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**Makataimeshekiakiak, Settler  
Colonialism, and the Specter of  
Indigenous Liberation**

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See, we only became Indians once the armed struggle was over in 1890. Before then we were Shoshone or Mohawk or Crow. For centuries North America was a complicated, dangerous place full of shifting alliances between the United States and Indian nations, among the Indian nations themselves, and between the Indians and Canada, Mexico, and half of Europe.

PAUL CHAAT SMITH, *Everything You Know about Indians Is Wrong*

For the Comanche curator and historian Paul Chaat Smith, to be Indian is to allow oneself to be defined by Eurocentric and colonial nomenclature. Prior to colonization, there were no Indians. Instead, the continent was home to dozens of autonomous Indigenous nations and the alliances and rivalries between them. Although colonial discourse remains significant within Indigenous struggles for decolonization, Smith is clear that to allow oneself to be defined as Indian is part of the ongoing and slippery process of settler dominance. The complex landscape of shifting Native alliances of the nineteenth century was overwritten by the binarisms of settler colonial hierarchies. The unique struggles and alliances of the Nemme sostoni'ihnee'e (Shoshone), Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk), and Apsáalooke (Crow), for instance, were subsumed in the 1890s into a single Indian polity. Settler colonialism made "Indians" from the linguistically and politically distinct Sauk, Meskwaki, and Anishinaabeg, among other national identities. The national distinctions between multiple indigeneities became a legal entity defined by a settler colonial government.

While the precise contours of this process varied from one Indigenous nation to another, the broad outlines described by Smith are clear: Indian identities and body politics only exist in response to colonial definitions of distinct Indigenous nations. Within a political framework dominated by federal Indian policy, no

Native struggle was merely local. The sovereign demands of the Cherokee Nation, for instance, had real-world impacts on the political condition of the Sauk and Meskwaki peoples. Inversely, Algonkian political and juridical battles likewise effected what was happening to the Tsalagi (Cherokee) and other Indigenous nations in the context of U.S. settler colonialism. In the context of *Re-Collecting Black Hawk*, it is imperative to concurrently understand the interconnectedness of Indigenous struggles against U.S. hegemony while we decipher the ways that settler colonialism, as a system of dispossession, negates Indigenous self-governance and appropriates its images and narratives of resistance.

As a way of countering these colonial discourses, this essay discusses Makataimeshekiakiak's stand against U.S. colonial expansion in the context of many centuries of Indigenous resistance and non-Native solidarity, of which this book is a part.<sup>1</sup> Employing my own knowledge of place, I invoke the four cardinal directions to spatially ground the collision of colonial and anticolonial forces. As such, imagine yourself in the western Great Lakes, the very topography this book encounters. Look around and acknowledge the specificity of your surroundings. To your east, the barbarism of settler colonialism emerges at an uncontrollable speed. To the west, the specter of Indigenous anticolonialism develops, with Makataimeshekiakiak's armed confrontation but a single encounter within a matrix of countless anticolonial insurrections. To the north, art's critical capacity flashes like the northern lights, while southern winds bring renewal and strength to renounce settler privilege—an intensely difficult task. By orienting yourself *within* the text rather than outside it, your journey through this book as a reader will confront and begin dismantling settler colonialism, beginning from the very place you inhabit.

What is now known as the Midwest was at one time the Northwest. Of course, each of these geographic designations evokes the movement of Manifest Destiny from the imperial center of Washington, DC. By contrast, situating ourselves within the geographic terrain of the Great Lakes, what could be called Anishinaabewaki (Anishinaabemowin for Indigenous lands), both reader and author may begin to move beyond colonial ways of privileging Washington, DC, as the seat of power and reinscribing the inevitable westward movement of settlement. Grounding itself in the Great Lakes region, this essay contests the westward course of empire by being about *this place* in relation to itself. By looking outward in all directions, we center this land and its stories, as well as embrace those others to whom we must listen. This approach mirrors a Native relationship with the land that, according to the Dené political theorist Glen Coulthard, “not only anchors many Indigenous peoples’ critique of colonial relations of force and command but also our [Indigenous peoples’] visions of what a truly postcolonial relationship of peaceful coexistence might look like.”<sup>2</sup> *Re-Collecting Black Hawk* invites the reader to similarly imagine and work toward that “truly postcolonial relationship,” one which demands the participation of both Native and settler populations.

In *Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview*, Jürgen Osterhammel defines colonialism as “a relationship of domination between an indigenous (or forcibly imported) majority and minority foreign invaders.” He continues, “Rejecting cultural compromises with the colonized population, the colonizers are convinced of their own superiority and of their ordained mandate to rule.”<sup>3</sup> Colonialism irreparably ruptures the evolution of colonized societies while transforming the consciousness of all who live under it. As the Caribbean intellectual Aimé Césaire noted in the early 1950s, colonization “dehumanizes even the most civilized man; that colonial activity, colonial enterprise, colonial conquest, which is based on contempt for the native and justified by that contempt, inevitably tends to change him who undertakes it.”<sup>4</sup> While independence movements of the twentieth century offered self-determination for many former colonies in Africa and the Caribbean, the United States and Canada remain colonial powers in which Indigenous nations are legally constructed as dependent entities within the settler state. North America is very much still a colonial society.

