and building personal/Community biopower and resilience. What we eat is also one of many Humxn biocultural relationships that are impacted by colonial biopower and claims to universality, particularly through Western science and medicine.

Western science/biology aids the state’s ability to create, administer and manage ‘universal norms’ about Life and subsequently dictate what ‘deviates’ from these so-called biocultural norms. Western science/biology is a key means of producing and reproducing hierarchical conceptions of Humxns and Nature: “the distribution of human species into groups, the subdivision of the population into subgroups, and the establishment of a biological caesura between the ones and the others” (Mbembe, 2003, p.17). These norms about Life ‘universalized’ by Western science can include notions of race, sex, gender, ability, class, the Body, Food, Medicine, mental and physical health and wellness, spiritual and cosmological Life-views, connection to non-Humxn Life, beauty, success, intelligence, Community, individualism, and beyond.

A profound example of the ways Western science has worked to produce ‘norms’ and fabricate ‘history’ is given in Iseke-Barnes’ (2005) description of the Bering Strait Theory, a Western science theory which proposes that North America was UNpopulated by People until a land bridge formed and the first Humxn Communities migrated from Northern Europe (p. 151). Iseke-Barnes breaks down the way this theory is presented and utilized to maintain settler-colonial states on Turtle Island and calls attention to the fact that Indigenous histories and cosmologies, (which affirm Indigenous People as arising from Turtle Island, not migrating there) are rarely “accepted and acknowledged as valid interpretations of what has taken place,” (Smith 1999, as cited in Iseke-Barnes, 2005, p. 150). Why is it that the Bering Strait Theory is accepted as true
science, but the histories and theories of hundreds of Indigenous nations are disregarded as false or mythical? Why does Western science get the final say? It shouldn’t. Iseke-Barnes’ asserts that “telling and retelling stories, reclaiming the past, and providing testimony to the past” are ways in which Indigenous people are “recovering from a colonial past,” (2005, p. 150). Indeed, Dei and Asgharzadeh (2001) write that “It is by according a discursive integrity to subjects’ accounts of their histories and cultures, indigenous languages and knowledge forms that colonial imperialist projects can be destabilized,” (p. 301).

Dei asks us to recognize that “Eurocentric knowledge masquerades as universal knowings,” and that, “Today, this fabrication continues to exact a heavy material, physical, psychological and emotional toll,” (2010, p. 7). Western science’s initial hierarchical organization of the world attempted to define the spectrums of Life and Humxnness with often false and limiting ‘universal’ ideas. Intersections of racism, sexism, gender, ableism and class in our biocultural histories are informed in different ways by Western paradigms of so-called ‘universal’ biological concepts. These are urgent ideas to interrogate in order to reclaim our individual Humxn stories and identities, and to regain biopower. If we understand ‘science(s)’ as ways of knowing, we must centre Indigenous, ancestral, cultural, and place-based sciences that existed long before Eurocentric sciences, and that continue to exist and evolve to this day in Living biocultures/Communities.

Digging deeper into our personal biocultures can reveal profound internalizations of what it means to be Humxn and help us reconnect with our Selves, Nature and each other in a way that redefines how we engage with our world. For me, reclaiming biopower has meant to reclaim the ability to define Life for myself. Dei encourages us, writing that, “As resisting subjects, we will all have to confront and deal with the historic inferiorization…the devaluation of rich histories and cultures,” in order that we may “shed the insulting idea that others know and understand us better than we know ourselves,” (2010, p. 4). The biocultural Life-views we Live by contribute to our larger understandings of what it means to be Alive. Unpacking Western science ideas that have found their way into our psyche through schooling and society, and redefining our Humxn relationships with(in) Nature for ourselves will strengthen our ability to harness personal and Community biopower.
In many ways, the colonial front of Western science has profoundly marked how we perceive and interact with our Selves, with Nature, its Creatures, and one another. It seeks to dominate classrooms, social-ecological (and thus political) decisions about Medicine, Food, Water, our wellness, and the way we perceive, identify, and organize ourselves with(in) Nature and society. Thus, anticolonial praxis must address the ways we have been biologically and culturally defined as Alive and Humxn with(in) Nature. Dei and Asgharzadeh write that, “decolonization requires breaking with the ways in which the human condition is defined and shaped by dominant European-American cultures,” (2001, p. 299). When I think of biology and Living biocultures, I think of the multitude of diverse biological, cultural, individual, collective, material, ideological and spiritual relationships we have to being Alive - our Life-views and Humxn identities. I also think about how much our Humxn-Nature identities have been impacted by Western science’s ideas that have become normalized in society.

Western science has its uses, but we must challenge its overarching presence, power and validity. As anticolonial thinkers, we must denounce the ways Western sciences cause the destruction of biocultural relationships and Life. Colomeda (1999) writes that, “European ecological heritage is born from such fear, dominance over nature, and hostility toward things unknown,” and reminds us that the widespread ecological/biocultural disasters evident today were/are “all accomplished in ignorance of the natural systems and the human connection to them,” (p 22). These fearful disconnections from Nature and one another as Humxns permeate within settler colonial and capitalistic society today. Western biology, framed as a ‘universal’ and ‘objective’ form of knowing, is a potent force for hierarchical notions of the Humxn with(in) Nature and divisions that feed into the metanarrative of capitalistic progress, Eurocentric modernity and colonialism. Gina Thésée (2006) in Montreal writes that Western science was “developed to drive the European man to dominate nature” and “anchored into the colonial enterprise in multiple ways,” (p. 28). She points out that science and technology were instrumental in expanding colonization efforts with “tools of exploration, penetration, domination and economic development, but also the scaffolding of militaristic and cultural superiority,” (p. 28). This attempt at domination continues today on a global scale.

Eve Tuck speaks to the colonial nature of Western science with respect to research in the present day. In her commentary on Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s book, Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples, Tuck writes that “Research is how imperialism and colonialism are both
regulated and realized, thus it has traditionally benefitted the researcher and the knowledge base of the dominant settler group,” (Tuck, 2013, p. 367). Western science and research form part of the system of settler colonialism that jeopardizes Indigeneity and Indigenous Livelihood on many fronts. “Research” is the word that matter-of-factly trails off the tongues of state tyrants and corporate oppressors just before they approve acts of further destruction to Land and People.

Thésée (2006) further emphasizes that the Mind is colonized through Western science’s claim to legitimacy and that it “is more efficient than even physical violence in perpetuating domination over peoples and nations,” (p. 39). She then goes on to offer that “the school is the main site of propagation for these discourses,” and that it is precisely there it can be tackled (p. 39). Throughout my biology studies, important dialogues about colonialism and non-Western perspectives could have arisen . . . but they did not. If these questions are silenced in most history classes, why wouldn’t they be silenced in the sciences—“the colonial tools for domination”? We learned countless details and processes of Human and Natural biology, but even as we learned about our own Bodies, the Human relationship to Nature, Land, Life, Self and one another was never specifically addressed in biology class. It was not addressed in any class at all! There was no room for these ontological and spiritual questions in schooling, and especially in Western-centered sciences. I thought about these relationships on my own, embodied them in my Living bioculture and theorized with(in) Community, until I had the chance to discuss them—finally—in a postgraduate philosophy class on Mind and Nature. Even in this instance, the dominant biocultural perspective was Western science.

This is my personal experience within the Canadian schooling system, but as George Dei points out, there are many dimensions to the individual learner—psychological, spiritual and cultural dimensions—that are not addressed in conventional education (2002). There were several laboratory experiments that I refused to partake in as a biology student because they violated the biocultural relationships I had with(in) Nature. As I learned about the creation of Life, watching Cells grow, divide and diversify before my Eyes into what would become a multicellular, Living, breathing Existence, how could I not see myself reflected? How could the biological study of Living things and their intertwined systems not discuss our personal/collective relationship to being Alive? Education must address this deep connectedness.
Our relationship to Nature, a profound aspect of Human biology, culture and Lived experience, must not be silenced in schooling and society. It should be central. We cannot accept Western sciences and their ideas of Humxnness as ‘obvious,’ ‘universal’ and all-encompassing. We must expand beyond Western ideas of Living, progress, and Humxn wellbeing in our classrooms, simultaneously redefining ideas of race, gender, sexuality and ability that function to connect us further to ourselves, each other and nurturing Humxn-Nature relationships. Bodies, Minds and Spirits can be decolonized through this process and personal/collective biopower can be nurtured. We must aim not only for culturally-responsive pedagogy, but education that is responsive to the diverse and ever-changing spectrum of Human Living experiences! We can no longer accept distorted colonial notions of Humxnness every day and move on with the class lesson. Refusing to question, speak to and unlearn the impacts of Western science/biology is to refuse the connection between how we have collectively, and yet differently, been conceived as Living Human beings by this dominant discourse, and how Eurocentric conceptions of Life have been internalized by cultures and Peoples around the world.

The strength of anticolonialism “lies in its offering of new philosophical insights to challenge Eurocentric discourses, in order to pave the way for Southern/Indigenous intellectual and political emancipation,” (Dei, 2006, p. 2). Through centuries of colonization and continuing processes of settler and neocolonialism, many Eurocentric/Western science discourses work to silence forms of Life, knowing and being, categorizing and dividing Humans and Nature with systems that are destructive of Life itself. This kind of “alienation” from ourselves, our Bodies, the Land, and one another “can only be resisted when knowledge is engaged holistically to speak to the individual and collective cultural, spiritual, material, and emotional presence. Abandoning dominant ways of knowing in this context has become a matter of survival” (Dei, 2009, p.254). It is from this perspective that I question how Indigenous/ancestral/cultural/place-based biocultural sciences, combined with an anticolonial lens, can help us create new and diverse systems of biocultural organization that harness personal/Community biopower. It is imperative to question the ways we have internalized ‘universal’ biocultural concepts. In this way, we can shake the ‘universal’ and positively impact many aspects of our Individual and collective identities – our wellness, learning, Community organization and capacity for revitalization.
2.2.2 Living Biocultural Sciences and Anticolonial Praxis

Within Western academia, ethnobiology is often colonially described as a new and largely undefined field made up of diverse disciplines that looks at “interactions between different components of the ecosystem and dynamic relationships established in time and space,” (Albuquerque & Medeiros, 2013, p.1). In reality, ethnobiological sciences and ways of knowing are not new; they are the theories and praxes for Living and cultivating biopower that Communities have for many decades been developing in different places and that continue to evolve today. Often these sciences are ancestral and arise in connection to Land – the biocultural knowledge of our abuelas y abuelos (grandmothers and grandfathers). It is thus important to differentiate between Western ethnobiology as a restricted and compartmentalized field of study within Western academia, and the diverse spectrum of ethnobiological sciences that includes Indigenous/ancestral/cultural/place-based biocultural sciences, or ways of knowing.

