Indigenous Resurgence: The Drive for Renewed Engagement and Reciprocity in the Turn Away from the State

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1. Introduction

"Indigenous resurgence" has emerged as a distinctive intellectual and political movement on the Canadian (and wider North American) landscape in recent years (Alfred, 2009b, 2009c, 2013; Alfred and Corntassel, 2005; Corntassel, 2012; Coulthard, 2014, 2016; Simpson, 2011, 2014, 2016). It centres on three basic contentions: (1) that colonialism in the Canadian context is an active structure of domination and fundamentally oriented towards the elimination of Indigenous societies rather than merely their subjugation; (2) that the prevailing normative-discursive environment powerfully reflects these underlying imperatives despite apparent shifts towards better addressing colonial injustice; and (3) that Indigenous peoples must consequently seek to turn away from this hostile environment wherever possible and channel energies into independent programmes of cultural, social, spiritual and physical rejuvenation. It is this latter aspect that perhaps most vividly sets the resurgence movement apart from a wider body of Indigenous critique directed against liberal Canada. For proponents of resurgence, continued attempts to resist and transform the settler-colonial order from within—through the channels, arenas and discourses it makes

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available—can neither ensure Indigenous survival nor realize genuine progress towards decolonization and might in fact prove counterproductive on both counts. Survival and decolonization each depend, they argue, on a collective redirection of energies away from attempts to further modify the conditions of colonialism and towards positively creating alternative social realities in the here and now. By reconnecting with land, culture and community, and rejuvenating Indigenous nationhood, governance structures and economies, opportunities to live Indigenously in contemporary times might be increased and genuine progress made towards transforming the colonial status quo.

My intention in this article is, first, to offer clarification on the political critique behind the resurgence movement and the "turn" or strategy of disengagement it advocates and, second, to excavate an opposingly directed drive within it. For despite possible first impressions, resurgence does not advocate the permanent or absolute cessation of discursive engagement with settler society nor seek to reduce it merely to functional necessities. But it does aim to shift it to radically different grounds. Ultimately, this is towards a renewed form of dialogue on matters of justice and decolonization, structured by principles of genuine mutual recognition and reciprocity. The remoteness of this objective at the present time, however, necessitates a different kind of shift as a prior condition: to move engagement to grounds structured not *on* but *for* reciprocity. In other words, resurgence shows a concern to foster ongoing engagements with settler society that might help to unsettle, and eventually remove, obstacles to reciprocal dialogue and the renewal of relationships.

I aim here to render this secondary—and, admittedly, often only implied—dimension of the resurgence movement more explicit. And I do so in the same spirit of engagement that I argue it displays. By attempting to draw out the presence of this drive for engagement and the precise form it takes, my intention is to contribute to the task of exposing and removing obstacles to the emergence of a reciprocal politics of decolonization in the Canadian context. Attending to the reason for and form of strategies of Indigenous disengagement, and the potential invitational content they carry, is an important aspect of this.

I begin with a more detailed look at the political critique behind resurgence's turn away from the prevailing normative-discursive environment before moving to consider what that turn entails. The importance of this is in establishing why a strategy of disengagement is so crucial to the movement's primary objective of rejuvenating Indigenous nationhood and culture. Section 4 elaborates on my claim of a conversely oriented (and inferior) secondary drive within the movement. This arises, I argue, given the need to undermine the moral and intellectual foundations of the prevailing social order and progress towards its radical transformation. I focus here particularly on how the kinds of engagement resurgence fosters work to

Abstract. "Indigenous resurgence" centres on three contentions: (1) that colonialism is an active structure of domination premised, at base, on Indigenous elimination; (2) that the prevailing normative-discursive environment continues to reflect this imperative; and (3) that Indigenous peoples must therefore turn away from this hostile environment and pursue independent programmes of social and cultural rejuvenation. The principal movement advocated under the resurgence paradigm thus appears as one of disengagement with the settler order. I also argue, however, that there is an important secondary drive within the movement that presses in the opposite direction. It figures further engagement both as a longer term goal (in the form of renewed dialogue on decolonization) and as an immediate imperative (in order to expose and remove obstacles to reciprocal dialogue). I aim, here, to excavate this secondary drive and consider what it connotes in terms of settler engagement.