The historian Patrick Wolfe distinguishes between *colonialism* and the particularities of *settler colonialism*. For Wolfe, “The primary object of settler-colonization is the land itself rather than the surplus value to be derived from mixing native labour with it. Though, in practice, Indigenous labour was indispensable to Europeans, settler-colonization is at base a winner-takes-all project whose dominant feature is not exploitation but replacement.”<sup>5</sup> In the so-called New World, both colonial and settler colonial projects commenced in the sixteenth century and remain ongoing to this day. Historically, French and Spanish regimes were more actively engaged in classical colonialism, while the British employed a strategy of direct land and resource appropriation that continued and often accelerated after their colonies gained political independence. The American Revolution was won by settlers, not colonized peoples, and the new government pursued an aggressive project of Euro-American expansionism known as Manifest Destiny. This required the creation of legal and economic systems that permitted European colonists and their descendants to become legal titleholders of the land. Manifest Destiny is, at its core, settler colonialism.

The nineteenth century saw Euro-American settlers move westward en masse. The U.S. government encouraged white migration into Indian Country by distributing free or inexpensive land, while cultural mythologies to justify this process were reinforced through art and literature. Emanuel Leutze’s popular 1861 painting *Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way*, which visually illustrates the “American pioneering spirit,” presently hangs in the capitol in Washington, DC. As a work of art, this painting facilitated a folkloric retelling of the peopling of the West. In the image, musket-carrying mountain men, followed by women in horse-drawn wagons, traverse high mountain passes to arrive at the barren and “uninhabited” lands to the West. The painting’s continued presence in the U.S. capitol demonstrates the continued prominence of Manifest Destiny in North American historiography.

*Westward the Course of Empire Takes Its Way* is absent of any Native figures, as Indigenous cohabitation with Euro-American settlers was not how the narrative of settler colonialism was to be written. Yet despite the legal and cultural disavowal of Indigenous land claims, the specter of “Indian” insurrection loomed large in settler colonial North America. It was therefore vital that Native peoples be defined and managed by settler governments.

In the United States, Indigenous sovereignty, a permeable and semiautonomous governability outside federated state jurisdiction, was cemented in 1831 with the Supreme Court ruling *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*. This decision, one of the most significant in American Indian law, limited Indigenous sovereignty by defining Indigenous nations inside the geopolitical borders of the United States as “domestically dependent.” As Chief Justice John Marshall paternalistically wrote in the opinion: “they are in a state of pupilage. Their relation to the United States resembles that of a ward to his guardian. They look to our government for protection; rely upon its kindness and its power; appeal to it for relief to their wants; and address the President as their Great Father.”<sup>6</sup>

This denial of Native coeval sovereignty (the notion that Indigenous peoples had existing governance structures already in place) facilitated the “reserving” of Indians to allotted reservation lands, which, in turn, was required for the establishment of modern-day territories and nation-state formation in North America. This is to say that the United States, and its citizenry in general, did not recognize that Indigenous nations could democratically govern themselves. Part and parcel to this dispossession was the denial that Indigenous peoples were (and are), in fact, contemporary. Distinct Indigenous nations were grouped into a single Indian polity.

Following the War of 1812 (which began in skirmishes with Native peoples around the southern Great Lakes), the Treaty of Ghent solidified European geopolitical borders in North America. In response, it dispersed many Indigenous refugees, including my ancestors, northward to escape the potential violence of the United States. Some would enter into treaty, while others would be defined as “Halfbreeds” (and not “Indians”) and unable to sign treaties. However some of the legal distinction between “Indians” and “Halfbreeds” was reversed with the 2013 Daniels decision in the Canadian federal court, which ruled that the Métis Nation be recognized as Indians under the Indian Act.

To the south, the 1848 Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo appropriated nearly half of Mexico’s land base from its primarily Indigenous and mestizo citizenry. These newly acquired territories in the mid-nineteenth century became easily obtainable for white settlement with the Homestead Act in 1862. This act, signed by president Abraham Lincoln, gave legal title of 160-acre plots to those settlers who “improved” the land. Indigenous peoples needed to be removed or relocated so that European and Euro-American settlers could repopulate their territories. But resistance was not futile.

The Indian Removal Act, the legal definition of Indigenous peoples as “domestic dependent nations,” and the genocidal relocation of the Choctaw, Chikashsha

(Chickasaw), and Mvskoke (Creek) from their homelands in the southeast all chronologically coincide with Sauk resistance to U.S. violence in the early 1830s. While proving a direct connection between events in the southeast and the Sauk and Meskwaki confrontation may be complicated, the density of these events suggests the gravity of the political climate for Native people. As nations, the Sauk and Meskwaki would have been aware of the struggles of other Indigenous nations throughout the continent. To deny this would assume Indian naïveté and the political ignorance of Native peoples. Moreover, it overlooks the undeniable and robust networks of political (and cultural) alliances that existed prior to, and continued throughout, the imposition of settler colonialism. Such alliances existed within linguistic and cultural groups, such as the Haudenosaunee (an alliance of five and then six Indigenous nations) and the Anishinaabeg (an alliance of at least three Indigenous nations), as well as via expansive and continental trade networks. Tecumseh's uprising, discussed below, called for banding together all Indigenous people against settler colonialism.

#### **WEST: MAKATAIMESHEKIAKIAK, INSURGENCE, AND THE SPECTER OF LIBERATION**

If coloniality and the violence of settler colonialism came primarily from the east, the specter of Indigenous insurgence and liberation loomed large in the west. The early nineteenth-century Indigenous resistance east of the Mississippi, such as the struggles fought by Tecumseh and Makataimeshekiakiak, extended westward as the Homestead Act and transcontinental railroads violently divided Native territory. As white Americans and European immigrant settlers migrated west to squat on lands traditionally inhabited by their Native neighbors, the colonial situation between Indigenous nations and non-Native settlers became progressively more tense. In fact, the Sauk and Meskwaki's current locations in present-day Kansas, Oklahoma, and Iowa are a product of centuries of encroachment.

