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THE MYTHS AND INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES THAT MAINTAIN SETTLER
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THE MYTHS AND INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURES THAT MAINTAIN SETTLER
COLONIALISM IN THE UNITED STATES

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This thesis is dedicated to my father and my children. My father has stood by me and supported me through thick and thin and without his love, I would never have been able to accomplish any of this. For my children, it is my sincere wish that this research gives them hopes for all that they can achieve as Native Americans and pride in their heritage.

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Introduction

The people of this island and of all the other islands which I have found and of which I have information, all go naked, men and women, as their mothers bore them, although some of the women cover a single place with the leaf of a plant or with a net of cotton which they make for the purpose. They have no iron or steel or weapons, nor are they fitted to use them.¹

With these words Christopher Columbus began the process of creating the image and mythology of the Indian. In creating the idea of the Indian, Columbus was starting a metaphor that would engulf all of the Indigenous populations of North American and serve to categorize them. The voyage of Columbus marks the beginning of an unprecedented colonial project that would serve to dispossess the multitude of Indigenous nations of their lands and resources. By placing all of the Indigenous peoples into the single category of the Primitive, Columbus initiated a process of mythologizing the Indigenous inhabitants into a single category that could be consumed by the nations and great minds of the European courts. The first step in the process was small, but the long term impact of the labeling of the peoples of the “New World” was key to the project by which European settlers would claim ownership over millions of acres of land that housed some of the greatest repositories of resources on the planet.

Columbus’ words in describing the first Indigenous inhabitants that he encountered in the Western Hemisphere laid the groundwork for what would become the structures of settler colonialism. Like laying the first stem of irises in a flower bed, the words Columbus used set in motion the myths and structures that would grow, just like the rhizome stem of an iris into multiple flowering parts of the flower bed of settler

¹ Berkhofer, Jr., Robert F. *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present*. New York: Knopf, 1978, 6. Citing Jane, Cecil. *The Journal of Christopher Columbus*. London: The Hakluyt Society, 1960, 194.

colonialism. The growth of settler colonialism's myths and structures was much like the horizontal growth of rhizome irises as each segment of the plant links it to all other parts and each flower that shoots up depends on all of the other shoots for its health and success. Each new horizontal segment of the plant is representative of the differing segments of settler colonialism that have worked together to create the tactics that provide for the overall strategic attack on Indigenous peoples and even on Indigeneity itself.

The first myth that Columbus created in conceptualizing the Indigenous peoples he encountered as existing in the state that European minds dubbed as Primitive laid the first stem in the fertile soil of the "New World" that grow into a full bed of irises all blooming into a single garden. The garden that it created is analogous to the different shoots of flowering settler colonialism. From the original myth of the Indigenous as the Primitive began the growth of the next stems that were institutional in nature. Just as the stem of the iris rhizome propagates to cover all of the available ground in a flower bed, settler colonialism propagated itself to consume the vast majority of the lands in North America.

The image of the Indian as existing in a state of nature without the mechanics of what European society saw as civilization became crucial to the launching of the era of settler colonialism in the area that would come to be known as the United States. This mythical image was instrumental in the rationalization of an orderly dispossession of the lands inhabited by hundreds of Indigenous nations. While the initial efforts of the colonizers focused more on the conquest of the Indigenous populations and plundering their material wealth, the nature of the colonial effort evolved, but that evolution was

still dependent on the same mythology created by Columbus' initial impressions about the Native inhabitants. The image of the Indian initiated a process that would develop into a multifaceted and institutionalized commitment to the dispossession and dissolution of the distinct cultures that were caricatured by that image.

With the arrival of the first settler colonies in North America, the land, the makeup of the population, governance, and languages spoken began to immediately change. Despite the then common myth that the settlers arrived on a continent devoid of any human populations, the settler arrivants found a continent that had already been substantially transformed by the population that already existed there. The European myth of the vast empty lands ready for settlement were part of the mythos of settler colonialism that was expedient to transplant the overcrowded populations of England, Spain, and the other colonial aspirants. The original mission of plunder and piety that had begun the transatlantic migration of Europeans was transformed into one permanent settlement after myths of golden cities had been put to rest and the resources that were available became more apparent in the form of tobacco, timber, wildlife, and other agricultural products.

The original settlers at Plymouth expected to find this open and empty continent that had been touted throughout Europe. The myth was quickly dispelled for the Puritan settlers when the first Native person they encountered in the place they would dub the Massachusetts Colony greeted them in English and appeared completely knowledgeable about their culture and customs. Despite such facts, the reports of open lands and wilderness persisted in the depictions of the "New World" that permeated the European discourse about North America.

The myths of settler colonialism continue to cloud the issues of Indigenous sovereignty in various ways, because those myths have permeated the entire settler system that has been institutionalized into the modern system of the United States through law, federal policy, and popular historic narratives. Beginning with the name of the continent that Amerigo Vespucci penned on his maps, the myths of settler colonialism have continuously served to justify efforts to dispossess Native populations of any legal standing, and to either openly exterminate or relegate them to the vanished past of human history. The effort to eradicate or confine Indigenous populations in the mists of a doomed past continues into modern times, and it still serves to justify a system that was built on the eradication of one race and the enslavement of another.

One of the keys to breaking down the settler colonial mythos begins with the examination of how the structures of colonialism continue to create the discursive and institutional frameworks that lock these myths into a factual framing. In order to effectively combat the on-going myths that surround and justify settler colonialism, it is necessary to examine the ways by which institutional, scientific, and cultural systems posit themselves in relation to the Indigenous populations. Understanding how the mythological imagery created by Columbus' descriptions have served to create a system of interlocking and mutually reinforcing institutional structures that strategically prevent Indigenous nations from having an equal place in the community of nations.

Much progress has been made in the last forty years in advancing Indigenous sovereignty both domestically and internationally, but the frameworks created by settler colonialism still remain as a bulwark against any true strides towards sovereign national states in a geopolitical system founded on nation-state structures. The

institutionalization of colonial myths combined with the relegation of Native nations to the past, and the on-going stereotypes that still persist about Native peoples all combine to create a world where the modest gains in sovereign authority of Native nations have not converted into a larger success for the Native populations.

This paper seeks to answer the question at the heart of this issue. How do the myths and structures work together to maintain the system settler colonialism? In order to answer this question, this study examines the on-going images and institutional frameworks that were historically created and functioned to dispossess Indigenous nations of land, resources, and sovereign authority. Such structures include law and policy, science, language, and education. The historical backdrop that frames the origins is necessarily a part of this examination, because the roots of the myths and deliberate manipulations of the truth begin in the past and are carried forward, intact to today. In order to understand where strategic gains in sovereignty can be generated, it is necessary to examine the historical structures that underpin the modern institutions that still prevent Indigenous nations from thriving.

The purpose of this paper is to examine the interrelated social structures that supported the myths of settler colonialism and serve to justify settler dominance of Native sovereignty. By examining these structures and exposing the ways that they continue to dominate the discourse, settler colonialism can begin to be denied its preeminent placement above Native sovereignty. The intent of this study is to expose the structures and institutions that continue to support the settler colonial capitalist system that has come to dominate not only the North American continent but also the entire globe. Only by exposing these structures and the myths that support them can

settler colonialism begin the self-reflexive process that is vital to dismantling these frameworks and look toward a post-colonial world. Such an understanding is essential to the creation of Indigenous strategies of decolonization and nation building. A comprehensive view of these institutional myths gives a broader perspective in evaluating how they function together in mutually reinforcing patterns. The existing literature generally details the importance of specific colonial institutions, but fails to synthesize a coherent picture of their interrelated operations, thus failing to describe how they continue to sustain their settler societies.

Necessarily, a comprehensive view of the overall system comprised of these structures sacrifices details in each. Working in concert, these institutions maintain a society of settler colonialism that continues to deprive Indigenous peoples of their inherent sovereign rights within the global nation state system.

Chapter 1: Review of Literature

Settler Colonialism

In reviewing the existing literature about the topic, the first step required is an understanding of exactly what settler colonialism entails. Examining the phenomena of settler colonialism requires a conceptual framing that distinguishes settler from other forms of colonialism. The distinction that comes first for some authors is the distinction between settler colonialism and the administrative colonialism that some European powers exercised in Africa and the Middle East during the period prior to World War II.² Byrd argues that removal of the formulations and structures of administrative colonialism did little to abate the deeper settler colonial roots, which continued to

² Byrd, Jodi A. *The Transit of Empire Indigenous Critiques of Colonialism*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011, xix.

maintain the global South as a set of resources available for exploitation and appropriation by the dominant systems of the North.³

The area that has become the United States of America presents a different picture than the regions that suffered under administrative colonialism. It quickly became a multi-ethnic settler society. The idea that the United States represents the first post-colonial state ignores the realities presented by the hundreds of Indigenous nations that existed prior to the English colonies and continue to exist within the settler society of the United States. As Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz has noted, “To say that the United States is a colonialist settler-state is to make an accusation but rather to face historical reality, without which consideration not much in US history makes sense, unless Indigenous people are erased.”⁴ Rather than representing the first post-colonial nation, the United States has become the archetypal image of the modern settler colonial state. The United States may have thrown off the yoke of British colonial structures, but it immediately adopted many of the same structures that created the colonial system and utilized them to justify the exclusive control over the dispossession and exploitation of Indigenous lands.

The singular distinction that sets settler colonialism apart from administrative and other forms of colonialism is permanence. The settler colonial effort is one that involves the permanent relocation of the settler population. What defined the distinct nature of this type of colonialism was the permanent relocation of settler populations to appropriate land and resources. European powers had practiced administrative

³ Ibid.

⁴ Dunbar-Ortiz, Roxanne. *An Indigenous Peoples' History of the United States*. Boston: Beacon Press, 2014, 7.

colonialism in Africa and the Asian sub-continent where their military occupations served to administer the Indigenous populations in the name of trade and extracting wealth to feed the coffers of the sovereigns. This would be distinct from the practice of settler colonialism. The Native populations from which the lands were being legally acquired did not possess the characteristics necessary for colonial administrators to simply militarily dominant them and instead a different method of acquisition was required. Where colonial administrators moved to colonies to administer them but retained their affiliations with their mother countries, settler colonialism was a chance to relinquish the ties to the original homeland and to make their colonies into new homelands.