Résumé. La « résurgence autochtone » se fonde sur trois assertions : (1) que le colonialisme est une structure active de domination ayant pour prémisse l'élimination des Autochtones; (2) que l'environnement normatif-discursif qui règne continue de refléter cet impératif; et (3) que les peuples autochtones doivent, par conséquent, se détourner de cet environnement hostile et poursuivre des programmes autonomes de rajeunissement social et culturel. Le principal mouvement préconisé selon le paradigme de la résurgence prend la forme d'un désengagement de l'ordre du colonisateur. Je soutiens qu'il existe cependant au sein du mouvement un courant secondaire important qui va dans le sens contraire. Il comprend un engagement plus poussé à la fois en tant qu'objectif à plus long terme (sous la forme d'un dialogue renouvelé sur la décolonisation) qu'en tant qu'impératif immédiat (afin de mettre au jour et supprimer les obstacles qui s'opposent à un dialogue réciproque). Je me propose, ici, de fouiller ce courant secondaire et d'examiner ce qu'il implique du point de vue de l'engagement des colons.

unsettle behavioural obstacles to reciprocal dialogue. In section 5, I move to look in more detail at how they also work to unsettle the ideational terrain of the settler colony. Highlighting five key areas—(1) the active nature of settler colonialism; (2) sovereignty; (3) land and ecosystem; (4) political economy; and (5) language—I provide a preliminary mapping of the barriers to reciprocal dialogue that resurgence identifies. It is, I argue, towards cultivating appreciation of the contingent and contested status of prevailing norms in each of these areas that resurgence presses, rather than necessarily their immediate or outright rejection. The aim, after all, is to foster conditions for reciprocal dialogue not to invert the normative hierarchies of the present.

An important note before proceeding. I take as my main reference in what follows a relatively small group of thinkers, concentrating mainly on the work of Taiaiake Alfred, Jeff Corntassel, Glen Coulthard and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, each of whom has been central to the development of an explicit scholarly discourse of Indigenous resurgence in the Canadian context. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that they neither represent *the* authentic voices of resurgence nor constitute its essential boundaries. Indeed, as each emphasizes, resurgence is less a scholarly endeavour than it is a practically situated—or grounded—mode of being

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and resistance. As such, it is reducible neither to a neat set of parameters nor a select group of voices. In focusing on this group, I do not wish to deny or erase the innumerable sites at which concrete acts of resurgence are happening in Canada today or imply that what follows is the movement's only valid conceptualization. Rather, the narrow focus I adopt here is motivated by a desire to avoid rendering the movement too conceptually and politically diffuse or simply equate it with Indigenous critique in general. The tightly overlapping articulation of resurgence these thinkers have developed is useful in this regard.

2. Indigenous Resurgence: The Need to Turn Away

At the heart of the resurgence movement is a call for Indigenous peoples to turn away from the state and the prevailing normative-discursive environment of the Canadian settler colony. Rather than channelling energies into attempts to further modify the settler-colonial order from within, efforts should be directed towards independently rejuvenating Indigenous nationhood and culture: reconnecting communities with traditional language, lifeways, and forms of governance; re-establishing sustainable economies; and pursuing ties of solidarity and collaboration with others working towards a radical transformation of the contemporary social world, both at home and internationally (Alfred, 2009b: 56; Simpson, 2011, 2016).

This call to "turn away" stems from observation of an inherent hostility to Indigenous being and interests of decolonization within state policy, public discourse and the wider normative environment of Canada. Despite over four decades of ostensible advancements towards acknowledging and addressing colonial injustice, the present era marks, it is argued, a general continuance of the underlying structural imperatives of settler colonialism. These imperatives are linked to the fact that in settler-colonial contexts such as Canada there is no geographically separate "home" territory to which the colonizing society could, in principle, retreat. This means that lands appropriated from Indigenous societies are crucial not simply for reasons of settlement and economic development but also as they provide the basic territorial foundation of the colonizing society itself (Tully, 2000). The presence of Indigenous nations on the geographical and political landscape thus poses something of an existential threat to the colonizing/settler society on at least two counts: materially, Indigenous presences threaten to impede free movement, settlement and economic development; symbolically, they indicate the as-yet unconsolidated legal and moral foundations of the settler institutional order and the unfinished business of colonialism. The continual (which is to say structural) imperative associated with the settler-colonial order, accordingly, is

to resolve this contradiction by one means or another—either through forms of physical and cultural erasure that attempt to literally expel Indigenous bodies and identities from the landscape or through forms of political erasure that attempt to refigure Indigenous societies as qualitatively different from and subordinate to settler counterparts (Tully, 2000).