In the early 1600s, the Sauk lived around Michigan's Saginaw Bay, a place whose name means, literally, place of the Sauk. Driven from this territory in the 1640s, the Sauk and Meskwaki migrated across the Straits of Mackinac, resettling around present-day Green Bay, Wisconsin. In the eighteenth century, French military forces pushed them toward the northern Mississippi River, resettling in what is now Iowa. The Sauk populated the region north of the Meskwaki, in the Mississippi watershed. The U.S. militarily encroached on their territory around the beginning of the nineteenth century. The U.S. government began signing treaties with Native nations, at which point internal divisions arose within Indigenous communities.

The Sauk and Meskwaki nations, known to the U.S. government collectively as the Sac and Fox, initially entered into a treaty in 1804. Makataimeshekiakiak and many of his affiliates denied the validity of the treaty signed between William Henry Harrison, then governor of Indiana Territory, and Sauk leader Quashquame, which ceded Wisconsin, south of the Wisconsin River, and nearly

all of Illinois to the United States. While Makataimeshekiakiak was against ceding lands in principle, he also felt that this treaty, in particular, violated protocol because the tribal council was not consulted in full. The U.S. government's lack of regard for Indigenous modes of governance indicates their disregard for Indigenous sovereignty, in general.

This early nineteenth-century treaty process, one directly tied to the winner-takes-all settlement program of the U.S. government, initiated the nation-to-nation diplomacy between the United States and Sauk and Meskwaki nations. At this time (as well as today), Indigenous ontologies posed a threat to the westward expansion of capitalist ideals, while Indigenous bodies occupied territories needed for their expansion. In his discussion of Indigenous dispossession in western Canada, a place where treaties were never even signed, Cole Harris writes that "the interests of capital and settlers converged. For both, land was the opportunity at hand, an opportunity that gave settler colonialism its energy. Measured in relation to this opportunity, native people were superfluous. Worse, they were in the way, and, by one means or another, had to be removed."<sup>7</sup> For both capitalism and settlement to function, Indigenous nations needed to be physically, culturally, genetically, or structurally removed.

Although Indigenous nations have generally upheld their ends of the reciprocal treaty relationship, the United States and Canada have not. The Homestead Act, as a significant denial of treaty obligations, solidified the triumph of settler society over the land's Indigenous citizenry by redistributing Native lands to European-descended newcomers. That Makataimeshekiakiak's image is now synonymous with settler rule is a result of the barbarous colonial process and the failure of public history to adequately recollect our shared memories. Not only were Indigenous societies violently removed from their traditional territories, settler societies appropriated their imagery as a way to legitimate their own illegitimate claims.

Makataimeshekiakiak was certainly neither the first nor the last to forcefully resist colonial oppression. The U.S. military considers the "war against Black Hawk" as the fifth of fourteen campaigns collectively called the Indian Wars.<sup>8</sup> According to the U.S. Army, the Black Hawk campaign began when "a faction of Sauk and Fox Indians, living in eastern Iowa and led by Black Hawk, threatened to go on the warpath in 1832 when squatters began to preempt Illinois lands formerly occupied by the two tribes."<sup>9</sup>

To the east of Sauk and Meskwaki territories, the Shawnee leader Tecumseh organized tribes throughout the Ohio Valley and the Great Lakes. Prefiguring contemporary pan-indigenism by two centuries, Tecumseh believed in Indigenous sovereignty and adamantly defended Native political rights until his death at the hands of the settler-colonists. Tecumseh's Rebellion, as these events are commonly known, was the precipitating event leading up to the War of 1812. However, unlike the more widely known war, Tecumseh's struggle was one of anticolonial proportions. As a proponent of pan-Indigenous collaboration, Tecumseh worked to bring together many Indigenous nations to fight against the U.S. military. This included traveling to present-day Oklahoma to recruit Tsalagi (Cherokee),

Chikashsha (Chickasaw), Choctaw, Mvskoke (Creek), Yat'siminoli (Seminole), and Ni-U-Ko'n-Ska (Osage) warriors. For the U.S. military, this is considered the second of the Indian Wars and the first in the nineteenth century. However, it was definitely not the last time the U.S. or Canadian military assaulted Indigenous communities.

Indigenous anticolonial struggles persist today in countless forms. Chief among these is the pursuit of decolonization, the process of dismantling settler colonialism's social, political, intellectual, and spiritual hegemony. The Idle No More events of 2012 and 2013 are among the most visible of these. Noting that "colonization is an all-encompassing presence in our lives," Waziyatawin (Dakota) and Michael Yellow Bird (Arikara-Hidatsa) define it as "both the formal and informal methods (behaviors, ideologies, institutions, policies, and economies) that maintain the subjugation or exploitation of Indigenous Peoples, lands, and resources."<sup>10</sup> Paradoxically, the political dominance of settler colonialism means that resistance can begin anywhere and can take many forms; many of these decolonial efforts appear in image pairings on the pages of this book. Campaigns against "Indian" sports mascots; exercising the right to hunt and fish on unceded territories; activism targeting the storage of radioactive and hazardous wastes on tribal lands; environmental struggles against mining on sacred sites; and Indigenous language preservation efforts can all be seen as part of a broader effort toward decolonization.

Brown and Kanouse note that the Black Hawk War is commonly written into history as the last Indian war east of the Mississippi. By framing this nineteenth-century confrontation as the ultimate moment of Indigenous insurrection, hegemonic history masks the ongoing battles that are currently being waged against colonialism. Makataimeshekiakiak's image, once reclaimed from its myriad settler appropriations, is part and parcel of the old spirit on which to draw. To reclaim Black Hawk is to begin to reconcile history. However, Makataimeshekiakiak's reclamation does little if it is not intimately linked to the everyday, contemporary realities of Indigenous people, particularly those for whom Makataimeshekiakiak's spirit is strong. This is a true move toward postcolonialism.