Currently, Western forms of ethnobiology dominate academia in the North. These fields are made up largely of Western science’s colonial hierarchies, and often work to ‘legitimise’, package and reproduce subjective biocultural knowledges as objective, quantifiable, and dislocated information that is static and unevolving. Western research in ethnobiology largely reproduces hierarchies of power by taking Indigenous, Land-based knowledges and attributing these ‘findings’ to Western academics, effectively removing the epistemic power of biocultural knowledge systems from their cultures and Peoples. This can be seen in the example of natural Medicines that are discovered, packaged and sold on the shelves of fancy health Food stores, completely dislocated from their biocultural Humxn-Nature-Land relationship and often made inaccessible to the very Communities they originate from.

On the other hand, Indigenous/ancestral/cultural/place-based forms of ethnobiology involve the recording, documenting, and oral-passing of biocultural ways of Life from generation to generation to strengthen and restore specific traditional practices and relationships to the Land (Mancera-Valencia, 2015, p.27). These forms of ethnobiology are subjective, Land, context and place-specific, and constantly evolving. These traditional or biocultural knowledges are considered culturally-specific collective intellectual property and they honour diversity, embodied learning and co-creating in communication with the natural world (Mancera-Valencia, p. 27). Colomeda (1999) writes that Indigenous sciences “sees life in all natural things,” and that Western views miss the “complexities of the relationship between Native People and the diverse
presences that comprised their world: mountains, lakes, rivers, trees, birds, animals, and so on…the presences inhabiting nature comprise the very center of existence, a great unifying Life Force or spirit. Kinship with all creatures is very real…the land was and is the culture” (p. 20). These interconnected relationships and notions of Community, diversity and communication are central to Life-sustaining biocultures.

Eurocentric and Western biology, ecology and ethnobiology still consider Humans as separate from Nature. Albuquerque and Medeiros (2013) recognize that the Western “notion of ecology, dissociated from human beings, may constitute a source of bias, given that humans interfere directly in ecological and evolutionary processes” (p. 1). A large portion of Western ethnobiology (and also Southern ethnobiology working from a Western science viewpoint) focuses on the cultural and health uses and relationships of different Plants and Animals. Although this helps maintain records of information that could potentially be lost by Communities, this "contributes little for the theoretical foundations of ethnobiology" and "leaves out attempts to understand the complex relationships between people and biological resources" (p. 2). Human relationships with(in) Nature - Human subjectivity, diversity, communion, learning and co-creation- are not a primary concern of Western ethnobiology, but they are central to many ethnobiologies and ethnoecologies around the world. Zainab Amadahy writes that “The current environmental crisis is testimony to what happens when we do not understand and respect that we two-leggeds are dependent on a complex web of relationships,” (2011).

Vandana Shiva is an ecofeminist that works to empower and reclaim biopower with the rural, Indigenous ethnobiologies of Womxn in India. She is an activist against the privatization of Water and Seeds and she recognizes the destruction of “life-support systems” that is resulting from ‘development’ and ‘progress’ in the name of Western sciences, writing that “there must be something seriously wrong with a concept of progress that threatens survival itself,” (2014, p. 11). She critiques the patriarchal nature of Western science/biology and the dis-connection of Humxn-Nature in global Food processes. Shiva illustrates the concepts of interconnectedness and co-creation within Indigenous/ancestral/cultural/place-based ethnobiologies when she writes that “Every seed is an embodiment of millennia of nature’s evolution and centuries of farmer’s breeding. It is the distilled expression of the intelligence of the earth and the intelligence of farming communities,” (2014, p. 223). She goes on to mention the complete lack of respect for this biocultural knowledge by Western science and development, writing: “Farmers have bred
seeds for diversity, resilience, taste, nutrition, health, and adaptation to local agroecosystems. Industrial breeding treats nature’s contributions and farmers’ contributions as nothing,” (p. 223). This pattern of disempowering local, Indigenous biocultures by colonial/capitalistic methods of biopower is seen in many places.

On a visit to el Centro de Investigacion y Docencia (Centre for Research and Education) in Chihuahua, Mexico, Federico Mancera-Valencia shared with me a newly released collection of articles titled, “Patrimonio Biocultural de Chihuahua” (Biocultural Heritage of Chihuahua). In this book he calls out how the growing schools of ethnobiology in North America have not recognized and persistently ignore the interdisciplinary works in ethnoecologia and ecobiologia coming from Latin America from the years 1940 onwards (2015, p. 22). He writes that Anglo bioculturidad has not considered the theories and philosophies for ethnoscientific analysis developed by Carlos Garcia Mora (anthropologic ecology and human ecology), Victor Manuel Toledo (traditional cognitive systems), and Enrique Leff Zimmerman (epistemology and environmental rationality) (p. 23). Federico Mancera-Valencia shows how, combined with anticolonial thought, ethnobiologies can be taken back from the grasp of Western imperialism and work to empower the biocultural scientists, academics and everyday Living practitioners of local, context and culturally-specific biocultures. Anticolonial thought affirms that, “The advancement of any one cultural perspective cannot be universally applied and/or seen as superior to other perspectives,” (Dei. 2009, p.252). Federico Mancera-Valencia writes that the point is not to completely delegitimize EuroWestern sciences, but to change the permanent disqualification of other ways of knowing that stems from it (p. 36). He suggests a vast and holistic understanding of biocultural heritages where philosophy and education is intercultural, and where formal education teaches and spreads not only EuroWestern epistemologies and sciences, but also the knowledges and sciences generated in Latin America and other places/Communities that have been colonized (2015, p.27). Non-hierarchy is a central tenet of anticolonialism, and it speaks to the ways ancestral biocultures understand knowledge to be created, shared and negotiated in Community.

The anticolonial framework is “anchored in the indigenous sense of collective and common colonial consciousness… it recognizes the importance of locally produced knowledge emanating from cultural history and daily human experiences and social interactions…[with] marginalized groups as subjects of their own experiences and histories,” (Dei and Asgharzadeh, 2001, p. 300).
An anticolonial lens on ethnobiological sciences allows us to look at Human relationships to Nature, Life and Land, and question the effects of larger systems on biocultural knowledge production. Human biocultural knowledge about Life on Earth did not begin with European science; it began and persists because of Indigenous/ancestral/cultural/place-based knowledge systems.

Gregory Cajete writes that Native cosmology, “a people’s deep-rooted, symbolically expressed understanding of ‘humanness,’ predates all other human-structured expressions, including religion and social and political orders,” (2004, p. 46). He adds that, “Native American philosophy of science has always been a broad-based ecological philosophy, based not on rational thought alone, but also incorporating to the highest degree all aspects of interactions of ‘man in and of nature,’ i. e. the knowledge and truth gained from interaction of body, mind, soul and spirit with all aspects of Nature,” (p. 46). In Haudenosaunee biocultural sciences, “The earth is thought to be ever-expanding, imparting its life force to all growing things…human animals were also seen as growing things,” (Herrick, 1995, p. 13). Humans-Nature relationships are based on the key unifying principles of “harmony and balance,” “harmony in diversity,” and “communal concerns of coordination, cooperation, symbiosis, and mutual interaction and adjustment,” (p. 15). Humans are considered to be a “being-in-becoming,” and “the life force imparted to humans…must be utilized by individuals in such a way that it result[s] not only in the social responsibility of sharing, but in the social responsibility of restraint as well. It [is] a power given with the stipulation that individuals use it for personally developing themselves into responsible citizens,” …valuing “lineal and collateral relationships” more than individualistic relations (p. 13). Theorizations of Living and being Human in Indigenous sciences are often much broader than in Western science.

In 2010, the work of Eckart Boege Schmidt, titled “El patrimonio biocultural de los pueblos indígenas de Mexico. Hacia la conservación in situ de la biodiversidad en los territorios indígenas,” ( “The biocultural heritage of Indigenous communities of Mexico. Towards the in situ conservation of biodiversity in Indigenous territories/lands.”) brought national attention to the framework of bioculturidad, specifically because of his use of context-specific “patrimonio biocultural” or biocultural heritage, connected to Land and time, or the geohistory of the sociocultural, economic, cognitive-episteme and language that implicated a dialectic relationship with the ecosystems (Mancera-Valencia, 2015, p. 23). Mancera-Valencia explains that the word
patrimonio in bioculturidad speaks to the cultural heritage or herencia (inheritance) of context- and Land-specific, subjective biocultural knowledges that have been passed down by ancestors, families and Communities for thousands of years from generation to generation. He describes biocultural heritage as praxis (reflection/theorizing and action), with properties of dialogical creation, co-construction of knowledge in Community and in dialogue with the territorial ecosystems, and production for sustenance (p. 24). Anticolonial thinking shares these concepts with Indigenous/ancestral/cultural/place-based biocultures in that it “acknowledges and works with the understanding that the self and subjectivity matter in terms of methodological implications/considerations, as well as in the ways we produce, interrogate, and validate knowledge…bodies and identities are linked to the production of knowledge,” (Dei, 2009, p. 252). Biocultural ways of knowing rely on the subjective Humxn-Nature and Humxn-Humxn relationships in a specific context of place and time.

Living biocultural sciences are tools for reclaiming our Individual/Community biocultural heritages, our ancestral knowledge and Life-views that relate us as Humxns to the Land, and to one another. It considers the relations of biopower in the long dialogical relationships between cultures and biologies in a world that is constantly changing and finding new and fluid states of being. It favours subjectivity, diversity and Community, embodied knowing and co-creation, learning from the Body, the Land, other Creatures, and one another as People. Njoki Wane writes that it “is our collective responsibility, to ourselves, to our ancestors and our future generation, to take an active role in re/claiming our cultural heritage and epistemic centre,” (2013, p. 105). This reclamation will look different for everyone, but these differences are strengths, and we must support each other and work together, sharing this collective responsibility in reflection, dialogue and action towards harmony in diversity.

In the context of settler colonialism, reaffirming our own ancestral and embodied biocultures helps us to learn about the Indigenous biocultural knowledges of the Land we are Living on, since we can draw interconnections, as well as share and honour differences. Getting to intimately know our identities as Living with(in) Nature can lead to conversations about interdependence and connection, pluriversal worlds and knowledges, Land and Bodies as sovereign Living entities, Self/Community biopower, love and nurturance versus fear and destruction, how we communicate and exchange, Self/Community wellness and resilience. Reclamation of my ancestral biocultural identity and biopower meant coming face to face with
the history of Uruguay and my ancestors, as well as my migration to Turtle Island. This space of contradiction (referred to in Chapter 1.1) has guided me to consider both what I am reclaiming and what my responsibilities are to my Communities as an Abya Yalan on Turtle Island that benefits from privilege in many social scenarios.