Settler colonialism can thus be understood as "territorially acquisitive in perpetuity" rather than only initially (Coulthard, 2014: 125) and, to borrow Patrick Wolfe's (2006) phrase, as a structure, not an event, that is, an active and constitutive feature of the contemporary social order rather than merely an episode in its history (Coulthard, 2014: 125; Snelgrove et al., 2014). Thus, Coulthard writes:

> although the *means* by which the colonial state has sought to eliminate Indigenous peoples in order to gain access to our lands and resources have modified over the last two centuries … the *ends* have always remained the same: to shore up continued access to Indigenous peoples' territories for the purposes of state formation, settlement, and capitalist development. (Coulthard, 2014: 125, italics in original)

The evolving or "shape-shifting" character (Corntassel, 2012: 88) of Canadian colonialism has enabled it to work continually in accordance with these underlying structural imperatives even as it has been forced "to modify itself from a structure that was once primarily reinforced by policies, techniques, and ideologies explicitly oriented around the genocidal exclusion/assimilation double, to one that is now reproduced through a seemingly more conciliatory set of discourses and institutional practices that emphasize *recognition* and *accommodation*" (Coulthard, 2014: 6).

For Coulthard (51), the primary vehicle for settler colonialism in the contemporary era is the "liberal recognition paradigm" that now constitutes the standard framework for public policy and discourse pertaining to matters of colonial injustice. Premised on the formal acknowledgment of distinctive Indigenous rights and statuses, on better accommodating those rights within the institutional matrix of the state and collectively confronting some of the more manifestly unjust episodes of Canadian colonial history, the liberal recognition era has presided over a range of significant and ostensibly positive developments for Indigenous peoples in Canada. It has seen retreats of direct state control in local communities, the growth of "modern treaty" processes through which self-government powers, land rights and compensation agreements have been secured, and brought about increased commitment to addressing patterns of Indigenous suffering and inequality connected to past acts of state violence (Corntassel and Holder, 2008; Irlbacher-Fox, 2009).

Nevertheless, the liberal recognition paradigm stands indicted by thinkers of resurgence on two primary counts: (1) that it remains structurally

committed to dispossessing Indigenous peoples of their lands and self-determining authority; and (2) that it operates to erode the very basis of Indigenous resistance by co-opting individuals and communities into forms of life that comport with the colonial order.

Regarding the first, resurgence critics contend that the liberal politics of recognition's root function is to manufacture a more robust legitimation—moral and legal—of the state's claims to sovereignty and, in the process, better secure the grounds of capitalist economic development. "In the long term," writes Alfred, "legitimacy is the most important form of power the state possesses" (2009b: 56). It is through legitimacy that support is garnered for the use of physical or military force to repress acts of serious dissent or disobedience and for preserving the social order even as its internal violences and contradictions are laid bare. In openly acknowledging and moving to address some of the most visible aspects of colonial domination, and thus figuring the state as an ultimately progressive political force and as a potential site of justice/reconciliation, the liberal politics of recognition helps to underwrite this claim to legitimacy.

What legitimation equates to here, it is argued, is justification for the continued dispossession of Indigenous lands and the continuing denial of Indigenous sovereignties. Although often couched in the vernacular of "mutuality" and "reciprocity," the liberal politics of recognition reproduces a plainly hierarchical relationship: the state is unerringly positioned as the sole recognizing party and Indigenous peoples merely as objects of recognition (Coulthard, 2014). Although they may vie to have claims to self-government and land rights recognized, Indigenous peoples are denied status as equal agents of recognition. Settler sovereignty is presumed and reproduced as the inevitable framework for recognition and the dispossession on which this is premised further entrenched and legitimated.