Unfortunately, existing political thought does not adequately address the specificities of contemporary indigeneity. As Jace Weaver (Tsalagi) argues, "postcolonial discourse says little about indigenous liberation struggles."<sup>11</sup> In postcolonialism's place, however, a radical indigenist thought and action may appropriately attest to ongoing Indigenous struggles. Beginning in 1994, the specter of liberation emerged in the masked faces of Mayan revolutionaries in Chiapas, Mexico. Using the advancement of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) as the tipping point, resistance to colonial rule had reached its logical conclusion. Through *zapatismo*, a radical indigenist oppositional political tradition, Indigenous revolutionaries brought their demands onto the national and international stage. Unlike colonized subjects, the Zapatistas refused to be denied the visibility they rightfully deserve. As recently as 2011, Subcomandante Marcos, the non-Native spokesperson for the Zapatistas, maintains, "What we're going to do is shake this country



up from below, pick it up and turn it on its head.”<sup>12</sup> Nearly two decades after their initial uprising, in December 2012, 40,000 Zapatistas marched through the streets of Chiapas, reasserting their presence. In February 2013, the Tzeltal leader Major Moisés was announced as the new *subcomandante insurgente*, a significant position in the non-hierarchical organization. Subcomandante Insurgente Moisés is known for, among other things, stating that “Our way is that we practice first and then make theory.” Through creative and anticapitalist organization, the Zapatistas have used Indigenous ungovernability to challenge the perceived docility of “Indians.”

The model established by the Zapatistas, a multilingual collective of Mayan campesinos, glows bright for Indigenous activists in North America who continually grapple with ongoing colonialism. Taiaiake Alfred (Kanien’kehaka) calls this decolonial process “Wasáse, a ceremony of unity, strength, and commitment to action.”<sup>13</sup> Informed by what he calls anarcho-indigenism, Alfred believes that Indigenous liberation is guided by the resistant spirit of the ancestors but founded in entirely new ways of being in the world. For Alfred, Indigenous ontologies are simultaneously ancient and contemporary. Accordingly, “the warrior spirit is the strong medicine we need to cure the European disease. But, drawing on the old spirit, we need to create something new for ourselves and think through the reality of the present to design an appropriate strategy, use fresh tactics, and acquire new skills.”<sup>14</sup>

This process of creating “something new” builds on Native traditions existing as cracks and fissures within a settler society that tried but failed to extinguish indigeneity as an ontological threat. Within these minute cracks, we may begin to think beyond the limits of coloniality. As the Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith notes, these tactics of resistance are intimately intertwined with “our struggles to become self-determining, the need to take back control of our destinies.” She continues: “One of the strategies which indigenous peoples have employed effectively to bound people together politically is a strategy which asks that people imagine a future, that they rise above present day situations which are generally depressing, dream a new dream and set a new vision.”<sup>15</sup> Given the structural realities of settler colonialism in our lives, this imagining or dream cannot be a fantasy of Indigenous isolation. Glen Coulthard’s vision of “a truly postcolonial relationship of peaceful coexistence,” based in Indigenous ontologies of “place-based ethics of reciprocity,” requires *collective* dreaming between both Natives and settlers.<sup>16</sup>

History provides us with a few examples of what these utopian dreams might look like. In his interview in this volume, the Meskwaki tribal historian Johnathan Buffalo recounts the fundamental difference between Scandinavian immigrant settlers and their Anglo-American peers. He notes that the Swedish and Norwegian immigrants’ “instinct wasn’t to shoot first, their instinct was, ‘Hey, Indians! I’ll go talk to them!’”<sup>17</sup> Incompletely assimilated into white society, these northern European immigrants advocated on behalf of the Meskwaki in the Iowa state government, which ultimately allowed the Meskwaki to purchase back a land base. Settler privilege did not always deny Indigenous presence; denial, however, was the dominant form of social interaction.

Like socialist Scandinavian émigrés, other non-Natives in North America, particularly the French, established strong kin networks with Indigenous nations. In fact, francophone Canadiens intermarried with Anishinaabeg (Ojibwe, Ottawa, and Potawatomi), Nēhilawē (Cree), and other Indigenous groups, either integrating into structures of the Native community or establishing new Indigenous societies; such was the case of the Michif (Métis). In the southeast, in particular, black and Indigenous relations also formed a complex racial triangulation that was not easily contained by settler-colonial systems of racial control. Remembering these legacies of settler-Indigenous collaboration can build the foundation for a collective dreaming to challenge colonial structures of inequality and exploitation, while acknowledging the historically unequal structures put into place by these networks.

### **NORTH: SETTLER COLONIALISM, THE POWER OF DREAMING, AND ART**

The radical potential of art shines in the north, alongside the aurora borealis and the North Star. Many indigenous cosmologies are tied to celestial constellations and the stories told about them. Art allows us to dream new celestial possibilities that physical realities may not allow. During the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, artistic practice underwent a paradigm shift in which politically engaged artists were no longer content to represent radical politics in their work but instead strived to create works that acted as politics themselves. This shift, described by Victor Burgin as the difference between the “representation of politics” and the “politics of representation,” accompanied a move away from modernist aesthetics and an embrace of certain characteristics of earlier politicized avant-gardes: collaborative production, aesthetic deskilling, and a blurring of the boundary between art and life.<sup>18</sup> The art historian Gabriel Peluffo Linari notes that this conceptual shift “made possible a new convergence, for example, of art, anthropology, and politics.”<sup>19</sup>

The “politics of representation” is particularly crucial for Indigenous nations, since Native peoples are commonly represented in romantic and mythologized ways that diminish their visibility as political agents in both the past and present, as well as in the future. Moreover, Indigenous aesthetic traditions grant extraordinary power to artistic visions. Just as Indigenous Australian presence is actualized through dreamscapes, and their subsequent materialization through painting, so too do dreams facilitate our imagining of new histories and futures. It is through the intangibility of art, that is, art’s ability to transgress easy and quantifiable solutions, that we may individually and collectively dream a radical vision of a better world.