According to Vandana Shiva, the main shift we can work towards is the moving away from a “monoculture of the mind” – an inability to see diversity and its potentials (2014, p. 2). It is imperative that we work to move away from anthropocentric Life-views presented by EuroWestern science and way of Life to one that is biocentric, inclusive of the Earth, all Humxn biocultures, and all the Earth’s Creatures as integral Community relations. This biocultural shift in our theorizing, praxis and pedagogy will open the door for an array of necessary decolonial questions and conversations that must be grounded in our work. A biocentric Life-view, represented by an overwhelming majority of Indigenous and non-Western sciences across the planet, sees “human beings eschew self conceits and embrace a moral obligation of relationship; human beings are only part of a larger reality and need on occasion to sacrifice individual interest to those of the whole (Chessworth 1996 as cited in Colomeda, 1999, p. 20). An anticolonial biocultures framework must work to put the Humxn back with(in) Nature and uncover the ways in which Eurocentric Life-views taught us that “Wilderness was a place to be feared,” or dominated (p. 21). An ethnobiological lens that honours diverse Indigenous/ancestral/cultural/place-based Life-views or biocultural heritages speaks instead to the interconnectedness and wholeness of the Living world. Moving from a single anthropocentric Life-view to a biocentric spectrum of Life-views requires us to delve deeper into our relationships with(in) Nature and make fundamental changes in the way we Live day to day.

2.3 The Colonized Consciousness: Capitalism and Biopower

We have seen that the state’s use of biopower attempts to normalize and legitimize the destructive use of Land as economic ‘resources.’ Tuck and Yang (2012) tell us that settler colonialism remakes Land into property, and that consequently “human relationships to land are restricted to the relationship of the owner to his property,” (p. 5). This physical, psychological and spiritual dis-connection to Land helps to explain the consumerist trajectories of our societies and the Humxn-Nature relationships involved. In order to validate the colonial order,
“epistemological, ontological, and cosmological relationships to land are interred, indeed made pre-modern and backward,” (Tuck & Yang, 2012, p. 5). How else could oil and mining companies bulldoze through Communities, polluting Land and Water? How else could profit come before People? Aime Cesaire calls this the “thing-ification” of People, Nature and Life, where the Human and Nature are turned into instruments of production (1972, p. 6). Nature and Life on the Land is turned into ‘resources’ – natural resources, animal resources, human resources - endlessly exploitable for the profit of the state.

Ania Loomba (1998) understands colonialism as “territorial ownership” of a space through imperial ideologies that secure occupation. Considering the history of various pre-European colonialisms, Loomba asks: why did modern European colonialism “alter the whole globe in a way that these other colonialisms did not?” (p. 3). The difference lies in that earlier colonialisms were *pre-capitalistic*, whereas modern Western/Eurocentric colonialism established itself *alongside capitalism and industrialism*: “Modern colonialism did more than extract tribute, goods and wealth from the countries it conquered – it restructured the economies of the latter, drawing them into a complex new relationship with their own…flows of profits and people [that] involved settlement and plantations, ‘trade,’ and enormous global shifts of populations,” (Loomba, 1998, p. 3-4). In addition, Loomba asserts that European colonialisms relied on producing the “economic imbalance necessary for the growth of European capitalism and industry,” (p. 4). Colomeda seconds these ideas when she writes that, “The ever expanding consumer economy pays little heed to the amount of pollution that it may create, the disruption of traditional Indigenous economy that it may create, the need for ultimate renewal of the natural resources that are being exploited, or the cumulative costs that the raping of an environment may impose on future generations,” (1999, p. 24). Interpreted in this way, European and Western colonialism and capitalism can be seen as the explicit, antagonistic and violent inhibition of Life – destruction of Land, People, biocultures, social-economic organizations, as well as ecological Communities that include Flora and Fauna and the systems of biopower that keep them Alive. How have we reached such massive levels of damage? The answers lie in our subconscious biocultural relationships.

When thinking about cultures, we are considering the way Human beings co-exist with one another and co-create the world, both individually and collectively, through the production and exchange of materials and ideas. Amilcar Cabral (1924-1973), an agricultural engineer,
anticolonial thinker and political leader of independence, understood that the material ‘productive forces’ a culture maintains with the world also determine the ideological culture that is produced, and vice versa, in an evolving dialogical relationship (Cabral, 1970, p. 3). Currently, prevailing global human biocultures are tied to the reliance of capitalistic material ‘productive forces,’ in destructive colonial biocultural relationships. Cabral tells us that there are “strong, dependent and reciprocal relationships existing between the cultural situation and the economic (and political) situation in the behavior of human societies,” and that “culture is always in the life of a society, the more or less conscious result of the economic and political activities of that society, the more or less dynamic expression of the kinds of relationships which prevail in that society, on the one hand between man (considered individually or collectively) and nature, and, on the other hand, among individuals, groups of individuals, social strata or classes,” (1970, p. 2). In other words, a society’s culture is made up of the everyday interactions of ‘Life’ - the conscious and the unconscious (or learned and unquestioned) patterns of activity and Living relationships between People, and between Nature and People. Cabral embodied this understanding through his concerns with ‘reality,’ his fight for material or “practical things” and “real improvement” in People’s Lives, seen in his insistence and teaching of agricultural and economic independence (Lopes, 2006, p. 1). Cabral knew that change towards liberation was an act of bioculture and that possibilities emerged through “a continued process of social and structural revolution, capable of drawing whole peoples into an arena of active participation,” (Lopes, 2006, p. 2-3). There are advancing cultural movements seen across diverse fronts that are led by Indigenous Youth and engaging People across the Planet. In these contexts, how can effective change be accomplished?

We must come to terms with our biocultural relationships and responsibilities within the time and place/Land we inhabit. Tuck and McKenzie (2015) write that “Theorizations of settler colonialism expose deep behaviors of ignorance toward land, water, environment, and sustainability,” (p. 3). They offer that a focus on place and Land “necessitates acknowledgement and reparations based on these histories: of settler colonialism, capitalism, and of separations of mind from body, body from land,” (p. 3). Many of us within our Communities, even scholars and activists who argue most passionately against colonial and capitalist oppressions, are caught in the snares of consumption, financially supporting and ideologically normalizing many destructive, unsustainable values of colonial biopower hidden behind misleading advertisements,
fashionable products and empty promises. At Community meetings, in schools, and in several organizations I’ve worked at that are invested in “decolonizing” and “being green,” I see few People concerned about waste, for example. By the time we leave the room we have created two or three bags of waste, from plastic bottles and utensils, coffee cups, styrofoam plates, the list goes on. People will simultaneously speak against capitalism and colonialism while they sip imported, unfairly traded coffee from a major corporate chain in a one-time-use cup, or as they down bottles of Water from corporations that are very literally stealing it from Native Lands just a few hours’ drive away.

These are just some very simple examples of the small but significant ways we give up our biopower by failing on a daily basis to make choices that acknowledge Land and our biocultural Human relationships with (in) Nature. We must be concerned with what we consume and the waste we create if we are serious about anticolonialism and decolonization. Tuck and Mackenzie (2015) ask, “Are we capable of ‘post carbon social theories’ of place (Elliott & Urry, 2010) that address ongoing obsessions with expansion and capitalism; more, are we capable of living post carbon social lives?” to which they respond that “theorizing and practicing place more deeply is at least a step in the direction of such a path,” (p.3). When I think about the vast biocultural knowledges that have thrived over centuries, I know that we are capable. We need to follow the examples of our ancestors and get creative.

It is understandable that addressing and re-organizing our consumption habits requires time, energy, materials and mental space, especially for marginalized and already stressed Communities and individuals. It is not made easy, affordable, or accessible and often requires tremendous amounts of personal research, relearning, and building of relationships. However, this reluctance amongst so many of us to take even small steps towards accountable responsibility for our consumption and reification of capitalist colonial norms of biopower serves to highlight a biocultural phenomenon: the colonized consciousness and identity is detached from the Human’s interconnectedness to Nature, Land, Self and one another. Somewhere deep down we must have been persuaded that the only way forward is capitalistic, based on individual merit, linear growth and excess material wealth. Somewhere along the line we have disconnected or conveniently forgotten the dangerous colonial tensions in our consumption, comforting ourselves with mundane materialism. Even as we decry capitalism and call for Humanism in our politics we Live a Life of material excess, waste, and dis-connection that is
directly responsible for ongoing destruction of Humxn biocultures, Lands and the Life-sustaining systems of the Earth. Why?

If we understand that capitalism is a vehicle for old and new forms of colonial biopower and oppression, then we need to question our investment in it and find real alternatives in our everyday Lives. We must understand that the tyrannies of state biopower and capitalism would be impossible without our participation as consumers. Instead of fueling colonial capitalism and destruction, we need to support our own sustainable Community economies. As anticolonial learners, advocates and pedagogues, we foil our own work by falling for these cultural commodities and financing further biocultural destruction. The strength of neocolonial capitalism lies largely in its ability to seduce us, to create vagueness and doubt, and to hide and dis-connect oppressive systems behind the material things we produce and purchase. Colonial biopower also lies in the state’s attempts to make us believe there are no other options – that these are the ‘norms’ for Life, that we need them to survive. But People survive every day without colonial capitalism (or should I say despite it?). They have survived since time immemorial, since the dawn of Life on Earth. As People, we can choose to sustain ourselves and to re-organize into Community-oriented economic alternatives on the Land. These choices are a critical step to reclaim biopower.

If we are leaving unsustainable biocultural relationships to People, Land, Nature, material resources and biopower unchallenged, we cannot pretend to talk about anticolonialism or decolonization. If we refuse to discuss the ways we are financially supporting and ideologically normalizing settler colonialism daily, we are ignoring that those most affected by the destruction of colonial capitalism are Indigenous, Black and marginalized Communities. Also, we are ignoring the possibilities for a growing global ecological and social consciousness to foreground Indigenous voices and anticolonial perspectives. This can be seen on many fronts. The action at Standing Rock was, in its moment, the height of this growing consciousness, putting Indigenous and non-Indigenous Communities on high alert, centering Humxn-Nature relationships, and challenging the biopower of corporate capitalism and settler colonialism across the Planet. Since then, the actions protecting Land and Water have multiplied.