The granting of charters began the initial stages of colonization in North America. Where the French merely sought trade and furs that were so richly cherished in the courts of Europe, and the Spanish sought to conquer and exploit gold and other valuable resources from their Viceroyalties, the British charters sought to resettle entire populations. The charters in the new lands were beholden to the crown, but because of distance and travel time, the new colonies were left to fend for themselves subject to their taxes imposed by the sovereign. The settler colonial effort began in earnest with European settlers even willing to sell themselves into indentured servitude for the opportunity to claim new lands and a new lifestyle in the colonies. Backed by a slave labor population transported from Africa, the one-way ticket to America became the hallmark of the new form of colonialism, settler colonialism.

Ultimately, settler colonialism is an amorphous categorization that functions to create meaning for the all-out assault by one population to replace, remove, extinguish,

or assimilate the Indigenous population. The colonies succeeded by the extermination of one race and the enslavement of another in the effort to accumulate capital within the geopolitical system.⁵

The structures that comprise settler societies are diffuse and varied, including law and policy, science, education, and language. There is no one single over-arching plan that was formulated to create a successful settler colonial effort. Settler colonial structures are analogous to positive feedback loops in climatological systems where multiple, seemingly independent, systems actually function to create a singular whole outcome.

The iris flower bed of rhizomes that represents the settler society is an analogous metaphor that serves as an instructive method for examining the myths and institutions of the system. The analogy has also been conceptualized in the parlance of modern psychoanalytic literature as a rhizomatic structure that expands horizontally rather than vertically into multiple different root systems that all compose the larger expanse of the settler colonial structure.⁶ Deleuze and Guattari have further explained that the unique aspect of the rhizome is its multiplicity where each point can and must be linked to all other points.⁷ In describing this relationship, it is necessary to remember that the primary function of this rhizomatic structure is the dispossession of lands from Indigenous populations in order to exploit them within the dominant settler colonial society. As Glen Coulthard has written:

⁵ Byrd, xxiii.

⁶ Ashcroft, Bill. *Post-colonial Transformation*. London: Routledge, 2001, 50.

⁷ Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus*. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota P., 1994, 7.

A settler colonial relationship is one characterized by a particular form of *domination*; that is, it is a relationship where power—in this case, interrelated discursive and nondiscursive facets of economic, gendered, racial, and state power—has been structured into a relatively secure or sedimented set of hierarchical social relations that continue to facilitate the *dispossession* of Indigenous peoples of the lands and self-determining authority.⁸

Just as the iris expands to the limits of the available soil in the garden, the ultimate goal of the system is the total dispossession of the lands of the Indigenous inhabitants along with the assimilation or elimination of the Indigenous population as a means of depriving them of their inherent sovereignty.

The horizontal, decentralized nature of the rhizome structure indicates that there are various, non-hierarchical branches feeding into the singular structure of dominance that results in the conceptual whole of settler colonialism. The structures that have supported the system have been examined by various authors as they impacted Indigenous populations in various formations. The individual structures present the singular views of how the horizontal functions within the larger formations of settler colonialism. The literature suggests that there are multiple horizontal forms that contribute to the system of domination that remains in place. The themes that emerge in the literature present a fractionalized picture of the various rhizomatic structures but understanding these formations are key to understanding the larger picture of how the dominant system continues to function to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their lands and sovereignty. Each of the branches in the rhizomatic structure acts like the feedback

⁸ Coulthard, Glen Sean. *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014, 6-7 (Emphasis in original).

loops in climatological studies feeding all of the other structures and cycling back into the overall formation that is settler colonialism.

Law and Policy

Policy, implemented through law is one of the primary stems and formations of the structure that created, justified, and continuously reifies settler colonialism is the combined force of law and policy. A hallmark of Western civilizations is the rule of law. One of the innovations in the democratic systems that evolved out of the monarchies of Europe is the system of laws designed to protect the individual from the vagaries of sovereign whim. Settler colonialism required a basis in law in order to proceed in a moral and rational way to dispossess Indigenous populations of their lands and resources. Two primary works in this area illustrate just how intrinsically linked the legal system and the colonial effort are. At the formative level, the colonial effort in the United States has been justified by the propagation of a legal myth. In the foundational United States Supreme Court cases known as the Marshall Trilogy, the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court, John Marshall, laid the legal foundation for the system of dispossession of Indigenous lands and the federal control of that process. This feat was accomplished by a fictionalization that was incorporated into federal law through the decisions laid down by Marshall in these three cases, forever establishing the status of Indigenous peoples within the U.S. legal system; that fictional legal doctrine that became actual law was the Doctrine of Discovery.⁹ Because of the nature of the judicial doctrine of *stare decisis*, the decisions in these cases still control the legal landscape of Indigenous land titles and the status of Indigenous nations. The Doctrine

⁹ Wilkins, David E., and K. Tsianina Lomawaima. *Uneven Ground: American Indian Sovereignty and Federal Law*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001, 54.

of Discovery is still employed by the United States and other settler colonial nations to deny Indigenous nations an equal footing in the arena of international law and preclude any change in status within the international nation-state system.¹⁰ The legal system forms the foundational principles that rationalize and make the dispossession of Indigenous lands and resources a morally correct exercise of power by the settler colonial system.

Science

The second key structure invaluable in the successful colonial effort came from the greatest scientific minds of the day. Rationalism plays a key role in the formulation of Western European thought and an integral role in justifying the colonial effort. Science became an integral tool in converting the image of the Primitive that Columbus' original descriptions contained into an entire field of eugenics. The literature in this area begins with some of the most biting criticisms of Western science. The vital role that science played in justifying U.S. settler colonial policy and practices has been explored and documented by some of the greatest works in Native American scholarship. The culpability of the role that anthropology has played in the settler colonial effort was famously indicted by Vine Deloria, Jr. For Deloria, the tenets of the field of anthropology uniquely contributed to both the policy realm and the stereotypical portrayals of Indigenous peoples by Western science.¹¹ The intrinsic nature of the feedback relationship between science and policy occurs in the intersection of

¹⁰ Williams, Robert A. *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought: The Discourses of Conquest*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1990.

¹¹ Deloria, Jr., Vine. *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto*. New York, NY: Macmillan Company, 1969.

agriculture and title.¹² Early colonial science served the colonial effort and the advances in sciences were integral in the civilizational effort of the settler colonial system to place Indigenous peoples below the level of the white European conquerors.¹³ The intertwining of the rhizomatic feedback loops is clearly displayed in the overlapping literature between science and the other settler colonial structures.

Education

The techniques of educating the Indigenous population have a unique relationship with the other rhizomes of settler colonialism and have contributed to the dispossession of their lands and erosion of their sovereignty. From the earliest colonial efforts, education has been a key component of the institutional structure of settling Indigenous lands. The history of missionary involvement is reflected in the common teachings of the three G's of God, gold, and glory that spread through virtually every public school history program in the United States. The involvement of missionaries and the education of the Native peoples in first Catholicism and then in Protestantism was a core component of the settler colonial effort. In detailing the historical relationship between education and settler colonialism, Sandy Grande has written that, "The miseducation of American Indians precedes the 'birth' of this nation. From the time of invasion to the present day, the church and state have acted as coconspirators in

¹² Barker, Joanne. *Sovereignty Matters: Locations of Contestation and Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-determination*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005, 8.

¹³ Berkhofer, Jr., 33.

the theft of Native America, robbing Indigenous peoples of their very right to be Indigenous.”¹⁴

When the United States took over the role of the settler society, the mission of education shifted to assimilation of Natives into the dominant society. Treaty provisions that required education had been largely ignored until the federal government saw it as a means for transforming the Indigenous populations into invisible members of the American Melting Pot. Assimilation Era policies involved formal education efforts to transform the Indigenous peoples into productive members of the settler society. The era of forced boarding school participation arose at the same time that the United States was working to create individualism among the Indigenous populations through assimilationist policies like allotment.¹⁵ Education practices were aligned with the policy and scientific attempts to bring the light of the evolutionary concept of civilization to the Indigenous populations and to remake them in the image of the settler colonial society.

In more recent times, the struggle between Native societies and the institutions of education have taken a turn toward the theoretical precepts of pedagogy itself. Finding mutual reinforcement in scientific practices, Native knowledge and epistemological perspectives have found it incredibly difficult to find legitimacy in the academy. The difficulties presented have impact on policy and program because, as Kovach has noted, “Policy and programming grow out of research and while the

¹⁴ Grande, Sandy. *Red Pedagogy: Native American Social and Political Thought*. Roman and Littlefield Publishers: London. 2004, 11.

¹⁵ Berkhofer, Jr., 171.

influence of research and its methodologies is not always visible in the policy cycle, research is where it starts.”¹⁶

The linkages between the various horizontal rhizomes of settler colonialism are found in interstices between that multiple structures. Each of the rhizomatic structures feeds back into the other parts of the institutional structuring and presents a more coherent picture of how they reinforce and sustain one another. Education catalyzes the linkages between the structures and provides a key insight into the way they function to present a united front targeted at dispossession of Indigenous lands and resources.

Language

The stereotypes reified by scientific endeavors were employed in the colonial effort to shape the image of the Indian in Western thought, and the educational systems reinforced these ideas, and also advanced the primary position of the colonial system over Indigenous peoples. Linguistic domination was a key attribute of settler dominance. For English this meant the elimination of the Native languages and their replacement with the settler vernacular as well as using English to eliminate the existence of the Indigenous populations from the English speaking world in a technique Jean O’Brien called *firsting and lasting*.¹⁷ The first teaching required that the Indigenous populations learn the language of the settlers. The language also served to create the image of the “Indian” that was variously employed by the settler colonial mythology to justify the policies of eradication and assimilation that were the hallmarks of U.S. policy towards Indigenous peoples in North America. The relation of the

¹⁶ Kovach, Margaret. *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Contexts*. University of Toronto Press: Toronto. 2009, 13.