Art does not prescribe mandates; rather it dreams previously unimaginable possibilities. Louis Riel, a Michif revolutionary hanged for treason against Canada in 1885, is credited with saying, “My people will dream for one hundred years; when they awaken it will be the artists who give them back their spirit.”<sup>20</sup> With this prophetic statement, Riel acknowledged the immense and transformative power

of art making. From this particularly Indigenous perspective, not only do artists transform the material substance with which they work, they also use their creative labor to construct new and otherwise unthinkable worlds. Dreaming envisions new ways of reclaiming spirit.

As an image-text, *Re-Collecting Black Hawk* carries strikingly dream-like qualities. By juxtaposing problematic settler-colonial appropriations of Makataimeshekiakiak with texts that evoke a radically different and living Indigenous spirit, Brown and Kanouse reimagine his legacy in the landscape and in everyday settler practices. While his likeness remains unquestioned and therefore normalized by most midwestern settlers and their descendants, Brown and Kanouse pose questions that directly challenge ingrained and sustained colonial memories. Although they refuse to give easily identifiable answers, their use of the image-text challenges the very formation of history as science (that is, as quantitative fact). While images have the façade of indexicality, they are significant because of the multiple readings they engender. By amalgamating texts and images, this project stimulates multiple readings of both the text and image, as well as the palimpsests between them. *Re-Collecting Black Hawk* causes discomfort specifically because it forces us to examine who we are as a people and what we know about ourselves—whether Native or settler or having roots in both positions. Even if they do not clearly articulate their ideological position, Brown and Kanouse confront colonial amnesia by coalescing the dialectic between Native presence and absence. It is in this indeterminate space between presence and absence, between being awake and asleep, where the notion of the dream returns. While psychoanalysis might call this the recollection of repressed desires, it might be better to think of these dreams as the space where repressed and marginalized histories are reclaimed. By illuminating and re-collecting these dreams, Brown and Kanouse oppose the centrality of forgetting and the omnipotence of colonial amnesia. These dreams re-collect the power of colonialism and seek to upend it.

Writing in 1931, Bertolt Brecht noted that “photography, in the hands of the bourgeoisie, has become a terrible weapon against the truth. The vast amount of pictured material that is being disgorged daily by the press and that seems to have the character of truth serves in reality only to obscure the facts.”<sup>21</sup> This tension between the perceived indexicality of a photograph and its referent, of course, lies at the heart of *Re-Collecting Black Hawk*. Photography, particularly the landscape genre, is a visual tradition that has historically excluded Indigenous individuals from any semblance of subjectivity.<sup>22</sup> But, as Brown and Kanouse visually and conceptually demonstrate, the photograph goes far beyond an indexical relationship between an image and its subject. In fact, from an Indigenous perspective, photography serves an intellectual and philosophical end. The Hopi image maker Victor Masayesva sees in photography “a philosophical sketching that makes it possible to define and then to understand our ignorance. Photography reveals to me how it is that life and death can be so indissolubly one; it reveals the falseness of maintaining these opposites separate. Photography is an affirmation of opposites. The negative contains the positive.”<sup>23</sup> It is in this Indigenous dialectic, where

the photograph reveals both positive and negative, truth and fiction, mythology and fact, presence and absence, dreams and reality.

It is here that *Re-Collecting Black Hawk* develops its visual strength. By revealing the “negatives” of history, to borrow from photography’s double entendre, Brown and Kanouse illuminate a potential path to the future. This pathway is not prescriptive. Rather it uses photography to illuminate the dark recesses of colonial settlement and Indigenous dispossession in a way that challenges the unfettered continuation of settler colonialism.

Like the world of dreams, art is a cultural space where paradoxes are not rushed to resolution. Dialectical tensions can be experienced, our ignorance can be described, and processes for addressing it can be rehearsed. At the same time, it remains deeply embedded in capitalism and its colonial logics. Critical and avant-garde art practices have long sought to work through these dialectical tensions. In *Empires, Ruins, and Networks*, Scott McQuire and Nikos Papastergiadis argue that “to consider the place of art today is not a matter of imagining alternative places that exist outside capitalism or beyond the reaches of colonialism, for these structures have already claimed a space within us.” Instead, they argue that the task of the artist is to develop “a more rigorous strategy [that] would include a practice that not only interrogates from within, seeking to reclaim the past and ‘hijack’ the present, but also develops collaborative practices that allow a space for ethical relations and the appropriate language that can make sense of specific situations.”<sup>24</sup> Since very few live outside the reaches of either colonialism or capitalist, market economics, ongoing coloniality may be challenged by the development of decolonial thought and anticolonial action that transgress the limits of an otherwise violently bounded contemporaneity.