Tuck, McCoy, & McKenzie (2014) warn us that “understanding and fostering sustainable relationships to land and the environment cannot happen when those activities are accountable to
a futurity in which settlers continue to dominate and occupy stolen Indigenous land. Environmental justice can only take place with Indigenous peoples and epistemologies at the center,” (p. 16). Corntassel (2012) calls on Indigenous communities to “confront the ongoing legacies of colonialism” and to take up their responsibility as leaders in sustainability as a way to work towards decolonization (2012, p. 87). Indigenous Youth, Community members, and Elders are taking leadership in sustainability, Land and Water protection across the globe despite enormous challenges, but they must not be the only ones to show responsibility for biocultural re-organization. As Cannon (2012) points out, it is imperative that we come to understand “environmental sustainability as a problem we all share,” (p. 26). This means engaging everyone involved, co-creating a biocultural rebirth that moves slowly but surely “beyond political awareness and/or symbolic gestures to everyday practices of resurgence,” (de Silva, 2011, as cited in Corntassel, 2012, pp. 8, 9). It is not enough to talk about the intricacies of colonialism and capitalism or to lead loud marches in our Communities. This is important work, yet it accomplishes little if we continue to feed the great industrial-colonial machine daily.

Divesting from banks and corporations that fund colonial destruction is a powerful step, as was seen with the divestment from banks funding the Energy Transfer Dakota Access Pipeline when their customers began to close their accounts in protest. But we need to do more. We need to find ways to altogether stop supporting the systems that kill us, and build and strengthen our own bioculturally sustainable economic systems, especially investing in Indigenous People, Communities, and economies. In order to do this, we must take responsibility for our individual roles as producers and consumers implicated in colonial systems, and begin to relearn sustainable Humxn relationships to Nature—to Land, to Life, to ourselves and to each other. We must respect the local place and Land-specific Indigenous ways of knowing and being with the Earth, and we must be guided by our own ancestral biocultural heritages.

Mbembe (1992) sees in conviviality the possibility of imagining new ways to resist or compromise within colonial state-social relations. He interrogates how we understand our acts of resistance and whether we consider these actions to be transformative. Although ideological resistance is important to help heal colonial damage and reclaim agency, the material base of the state – the Land and associated biopower - also needs to be reclaimed and decolonized on Indigenous terms. This means disrupting settler colonial normalcy and dominance, and changing our material biocultural relationships. It means rebuilding our Humxn identities with(in) Nature
and structurally re-organizing our communities. It means creating and directing more space and resources to meet the demands of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee, the Water Protectors, the Families of the missing and murdered Indigenous Womxn, the First Nations Youth and Communities, and moving beyond conversations to concrete actions of justice, material relocation of resources, and healing. Beyond political awareness and symbolic gestures, we must work to change our everyday Lives and relationships to our Selves, our Bodies, the Land and each other. Through our actions, we must build our relationships with Indigenous Peoples, Nations, the Treaties and the Land.
Chapter 3
Mobilizing Living Biocultures in Community Learning and Change

Currently, colonial schooling and the imposed dominance of Western science perspectives in society at large limit how we learn to think about Living, Community learning, and possibilities for biocultural change or re-organization. Schooling overall organizes for and normalizes oppression because it directly reproduces and transmits the ‘norms’ or colonial Life-views that maintain the settler colonial biopower of nation-states. In Canada (and much of Turtle Island and Abya Yala), theories, frameworks and policies made about learning and schooling exist primarily within the Western paradigm; they work from models that create separation between Humxn and Nature, Individual and Community, Mind and Body. There is no room for the Humxn experiences of emotion or spiritual connection, subjectivity and diversity. There is no room for differences in Life-views or learning methods, our desires, hopes and dreams. In such hostile growth conditions, possibilities for epistemological, ontological and biocultural wellness, resilience and diversity are suffocated, and it is the youngest and most marginalized that suffer the impacts first. This kind of ‘learning’ is not actually learning because learning implies the continuation of, or nourishing of Life. This kind of learning is more like a slow sterilization or asphyxiation depriving learners the ability to flourish in their own unique ways. Students are asked to ‘succeed’ in school despite the often violent, dehumxnizing, and demoralizing experience of mental, spiritual and physical un-wellness at the hands and policies of racist, colonial educators, frameworks and systems.

The consequences of these schooling policies and ‘norms’ on generation upon generation are violent to what Marie Battiste calls “the learning spirit” and the effects of this kind of schooling on culture and health are profound (2013). Celia Haig-Brown (2009) writes that it is important to remember that, “In North America, schooling – or what has been ethnocentrically called formal education – began as a relation between Europeans and Indigenous people,” and that schooling “quickly became a major tool for attempted assimilation of First Nations peoples,” driven by “the marketplace mentality of the early colonizers,” (p. 7). She writes that too often, “these roots of contemporary schooling are conveniently forgotten along with the colonial mentality that continues to inform” schooling today (p. 8). Schooling in Canada can be seen as the systematic
inhibition of biocultural learning, Community biopower and wellness. This colonial pattern is seen across Turtle Island and Abya Yala, although details are unique and context specific in each place. In its maintenance of settler colonialism, imperialism and white supremacy, schooling often denies not only students’ cultural heritages, but their Human biocultures – the students’ subjective, embodied Living experiences with(in) Nature and Community.

In *Decolonizing Education: Nourishing the Learning Spirit*, Marie Battiste writes that the legacy of forced assimilative education for Indigenous Peoples, whose “heritage and knowledge [are] rejected and suppressed, and ignored in the education system,” “is a subject that every citizen of Canada should know, because every citizen in Canada is connected to it,” (2013, p. 23). She explains that educational institutions in Canada serve to create, reproduce and transmit “an imagined culture of nationalism imposed by the state…not reflective of the heritage, knowledge, or culture that the students bring to education, or their skills and shared traditions. It is not reflective of the normal every day that they live with their families. It is only reflective of an imagined and aspirational ‘other,’” (p. 29). Further, “Since there is no agreement about transmitting knowledge, heritage and culture, the resulting curriculum is made normative by a cloak of standards and expectations on all educators and students,” (p. 29). Battiste leads us in writing that, “The key in designing meaningful education in Canada must begin with confronting the hidden standards of racism, colonialism, and cultural and linguistic imperialism in the modern curriculum and seeing the theoretical incoherence with a modern theory of society. No theory of Canadian society exists that reflects its order as an eternal pattern of human nature or social harmony,” (2013, p. 29). We cannot continue to allow one colonial Life-view, one science, one way of knowing or bioculture, to define our Living Human-Nature and Human-Human relationships, and the learning, growth and success of our Communities. The silencing of diverse biocultures in education has effects on the wellness and resilience of People, Communities, their biocultural knowledge systems, and the Land.

Marie Battiste gives recommendations for educators in Canada to identify new processes and frameworks that take on the pedagogical responsibility of “addressing issues of inequality, inequity, gaps in education among diverse groups, colonial conscientization, and hegemony in politics, organizations, and institutions, while acknowledging excellence through the proper valuing and respectful circulation of Indigenous knowledge across and beyond Eurocentric disciplines,” (2013, p. 69). We must look to the work of Indigenous educators and Community
members for pedagogical methods, frameworks, and resources that contribute to increasing their physical and epistemological presence in schools and Community learning spaces, and we must do this in a way that shifts power and consciousness. As a form of Land education, an anticolonial biocultures framework strives to i) build bridges and relationships by centering Indigenous ways of knowing Land and Life, ii) explicitly disrupt settler colonial normalcy, and “inspire acts of refusal, reclamation, regeneration, and reimagination” that move towards decolonization and are accountable to Indigenous futurity (Tuck, McCoy, McKenzie, 2014, p.18-19). Situated in colonial-Canada, an anticolonial biocultures framework supports shifts on all levels of education and society that will honour diverse knowledge systems, persistently centering First Nations, Metis and Inuit biocultural epistemologies and fostering dialogue with the diverse biocultures of settlers, diaspora, and migrants in respective Communities. The goal is to foster conversations about decolonization, and what our roles look like in the coming years of biocultural change.

This chapter discusses the anticolonial biocultures framework in more detail and offers methods that I use or have witnessed in my teaching and Community learning. Much of my learning has come over the years from my Lived experiences with the People and Community around me; Elders, young People, teachers, Families, colleagues and peers, Children, Plants, and Animals from many different biocultures around the world have all contributed to the collective biocultural knowledge that I am sharing in this chapter.

The following five concepts are commonly found in anticolonial theories and Indigenous/ancestral/cultural/place-based biocultural sciences. Due to their significance in the Humxn relationship with(in) Nature, they form the core perspectives and pedagogy of anticolonial bioculture frameworks. The five concepts are:

1. Individual Subjectivity: Biocultural Identity, Location and Responsibilities
2. Diversity: Honouring Differences as Possibility
3. Communion: Interconnection, Communication and Co-creation with(in) Community
4. Embodied Learning and Growth: Individual and Collective Creativity
5. Constant Change: Possibilities of Re-organization in the Emerging Future
These concepts are not meant to be broken down into individual categories, but rather presented in a holistic, interconnected form as they exist in Humxns and in Nature. Subjectivity, diversity, communion, learning, co-creation, and change all happen simultaneously within Indigenous biocultural sciences and anticolonial ways of knowing. These five concepts can be tailored to several curriculum themes and objectives, and applied in Tkaronto schools and Community spaces as a way towards co-creating sustainable, anticolonial futures.

3.1 Reclaiming Biocultural Identities: Pedagogies of the Living

As a Community educator and Youth worker, I use the anticolonial biocultures framework as a tool for helping People locate themselves within settler colonialism, connecting questions of location, identity, power, relationship and responsibility through discussions of anticolonial efforts on Turtle Island and abroad. Achieving a change of consciousness and moving towards relationships based on interconnection and empowerment requires locating the subjective Self within learning and Living. It is essential to recognize subjectivity in learning, in Humxn knowledges, and biocultures. Remembering a lecture by Thomas King, Jill Carter (2016) writes that “the foundational stories of our coming to be direct our perceptions of, and behavior towards, ourselves and all others whom we encounter during our short journey on this earth,” (p. 2). In a talk she gave in 2016 at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education in Tkaronto, I remember Jill saying that “we need conciliation before reconciliation.” In other words, she said, we need the chance to get to know one another because we never got that chance - to tell our own stories and get to know one another (my paraphrasing from memory). In education, this means acknowledging the Humxn identities, knowledges, biocultures, stories, and Lived experiences of People in the learning space and on the Land we are Living. It means making sure that the stories and knowledges of Indigenous People are known and valued. This also means challenging any and all notions of hierarchy between People and knowledges (including power hierarchies between teachers and students). It is pedagogically important to recognize subjectivity and diversity, and that Humxn knowledges, sciences, and Life-views are co-created as evolving relationships of subjective Humxn Bodies-Minds-Spirits with(in) biocultural Communities with(in) Nature.
There are many ways of knowing the world and thus there are many expressions of biocultures. If we think about the diversity of Animal, Fish and Plant cultures from an ecological perspective, it seems absurd that any would be held higher or with more importance than another: all species’ ways of knowing and Living form part of the Planet’s intricate and interrelated biomes. We empower one another when we acknowledge with humility that as Individuals we hold only one perspective of the whole. Anticolonial biocultural pedagogies should engage with the plurality and fluidity of viewpoints in the space, having explicit discussions about how we know what we know, the partiality of knowing and thinking about power relations in how knowledge is created, produced and reproduced (Dei, 2012, p. 112). Our learning spaces must be critical when working with ‘objective’ knowledge, acknowledging that “discursive practices are never neutral or apolitical and that historical accounts and narratives are shaped and socially conditioned” (Dei & Asgharzadeh, 2001, p. 318). We must work to center subjectivity, diversity, embodied learning, knowledge co-creation and a reclaiming of biocultural roots and identity as important aspects of Living and learning.