¹⁷ O’Brien, Jean. *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New England*. University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis. 2010.

imagery to the other aspects of policy was seminally illustrated by Robert Berkhofer, Jr. when he stated that, “the Indian was a White invention and still remains largely a White image, if not a stereotype.”¹⁸ The linkages between language and education have been a key feedback loop in the rhizomatic structure of colonialism since first contact and continue today in the forms of stereotypes and academic legitimacy.

Chapter 2: Law and Policy

The first and arguably most important structure that created an entry point for settler colonialism into the lands of Indigenous peoples and continues to support settler domination over Native nations was legal. The law was a primary tool in the colonial effort from its inception and continued to maintain the dominance of white settler colonial nations throughout the colonial period. Professor Williams elaborated on the nature of law as a colonial tool stating that, “law’s utility in generating legitimating arguments for the acquisition, maintenance, and defense of colonial spheres of influence was seized on as a principal instrument of empire by the colonizing monarchs of Portugal and Spain.”¹⁹ Building upon the precedents established by the original colonial powers, the West continually used the law as a tool to create their colonial regimes. Professor Williams continues by noting, “Law, which Europeans have long revered as their instrument of civilization, became the West’s perfect instrument of empire in the heart of darkness that was America.”²⁰ The impact that the law had on relations between the Native nations and the settler colonial effort was overwhelming. As a tool of settler colonialism, law became a primary structure for the enactment of

¹⁸ Berkhofer, Jr., 3.

¹⁹ Williams. *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought*. 1991, 59.

²⁰ Williams, *The American Indian in Western Legal Thought*. 1991, 93.

policies that were genocidal to the Indigenous peoples of North America. According to Professor Strickland, “the law was both a formal and an informal instrument of genocide.”²¹ The law played a critical role in legitimating the acquisition of lands from the Native inhabitants with the morally “correct” goal of civilizing the continent. Law continues to subjugate those Native nations in the role of the “other” to the dominate settler colonial society.

The rule of law created the governing rules that regulated interaction between the United States and the Indigenous nations occupying the territories the settler colonial nation wished to appropriate for itself. The law served the vital function of appropriating the spaces occupied by the Indigenous population and transforming those lands into a part of the space claimed by the settler colonial nation. Law was critical to the appropriation of these lands because, “Stealing land, or property, is unacceptable in a liberal democracy, but structuring Native lands as part of the abstract space of the nation erases public outcry.”²² The impact of the law on the relationship between the Indigenous nations and the United States was always one of the dominant settler colonial power over the subjugated Native populations. As Professor Strickland has written, “the genocidal story of the dissolution of the Indian nations is primarily one of white law and white policy.”²³ The impact that the law has had over the course of the history of the United States in their relations with the Native nations overwhelms all other forms of interaction. The relationship that the Indigenous peoples have had with

²¹ Strickland, Rennard J. *Genocide-at-Law: An Historic and Contemporary View of the Native American Experience*. University of Kansas Law Review, 34:4, 1986, 719.

²² Goeman, Mishuana. *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013, 30-31.

²³ Strickland, 723.

the legal system of the United States is unique and omnipresent. Professor Strickland continues by noting that, “Federal law dominates Indian life in a way that is not duplicated. The nature of public law and Indian policy is such that legal questions are central to all tribal, social, economic, and political issues.”²⁴ From the beginning, the law has been a primary structure that established and maintained the domination of the settler colonial society over the Indigenous. There exists no instance where the legal systems of the Indigenous nations were given precedence over the colonial system. The settlers brought with them an endless appetite for Native lands and a legal system that was all too willing to assert its own jurisdiction and dominion over any claims between the two societies.

For the United States, the legal legacy of relations between the Indigenous societies and the court system begins with a series of cases decided by the United States Supreme Court in the era prior to the Removal Era known as the Marshall Trilogy. The Marshall Trilogy involved a series of cases decided by the Supreme Court and authored by Chief Justice John Marshall. The impact of these decisions on Indian Country continue to be felt today as Professor Williams notes:

A well-known language of racism that identifies Indians as irredeemable savages now generates important legal consequences and precedents. The Marshall model gives authoritative legal meaning and sanction to the language of racism used to justify the doctrine’s regime of legalized racial discrimination and then perpetuates that meaning through the force of stare decisis.²⁵

²⁴ Strickland, Rennard J. *Genocide-at-Law: An Historic and Contemporary View of the Native American Experience*. University of Kansas Law Review, 34:4, 1986, 738.

²⁵ Williams, Robert A. *Like a Loaded Weapon: The Rehnquist Court, Indian Rights, and the Legal History of Racism in America*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2005, 71-72.

Due to the legal doctrine of *stare decisis*, these cases continue to govern the legal landscape of Indigenous relations with the dominant system because of the legal adherence to previous decisions on questions of law in subsequent decisions.

The first decision in the Marshall Trilogy is the United States Supreme Court case of *Johnson v. M'Intosh*, decided in 1823. The decision in this case dealt with the state of aboriginal title and who would control the sale of Indigenous lands. In this decision, Marshall incorporated a version of what has become known as the Doctrine of Discovery, merged with Conquest, to assert that the ultimate title to the lands was vested in the United States by stating that:

Conquest gives a title which the Courts of the conqueror cannot deny, whatever the private and speculative opinions of individuals may be, respecting the original justice of the claim which has been successfully asserted. The British government, which was then our government, and whose rights have passed to the United States, asserted title to all the lands occupied by Indians, within the chartered limits of the British colonies. It asserted also a limited sovereignty over them, and the exclusive right extinguishing the title which occupancy gave to them. These claims have been maintained and established as far west as the river Mississippi, by the sword. The title to a vast portion of the lands we now hold, originates in them. It is not for the Courts of this country to question the validity of this title, or to sustain one incompatible with it.²⁶

Marshall asserted that the title obtained by conquest (despite the fact that conquest had not yet occurred) by the settler colonial powers passed to the United States after the American Revolution. Marshall traced the title back to the original discovery and occupation by the British Crown, and then identifies the United States as successor to British claims. Marshall goes on to explain what the nature of the change in title for Indigenous lands meant under the Doctrine of Discovery holding that:

²⁶ *Johnson v. M'Intosh* (1823).

However extravagant the pretension of converting the discovery of an inhabited country into conquest may appear; if the principle has been asserted in the first instance, and afterwards sustained; if a country has been acquired and held under it; if the property of the great mass of the community originates in it, it becomes the law of the land, and cannot be questioned. So, too, with respect to the concomitant principle, that the Indian inhabitants are to be considered merely as occupants, to be protected, indeed, while in peace, in the possession of their lands, but to be deemed incapable of transferring the absolute title to others.²⁷

The impact of this decision between all white litigants cannot be understated. As previously discussed, the most important aspect of settler colonialism is the acquisition of Indigenous lands. In this decision, Marshall resolves the question of aboriginal title by stating that the Natives held only a right of occupancy that could only be alienated from them exclusively by the United States federal government.

The decision laid the groundwork for the acquisition of Native lands in a legal (moral) way whether by purchase or by violence. Professor Williams has argued that, “The Supreme Court’s unanimous decision in *Johnson v. M’Intosh*, written by Marshall in 1823, is, without question, the most important Indian rights opinion ever issued by any court of law in the United States.”²⁸ The inherent flaw in the opinion lies in the construction Marshall created of the Discovery Doctrine, which previously had only been asserted by the colonial powers of Europe when disputes arose between them over their colonial land claims. As Wilkins and Lomawaima have noted, “At the heart of the decision was Marshall’s distorted, historically inaccurate, and legally fictitious construction of the doctrine of discovery.”²⁹ Marshall’s decision served to vest sole

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Williams, *Like a Loaded Weapon*, 2005, 51.

²⁹ Wilkins and Lomawaima, *Uneven Ground*, 2001, 54

authority for the dispossession of Native lands in the newly formed federal government, which was key to the insatiable need of the new nation for Native lands to settle. The colonial effort required a legal justification to legitimate its dominion over the Native nations and the valuable lands and resources they possessed. Despite being labeled as “one of the most thoroughly racist, nonegalitarian, undemocratic, and stereotype infused decisions ever issued by the Supreme Court,” *Johnson v. M’Intosh* remains good law in the United States and continues to be asserted in cases involving Native land claims.³⁰

Eight years later, Marshall would revisit the issue of Native status within the United States’ legal system in the second case of the trilogy. With the question of removal looming within the halls of the federal legislature, much remained unresolved in the nature and status of tribal claims against the settler colonial society. The state of Georgia had become the crucible where Native rights were being beaten and molded into a shape that was amenable to the settler colonial states. As a condition of their ratification of the Constitution, the State of Georgia had extorted a promise that the federal government would rid Georgia of the Cherokee Nation and the rise of the removal effort within the legislature signified the intent of the Congress to solve this problem. With the election of Andrew Jackson to the presidency, the stage was set for the legal battle over the status of Indigenous nations and the legal standing that they would merit within the settler colonial courts.

In the second case to come before the Supreme Court, *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831), the status of the tribal nations was very much at the center of the controversy. The case illustrates the way that policy and the law form one of the

³⁰ Williams, *Like a Loaded Weapon*, 2005, 56.

feedback loops within the rhizomatic structure of settler colonialism and work synergistically to deprive Native nations of their inherent sovereign status. The state of Georgia had long been pressuring the federal government to do something to rid the state of Cherokee sovereignty within the state borders. With the election of Andrew Jackson, the Cherokee Nation could see the writing on the walls of the capitol in the form of the Removal movement. The discovery of gold within the boundaries of the Cherokee sovereignty only served to increase the pressure on the federal government to act. The Supreme Court, once again, found itself the fulcrum upon which Native rights and sovereignty would tilt.