*Re-Collecting Black Hawk* is built using precisely this collaborative or cooperative model. Initiated in 2007 as a two-person collaborative photo-essay, this book expanded to include the voices of others—specifically the Sauk and Meskwaki who live with the legacy of Makataimeshekiakiak most directly, as well as other Indigenous intellectuals and activists. In sovereign Sauk territory, the image of Makataimeshekiakiak means something quite different than it does among the non-Native inhabitants of the land known today as Iowa, Illinois, and Wisconsin. Sidelining their own authorial voices to, quite literally, listen to the perspectives of Indigenous people, Brown and Kanouse model an important part of the self-decolonization process. In a feminist context, Wendy Hui Kyong Chun develops the notion of a “politics of listening” that also points a way forward for settlers to act in solidarity with Indigenous people.<sup>25</sup> Challenging the centrality granted to speaking as an act of agency, Chun “argues for a politics of listening as a necessary complement to the politics of speaking.” She continues: “Although important, the question of how to listen and respond . . . has been largely unaddressed, possibly since the question of listening in general tends to be under-theorized and/or under-valued: more often than not, we assume we know how to listen.”<sup>26</sup> In many regards, this is one of the most impressive aspects of *Re-Collecting Black Hawk*. Brown and Kanouse listened before speaking.<sup>27</sup>

In an Indigenist context, Taiaiake Alfred connects this politics of listening directly to another key requirement of decolonization: a transformed relationship to the land. Alfred writes: “If non-indigenous readers are capable of listening, they will learn from these shared words, and they will discover that while we are envisioning a new relationship between Onkwehonwe [original or Indigenous people] and the land, we are at the same time offering a decolonized alternative to the settler society by inviting them to share our vision of respect and peaceful coexistence. The non-indigenous will be shown a new path and offered the chance to join in a renewed relationship between the peoples and places of this land, which we occupy together.”<sup>28</sup> For Alfred, Indigenous and non-Native communities have much that they can share with one another, if non-Natives are willing to listen for new paths to be illuminated.

Writing about his experience as a non-Native activist, Richard J. F. Day acknowledges, “I know I am never really of the land, anywhere.”<sup>29</sup> This alienation from the land arguably motivates the problematic appropriation of Native imagery documented in the photographs in this book. To legitimate its territorial claim, settler society appropriates the name and image of the people it slaughtered and displaced to possess it. Therefore, they also appropriate the land itself and its very legacy. Unwilling to let this process continue without comment, Brown and Kanouse intimately traverse the land, driving its contours at nearly a walker’s pace, learning its spirit, collaborating with its traditional knowledge keepers, and building rapport. In many ways, they incorporate what I have elsewhere called the “Methodology of Visiting.” Employing this methodology, practitioners, including Brown and Kanouse, visit community members, listen to their perspectives, and speak with the elders. Indigenous existence on the land is marked by ongoing and reciprocal social relationships, often produced by brief visits at one another’s home.

Inverting the process of newcomer assimilation into settler colonial nation-states, Brown and Kanouse integrate Indigenous anticapitalist models of economics and reciprocal kinships into their working process.<sup>30</sup> As anthropologists such as David Graeber have explained, the non- and anticapitalist nature of many Indigenous societies has much to offer the stratified societies of the West. Learning with their Indigenous collaborators, Brown and Kanouse pursue an intimate and profound relationship to the land and its diverse peoples—not by pretending to “go native,” but instead by critically examining how those of us living in the rural Midwest or western Great Lakes region relate to our “homeland.” While many non-Native people feel constrained or paralyzed by the guilt of settler privilege, Brown and Kanouse actively disavow colonial mythologies and provide alternative ways of engaging with the land and its histories of violence.

A key component of their process of unmaking colonial relationships and economic structures is the decision to make *Re-Collecting Black Hawk* as accessible as possible. In line with contemporary critical artists who circumvent the for-profit gallery system, *Re-Collecting Black Hawk* appears not as a limited-edition set of silver gelatin prints but as a widely distributed print book produced by a nonprofit university press. Selections from this book, including this essay, and supplemental

materials have been posted on a companion website, [www.recollectingblackhawk.net](http://www.recollectingblackhawk.net). By deliberately *not creating* art objects-turned-commodities, this image-text seeks alternatives to pure market capitalism, in some way nodding to Indigenist economics in its production and distribution.

With these methodological choices—visiting, listening, collaboration, and democratic distribution—Brown and Kanouse demonstrate their commitment to an ethical practice that brings with it the potential eastern movement toward emancipation, both culturally and politically. Through its penchant for dreaming, collaborative or engaged art making can confront issues that quotidian practices would not allow. In her essay “The Collaborative Turn,” the curator Maria Lind writes that through cooperation, an artist “emphasizes the notion of working together and mutually benefitting from it.”<sup>31</sup> *Re-Collecting Black Hawk*, a cooperative effort by both Indigenous and settler participants, indicates that both constituencies may collectively engage in decolonial projects. By examining colonialism and its racist and capitalist orientations, we in turn participate in the creation of a world, to again echo Taiaiake Alfred, of peaceful coexistence.

#### **SOUTH: DISAVOWING SETTLER PRIVILEGE IN INDIAN COUNTRY**

To be Indigenous is to have a kin relationship with the land. Inversely, to be a settler is to control and claim ownership of this same land. Inherently, these two perspectives are at odds with one another. They are based in oppositional and contradictory ontological systems. The logics of settler colonialism, which deny Indigenous ways of being in the world, continue to use violence to appropriate, settle, and extract minerals from lands whose spirits are simultaneously ancient and contemporary. The same logic of capitalism that precipitated initial colonialism in the Americas remains in direct conflict with Native beliefs, priorities, and needs.

Even so, Indigenous people are still very much living with their precolonial governments intact. No matter where one travels, Native peoples will share their intimate and profound bond with and to the land. Looking south to the activism of Latin America’s Indigenous nations offers hope in the Global North. From the recent insurrection of teachers in Oaxaca to the struggle for coca in the Andes to, as discussed earlier, the Mayan rebels in Chiapas, our southern cousins have histories and legacies that may inform our own lives and struggles. In traveling to learn from one another, what I would call using a methodology of visiting, it is common protocol for Indigenous people to present themselves, assert their familial clan or family lines, affirm their place of origin, and thank their hosts for kindly welcoming them as guests. Through this process, Native peoples declare who they are while simultaneously constructing kinship with their host and the land on which they walk. They ask permission and engage in reciprocal dialogue. They do not attempt to take the land, as their settler-colonial peers have done and too often continue to do.