Subjectivity is fundamental to learning and Community change. It requires us to ask ourselves and our students to locate the Self, take responsibility, and envision how Individual actions grow into larger social changes in our Communities. Paulo Freire’s humxnization pedagogy reminds us that any true liberation or change comes with understanding and creation of the Self, the “possibility of surpassing the condition of object and reaching the condition of subject, maker of the world, remaker of the world,” (2007, p. 85). He specifies that “what is necessary to know is that change is not individual; it is social, with an individual dimension,” (p. 85). Speaking about the impact of Freire’s work on her own emancipation, bell hooks writes about the process of her “construction of an identity in resistance,” which Freire highlights as the first and most crucial step for true freedom from oppression (hooks, 1994). She shares a quote from Pedagogy of the Oppressed that made this particularly clear to her: “‘We cannot enter the struggle as objects in order later to become subjects,’” (Freire as cited in hooks, 1994). Learning should empower young People to engage as actors in the world around them and support them in improving their and their Communities’ wellbeing. In my experience, even programs that are meant to encourage ‘Youth leadership’ can be disempowering when they assume that Youth are ‘too young’ to talk about and tackle real world problems from their own subjective locations and biocultural ways of knowing.
In their paper on co-developing Youhttopias with Youth of colour, Akom, Ginwright and Cammarota tell us that “youth need new kinds of spaces where resistance and resiliency can be developed through formal (and informal) processes, pedagogical structures, and youth cultural practices” in order to go “beyond pathological approaches,” (2008, p. 2). Pathological approaches are those that criminalize or disenfranchise Youth based on ideas of lack and deficiency, often grounded in notions of race, sex, gender, ability, status and class. I have witnessed these pathological approaches in ‘behavioural’ classes, ‘special ed’ classes, and everyday classrooms, where Youth are consistently prescribed and treated as problems, with ‘issues’ that can be ‘resolved’ – or not. Francisco Villegas (2014) writes that “the reliance of deficiency theories individualize blame onto specific actors – students and parents – and their associates ‘cultures’ (read as race and implied value towards education). By placing the onus on racialized students, families, and communities, the schooling institution maintains a meritocratic façade of a neutral site where all can succeed but some do not due to personal or cultural deficiencies,” (p.42). The internalization of pathology and lowered expectations by Youth, Parents and Families of colour is well documented (Battiste, 2013; Dei, 2009; Matute & Chica, 2014; Villegas, 2014; Wane, 2004). Wane also notes, in regards to behavioural ‘problems,’ that we can “interpret the disruptive behavior of these students as resulting from exclusionary practices,” and the “virulent and pervasive presence of unequal treatment to visible minority students throughout our education system,” (2004, p. 30). Thinking about resilience, Stout and Kipling (2003) write that “it is clear that systemic racism influences individual self-perception and interaction with others, heightening vulnerability to a range of negative outcomes,” (p 9). Schooling is largely responsible for the dispossession of Youth’s biopower, silencing and punishing the need for young People to express themselves and create themselves and their world. The aim of centering subjectivity in learning is to invite Youth to theorize about their own biocultural locations since “one way presumed deficiency is communicated to racialized students is by devaluing knowledges and experiences, (Villegas, 2014, p. 43). Students should be encouraged to learn about and co-create their cultures, strengthening themselves and their Communities in the process. The aim is to empower rather than disempower. Centering subjectivity is respectful of Youth agency and sees potential, rather than focusing on the negative aspects of challenges that Youth may be facing. Explicitly talking about and valuing Individual subjectivity and diversity in learning spaces expands our thinking about the subjectivity, diversity and embodiment of knowledge that is central to many Indigenous/ancestral biocultures and anticolonial pedagogy. It
is the first step to re-organization and co-creation; we must realize our own biopower, the power to change our Selves.

When centering the co-existence of multiple, diverse subjectivities and the co-creation of knowledge in Community, we must consider how we tell, listen to and honour different stories/histories/perspectives/biocultural knowledges and Life-views. This requires questioning power and colonial biocultural ways of knowing and being with our Self, the Land and one another. In Tkaronto, we must center Haudenosaunee/Anishinaabe/First Nation/Metis/Inuit biocultural perspectives and engage with the diversity represented in the city. We must acknowledge, engage, value, and nurture diverse ways of knowing and being, rather than hierarchies. Joshee (2004) writes that Canadian education ‘engages’ with diversity with an “over-riding message of social cohesion and integration into mainstream society, presenting inter-group inequities and frictions as past problems that Canada has resolved,” (as cited in Bickmore, 2014, p. 263). This effectively silences oppressive settler colonial relations within the classroom and the diverse Living experiences of students under the pretense of multiculturalism. Schooling in Tkaronto is not multicultural; curriculums, systems and teacher education are Eurocentric and deeply colonial. Njoki Wane (2004) expands on this in her research titled, “Experiences of visible minority students and anti-racist education within the Canadian education system.” Wane writes that “Canada’s failure to creative inclusive learning and teaching environments for visible minority students significantly limits their learning opportunities and, by extension, their future quality of life,” (p. 25). There is little to no biocultural diversity in the content that we are teaching and learning, and Indigenous knowledge is only hinted at emptily if mentioned at all.

In a teacher’s education course on Democratic Citizenship Education I was asked to read dozens of works by white scholars about the need to ‘include’ a diversity of voices in the Canadian curriculum, particularly Indigenous voices. Although we had Indigenous, Black, Latinx, Muslim, and Asian identities in the room, our perspectives were at best politely nodded at. First Nations, Metis and Inuit perspectives were ‘suggested,’ never actually engaged. Talking about diversity without taking action to meaningfully engage diverse epistemologies and politics maintains the supremacy of Eurocentric knowledge, simultaneously silencing and devaluing other knowledge systems. ‘Engaging’ diversity in ways that remain safe for and do not challenge the imperial knowledge base of white supremacy maintains a settler colonial education system and state biopower. This kind of education does nothing to meet the diverse identities in our schools and
Tkaronto Communities; it perpetuates the loss of biocultural diversity and ignores the daily Lives and perspectives of Living People in the room. Wane writes that this violence “is being perpetrated daily against visible minority students, who are forced to witness their histories being erased and/or distorted and their identities de-valued,” (2004, p. 29). There needs to be work done daily to reimagine teaching methods, curriculum, materials and structural changes in schools that will work to redistribute power and address the diversity of biocultures that students bring to school.

Anticolonial biocultural pedagogies do not aim for ‘tolerance,’ but for a valuing of *diversity as possibility* in our learning. They see diversity as a necessity that nurtures both cultural and biological Community wellness, and understands that the ways we choose to negotiate differences leads to two general conclusions: 1) the oppression of one party by the other, or 2) learning and growth of biopower for all parties involved, which can lead to a type of homeostasis and conscious co-creation. Biocultural learning and co-creation depends on unoppressive, collective engagement and can be manifested through subjective participation, space and dialogue that honours diversity, empathy, reciprocity, growth and co-operatively finding solutions. This kind of communication and learning requires Self-awareness and an understanding of power dynamics, as well as skills of listening, emotional intelligence, and knowing how to hold space, especially during moments of injustice, discomfort or disagreement. Although co-operative learning, conflict resolution, and communication are major determinants of Humxn Lived experience and bioculture, they are not explicitly talked about or taught in schools. This is another way in which the biocultural Humxn identity remains largely unengaged and under-explored in colonial schooling. Biocultural learning engages with subjectivity and diversity while maintaining Community, interconnection and co-creation at the center. It asks: How do we effectively communicate between subjectivities and diverse lenses? What strategies lead to understanding, growth, and learning? We must learn to engage responsibility and reciprocity within these relationships, specifically in the context of settler colonialism. How can we foster action and co-creativity for possibilities of biocultural transformation and re-organization of our Communities/schools?

The anticolonial biocultures framework works from the understanding that that everyone is inherently political and involved in either the harming or nurturing of others within an ecological framework – just by being Alive and Living. To be Alive is to be a political actor in the world.
Indigenous epistemologies recognize that biology and culture are made up of relationships and relationality, and “prioritizes the reality that human life is connected to and dependent on other species and the land,” (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015, p. 4). Zainab Amadahy puts this in another way, writing, “I was taught by my Indigenous teachers that we two-leggeds are part of Mother Earth’s body,” (2013, p. 27). I appreciate this Life-view because it reminds me of my own Body and the way each Cell, each Organ, each part and system has a crucial role; because they are in communication, each Individual part of me impacts the wellbeing of the Community that makes up my whole being. Similarly, perspectives of ‘ecological citizenship’ understand that Individual choices impact the collective, and that public decisions affect the private, and vice versa (Huckle, 2008, p. 6). We must work to integrate the fact that we “are ‘always already’ acting on others” and that “such citizenship focuses on horizontal citizen-citizen relations rather than vertical citizen-state relations,” (p. 6). Many of the Indigenous biocultures of Turtle Island and Abya Yala would say that these horizontal relations must also include the Earth itself, along with her Creatures, Waters and Ecosystems. In this sense, responsibility is directly connected to biocultural understandings of participatory and reciprocal co-creation. How can we bring interconnection, conscious co-existence, and co-creation into education more explicitly?

The anticolonial biocultures framework centers interdependence in the ways we Live, learn and communicate with the world and exposes the “falsity” in the colonial concept of Individualism (Fanon, 1963, p. 11). It understands that learning is achieved through Community relationships, where each part brings its own skills, gifts and perspectives to the whole. It asks us to act, redefining and reclaiming the biocultural relationships we co-create and embody every day, with the Land and with each other. Forward-thinking theories of resistance, futurity, and transformation call us to ask ourselves, our students, and Communities to reflect on how collective change happens, and to embody our biopower and responsibilities on the Individual level. In the book *Youth Resistance Research and Theories of Change*, Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2014) write:

> According to the poststructuralist turn, change is always occurring, and within a more cynical critical approach, change is never happening or if it does, it reinscribes relations of power. Within many Indigenous epistemologies, change is always happening (although different from the poststructuralist sense), and it can take on many forms – desirable or otherwise. These varying perspectives on change matter with regard to human agency, and thus matter with regard to
resistance. Each perspective is going to have different implications for how humans should spend their time on the planet,” (p. 120).