In the decision issued by Marshall for the Court, he avoided the merits by manipulating the jurisdictional claim and asked whether “the Cherokees constitute a foreign state in the sense of the Constitution?”³¹ The motivation for Marshall to reach for this question was political in nature. O’Brien has described the Court’s dilemma by noting:

Legally the *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* case was about Cherokee sovereignty and rights. But politically, it involved the future of the Supreme Court. President Andrew Jackson had campaigned for office on a pledge to move the tribes westward. But a Supreme Court ruling that the Cherokees were a foreign state would have prevented the government from moving the tribes. President Jackson made it clear that he intended to ignore the Court if it ruled in favor of the Cherokees. Marshall realized that a president’s refusal to enforce a Supreme Court decree would seriously harm the future of the Court.³²

In the case, the Cherokee Nation had sought an injunction against the state of Georgia to prevent the state's ability to enforce certain discriminatory laws within the sovereign

³¹ *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831).

³² O'Brien, Sharon. *American Indian Tribal Governments*. Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989, 57.

Cherokee territory. Knowing that a ruling in favor of the Cherokee meant a crisis in the powers between the branches of the federal government, Marshall was forced to craft an answer that did not deprive the Cherokee of sovereignty entirely, but did not risk Jackson's wrath against the Supreme Court. The answer that Marshall provided might have seemed innocuous, but the ramifications have gone far beyond what Marshall could have possibly foreseen.

In answering the question he posited about whether the Cherokee constituted a foreign nation, Marshall answered that the Cherokee did constitute a nation but did not constitute a foreign nation. Writing for the court in a decision where two justices agreed, two concurred, and two dissented, Marshall struck down any notion of foreign national status within the geopolitical community of nations for Native nations.

Building upon the earlier decision and expanding it Marshall wrote for the Court that:

Though the Indians are acknowledged to have an unquestionable, and, heretofore, unquestioned right to the lands they occupy, until that right shall be extinguished by a voluntary cession to our government; yet it may well be doubted whether those tribes which reside within the acknowledged boundaries of the United States can, with strict accuracy be denominated foreign nations. They may, more correctly, perhaps, be denominated domestic dependent nations. They occupy a territory to which we assert a title independent of their will, which must take effect in point of possession when their right of possession ceases. Meanwhile they are in a state of pupilage. Their relation to the United States resembles that of a ward to his guardian.³³

In creating the status of the domestic dependent nation, Marshall found a middle road that averted the crisis of inter-branch conflict, but, in doing so, he created a precedent that has done enormous damage to Native nations for nearly two centuries. By denying

³³ Cherokee Nation v. Georgia (1831).

the Native nations the status of foreign nations, the Supreme Court denied the tribes the ability to confront states in the Supreme Court.

The idea that the Indigenous nations were less than foreign nations placed them in a position where their sovereignty could be demoted to less than nations and even states within the system of federalism that makes up the United States. Nearly two centuries later, the status of domestic dependent nationals continues to be asserted in the United States courts of law to deny the rights and sovereign status of Indigenous peoples. Despite written constitutions, courts, legislatures, representative forms of government and growing economic power in the United States, the Indigenous nations are still locked within the status that Marshall ascribed to them. The impact that this status has had on Native land claims, sovereignty, and ability to assert their own jurisdiction has been omnipresent in all of their dealings with the United States federal government. The status has the double impact of placing doubt on the concept of democracy and turning democracy itself into a weapon in the struggle to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their lands.³⁴

The feedback loop demonstrated by this rhizomatic structure created by the law and its interstices with policy formulated the mechanism and paved the way for the United States federal government to create an exclusive relationship with Indigenous nations and put a wall between them and other global powers. The two cases limited the lines of flight that would have been available to any other recognized nation in dealing with an enemy of superior military power and malignant intent in the international arena. The Supreme Court left the Native nations with no defense against

³⁴ Grande, 32.

the desire of the settler colonial power to begin the process of dispossessing the nations in the Southeastern sections of the newly formed United States and relocating them to the area that would be dubbed Indian Territory in Oklahoma. The process would not be limited to those nations, however, as removal became a tool for relocating Indigenous peoples from multiple parts of the country as they became an impediment in the settler colonial appetite for more land and resources.

With the law in place as a mechanism to aid in the settler colonial effort, the dominant system was free to branch the root structure in other directions that would feed back in ways that only complimented the overall effort to eradicate the difference presented by the Native American other.

Chapter 3: Science

The next branch of the colonial rhizome was the incorporation of science into the effort to rid the settler society of the “Indian Problem”. The best science of the day was employed as a tool to inform the policy and legal decisions that impacted Indian Country in ways that always favored settler colonial goals. Removal was the first major policy of a young United States, but it only delayed the problem of what to do with the Indigenous nations now trapped, due to settler leap frogging across the center of the continent in search of gold, in the middle of a continent that was entirely claimed. After the settlers managed to populate the coasts of both oceans, the need for land turned inward. The history of the coastal settling saw the repetition of the Georgia gold saga in California and the outcome of removal repeated within the California territory. The story would be repeated one last time in the interior of the country.

Despite their best efforts to resist settler colonial encroachment, the Indigenous nations of North America increasingly found themselves pushed slowly onto reservations that only left them with a fraction of the lands they had possessed pre-colonization. The lands they had originally possessed were an immediate source of tension with the science that the settler colonial society brought with them to the shores of North America.

One of the first major sciences that had flourished in Europe was organized agriculture. The science of agriculture impacted Indigenous peoples in both the realm of science and in the education programs that were created to encourage assimilation into the settler society. Chief Justice Marshall had noted in the *Johnson v. M'Intosh* opinion that “the tribes of Indians inhabiting this country were fierce savages, whose occupation was war, and whose subsistence was drawn chiefly from the forest. To leave them in possession of their country was to leave the country a wilderness”;³⁵ juxtaposing the difference between the image of the civilized agriculturally based settler society and the Primitive hunter-gatherer Native population. Marshall continued, “As the white population advanced, that of the Indians necessarily receded. The country in the immediate neighborhood of agriculturalists became unfit for them.”³⁶ The idea that the environment reflected the difference between the evolved and civilized settler society and the primitive Indigenous had been brought with the settlers from the best scientific minds of Europe and was continually reaffirmed by the acts of conquest.

³⁵ *Johnson v. M'Intosh* (1831).

³⁶ *Ibid.*

The fledgling social sciences of Europe evolved concomitantly with the revolutions in agriculture, industrialization, navigation, and exploration. As the European powers had expanded into the colonial era, the social sciences became committed to the secular explanation of the success and justification for the settler colonial projects. The Assimilation Era was only a reflection of the way that science informed law and policy. The feedback loop between these two areas would continue a close relationship that would last for close to two centuries.

To continue to explain and justify the idea that settler colonialism was just part of a larger project in the evolutionary process of *homo sapiens*, science set out to prove that the civilizational complex was as inevitable as the evolution of species that Darwin had posited. The idea of progress as an inevitable part of human evolution became intrinsically bound as science for the settler colonial project.

As part of the larger eugenics movement, the wilderness and the savage became linked in the imagery and science as being part and parcel of one another. Agricultural science then, was integral to taming both the frontier and its inhabitants. At the general level, the science of agriculture was a tool of colonization. As Manning noted, “Is it possible that the technology did not spread entirely by adoption that hunter-gatherer were wiped out or displaced by an advancing agricultural imperialism? The record suggests that although some adoption did occur, by and large farming spread by genocide.”³⁷ Nowhere was this relationship played out on a grander scale than in the North American holdings of the United States. Manifest Destiny was more of a

³⁷ Manning, Richard. *Against the Grain: How Agriculture Has Hijacked Civilization*. New York: North Point Press, 2004, 45.

religious idea that the settler colonials were destined to dominate the continent, but the secular movement in the United States did its part to make sure that the same doctrine was justified by the scientific mind.

In analyzing how wilderness was juxtaposed with civilization and the agricultural drive of settler colonial society, Roderick Nash observed that:

The increasing tendency to redefine America's mission in secular rather than sacred terms made little difference in regard to antipathy toward wilderness. Insofar as the westward expansion of civilization was though good, wilderness was bad. It was construed as much a barrier to progress, prosperity, and power as it was to godliness. On every frontier intense enthusiasm greeted the transformation of the wild into the civilized.³⁸

The best minds of the Enlightenment had joined in the same mythos that religion had propagated to explain and justify the conditions of European settler colonialism.

The feedback loop between science and policy within the root structure of settler colonialism advanced the great unifying myth of westward expansion and terraforming under the umbrella concept of progress. Just as Marshall saw the possibility of not dispossessing the Indigenous peoples as an intolerable blow to the inevitable progress of conquest, later scientific thinkers joined in the promotion of civilization as part of an evolutionary progress. Vine Deloria, Jr. illustrated the impact of this feedback loop when he observed that, "Behind each successful man stands a woman and behind each policy and program with which Indians are plagued, if traced completely back to its

³⁸ Nash, Roderick. *Wilderness and the American Mind*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1967, 40.

origin, stands the anthropologist.”³⁹ The Indigenous nations of North America were rendered merely the subjects of the great civilizational experiment. The relationship of science to the idea of progress and civilization was cemented into the drive for westward expansion and resource consumption.

The use of science in the process of “civilizing” the Indigenous peoples intrinsically tied it to the law and policies of the United States. The use of the pupilage metaphor only served to show how the sciences played their role in helping to bring the light of progress to the Indigenous peoples of North America. Because they were the wards of the United States, the newly formed nation saw it as imperative that it bring the cause of Western civilization to the Indigenous nations under its protection and pupilage.⁴⁰

The role that science would play in this process has done much to taint the efficacy of the social sciences, because of their utter failure to bring the Indigenous peoples of North America into the fold of the larger civilization. The racist application of the science that equated biology and evolution to social complexity only served to cement the idea that progress and civilization were the ultimate goal of the policies of the United States as they related to the Indigenous nations.⁴¹ The best science of the day as the United States entered into the era of Assimilation and Allotment supported the claims of the policy makers in Washington that turning the Native peoples into

³⁹ Deloria, Jr., 81. Though the metaphor Deloria employs may be considered sexist by some, the larger point he is making remains valid and relevant.

⁴⁰ Deloria, Jr., 45.