L. Frank Manriquez (Tongva/Ajachmem), a self-described “decolonizationist,” uses storytelling as a point of entry into the “bad manners” that settler-colonists have

displayed over the past five centuries. While working with youth in the Education Department at California Indian Lifeways, she *stories* youth, an Indigenous pedagogy of employing storytelling in an educational manner. In an interview, she explains that “every Indian knows that there is protocol. You don’t go to somebody else’s land and do something . . . without asking permission from the other Natives of that land.” She continues, “When you go to a place, inside, all you have to do is just acknowledge and say thank you for letting me be in your home. Or I acknowledge your existence, even. And then, there is not so much resentment.”<sup>32</sup> The image-texts in this collection demonstrate the long legacy of going against protocol, of not asking permission. Yet in highlighting the results of this practice, Brown and Kanouse depart from it. Not only do Brown and Kanouse “ask permission,” but they go even further and work cooperatively with Indigenous intellectuals, artists, and activists.

Of course, Brown and Kanouse are far from alone in the struggle to dismantle settler privilege, white guilt, and colonial amnesia. Others are actively working toward the same goals in more directly activist ways. From current campaigns against the destruction of Migiziiwasin (Eagle Rock), through fights to protect waterways from acid mine drainage, to widespread activism against Tar Sands “development,” more and more people are realizing that the only “sustainable” future is a truly postcolonial one in which Natives and non-Natives work in solidarity. Idle No More, a movement named in late 2012 by three Indigenous women (Nina Wilson, Sylvia McAdam, and Jessica Gordon) and their settler ally (Sheelah McLean) from Saskatchewan, exemplifies the tripartite resistance against colonialism, capitalism, and ecological destruction through land dispossession. Richard J. F. Day writes bluntly about his experiences as a settler-Canadian professor teaching settler students to transgress the dominance of coloniality. For Day, the ultimate goal, one that incorporates both settler and Indigenous into its matrix, “is to undermine the global system of states and corporations whenever and wherever [we] can. Every impediment to this system is an impediment to Canadian colonialism and its domination and exploitation of people and the land.”<sup>33</sup> Day links nation-states with multinational corporations in describing a global system that exploits both humans and the nonhuman world. Echoing the Zapatistas, who maintain, “we do not struggle to take power, we struggle for democracy, liberty, and justice,” Day asserts an additional goal beyond victory or defeat on a particular issue.<sup>34</sup> From his non-Native vantage point, Day seeks to “to renew the spirit . . . with which my people were originally welcomed to this land, and which, sadly, we have shown that we mostly do not comprehend.”<sup>35</sup>

Settler society’s incomprehension of its status as a visitor to the land has long been a target of the artist Edgar Hock E Aye Vi Heap of Birds (Cheyenne/Arapaho). For the past twenty years, Heap of Birds has used industrial-grade signage to remind various North American and European communities about their *Native Hosts*. Typically, a series of signs informs local settler communities about Native pasts and presence in the land by using reversed English-language texts. In two recent commissions at the University of Illinois and Michigan State University,

several of these signs were vandalized and/or stolen. While the motivations for these acts can never be fully known, continued presence of the signs served as daily reminders of an ongoing colonial apparatus. At Illinois, this reminder was no doubt threatening to those whose resentment about the “retirement” of Chief Illiniwek remains palpable on campus.<sup>36</sup> Heap of Birds’s works simply demand their audiences not forget historical events and acknowledge the historicity of our contemporary presence on the land. In an act of violence against the “hosts,” those who vandalized the signs chose to deny any and all memory of Indigenous “survivance.” They refused, and will forever refuse, to ask permission. Nonetheless, the support of universities for Heap of Birds’s interventions and the publication of projects like *Re-Collecting Black Hawk* indicate that countervailing forces are building to confront the colonial matrix in which we are all embedded.

Another component of disavowing colonialism and settler privilege is to look long and unflinchingly at how it operates in one’s own life. To truly decolonize, we must look inward. My paternal family were Michif (Métis) voyageurs who traveled the continental expanses of North America disregarding the emerging colonial boundaries that the United States and the Dominion of Canada had established. The Michif are a unique Indigenous people of mixed Nēhilawē (Cree), Anishinaabeg, and European ancestry whose language reflects this etymologically, drawing primarily from Nēhiyawanin (Cree) and French. Historically, borders mattered little for my migratory ancestors as they followed traditional riverways throughout the Great Lakes, west onto the plains and prairies, and north toward the boreal forest and arctic tundra. Although of both Indigenous and settler descent, most Michif saw (and see) themselves (ourselves) as children of the country, intimately connected to their tribal relations and to the land.

Yet my own ancestral place within the history of North America was also secured by the pacification and forced relocation of Indigenous nations in the western Great Lakes and prairies. My mother’s family descended from Swedish and Danish immigrants who homesteaded land in Minnesota, eventually establishing successful farms during the late nineteenth century. Like other non-Native settlers, their arrival and economic prosperity could be achieved only through the appropriation of Indigenous lands, primarily those of the Dakota and Anishinaabeg. My own family benefitted by the enactment of the Homestead Act and the execution of thirty-eight Dakota men for their resistance to U.S. colonial expansion. This largest mass execution in U.S. history took place only a few years before they arrived from Scandinavia to “repeople” the land and less than forty miles from my ancestor’s eventual homestead.<sup>37</sup>