We need to explicitly discuss ideas of co-creation and change in our learning spaces, locating ourselves and our Communities within historical and current biocultural contexts. Impactful resistance to settler colonialism cannot take place without critical questions and reflection about how to “transform moral outrage into concrete attempts” of social change (Giroux, 2014). Young People are expressing Individual and collective outrage, co-creating long-term projects and spaces that embody, critically imagine and redefine traditional paradigms, claiming “collective agency in which their voices must be heard as part of a concerted effort to shape the future that they will inherit,” (Giroux, 2014). An anticolonial biocultures framework builds spaces of Community co-creation, where collective hope and responsibility can be nurtured and mobilized into actions that contribute to change and reclamations of biopower.

Learning spaces that allow us to fully explore, dream and create ourselves are essential in reclamation of Humxn biocultural identities of subjectivity, diversity, Community, learning, co-creation and change. Freire tells us:

Soñar no es solo un acto político necesario…forma parte de la naturaleza humana que, dentro de la historia, se encuentra en permanente proceso de devenir…No hay cambio sin sueño, como no hay sueño sin esperanza…La comprensión de la historia como posibilidad y no determinismo sería ininteligible sin el sueño, así como la concepción determinista se siente incompatible con el, y por eso lo niega,” (“Dreaming is not only a necessary political act…it forms part of human nature which, within history, finds itself in a permanent process of becoming….There is no change without dreams just as there are no dreams without hope….The understanding of history as possibility rather than determinism…would be unintelligible without dreams, just as a deterministic view feels incompatible with them and, therefore, negates them,”) (1993, p.116-117).

We must work to create this essential catalytic space for dreaming, exploring, theorizing and creating the Self and Community, looking always to get to know our Humxn identities through embodied learning and growth. These spaces are created when we engage Youth as creators of culture in their Community, rather than simply consumers (Akom et al 2008, Allison 2013, Sutton 2007). To encourage and enable the creation of culture by young People, we must “welcome diverse cultural identities and recognize the structural inequities these young people
encounter, along with their boundless capacity for confronting injustice,” (Sutton, 2007). In “Methodology of the Oppressed” (2000), Chela Sandoval describes the co-creation of “a deregulating system” that decodes/recodes and produces knowledge/media “by practicing on cultural artifacts of every kind – from film, television, and computer representations to architectural environments, literature, theory, and science,” (2000, p. 9). Co-creation can take many diverse pedagogical forms in learning spaces, including but not limited to embodiments of: play, art, music, dance, slam poetry, writing, film, fashion, theatre, cooking, herbalism and Land practices, critical media, research, sciences, architecture and action projects that spark anticolonial conversations and biocultural change. The list is endless. It should be the Individual’s choice which method of growth and learning best allows them to tap into their biopower, and they should be able to use that method to attain curriculum requirements.

An anticolonial biocultures framework nurtures our Humxn-Nature relationships by asking us, as teachers and learners, how and why we learn and placing a critical lens on schooling and learning itself. To build sovereignty and biopower in leaning spaces and Communities, we must ask: What are our ideas of Living and Humxnness and where have they come from? How do we think Humxn learning happens? What is learning/school for? What do we want it to be for, or what could it be for? And what do learners need in that space for it to become a place where they can learn and grow into what they envision for themselves and their Communities? Education for Communities must be brought back to Communities. An anticolonial biocultures framework aims to focus our attention away from the prescribed ‘norms’ and systems within colonial Life-views so that we may refocus on bioculturally redefining ourselves and our relationships in Community. We must think about how we communicate and grow as Living beings in Community. Are we allowing space for subjectivity and diverse experiences to shine? How are the spaces we create fundamentally challenging how we relate to one another, communicate, share, learns, co-create and exist as Living beings?

3.2 Grounding Learning with(in) Community and the World Around Us

Working with an anticolonial biocultures framework helps us to find creative ways to persistently build relationships with the Land, Water, Plants, Animals, our Bodies, and one another. These relationships are not a result of simply talking about them; we heal our
relationships by actively sharing and co-creating strong Community connections of understanding and solidarity between us. Anticolonial biocultures work to create Community spaces that engage both the biological and cultural Lived realities of Community members, purposefully challenging the dominant Life-view narratives that are presented by Eurocentrism and allowing plurality of biocultures, ways of knowing, and innovative ways of being with(in) Nature to flourish. It means reclaiming biocultural Humin identities and biopower so we can better grow together.

Building relationships between us and with (in) Nature sounds simple enough, the challenge comes in achieving this in contexts where People cannot (or refuse to) see the connections between settler colonialism and their everyday Lives. Reading Jean-Paul Sartre’s preface to Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), I see parallels in the way settler colonialism maintains settlers, diaspora and migrants dis-connected from their colonial implications, and the way external colonialism² physically dis-connects the everyday Life and consciousness of the distant metropolis from the ongoing violence in the colonies. Sartre writes, “It’s true, you are not colonists, but you are not much better . . . they made you rich . . . you pretend to forget that . . . massacres are committed in your name,” (Fanon, 1963, p. xlix). We must be clear that as political participants of global corporate consumerism, neo-colonialism and settler colonialism in Canada, Humin and ecological destruction is committed in our names, with our dollars, and we are supporting colonial violence until we do something about it. Is there a link between this physical/mental dis-connection from violence and our ability to feel responsibility? If so, what does it mean when we feel this violence close to ‘home’ in the form of increasingly urgent Humin and environmental justice issues that impact everyone on the planet?

Today, we face increasingly complex groups of learners that identify in increasingly complex ways to colonialism. Martin Cannon (2012) critiques that much of pedagogical literature fails to address ways non-Indigenous Peoples (to Turtle Island) can be engaged to reflect on their identity and take ownership of their participation in settler colonialism. In Tkaronto and large urban centers especially, many learners are diaspora and migrants who arrived to Canada from countries affected by past and contemporary forms of colonialism. Celia Haig-Brown points out

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² where Lands and Peoples are exploited and shipped back to the colonizers (see Tuck & Yang, 2012)
that the “everyday lack of consciousness” in Canada’s education “create the conditions that allow them the same possibility of forgetting their pasts and their relation to Indigenous peoples,” (2009, p. 12). For diaspora and migrants, this may also constitute a lack of consciousness about their relation to Indigenous Peoples and their colonial locations back home. Haig-Brown (2009) writes that “the simple binary distinctions of colonizer/colonized or Indigenous/immigrant fail to address the range of ways that people are a part of this country,” (p. 14). These binaries ignore that there are many People Indigenous to Abya Yala, Africa, Asia, and other places of Earth, who because of colonialism find themselves in relationship with Indigenous Peoples in Turtle Island. These binaries also leave out the People who through colonization have mixed ancestries, biocultural heritages, and intersecting or even unknown identities. Diaspora, refugees and migrants have Life experiences directly linked to ongoing colonialism, settler colonialism and neocolonialism. An anticolonial biocultures framework aims to connect these questions of location, identity, biopower and relationship through discussion of current anticolonial efforts in Turtle Island and abroad, so that an understanding of responsibilities within settler colonialism can take root.

Celia Haig-Brown shares that by learning about residential schools, the struggles and resistance of Indigenous Peoples in Canada, her students came to a more critical understanding of schooling itself, their locations, relationships and responsibilities to Indigenous People, and “their own need to heal from the effects of historical and current racism,” (2009, p. 8). By considering the history of the Land they are Living on and the Land/biocultural ancestors they come from, students can begin to grasp the complexities of their own biocultural situation and their locations in settler colonialism in Canada (p. 9). History is important for locating ourselves, but also for learning about how social change happens. Pedro Noguera writes that it is helpful and inspiring for young People to learn from the history of social movements (2014, p. 73). I have seen this personally in the ways I have learned from and been inspired by Youth at the forefront of social change (in history and today), but also in the feelings of power expressed by young People when learning about social change. Noguera writes, “In retrospect, one can see how forces come together, how they are able to capitalize on weaknesses among the elites in power, and how that then results in the possibilities for revolutions to occur,” (p. 73). History shows us what has been possible so far, it connects us with our predecessors, fills us with gratitude, and gives us a new appreciation for our roles in co-creating new possibilities.
However, we must also address the current moment; we cannot keep our learning in the past because these changes are ongoing today.

Learning about current local movements connects us to our responsibilities and to possibilities for change in the present. At a Youth conference on sustainability in Milton, Ontario I was struck by the silence of the organizers about the current local movements that were fighting to re-organize the very unsustainable systems they were talking about. My workshop was about oil, Energy and Water and talked about the ecological, social, cultural, political and economic effects of oil spills on Turtle Island. After a hands-on oil spill cleanup experiment, we asked ourselves what People use oil for, existing alternatives, and recent inventions by young People their age that tackle the creation of clean Energy. We then looked at local and global anti-pipeline movements that protect Land and Water. I showed them photos of current Youth actions: Rezpect our Water led by the Youth at Standing Rock, Kinder Morgan actions in Canada, and the Earth Guardians – Indigenous-led Youth movements across the planet. This was impactful. The young People in my workshop saw themselves directly represented as agents and change makers in the world, inspiring their own actions, responsibilities and commitments. I finished the workshop by inviting them to write words of support for the Water protectors, which we gathered on a large banner to be sent to the Youth at Standing Rock.

After the workshop I was approached by the conference organizers (who happened to be white settlers to Canada) and told, “Advocacy is great, but you should really focus more on the program objectives.” I fail to see how opening respectful honest dialogue about real sustainability and Land concerns does not meet program objectives of increasing awareness and agency, and empowering Youth to be Community sustainability leaders. I do, however, see how refusing to speak to real issues upholds a settler colonial and oppressive educational space. Dei (2009) asks us: “who (or what agenda) is best served by the maintenance of the discursive divide between teaching and activism? Who benefits from teachers’ collective refusal to engage as activists, citing professionalism and objectivity?” (p. 255). We must include present day local struggles for change and re-organization in our teaching. We cannot be afraid of centering settler colonialism and acts of resilience in our learning – it is our responsibility as educators to create spaces for these conversations.
Why wouldn’t I mention the brilliant successes of Black Lives Matter, the BLM Freedom School, and the Black Liberation Collective in Tkaronto? Why wouldn’t I mention the Youth-led Standing Rock movement and its global unifying Humxn influence? or Unist'ot'en here in British Colombia? or the Youth protesting the Line 9 pipeline in Ontario? Why wouldn’t I tell them that young People just like them are standing up for what they believe and leading Humxn innovation?... speaking at the United Nations, creating revolutionary art and music cultures, and demanding accountability from their local governments for not taking significant action on issues that matter to them and affect their Lives?