⁴¹ Berkhofer, Jr., 56.

agriculturalists would support the great goal of civilizing the Indigenous peoples.⁴² The impact that the combination of science and policy had on the Indigenous peoples was most clearly seen in the decline of the land base of the Native peoples. The Allotment process served as the mechanism of one of the largest land transfers in the history of human populations. In just a few decades, the policies inspired by the scientific racism of anthropology and evolutionary progress helped to divest the Native populations of all but a fraction of their pre-Allotment land holdings. Between the years of 1903 and 1933 Indigenous peoples saw their land holdings shrink by close to two million acres per year until ninety million acres had been transferred from their possession into the hands of the settler colonial nation.⁴³

Deloria's critique of the science of anthropology in the Twentieth Century finds its roots in idea of the vanishing Indian. The reason that so many anthropologists descended on the reservations in the summer months was to document the cultures and practices of the Indigenous peoples before they vanished from the face of the earth.⁴⁴ The result of the imputation of the social sciences into the realm of policy making pushed Indigenous nations closer to the brink of extinction in the same way that the destruction of food sources such as the bison had on the Great Plains. The sciences had been employed to explain the Divine nature of progress and the ways that it had eclipsed the less developed societies that stood in the way of the spread of European hegemony.

⁴² Berkhofer, Jr., 59

⁴³ O'Brien, Sharon, 79.

⁴⁴ Deloria, Jr., 78-79.

The social sciences were not the only science that had a devastating effect on the Indigenous nations of North America. The coming of the Atomic Age had just as much detrimental impact on the Native peoples of North America in the Southwest as Removal had had on those of the Southeast. The discovery of uranium in the deserts of the Navajo reservation was just as destructive to the future of the Indigenous peoples of the Southwest as the discovery of gold in Georgia had been to the Cherokees 150 years earlier. The scientific community was once more called into action to help deprive the Indigenous peoples of their land and clean water.

Since the testing of the first nuclear bomb in the deserts of New Mexico, the federal government in conjunction with the nuclear scientists have acted to control more and more territory in the Western United States. The removal of lands in this region from public to restricted governmental control has been steady and disproportionate to any other region in the country. The lands of Nevada have seen so many nuclear test detonations that it will be thousands of years before the radiation dissipates to livable levels. The discovery of rich deposits of uranium and other rare earth metals along with the removal of public lands for the use of nuclear test detonations have deprived many Native nations of their lands and holy places. As Valerie Kuletz has noted:

The struggles going on in these out-of-the-way places, struggles that the mainstream media ignore more often than not, are quite familiar to the Indian people who inhabit them. My interviews with Indian people in the interdesert region have revealed that many feel these struggles to be reminiscent of an older relationship between white people and Indians, only now the terms of the argument have changed, and the doublespeak is slicker. Many Indian people have expressed to me that they see the nuclear wasteland as a form of twentieth-century genocide. This, in conjunction, with the strong military presence in the interdesert region, gives them the feeling that history is one again repeating

itself, that the nuclear landscape is a contemporary form of the colonialism that won the West.⁴⁵

The nuclear science industry and the technologies that have resulted from splitting the atom have uniquely contributed to what can only be described as an on-going nuclear war against the Native populations of the desert southwest of the United States. The linkages between science and settler colonialism have been cemented into the histories of the Indigenous peoples throughout North America. The feedback between science and settler colonialism has occurred at multiple levels of the rhizomatic structure of the construct such that they are intrinsically tied to the project.

The social sciences removed themselves from the civilizing project in the open field of policy making, but they have remained to pressure the nature of Indigenous difference in other forums. No longer do anthropologists openly direct policies to help “civilize” the Native peoples, but now do so on a more covert field of play. The myth of the multicultural society was discarded by the social sciences and replaced with the studies of the poststructural society and postcolonial studies. The social sciences have remade themselves into an even more insidious form that threatens to deny the uniqueness of Native culture and society and to absorb them into the idea of the postracial society.

The use of the sciences in the denial of Native identity presents itself as yet another mechanism for the assault on Native difference. The Native other that has always existed within the culture of the settler colonial project is ignored or even

⁴⁵ Kuletz, Valerie. *The Tainted Desert: Environmental Ruin in the American West*. New York: Routledge, 1998, 114-115.

denigrated as holding on to a difference that does not exist within a world of psychoanalytic explanation.

The best science of the day in the Twenty-First Century calls for a rejection of essentialist notions and embracing a poststructural world of postracialization and identity. The postcolonial nature of these studies, as previously mentioned, rely on the notions that somehow the colonial era has ended. The evidence to support this claim is lacking from the perspective of the Indigenous populations of North America, who still find themselves as wards of the larger United States government and in a never ending state of pupilage. The conclusions of such science ring hollow in the ears of the Indigenous peoples that still find themselves firmly trapped under the yoke of settler colonial rule. The Native nations exist still at the sufferance of the United States Congress. The postmodern science built itself on the corpus of the vanished American.

The postracial anti-essentialist camp of science has firmly located itself in a position to tell Native peoples that they should move beyond their own essentialist cultures into the post-structural world. Native scholars have been forceful in their rejection of this idea. The critics have responded that the anti-essentialist camp ignores the fact that the normative constructions of these premises fail to adequately address the liberatory potential that exists within them and at the same time become a tool leveraged against the claims of Indigenous difference in favor of settler colonial domination.⁴⁶ While the science seeks the emancipatory potential of radical democracy, the method involved only serves to ignore the Indigenous other as the foundation upon which settler colonialism has built itself.

⁴⁶ Coulthard, 21.

What the postmodern social science fails to address is the prior questions of settler colonialism and the Native as the ontological other that it has posited itself against. The failure to address the pre-existing premise of Native “otherization” within the pantheon of settler colonial feedback loops as they exist within the rhizome structure prevent the emancipatory potential of these studies. In order to truly realize the potential of these forms of inquiry, Native scholars have begun to interrogate the nature of the assumptions underlying them. As Jodi Byrd noted:

With the scope of such transits, indigeneity as an ontological prior challenges postcolonial and critical theories because it serves as a significant parallax view—though certainly not the only one—along the baseline of colonialism through which to trouble the dialectical processes that underwrite colonialist hegemonies of racializations and normativities, subjectivities and subjectifications. As radical alterity, indigeneity functions as a counterpoint that disrupts the fictions of multicultural settler enfranchisement and diasporic arrivals; as event and as horizon, indigeneity is temporal as well as spatial, structural as well as structuring.⁴⁷

While the language of this scholarship can be difficult to parse, the point is very simple: the Indigenous other exists as a prior question that must be addressed in order to understand the structures of settler colonialism and how it has been built upon the image of the Native other. The postmodern social sciences and psychoanalytic scholars fail to address the prior question and this taints the foundations upon which postcolonial and postracial studies have constructed themselves. Until the prior question of indigeneity is addressed, it will remain difficult to center deconstructive studies into the nature of settler colonialism and simply sweeping it under the rug with claims of anti-essentialism does not serve to interrogate the nature of the relationship.

⁴⁷ Byrd, 31-32.

Another tactic employed to avoid the prior question of the Indigenous other comes in the form of the accusation of Nietzschean resentment. Redeploying this in the context of Indigenous liberation and using Canadian First Peoples as an example, Coulthard has written that:

In the context of internalized colonialism, then, it would appear that the emergence of reactive emotions like anger and resentment can indicate a breakdown of colonial subjection and thus open up the possibility of developing alternative subjectivities and anticolonial practices. Indeed, if we look at the historical context that informed the coupling of recognition with reconciliation politics following Canada's launch of RCAP in 1991, we see a remarkably similar process taking place.⁴⁸

The resentment that Indigenous communities are accused of harboring in the postracial world becomes a mechanism for the rejection of the mental colonialism that has infected the psyche of the colonized as they attempt to navigate a world of settler racialization.⁴⁹

From these examples, the conclusion is obvious, settler colonialism has historically and contemporaneously employed the best science of the day as part and parcel of the process of colonization. The sciences have uniquely posited themselves as an arm of the rhizomatic structure of settler colonialism and serve to feed and nourish the other parts of the root structure that form its basis. Settler colonialism has relied on the sciences as a justificatory mechanism to rationalize the dispossession of Indigenous peoples of their lands. Western thought requires a rational basis for its actions and the sciences form the core of this rationality. Just as thought requires a rational basis in science, so, too, do policies and laws within the Western concept of the rule of law.

⁴⁸ Coulthard, 115.

⁴⁹ Coulthard, 114.

These two structures have worked concomitantly toward the same goal of rationally dispossessing Native peoples of their lands.

Chapter 4: Education

The third arm of the effort to colonize the lands of North America is education. Historically education functioned as a way to civilize the Native peoples. In creating the mechanism to civilize the Primitive cultures of Native peoples, education has no equal in its forceful behavior modification. The educational system was founded as a means to bring the light of “civilization” to the Indigenous peoples of North America and has functioned to further the colonial project from its inception. From its inception, education formed the tool that colonial society used as way to hammer the Indigenous society into the mold of the rapidly growing settler colonial population. The missionaries who accompanied the original explorers brought education in the means and methods of Christianity and formed the origin of what would become one of the greatest assimilative tools of settler colonial society.