Implicated in these events, I must personally learn how to disavow the benefits of these structures and events—a very difficult task. As the historian Robin D. G. Kelley notes in a speech on the abolition of whiteness, “The challenge before you/us is how to accomplish this, to dismantle white supremacy. It’s not enough to reject your racial designation. After all, your white skin still works for you no matter what you call yourself: it works in terms of how the police treat most of you, where you can live, access to home loans, the way you’re treated at work or in



the classroom. The only way to really abolish whiteness is to destroy the structures of racism itself and to commit yourself to anti-racist, anti-sexist struggle.”<sup>38</sup> While white privilege is only one component of settler colonialism, its dismantling goes hand in hand with the abolition of settler privilege. By committing to both these struggles—in both what we call our “work” and our “personal” lives—non-Native activists likewise commit to establish a vibrant and sustainable future. Although this essay in no way serves as a prescriptive in offering solutions to overcoming settler colonialism and white privilege, *Re-Collecting Black Hawk* begins to move in this direction, as does the continuing Idle No More movement. This global movement, emerging from Indigenous communities, confronts the logics of settler colonial appropriation of Indigenous lands and its systematic coupling with white privilege.

## HOME

After journeying in all directions, we all must return home someday. Settlers and Indigenous, alike, must both develop continued relationships with the land and with each other. In *Re-Collecting Black Hawk*, Brown and Kanouse both document and undermine a legacy of settler appropriation of Indigenous lands and stories. Working with Meskwaki, Sauk, Dakota, and Michif collaborators, they demonstrate that Makataimeshekiakiak is not simply a common patrimony expressing a generic Indian history mutated into an “American” present. As the settler-Australian historian Patrick Wolfe notes, “Indigenous North Americans were not killed, driven away, romanticized, assimilated, fenced in, bred White, and otherwise eliminated as the original owners of the land but *as Indians*.”<sup>39</sup> Makataimeshekiakiak’s name and image are not empty signifiers that can be filled with inaccurate and deceptive settler narratives of Indians. He is not just another Indian, not even just an adversarial one. In both name and image, Makataimeshekiakiak has irreplaceable history and meaning that, regardless of colonial amnesia’s ability to obliterate indigeneity, cannot be stripped away. His story and presence cannot be erased.

Inversely, it goes without saying that colonialism is presently inescapable, while its current presence leaves an indelible stain. Although it does not need to, the history of colonial structures presently informs each and every moment of Indigenous lives in the United States. While there are elders who remember the old ways before the incursion of global capitalism, by and large our daily lives have been fully colonized. From the moment we wake up in the morning until the time we drift off to sleep, our bodies maneuver through a system contained by the limits of colonialism and its twin brother, capitalism. Our bodies and languages are shaped by the historical processes of colonization. It is only during our dreams, both metaphorical and literal, that the limits of capitalist colonialism fade into the background. In these nocturnal moments of liberation, similar to visions while on “the hill,” indigeneity and its affiliated national (what many may call tribal) epistemologies allow us to think beyond the limitations of colonialism’s reservation formation. Indigenous thought, concurrently ancient and contemporary, is located

in those emancipatory moments when “customary knowledge” filters through the limitations of monetary exchange.<sup>40</sup> Likewise, as stated earlier, the intimate relationship between dreaming and art can be tied to alternative and utopian ways of imagining a truly postcolonial future. Dreaming and art come together at the moment of emancipation.

For some, these unlimited and unconfined thoughts are common. This is the way of the elders whose first languages connect them to the timeless practices of the ancestors. Makataimeshekiakiak, in his resistance to U.S. control, was one of these thinkers. For others, myself included, these autonomous (and precolonized) thoughts are rare, emerging only from the deepest recesses of our being. Only when I dream or make art am I liberated from the omnipresence of colonialism. The work of the others in this book, including George Thurman, Johnathan Buffalo, Sandra Massey, Yolanda Pushetonequa, and Waziyatawin, contributes to the decolonization of their communities and the renewal of Indigenous ways of thinking. They free themselves from colonial epistemological control. Attending to these ways of thinking—listening to these dreams and visions—provides an alternative to the resource-draining ways of capitalism. As Eric Cheyfitz argues, the present moment of neoliberal globalization began with the European invasion of the Americas, and “this Westernized world must begin to think seriously in terms of the philosophies that were providing balanced models of social life when unbalanced Europeans arrived violently more than five hundred years ago.”<sup>41</sup>

As the highest stage of colonialism, capitalism operates by reducing our collective history to a short memory.<sup>42</sup> Capitalism functions precisely because we forget its multidirectional and atrocious history. Inversely, Indigenous history, one where intimate relationships are maintained with both animate and inanimate beings, is a history that refuses to forget. Just as Coulthard maintains that intimate and sacred relationships with place are central to Indigenous ontologies, the maintenance of a long memory is at the core of Indigenous modes of knowing. As an act of solidarity and in a process of self-decolonization, non-Native people can assimilate a long memory into their own ways of being. The burden is on all of us who believe in Indigenous sovereignty, both Native and settler alike, as well as those of us who straddle both histories.

This burden, following Brazilian thinker Paulo Freire, emerges at the community level through praxis. That is, it is situated in the dialectic between theory and action. Indigenizing Freire’s mandate, Taiaiake Alfred calls this lifelong journey *wasáse*, the ancient Haudenosaunee war ritual. Through this and other ceremonies, the specter of Makataimeshekiakiak’s non-acquiescence to settler violence remains today. While Indigenous war rituals and the battles themselves may not be the same today as they were in Makataimeshekiakiak’s time, they are nonetheless still ongoing. From the language efforts initiated by the Meskwaki Nation to the intellectual work of Waziyatawin, today’s Native warriors have intentionally and tactically shifted their fight against U.S. colonialism. By *re-collecting Black Hawk*, we may collaboratively participate in this ritual of resistance and survival by listening before speaking.