Schooling often disconnects learning from the Lived experiences of young People in their Communities, but an anticolonial biocultures framework does just the opposite, focusing on place and the real everyday Lives of learners in order to spark innovation. Tuck and McKenzie (2015) write that “it is the specificity, the rootedness of place that makes it so important in (post) human imagination” (p.5). They ask whether we are capable of addressing the challenges of our time and suggest that “theorizing and practicing place more deeply is at least a step in the direction of such a path,” (p. 3). I have experienced this myself first hand in my teaching. Every time I invite open dialogue to tackle current real world questions, young People surprise me with how much they already know and how much they care about the state of the world and their Communities. I have heard 6-year-olds discuss politics and local challenges more competently than some adults who have the right to vote. I have also seen how much young People worry and how this negatively impacts their mental, physical, emotional, spiritual health, and wellbeing.

These conversations are especially crucial to racialized, marginalized and criminalized Youth - Indigenous, Black, Brown, Latinx, Muslim, disabled, neurodivergent, LGTBQ2S+, migrant, refugee, and undocumented Youth. I have been called into schools with the so-called ‘toughest’ kids and heard dialogues so critical and creative that some adults in the room (sometimes myself) were not able to keep up. Young People know more than we give them credit and they have dreams and ideas for changing the spaces around them for the better. Yet too often in Tkaronto schools and Youth programs I have been told by program directors that discussions about oppression, power, social justice and colonialism are ‘too political’, or that the Youth are ‘not old enough’, or ‘uninterested.’ Openly discussing examples of current biocultural movements and solidarity into the classroom can help bring settler colonialism ‘home’ in a way that empowers students to hope and to envision the ways they can be a part of social biocultural change in their
Lifetime. Doing this we show the next generation what is possible and that we believe in their knowledge and abilities to take on challenges, instead of pretending they don’t know or care. Doing this we encourage them to dream and take action.

As a teacher I want to create space for young People to learn about things that affect their Lives on a daily basis, their Livelihood and dreams for the future, their Families and Communities. Conversations about current, local issues and how they are already being tackled are not only effective for engaging even the most ‘unengaged’ students, they are crucial to our learning, wellness, and sense of Community resilience. An anticolonial biocultures framework addresses and engages with the diverse identities, needs and questions of young People in a way that is empowering, action-focused and hopeful rather than disempowering and silencing. Young People have the right, as Living participants in the world, to be informed, ask questions and co-create the world around them. The challenges our Communities face in the world are real and should be a regular part of conversations in schooling so that we can work together to imagine and create real solutions.

Often times I have found that teachers and Community workers do not feel equipped or personally able to handle certain real world conversations, particularly in vastly diverse spaces. They especially feel unequipped to talk about settler colonialism in Canada. There is opportunity here. Grounding learning in Community and the real world means building connections and relationships with(in) Community so that we may learn together, from each other. Working with Tkaronto Youth and Community groups I can confidently say there are many dedicated, compassionate, well-prepared and knowledgeable People ready to take the lead. They reorganize Communities and schools every day, lead dialogue and change, create antiracist and anti-oppressive frameworks and policies, redefine reconciliation and solidarity, fine tune peacebuilding methods, rethink mental, physical, emotional and spiritual health, build Community wellness, sustainability, and more. We need to reimagine what more grounded and extensive Community-school partnerships look like. We can increase the roles of bioculturally relevant, knowledgeable Community members, artists, elders and Youth leaders in schools. We can build capacity building programs for educators and learners directly from these Community-centered frameworks and support the funding of these initiatives and Community leaders in schools. We can engage teachers as participants or co-facilitators during these programs, while
simultaneously creating space for Community members to share knowledge and build relationships with students.

Taking this idea further I ask myself: what could the re-organization of *Schools-as-Biocultural-Community-Centers* look like in Tkaronto (Rostan, forthcoming 2019)? I envision connecting place- and culturally-specific Community workers, resources, methods and services to schools, creating Community-learning centers that build wellness and sustainability within Tkaronto’s Communities. This type of re-organization can help disrupt the normalization of Eurocentric knowledge as all-encompassing, making space for the knowledges in the Community to come forward, tackling place-specific challenges and building biocultural resilience. We must work to build connections.

### 3.3 Community Sustainability: Strengthening Biocultural Relationships

Strengthening Life-sustaining biocultural Humxn relationships and biopower depends on the understanding that Community sustainability leads to more possibilities of wellbeing, resilience and anticolonial resistance. Thus, anticolonial biocultural pedagogy must take a serious look at how we are implicated in the destruction of Peoples, cultures and Land, here in settler colonial Canada and abroad. This means reflecting and acting on where we Live, what we consume, the waste we create, what our money is funding and the ways in which our Life-views and Lifestyles perpetuate colonial biopower and violence. If we can slowly organize our Communities to grow and harvest Food, build relationships with neighbours and local farmers, create and harness energy, build more sustainable homes, re-organize to share resources, and build alternate, bottom-up economies in our Communities, we will no longer need to rely on the biopower of colonial systems that destroy us. Countless anticolonial and decolonial revolutionaries have said this in their own way.

Exciting examples of this kind of biocultural re-organizing are increasing in local and global contexts. In February 2016, I saw a completely self-sustainable public school built in Jaureguiberry, Uruguay from mostly recyclable materials (tires, bottles, sand, etc.). This school is completely ‘off grid’ yet located right off the main highway to Montevideo. It has over a hundred Children re-learning and re-imagining their roles as Humxns with(in) Nature on a daily
basis, year round. The Children and surrounding Community learn how the building works to heat itself, collect Water, and grow Food, and a large part of their curriculum consists of reconnecting with the Land through action and embodied learning. Similar buildings are being built in Six Nations on Turtle Island and across the continent. Increasingly we are seeing Community gardens, repair cafes, trade systems, upcycling and sharing trends. Biocultural changes are already happening and the possibilities to engage are vast. The potential for transformation and liberation that comes from this kind of Community self-sustainability is crucial to anticolonial biocultures, the reclamation of Individual/Community biopower, and the building of thriving biocultural Communities. It begins in relationships that respect Land and Indigenous Nations, through action projects that slowly work to re-organize Community spaces and schools. An anticolonial biocultures framework makes spaces for learners to come to terms with and experiment new ways of honouring our relationships and responsibilities within the time and place/Land we inhabit.

Collaborating in programs of Community sustainability and co-creating Youth action projects has allowed me to have conversations with hundreds of Tkaronto Youth about what sustainability means to them. In the words of the young People I have met, sustainability is "managing our things better" and "learning to share." It is recognizing that "the government is not helping" and that we need to "do it ourselves." It is acknowledging that "society is not fair to everybody" and that we have to prioritize our "needs over wants" and "not use so much pointless stuff" or "more than we need when others have nothing." In the words of a grade 8 student: “It’s our garbage, so it’s our responsibility.” The groups in my workshops are bioculturally diverse and typically range from ages 9 to 24 in Community center Youth groups and school classrooms across Tkaronto and surrounding areas. We discuss sustainability in terms of economic, social, cultural and environmental categories, highlighting the connections between them. The economic category allows us to think about the importance of supporting local economies and self-employment, different forms of exchange other than money, the way the government operates, where our taxes might go, access and inequities. The social category brings up questions of education, knowledge production, media, healthcare, shelter, colonialism, racism, stereotypes, police violence, marginalization, power and the difference between sustainable versus unsustainable relationships among People. The cultural category gets us to think about the things in our biocultural heritages that we value and want to protect and pass down to future generations.
such as: stories and Food recipes from our grandparents, traditions, history, Life-views, knowledge of Medicines, and language. It also allows us to address challenges to biocultural sustainability for different groups in Canada, particularly First Nations, Metis and Inuit Communities.

The final category, environmental sustainability, helps us think about the Land - consumption, pollution, waste, Food, Animals, Water - and our biocultural relationships to all of this as Living Humans. Looking at current examples of Indigenous, environmental, Land, and Water struggles protecting the sovereignty of Life helps students see the connections between the categories. Together we see that our cultural, social, environmental and economic realities are interconnected. In hundreds of conversations, young People and Children were able to recognize and connect questions of social, cultural, economic, political and environmental sustainability to real situations in their worlds and Communities, helping to spark in-depth conversations on location, biopower, privilege and responsibilities within settler colonialism in Canada. Perhaps most importantly, looking at current, local projects working towards change nurtures hope and imagination in what can otherwise seem like a very gloomy future for a kid growing up in seemingly-apocalyptic times. The conclusion often reached together is that sustainability is not an unattainable thing – it is simply the re-organization of how we get things done in our economies, Communities and daily Lives. It is the rebuilding of Living relationships right where we are.

Usually there are mixed emotions as we discuss sustainability, with most pessimism becoming a little more hopeful by the end of the workshops. Students describe themselves as feeling "uncomfortable" and "afraid" of what they hear on the news and see on social media about the world. Many admit that they feel they have nobody to talk to about “these things” in their Families or their Communities. This indicates a need for guardians, elders, teachers, Family members, and Community leaders to find ways to address the valid questions, concerns, emotions and fears young People are facing.

During one workshop, a student grew exasperated and shouted: "It’s impossible! Nobody cares.” When I asked if he wanted to share why he felt that way, he said, “…that’s just human nature, people are greedy and if they haven’t change till now after all these years, they are never going to change!” The class fell silent and heavy. Before I could find the right words, countless others
in the class raised their voices at once, saying: “That’s not true, I care,” and “YEAH! it is possible,” and “People need to wake up and stop being selfish!” and “We just need to learn to work together!” I was so grateful for the courage of the young People in that room. Learning moments like these allow the dialogue to hit a level of emotion and realness that is necessary for healing, solidarity and mobilization. It is important to talk about what it is like to maintain hope throughout daily attacks on Life, People and Land. It is important because the young People in our Communities experience these attacks. They Live, see and feel what is happening as much as adults do. Our classrooms and Communities must provide spaces to have these conversations, discuss our wellness, process emotions, heal together, re-organize and act together.

The ultimate goal of the anticolonial biocultures framework is to co-create Community action projects that tackle local challenges to economic, cultural, social, political, and/or environmental sustainability in a way that addresses responsibilities and relationships within settler colonial contexts. Community education and action that begins with the sustainability of Life, Peoples and Land, in past and present, local and global contexts, can help us to collectively imagine new ways of organizing and being in a way that centers interdependence, responsibility and solidarity. The growing questions of Life-sustainability and biopower on the planet require us to think about these relationships and to be accountable for our pasts and futures. In the words of Fanon (1963), we are facing a “colossal task, which consists of reintroducing man into the world, man in his totality,” (p. 62). To do this, he writes, we must “confess” our different modes of participation in colonialism, “decide to wake up, put on [our] thinking caps and stop playing the irresponsible game of Sleeping Beauty,” (p. 62). Biocultural wellness and sustainability are entry points that offer a place- and Land-based sense of urgency in which we may bring home and call to question our colonial implications and responsibilities in building biocultural wellness, resilience, and innovation.