The Christian missionaries were firmly in control of educating the Native populations and bringing the light of Christianity to them. The educators in the clergy saw their pupils as normatively deficient when compared to their settler colonial societies. The terms of Native education and the place of Indigenous peoples in relation to the “civilized” nations of Europe was set by the missionary educators. As Berkhofer has written:

The basic themes that would dominate so much of White thinking on Native Americans for the next few centuries were well developed in the literature on the Spanish conquest and settlement of the Americas. Using the twin criteria of Christianity and “civilization,” Spaniards found the Indian wanting in a long list of attributes: letters, laws, government, clothing, arts, trade, agriculture,

marriage, morals, metal goods, and above all religion. Judgments upon these failures might be kind and sympathetic or harsh and hostile, but no one argued that the Indian was as good as the European in this early period.⁵⁰

The feedback loop and connections between the rhizomatic structures of colonialism are apparent in this statement. The overall depiction of the Native as normatively deficient in these areas when compared to the settlers indicates that the goal of education from its inception in the Americas was to bring the light of the structures of settler colonialism in the name of Divine Providence. The connections between law and policy as well as science are made evident by the nature of the image established by the Christian educators who came to North America. The importance of education in the process of creating settler domination matched the roles of law and science stroke for stroke. Sandy Grande has noted that, “perhaps at no other time in U.S. history did the church and state work so hand in hand to advance the common project of white supremacy as it did during the period of missionary domination.”⁵¹

With the rise of the popularity of evolutionary perspectives in the social sciences and the changing nature of the policy eras in Native and settler relations, the nature of education changed to help supplement the ideas that were being put forth. In order for the Native to progress from the state of “primitivism” to the status of members of the “civilized” society, education came to be viewed as a primary tool. In the project of assimilating the Native into the multicultural society, education would play a vital role. Education could bring not only the light of Christianity to the Natives, but also a mechanism to bring the concomitant benefits of civilization such as agriculture, letters,

⁵⁰ Berkhofer, Jr., 10.

⁵¹ Grande, 12.

laws, and citizenship. The missionary educational project found direct support in the federal government through appropriations to the Civilization Fund.⁵² The name of the program makes its goal painfully obvious and situates it within the larger rhizomatic structure of the settler root structure and shows how the individual branches of that structure feed back with one another making lines of flight almost impossible to locate. The net effect is to trap Native peoples within formations that make it impossible for them to escape without denouncing their indigeneity and opting to attempt to pass in the settler society. As Grande concludes, “the work of teachers, church leaders, and missionaries were hardly distinguishable during this era; saving souls and colonizing minds became part and parcel of the same colonialist project.”⁵³

The mission of education in relation to the Native populations has been clear since the early days of the United States. Rather than educating its own population, the focus of education in the early eras of the nation were firmly fixed on the project of bringing the Native other into the larger settler colonial society. Today, the schools that make up the Ivy League are seen as the pinnacle of higher education in the United States, but that image is more recently evolved than many realize. As Hall observed:

This assimilative function was entrenched in Harvard’s legal foundations since its founding in the seventeenth century. Like several other Ivy League universities in the former English colonies of the United States, Harvard’s charter includes a specific mandate to educate a class of Protestant Indian missionaries equipped on graduation to evangelize their own Aboriginal groups.⁵⁴

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Ibid.

⁵⁴ Hall, Tony. *The American Empire and the Fourth World: The Bowl with One Spoon*. Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005, xxvii.

Even at the highest levels, the origins of education and the missionary projects dovetailed to focus on the project of ‘civilizing’ the Native populations.

The physical state of the mission of education began to change in the United States as the eras in policy formation changed. The original influence of Christian missionary work to educate the Natives and the federal funding of these efforts through mechanisms such as the Civilization Fund began to change as the agencies and powers of the federal government expanded after the Civil War. The agency in charge of dealing with Native was moved out of the War Department and was renamed the Bureau of Indian Affairs and it was tasked with the project of assimilating the Native populations, particularly those on reservations, into the larger settler society. “During the assimilation era, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) literally took charge of Indian life. The BIA looked upon itself as the parent and regarded Indians as children, deciding what was best for them and forcing their compliance.”⁵⁵ Education was not an unwelcomed part of settler colonialism for many Native peoples. In fact, many Native nations had negotiated education funding and support as part of the treaties they signed in exchange for the lands they relinquished to the colonial society.⁵⁶ Unfortunately, for a very long period, the only education they saw was in the form of missionaries and when the nature of the educational support changed, it could hardly have been said to be for the better.

The all-out push during the assimilation era to integrate the Native into the larger society and make their difference invisible found a home in the newly formed

⁵⁵ O’Brien, 76.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

Bureau of Indian Affairs and took the form of the boarding school. Based on his experience with captive Cheyenne and other Plains Indian warriors, Captain Richard Henry Pratt founded the first of the boarding schools, the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania upon his personal motto of “Kill the Indian and save the man.”⁵⁷ The motto makes it clear that the goal of the boarding schools was to completely eradicate the difference presented by the Native other in favor of molding model settler colonial citizens. The combination of education, science, and law came to represent the perfect storm of assimilative pressure on Native peoples. The feedback with language will be discussed in the next section, but also played a critical role as the students in the boarding schools were not allowed to speak their own languages but pressed to only speak English at school. The Natives would quickly be disabused of the notion that the boarding schools would somehow fulfill the terms of the treaties they had negotiated in good faith with the United States. As Grande has noted:

Like earlier models, the “new” boarding schools were designed, first and foremost, to serve the purposes of the federal government and only secondarily the needs of American Indian students. Such imperialistic purposes were reflected in curriculums that included teaching allegiance to the U.S. government, exterminating the use of Native languages, and destroying Indian customs, particularly Native religions.⁵⁸

The boarding school project took Native children from their homes and relocated them to their campuses where the students were educated in English, Christianity, and a host of vocational studies that were designed to integrate them fully into mainstream settler culture. The main objective was the elimination of cultural bonds whether they were

⁵⁷ Dunbar-Ortiz, 151.

⁵⁸ Grande, 13. Citing Spring, Joel H. *The American School: 1642-2000*. Boston: McGraw-Hill, 2001.

linguistic or ceremonial with the final goal of creating productive citizens. The boarding school project occurred firmly within the period of evolutionary social science and straddled the policy eras of Removal and Allotment. The combined assimilative effect of the project was less than the government had hoped to accomplish and resulted in multiple “lost” generations of Native children.⁵⁹ The boarding school experiment became just another chapter in the historical trauma that marks the experience of being Native within the larger settler society.

The lack of effectiveness in creating the assimilated Native foretold the end of the boarding school era. As Grande notes:

By the turn of the century, the combined effects of rapidly increasing enrollments (due to compulsory attendance laws), a decrease in federal funding, a changing political tide, and a growing resistance among tribes began to encumber the boarding school experiment, rendering it too unwieldy for federal officials to maintain. Not only did the schools become political and economic liabilities, but also proved an ineffective means of achieving the government’s aim of complete assimilation.⁶⁰

The end of the boarding school effort cast aside some of the tenets of Native education but retained and expanded upon others. As Grande has noted, “Indian education was never about the desire to ‘civilize’ or even deculturalize a people, but rather, from its very inception, it was a project designed to colonize Indian minds as a means of gaining access to Indian labor, land and resources.”⁶¹

Compulsory education became the rule in the United States as the settler society strove to inculcate the Puritan Work Ethic into all students and created and informed

⁵⁹ Dunbar-Ortiz, 151.

⁶⁰ Grande, 14.

⁶¹ Grande, 19.

citizenry. Native children were not exempt from the broader application of these rules as they were compelled now into schools that were modeled after those in the larger society and produced the same Western oriented education for all students. The larger issue of pedagogy and the lack of a place for Native peoples in that pedagogy began to arise with this form of compulsory education.

As Deloria had noted decades before, the white, academic community had little regard for the Native peoples that they chose as the objects of their study.⁶² Beyond being the object of study in academic, the larger community set about literally “white washing” the Indigenous population out of history. The pedagogical terms of acceptance in the larger academic community serve to privilege the positions of mainstream studies sponsored by settler colonial academicians. The perspective that is privileged in this system crowds out any alternative worldview and denies the voice of the other any legitimacy within its pedagogical framework. In discussing the harm that this form of knowledge generation has created Smith has observed that:

Most Indigenous criticisms of research are expressed within the single terms of ‘white research’, ‘academic research’ or ‘outsider research’. The finer details of how Western scientists might name themselves are irrelevant to Indigenous peoples who have experience unrelenting research of a profoundly exploitative nature. From an Indigenous perspective Western research is more than just research that is located in a positivist tradition. It is research which brings to bear, on any study of Indigenous peoples, a cultural orientation, a set of values, a different conceptualization of such things as time, space, and subjectivity, different and competing theories of knowledge, high specialized forms of language, and structures of power.⁶³

⁶² Deloria, Jr., 94.

⁶³ Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books, 1999, 44.

The Indigenous peoples of the United States are left to struggle for a position within the educational structure ascribes value to the positions they hold within the larger discourse of legitimacy. The Native scholars have found themselves on the outside of the educational institutions looking in on a world dominated by objective methods of observing, measuring, recording, and explaining the larger world. They Native scholar has found that worldviews that are backed by thousands of years of lived world experience as discarded within the educational institution for a lack of validity and quantifiable reductionism.

The centering of academic legitimacy within a Western tradition has profound implications on the types of knowledge that become acceptable and the means for acquiring that knowledge. As Indigenous scholars have learned the domination of Western systems of knowledge production has served to undercut the legitimacy of other pedagogical orientations and creates a monolithic institutional bias within education. As Kovach has written, “there are indeed a range of conceptual frameworks applied to research methodologies, and the problem is that they inherently centre Western epistemology, thus manufacturing and reproducing Western epistemology as a normative standard within research.”⁶⁴ Indigenous scholars in the United States and in other parts of the world have struggled against this epistemological orientation and striven to posit alternative research methods that expand the scope of knowledge production and create alternative mechanisms for evaluating research about Indigenous peoples. Only within an alternative framing of education that recognizes and values knowledge production within other framings can Indigenous research and knowledge

⁶⁴ Kovach, 41.

production find an equal footing within the educational establishment. But the struggle for legitimacy within the dominant framework is one that continues and remains a tool of settler domination of all forms of Indigenous research.