We must center Land and begin with our locations in order to understand ourselves as Humxns with(in) Nature. This means recognizing the Indigenous Peoples of the Land and acknowledging treaties continually through our actions on the Land. It also means creating space to address current Land movements, such as the various local actions addressing Indigenous sovereignty, pipelines, pollution, Water, Food security, etc. We must find ways to engage Indigenous biocultures, epistemologies, arts and sciences in conversation with the biocultures of the diverse People in Tkaronto and beyond. If possible, we must spend time together outdoors or out in the
Community, with activities and assignments taking place with(in) Nature, and engaging our biocultural identities in creative ways. We can appreciate the many ecological Community players in our day. Food? Plants? Animals? Water? the changing seasons and cycles? What biocultural rhythms and processes can we acknowledge and take part in? Are there Creatures, Plants, Water in the space with us and how are they participating? These actions may seem trivial or ‘romantic,’ as some like to call it, but they are important for moving towards interconnection and biocentricity; I have seen their successes first hand in educational spaces. I remember that one of the most memorable and impactful workshops in a sustainability program (according to the young participants) was the one where there was a Live Turtle (rescued) that they got to learn to interact with respectfully. It seems silly, but for city Youth especially, sharing space with a Living Turtle was the highlight of the program and made their learning about Nature and sustainability that much more important to them. The experience placed them back with(in) Nature and invited them to feel their Living Human identity.
Chapter 4
Biocultural Re-organization Towards an Emerging Future

Throughout this thesis I have shown that anticolonialism and biocultura together provide a theoretical, practical and pedagogical framework for shifting ontological and epistemological understandings of the Humxn relationship to Life, Nature and Land. An anticolonial biocultures framework requires thinking about how we identify with being Alive. It requires us to locate ourselves in the changing biological and cultural ecosystems we are in relationship with, thinking about how we are implicated colonially in these Life systems, beginning with the local, but also considering global implications. As a theory, praxis and pedagogy, anticolonial biocultures call for us to be aware of and present in Living. We must seek and acknowledge the connections between our biological and cultural histories, presents and futures, move beyond talk and symbolism, and have the courage to learn together, breathing innovation and creativity into what is no longer of use. Co-creating bioculturally resilient and diverse Communities means learning and creating as Communities, and re-imagining Humxn biocultural relationships so that we may re-organize into Life-nourishing systems. This means interrogating Eurocentric/Western ideas of our biocultural identities as Humxns with(in) Nature, including colonial notions of race, sex, gender, ability, wellness and class. It also means widening our understandings of how Living beings learn and communicate to co-create their world. Anticolonial biocultural pedagogy aims to build learning Communities through relationships that center subjectivity, diversity, Community/communication, learning, creativity, and possibilities for transformation.

This work is a call to action that joins the calls of hundreds of Indigenous nations from Turtle Island, Abya Yala and around the world. We must consider the number and momentum of anticolonial and biocultural movements that are raising questions about our Humxn relationships to Land, Water, each other and an oppressive biopolitical system. Choosing not to engage these pressing questions of our time in anticolonial thought, learning and action is short-sighted and counter-productive. The complexity of our current local and global historical moment requires creative, comprehensive approaches to learning that engage our Individual and collective stories and inspire our imaginaries towards healthier, more respectful and sustainable biocultural Community relationships. This big-picture lens centered in specific places can help to radically challenge our own biocultural identities within settler colonialism, creating spaces for us to
communicate creatively, as whole connected subjects rather than disconnected objects, building Community biopower, partnerships and relationships.

Beginning with biocultural conversations has helped me bring the transformative purpose of anticolonialism to the forefront in many spaces. I have found that discovering possibilities for transformation by looking at Life’s imaginary and creative processes is vital for reconnecting with our Self, one another and our place as Life with(in) Nature. These pedagogies of the Living create spaces of exchange for imagining new ways to co-exist and resist, by encompassing the multiple worlds that come together to make up our collective reality as Living, breathing Humxn beings on a Living, breathing Earth.

I first learned of the power of grounding biocultural Humxn-Nature relationships in anticolonial learning while leading a peacebuilding camp for migrant and refugee Youth in Tkaronto. We told stories, explored identity, drew out anti-oppressive Community commitments, learned to share space by playing music and games, and deconstructed social norms and power dynamics through theatre, but I could not inspire in them more than brief acknowledgement and discussion about some vague role they had to play in some seemingly non-existent social revolution. How could I inspire more in these young People? How could I encourage responsibility and action? How could I uncover the need to profoundly question their identities and contributions to their Communities?

We began to go outside together. We began to play and notice things we had not noticed before. Walking around in our Community, on the Land, I asked them to look for and write down or photograph examples of conflict, oppression, divisions and power, followed by examples of Community, diversity, creativity, interconnectedness and peace. Suddenly the words we had been throwing around in discussions began to come Alive. But it was not until Ghanaian Elder and Community educator, Nene, came to teach us one day that settler colonialism was really brought ‘home’ and we could see our responsibilities more clearly.

As we sat in a circle outside, Nene asked us what we knew about the Earth. In a way that captured our imaginations, he placed each one of us in the heart of Nature. First, he told us that the Earth was on an axis as it rotated around the Sun. He taught us that the Earth was vibrating and spinning at one thousand miles an hour and then asked how it was possible for us to be
sitting so still and unmoved on the Land. He interrogated our explanations of gravity and then linked us irrevocably to the electromagnetic field of the Earth’s core. As he spoke, he asked us to question our relationship to the Earth through a biocultural story that engaged us and connected us to Trees, to Animals, to the Sun and Moon, to Plants, to Water, to each other, to Life and finally, to colonialism, Humxn and ecological destruction, and to our biopower and responsibility as Humxns of the Earth. As I watched the moment unfold, I could see Nene had awakened in the Youth not only a sense of wonder and awe, but a sense of collective power. He had managed to connect them to the Land and in doing so he engaged them in Indigenous sciences and anticolonial thought. By pointing out that young People have for generations been the leaders of social transformations, he inspired them to dream and imagine possibilities. From that day forward, our discussions in the program were charged with a different kind of Energy. From the young People’s artwork, plays, poems, stories, interactions and peacebuilding initiatives radiated a new understanding of themselves within history and Nature—an old idea, a new dream.

There are limitless possibilities within formal and informal education spaces of bringing settler colonialism ‘home’ through questions about Nature—Land, Air, Water—and our relationship with(in) it. A biocultural understanding of our Nature as Living Humxn beings and our relationships to each other, other non-Humxn species and the Earth, observed critically with a mind that recognizes histories, contradictions, differences and power relations, can be useful for highlighting the very interconnectedness that anticolonial and Indigenous movements aim to bring to the forefront. In thinking about solidarity, it can be transformative to learn about Humxnity as a species among species and consider ourselves to be mentally, physically, emotionally, and spiritually in relationship on all other Living Creatures. A biocultural lens that begins with the sustainability of Life, Peoples and Land, led by Indigenous Life-views and social thought, can help us to collectively imagine and re-organize our ways of being, sharing and knowing, centering interdependence and the nourishing of Life, rather than its destruction. Our learning relies on exchange and communication between People, and between Nature and People. Cesaire (1972) asks, “Of all the ways of establishing contact [between civilizations] was it [colonization] the best?” to which he answers simply “no,” (p. 2). An anticolonial biocultural approach can help us begin to establish contact with each other and the Land in ways that honour our interconnectedness. Anticolonial biocultural frameworks can be used to create holistic,
multicentric and Land-based approaches to reclaiming biopower and building biocultural relationships between Peoples, working to prevent the propagation of colonial relations in the struggle for the one thing we undoubtedly share: Life.

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon (1952) writes:

> “I find myself suddenly in the world and I recognize that I have one right alone: That of demanding human behaviour from the other.
> One duty alone: That of not renouncing my freedom through my choices…
> I am not a prisoner of history. I should not seek there for the meaning of my destiny.
> I should constantly remind myself that the real leap consists in introducing invention into existence.
> In the world through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself.
> I am a part of Being to the degree that I go beyond it.
> And, through a private problem, we see the outline of the problem of Action” (p. 179).

I take seriously Fannon’s call to create ourselves endlessly, emerging through action and bringing our inventions into existence, going beyond what we know about “Being”. Every day, I feel more alienated from the “human” society tries to force us to be, and more aligned with the Humxn my biocultural memory is asking me to become. To be human in today’s world is to be limited in capability, forced into Western science’s ‘objective’ hierarchical systems, compartments of race, gender, sexuality, wellness, and ability that jeopardize our Livelihood, silence our Lived experiences, and pathologize our differences. By contrast, to be Humxn is to intentionally nurture our emergence and that of our Community, to honour diversity and spectrums of existence, to be present and responsible in our learning and co-creation of the world, to build connections between our common goals, learn from one another and re-organize.

Fanon describes in “Being” the capacity for inventiveness and adaptability that Che Guevara attributed to the guerrillero (Guevara, 1961, p. 19). As Living beings, Humxns are problem solvers. I often think of how elders must feel looking at their world, completely transformed since their childhood, full of inventions and realities they had only dreamt of and imagined. We cannot deny biocultural transformation. It is constant and we are part of its co-creation. We must ask where biocultural lines have been drawn to dis-connect us and work instead to build connections and bridges. We must question how these lines have affected the way we perceive
ourselves and our relationships with our Self, our Bodies, each other and Nature, the Land, Water and Creatures of the Earth. And we must ask ourselves what is possible for learning, solidarity and co-creating decolonial futures when we reclaim biopower and reimagine our biocultural relationships as Humans Living with(in) Nature.

I leave you with words from Water and Land protector Robert Lovelace:

“I have come to understand that the struggle for environmental justice is rooted in the hearts of people of all races and cultures. It finds its original impulse in the inherent sense of indigeneity that cannot be extinguished. For Aboriginal people in Canada, that impulse is still raw, a scar that has yet to close. Because of this we are at once a symbol and lamp in the battle to save the planet. We still hold legal tenure to the land. Our knowledge systems, although compromised, continue to form the structure and hold a vast content of information that supports sustainable living. Our epistemologies continue to bear witness to the goodness of humanity and the love of a Creator and beautiful Creation. As I sit here writing in the early morning in my cell I know that my friends and neighbours are awakening to the task at hand. I am humbled and assured that the tide of change is rising,” (2009, p. xix).
References