While Indigenous scholars have struggled to find an equal footing with settler colonial epistemology within the larger educational institution, the colonization of the Native mind continues unabated at virtually every level of compulsory education. As this thesis along with thousands of other research pieces compiled each year illustrate, the form and substance of the vast majority of projects still fit within the standards established for knowledge production by the Western academic community. The Indigenous academic community, however, has made some major strides in attempting to posit alternative mechanisms for evaluating and presenting research in ways that value the methods of knowledge production in their own communities. Indigenous methodologies and pedagogy have started to take hold in the larger academic communities and are beginning to bear results for their Native communities. In discussion conceptual frameworks for research, Kovach has noted that:

These frameworks can assist Indigenous researchers by naming and acknowledging three aspects of Indigenous research: (a) the cultural knowledges that guide one's research choices; (b) the methods used in searching; and (c) a way to interpret knowledge so as to give it back in a purposeful, helpful, and relevant manner.⁶⁵

The impact that these alternative methodologies have occurs on the level of mental colonization and knowledge production. The attempts to bring indigeneity into the

⁶⁵ Kovach, 43-44.

academy present an alternative way of viewing knowledge production that can empower Native communities:

In taking up this task the process of Indigenizing the academy has already been put into motion, but this is only the means to an end, not an end in itself. Ultimately, the strength of our Indigenous cultures rests in our ability to exert our humanity through the decolonization of our minds and the transformation of the world around us while recognizing that our truths stem from the eternal nature of our languages, ceremonies, worldviews, and values.⁶⁶

While the movement within academic to legitimize other forms of knowledge production is encouraging, the vast majority of education remains steeped in the methods and dogma of settler colonialism.

The larger stories that are reiterated in classrooms across the United States continue to be those that are controlled by the settler colonial establishment. The colonization of the minds of children occurs from the outset of education in the elementary schools and the behavior modification techniques are cemented in the secondary schools. The university as a battleground in pedagogy remains a territory reserved for a privileged few, so the majority of the damage of settler historical inculcation becomes a *fait accompli* for the majority of students of all ethnicities. The control of the stories presented within the educational institution equate to the control of history and the histories are firmly in the control of the settler colonial system. The Indigenous remains the exotic other within the larger narrative and this serves to help justify the dispossession of their land by the ‘enlightened’ colonists and their continued relegation to the role of wards of the larger society.

⁶⁶ Mihesuah, Devon A., and Angela Cavender. Wilson. *Indigenizing the Academy: Transforming Scholarship and Empowering Communities*. Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004.

Education fits nicely within the rhizome structure of settler colonialism. The roots of education have continuously fed the efforts of policy to assimilate the Indigenous peoples into the settler colonial society. At the same time, education has been the means to inculcate the best scientific knowledge of the scientists of the Western tradition into the everyday lives of the settler and Indigenous populations. The feedback loops between education, policy, and science become clear when viewed from this vantage point. The use of education to create a mechanism for indoctrinating the entire population into the otherization of the Native has been invaluable as a tool of rationalizing the dispossession of Indigenous lands, and, at the same time, making it appear as if the settlers found a vast abandoned continent to which they could bring the light of civilization and the metanarrative of progress. Education has been a uniquely valuable tool in the toolbox of settler ideology and continues to function as a mechanism for justifying the taking of Native land and relegating Native nations to the status of pupils of the benevolent settler colonial society.

Chapter 5: Language

The final branch of the colonial rhizome addressed herein is language. Not only was it vital for the settlers to ensure the domination of their own language in dealing with Native populations, but also it was important to eradicate those aboriginal languages. The dual process involved here required that the settler language, most notably American English in the case of the United States, become the dominant language spoken, and that the difference of Indigenous languages be absorbed into the national dialogue until no difference remained. Language created a unique fork in the rhizome structure of settler colonialism because it allowed the settlers to replace the

difference present by cartographic designations so that the result was a nation that had long been the property of the new original inhabitants, the settlers. The predominant languages of the law, science, and education was American English and the in the arenas where the most important battles of settler colonialism would be fought the same language would be used to dispossess Indigenous societies of their lands and to appropriate their cultures. The feedback loops between language and the other categories has been constant and omnipresent throughout the history of settler-Indigenous relations.

From the outset, language has been a tool that settler societies used to civilize the Primitive, Indigenous peoples of the world. The relation between language and empire was cemented early on in settler colonial efforts. The tradition of employing language as a tool of settler colonial domination began in 1492 when Antonio de Nebrija penned his work on Castilian grammar and wrote that “language is the perfect instrument of empire.”⁶⁷ The settlers realized the importance of procuring linguistic dominance both in possession of a larger pool of speaker, and in the elimination of competing languages. The relationship between settler efforts and the use of language were evident from the first colonial efforts

The relationship between the law, policy, and language was intrinsic in nature and they reified one another. The relationship was even taken *ad absurdum* early on in the colonial effort. The Spanish colonists brought the written law with them as dictated by the Papacy and used it to justify their efforts at discovery and conquest. There are

⁶⁷ Goldstein, Alyosha. *Formations of United States Colonialism*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014, 342.

stories still related about Spanish colonialists landing on various lands in the Americas, marching onto shore, and reading the *Requerimiento* in Spanish to empty beaches where they proclaimed that any Natives who did not convert to Catholicism would be subjected to the might of the Spanish armies in a legal and morally just war.⁶⁸ The example illustrates the relationship between law and language taken to an absurd point, but sheds light on just how critical the two rhizomatic structures reinforced one another. With no one present to object to their declaration, the Spanish took it as an open license to make war on the Indigenous populations and to bring the dictates of Catholicism. The language thusly became an intrinsically vital element in the claiming of Indigenous lands in the name of the settler colonists.

With the onset of their colonial effort, the British took a page from the other settler colonial powers and employed linguistic domination tactics to further their efforts. The same system of missionary education that had brought Spanish and Catholicism to the southern continent was now employed to bring the tenets of the English language and Protestantism to the Native peoples of North America. The relationship between education and the spread of Christianity was unbreakable. The missionaries brought with them the King's English and the King James Version of the Bible to teach the language to the Indigenous peoples and to convert them to the doctrines of Christianity. As the settlers spread across the continent they continued to bring with them their designations for the cartographic features they discovered.

The second goal of linguistic dominance began to take root in the parts of the continent that had already been colonized for over a century. The language became a

⁶⁸ O'Brien, Sharon, 39.

tool of remaking the continent such that it appeared that the settlers were, in fact, the original inhabitants of the area. In examining the texts of New England literature during this time period Jean O'Brien wrote that, "In the process of constructing their stories, local narrators engaged in a subtle process of seizing indigeneity in New England as their birthright, which is the coded message of the entire enterprise of 'firsting.'"⁶⁹ The language of naming became an integral tool in erasing the Native from existence in settler colonial society. The Native became viewed as part of the country that exist prior to official history in the nation and the firsts of the colonists became the firsts for the entirety of North America. Using this method allow linguistic dominance to accomplish part of the goal of establishing the language of the settler society as the preferred means of describing the nation itself. Even when Native place names were retained, they were overshadowed by the first town, first business, first post office, first country and a myriad of other firsts that were all ascribed to the colonizers. Even the naming of states such as New Hampshire and New York illustrates just how the Native population was erased first from New England and increasingly across the entire nation.

While the Indigenous peoples were being written out of the language and history on the eastern shores of the continent, policies were implemented to eradicate their linguistic difference in other parts of the country. The assimilation policies did their utmost to integrate Native peoples into the settler society mostly by erasing the difference that they presented. From the later parts of the nineteenth through the early twentieth century the boarding school process did its utmost to extinguish linguistic

⁶⁹ O'Brien, Jean, 51.

difference by forbidding Native students from speaking their own languages and educating them in uniquely Western oriented curriculum and enforcing paramilitary style discipline and behavior modification techniques.⁷⁰ The result of the policies of assimilation and linguistic dominance did much to threaten the very existence of Native languages. Even more than interbreeding with whites, the outright policies of linguistic extermination served to dilute the base of Native speakers in many Indigenous societies. The process did not end when the doors of the boarding schools were finally closed, but continued throughout the twentieth century. The government-sponsored programs relocating members of some nations from reservations to urban population centers was a more recent tool for separating Native Peoples from their languages and forcing them into the larger settler dominated linguistic community.⁷¹ In addition to the mass adoptions of Native children into predominantly white families, the federal government, once more, physically relocated the Native populations, but this time, the goal was to assimilate them into the larger settler society rather than to reserve a separate place for them.

The policies of assimilation have been replaced in recent decades with a move to more self-determination for Indigenous nations, but that has done little to undo the damage that has been done to Native languages. Though many nations have instituted language programs and efforts at revitalization of their languages, the hard reality is that many languages have already been lost and it is a rare people who have more native speakers than English speaking members. The dominance of American English in

⁷⁰ Grande, 14.

⁷¹ Ramirez, Renya K. *Native Hubs: Culture, Community, and Belonging in Silicon Valley and beyond*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2007, 46-47.

Indian Country is a sign of just how effective the campaign for linguistic dominance has been to settler society. The process of linguistic domination continues despite these efforts because, as Vicente Rafael has recently noted, “The systematic privileging of American English not surprising sustains a pattern of marginalizing the mother tongues of native peoples and non-Anglophone immigrants alike.”⁷² Linguistic dominance becomes part and parcel of the systemic apparatus designed to make settler colonial dominance complete.

The dual purposes of linguistic dominance are continuously at play in feeding back to the other aspects of colonial dispossession. The law uniquely focusses on the particularities of language and the role played by the denotative function of words, the science produced by Eurocentric thought is uniquely tied to the linguistic structures of language, and education relies upon the commonality of communication for its efficacy. In detailing the dual role that language domination works toward, Rafael has argued that:

In the wake of Noah Webster’s reforms, it is not difficult to detect in both liberal and conservative writers a recurring insistence on the unassailable link between American English and American nationality conceived as synonymous with American democracy. One is seen to be inconceivable without the other. A common language ruling over all others is held to be the prerequisite for achieving a common life steeped in egalitarian ethos.... Equality under the law implied—though it did not legally mandate—the inequality of languages.⁷³

The various branches of the rhizomatic structure that make up settler colonialism interrelate and mutually reinforce one another.

⁷² Goldstein, 347.

⁷³ Goldstein, 346.

The goal of eliminating the difference presented by Native languages alone is insufficient in the larger pantheon of settler colonial domination of Indigenous Peoples. The language is key to bridging the gap between making the settler colonial population seem as if it is indeed the original population and making the Indigenous population vanish from the written history. Jean O'Brien made this strategy abundantly clear writing that:

Although plenty of 'last' Indians received notice in local texts, other narrative constructions chimed into the chorus that declared the myth of New England Indian extinction. Included among these varieties of vanishing Indians are local texts that make no mention whatsoever of Indians, thus implicitly arguing for the disappearance of Natives who have been replaced by themselves. A rich variety of other forms of vanish Indians both implicit and explicit in their formulations found their way into local texts. Taken together, they composed a deafening anthem that persuaded New Englanders and others of its dubious veracity. Local texts, then, form a composite extinction narrative that resonated everywhere and whose message was unmistakable: New England Indians had either ceased to exist, or their prospects for the future had dimmed to the vanishing point.⁷⁴

While she writes specifically about New England, the process of vanishing the Native populations from the annals of history is a process that is germane to the entire continent. The conceptual framing of the settler as the first to do everything on the continent has been followed concomitantly with the language of the last of the Native peoples. The linguistic domination of American English has been a key ingredient in making the settler colonial dispossession of the continent. O'Brien's point speak to the rhizomatic linkages with education as well. Even in the Internet Age, the vast majority of educational materials and informational delivery occurs in text-based formats and in those formats the concepts of firsting and lasting are still effective in eliminating the

⁷⁴ O'Brien, Jean, 139.

traces of the Native and incorporating what remains into the larger dialogue of settler supremacy.

The use of language to enforce patterns of settler domination is not limited to the actual spoken words of the settlers. The significance of the portrayals of culture also have an impact on the ways that Native peoples are perceived by the larger settler society and on the ways that Native peoples perceive themselves. The use of the signifiers of settler society have the impact of accomplishing both of the purposes of linguistic domination. It is no accident that the faces of the great presidents of the United States are carved into the eternal stone of the Black Hills. The signifier involved here illustrates how the nature of an Indigenous holy place can be manipulated to the point where the Indigenous is erased and replaced with the signifiers of the settler dominance.

The language becomes a means for appropriating the cultures and lifestyles of Indigenous peoples into the larger society. The New Age movement and the rise of shamanism within white, settler society illustrate the ways that the larger society appropriates the cultures of Indigenous peoples. The signifiers of the ceremonies of Indigenous people are coopted and placed into terms the settler society can consume for their own benefit. The translation of Indigenous cultures into something that is consumable by the settler colonial society becomes just another mechanism for appropriating the narrative and controlling the story of history.

In writing about the impact that linguistic dominance through the mechanism of translation, Rafael has noted that:

Thus has it always been necessary not only to subjugate territories and people; it has also been imperative to co-opt and appropriate the very way of life of their inhabitants: their language, their beliefs, their desires. Such an appropriation has entailed a double process: on the one hand, conversion from below, that is, transforming the colonized culture in ways that make it receptive to and dependent on a power at one above and beyond them; on the other hand, conversion from above, that is, translating imperial power from a foreign into a familiar, everyday [sic], but no less awesome, even transcendent force in the lives of the colonized.⁷⁵

Though the perspective deals with translation, the point for linguistic domination remains valid; the settler colonial society has always employed the use of language to accomplish the dual goals of supplanting and then erasing the differences presented by the Native other. The resistance to the process only turns the tactics but does not affect the overall strategy.

The monolithic nature of this project has helped the settler society control the image of the Indian as a singular trope. The idea of what constitutes the Indigenous is one that originates in the language of the settler society and constantly works to help create the signifiers and tropes that supplant the actual place of those peoples and the placement of them within the dialogue of the original settler inhabitants. The image of the Indian was originally constructed and largely remains a creation of the settler population.⁷⁶ This tactic has been successfully employed to create a monolithic image of the Indian that can be consumed and erased within the larger settler population. Berkhofer continues by explaining how over two thousand cultures and societies were linguistically categorized:

⁷⁵ Goldstein, 335-336.

⁷⁶ Berkhofer, Jr., 3.

By classifying all these many peoples as *Indians*, Whites categorized the variety of cultures and societies as a single entity for the purposes of description and analysis, thereby neglecting or playing down the social and cultural diversity of Native Americans then—and now—for the convenience of simplified understanding. To the extent that this conception denies or misrepresents the social, linguistic, cultural, and other differences among the peoples so labeled, it lapses into stereotype. Whether as conception or as stereotype, however, the idea of the Indian has created a reality in its own image as a result of the power of the Whites and the response of Native Americans.⁷⁷

The linguistic dominance that this strategy invokes has been key to creation of the American Empire and the absorption of the Native other into it. The homogenization of all Indigenous peoples into the linguistic trope of the single image of the Indian has allowed the consumption of this image as a part of the larger culture.

Not only does the linguistic strategy of stereotyping all of the multitudes of Indigenous peoples into one category allow for the consumption of the Indigenous, but also becomes a trope that the empire can employ effectively in a variety of ways. The categorization and objectification of the Indian allows archaic scientific methods such as the blood quantum system to maintain a place within policy making and educational funding. The use of this categorization also becomes the cement that glues together the arms of the colonial root structure. In examining the use of the strategy of linguistically classifying all of the Indigenous peoples into the single stereotypes, Philip Deloria has argued that:

A stereotype, we might say, is a simplified and generalized expectation-savagery, in this case—that comes to rest in an image, text, or utterance. It is a sound bite, a crudely descriptive connection between power, expectation, and representation. To burrow more deeply into the world of expectation, we might

⁷⁷ Ibid. (emphasis in original).

try to shift from the simplifying tendencies of *stereotype* to the more complex terms *discourse* and *ideology*.⁷⁸

The ideology created by this stereotype become far more pervasive in the discursive universe. The ideology becomes more than a linguistic construction, but also a lived experience of both those employing the stereotype and those who are its objects.⁷⁹ The feedback loop this creates with science even furthers the cause of settler domination. The impact that the ideology presented can have on creating the truth of settler domination was documented by Parenti when he argued:

The most insidious forms of oppression are those that so insinuate themselves into our communication universe and the recesses of our minds that we do not even realize they are acting upon us. The most powerful ideologies are not those that prevail against all challengers but those that are never challenged because, in their ubiquity, they appear as nothing more than the unadorned truth.⁸⁰

The stereotype becomes a linguistic tool that reifies the structures of settler colonialism by enforcing the larger tropes of settler ideology.

The rhizomatic branch of language maintains linkages across the complimentary roots together forming the larger complex that constitutes settler colonial domination. The imposition of American English on the Native population and the assimilative attempts to eradicate their languages work concurrently with the imposition of discursive structures that relegated the Indigenous peoples to a single identifying stereotype, which, in turn, could be employed to justify the dispossession of the land

⁷⁸ Deloria, Philip Joseph. *Indians in Unexpected Places*. Lawrence, Kan.: University Press of Kansas, 2004, 9.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Parenti, Michael. *The Culture Struggle*. New York: Seven Stories Press, 2006, 130.

and supplanting all their traces from it. The language has been a key way that the feedback loops of settler colonialism has worked in complementary ways through various systems that are mutually reinforcing.

Conclusion

Like the iris rhizome that propagates throughout a garden, the various shoots of settler colonialism have grown in the fertile soil of North America and have resulted in the strategic dispossession of Indigenous lands and resources. This paper has examined the structures of settler colonialism including law, science, education, and language. The purpose of this examination was to employ a lens that allows the observer to conclude that there is no single structure that supports settler colonialism. The transfer of land from Indigenous to settler control was accomplished not just with weapons and military actions, but also, and more importantly through the use of mutually reinforcing systems and institutions that conceptualized and eliminated the difference presented by the Indigenous other in an attempt to utterly supplant their place on the continent.

Multiple political and social institutions function together, much like the multiple systems that work symbiotically within an ecosphere to support one another. The institution of settler colonialism function much like a bed of irises that is fed and supported by the various rhizomatic structures in play. While there are other structures such as religion, literature, and the arts that also contribute to the colonial project, discussing them would merely affirm the larger point. Multiple institutions function to help rationalize the transfer of land from the Indigenous nations into the settler society to be reduced into resources and consumed to feed the needs of settler colonial domination.

The myth that was born with Columbus' first descriptions of the "Indians" he found in the Caribbean islands became a crucial part of the construction of an entire rhizome of settler colonialism. Each point in the mythos and institutional structure link to and mutually impact all other points with the goal of making the settler colonial society justified in transferring the vast land holdings of the Indigenous peoples into their possession and simultaneously making the people vanish into the larger population and into the realm of history. The resilience of the numerous different Indigenous nations in the face of this all-out assault on their existence testifies to the strength of these peoples and their cultures. While the impact of acts of violence by individual settlers and the concerted attacks by organized military actions was extreme and cannot be understated, the roles that the myth of the "Indian" and the institutional structures built upon that myth have been, from an Indigenous perspective, disastrously efficient. The transfer of their lands and the attempts to assimilate those who were not killed by military action or mismanagement of federal policy prove that the linkages between all of the points involved was vital to the success of the settler colonial effort. The one-way trip that the settler society took to the shores of North America initiated one of the largest thefts of lands and resources in human history. The settler colonial project continues unabated, and the same myths and institutional structures that were employed at the outset of the project to wrest control of the continent from the Indigenous inhabitants are still being used today.

No single tactic of combatting oppression can succeed without being part of a larger strategic effort. Like the systems being resisted, the struggle for freedom and justice must be multi-faceted. The research leads to the question of additional research

into the means for creating and implementing the larger strategies and the tactics that can be employed to combat the drive of settler colonialism on multiple fronts. Further research into how existing tactics can be incorporated into a larger strategic vision for the push back by Native nations against the settler incursion can be accomplished would also be of particular benefit to the Indigenous nations striving to resist and respond.

In the final analysis, settler colonialism has created a multiplicity of myths and structures via institutions that feed one another with the ultimate goal of eliminating as much of Indigenous society as possible and consuming the rest within itself. There can be no single solution to halting this process but there can be the possibility of a strategic engagement to halt its progression once the structures and the ways they support one another are examined and understood. Only by understanding the myths and structures that continue to maintain the constellation of tactics employed by the settler colonial society of the United States can strategies to effectively combat it be devised and implemented.

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