The effect, for thinkers of resurgence, is to bolster the objective conditions of colonial domination. Through recognition politics, Indigenous political presences are (re)inscribed, both formally and informally, as qualitatively different from and subordinate to settler political presences and individual identities are pressed further into a state-centric model of citizenship (Alfred and Corntassel, 2005; Blackburn, 2009). At the same time, Indigenous presences on the land are further modified in ways that ultimately benefit settler interests. In pressing towards forms of "final" or "comprehensive" agreement, the politics of recognition helps to diminish —if only by more clearly delimiting—obstacles posed to capitalist economic interests. The assurances that would-be investors demand can be more readily granted following such settlements (Alfred, 2009b; Blackburn, 2009; Corntassel, 2012). As such, the basic structural imperatives of settler colonialism find potent expression through liberal recognition politics. For resurgence critics, the relative increases in security and freedom that participation within this paradigm might provide cannot

outweigh the harm associated with this bolstering of the basic objective reality of colonial domination.

Of arguably greater concern, though, is that participation within the liberal recognition framework might also undermine the basis of resistance struggles and even threaten long-term survival *as* Indigenous peoples. Alfred finds that the recognition era has seen a "gradual assumption of the values, goals, and perspectives that make up the [colonial] status quo" within Indigenous communities and an associated confinement of thought and action to the "opportunity structure" it offers (2009a: 94; see also Simpson, 2014; Waziyatawin, 2012). This marks a growth in "colonial mentalities" (Alfred, 2009a) or "subjectivities" (Coulthard, 2014) as goals of economic development and formal recognition have become widely accepted. Without denying the rewards that can often be achieved along such paths, or the pressures that encourage communities to pursue them, resurgence critics argue that the condition for any such gains is acceptance of the constitutive hierarchies of the settler-colonial order and its norms of political and economic organization. The effect is to perpetuate a broader internalization of the colonial order within Indigenous communities. For Alfred (2009b: 40), these must therefore be thought of as "paths of least resistance" in that they (at best) offer minor disruption to colonial imperatives in the short term and more likely actively serve them in the longer run. More importantly, though, they help to render the subjective work of colonialism more complete. Such acceptance of colonial frameworks closes off Indigenous minds to the possibility and even the desirability of a radically different, decolonized future.

The charge against the liberal recognition paradigm and the wider policy and discursive field it structures—from health and welfare to housing, education, and beyond—could thus hardly be more profound. It stands accused both of bolstering the objective reality of colonial domination and advancing it on a subjective level by undermining basic drives or desires to radically oppose it. The combined effect, as Coulthard sees it, is to "reproduce the very configurations of colonialist, racist, patriarchal state power that Indigenous peoples' demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend" (2014: 3). The recent history of Indigenous political resistance in Canada, it is argued, is thus one of increasing confinement to a framework that offers (*can* offer) only limited reform to the colonial order while also rendering its foundations more secure. It is not that positive modifications cannot result or that there is no scope for agents to engage this oppressive framework in innovative and unexpected ways. But if, as Alfred (2009b) suggests, the ultimate justification for any mode of resistance is its capacity to prevent the further erosion of Indigenous social and cultural being and to secure opportunities for future generations to live unbound by colonial realities, then the prevailing orthodoxy of Indigenous politics in Canada is found wanting. Participation within the liberal recognition

paradigm can, at best, take Indigenous struggles only so far (Corntassel, 2012). In the longer term, though, it renders survival *as* Indigenous peoples ever more precarious and the possibility of authentic decolonization ever more remote. If these remain the fundamental objectives behind Indigenous resistance, then a different way forward must be found.

3. Centring Indigeneity

Resurgence as a political and intellectual movement finds its origins in what Corntassel refers to as "everyday" acts and practices (Corntassel, 2012: 4; see also Alfred, 2009b; Corntassel, 2008). In other words, the movement takes its lead from modalities of being and acting that are already deeply rooted in Indigenous communities and social histories rather than attempting to assert a wholly novel programme of action from the perspective of theory (Simpson, 2011; Snelgrove et al., 2014). In fact, as Simpson sees it, resurgence can be regarded as Indigenous peoples' "original instruction" (2011: 66) and an integral part of Indigenous cultures and histories of resistance across the North American continent. Scholarly discourses of resurgence thus set out to reawaken these socially inherent capacities for positive agency and change on a larger scale. This is essential, it is argued, if Indigenous normativities are to be reasserted as a constructive force on the contemporary landscape and progress towards transforming the colonial reality is to be made. As Simpson writes:

> We need to rebuild our culturally inherent philosophical contexts for governance, education, healthcare, and economy. We need to be able to articulate in a clear manner our visions for the future, for living as *Indigenous Peoples* in contemporary times. We need to do this on our own terms, without the sanction, permission, or engagement of the state, western theory, or the opinions of Canadians. In essence, we need to not just figure out who we are; we need to re-establish the process by which we live who we are within the current context we find ourselves. (2011: 17, italics in original)

As already noted, common themes of action associated with resurgence include reconnecting with land, culture, and community; rejuvenating Indigenous nationhood, governance structures, and economies; and revitalizing Indigenous practices of diplomacy and solidarity building with other movements. These are to take place in accordance with an ethical framework that is intimately and self-consciously place-based and which emphasizes accountability at community level and the teaching of respect, reciprocity and nondomination among people, land and environment (Alfred, 2009b; Coulthard, 2014, 2016; Coulthard and Simpson, 2016;

Simpson, 2016). Despite these common elements, however, resurgence is nevertheless to be conceived as a deeply heterogeneous process. Its precise manifestations will inevitably vary, both spatially and temporally, in accordance with the specificities of local contexts, histories, cultures, human agency and imagination. The exact course of resurgence therefore cannot, and should not, be fully prescribed or anticipated. It must instead be determined through, and reflect, the diversity of the communities pursuing it.

In calling for a widescale reconnection with land, culture and tradition, thinkers of resurgence do not appeal for a return to, or the recreation of, some kind of precolonial social order. Rather, they insist, it is colonialism that brings rigidity to Indigenous social and cultural life, and a crucial part of loosening its grip must be to reinstate norms of self-criticism and cultural fluidity at the core of Indigenous social existences (Simpson, 2011). Resurgence thus proposes to draw "critically on the past with an eye to radically transform the colonial power relations that have come to dominate our present" (Coulthard, 2014: 157). It does not aim to tie present or future generations into falsely essentialized forms of social and cultural organization.

This commitment to a critical or "self-conscious" traditionalism (Alfred, 2009a: 16) is aptly displayed in stances adopted to questions of gender and sexuality. While positing the need to consult traditional philosophies in unsettling the colonial heteropatriarchy that now prevails in many Indigenous social contexts, thinkers of resurgence argue that these traditional frameworks must themselves be equally subject to critical interrogation. In part, this is to guard against the unwitting replication of colonial values in what otherwise passes for traditional culture (Simpson, 2016). But it is also driven by appreciation of the need to reassess and sometimes re-imagine traditional teachings and values in light of contemporary contexts. Simpson (2011: 60), for instance, highlights the importance of resisting essentialized versions of Indigenous womanhood even as traditional teachings around gender are used to empower women and articulate alternative forms of social organization. Alfred similarly insists that "obsolete views of men's and women's roles" (2009b: 84) must be left behind at the same time that traditional philosophies are employed in the struggle to liberate communities from colonial practices of governance (see also Coulthard, 2014, 2016). The resurgence of Indigenous normativities, in this view, cannot be detached from a rekindling of ethics of self-interrogation and self-criticism.

Importantly, critically revitalizing tradition in this way is understood not simply as the means to decolonization but also something of its ends (Coulthard, 2014). Rejuvenating culture and tradition does not, in other words, serve the "higher" aim of decolonization. The two are instead internally and inextricably connected: authentically decolonized futures will inevitably reflect ongoing practices of resurgence. Again, there is no

attempt here to impose substantive constraints on future social arrangements or to overdetermine the meaning of decolonization. The specific institutional forms, modes of governance and norms of socio-economic organization that best suit future contexts and generations must, it is maintained, be worked out along the way by those involved. But if those futures are to be understood as decolonized in any meaningful sense of that term, resurgence thinkers contend, they must be structured around ongoing critical engagement with traditional philosophical and cultural frameworks. In important ways, they must reflect "the very best practices of traditional cultures, knowledge systems and lifeways in the dynamic, fluid, compassionate, respectful context within which they were originally generated" (Simpson, 2011: 18). In these terms, resurgence is conceived not only as an inherent aspect of Indigenous being, past and present, but also of anything that might be called an authentically Indigenous—and decolonized—future.

The resurgence movement thus clearly possesses a strong inward-looking focus. In turning away from the prevailing normative-discursive environment of the Canadian settler-colony it means both to recentre Indigenous normativities in the lived realities of individuals and communities today and in the process reassert Indigenous agency as a positive and constructive force in the world. This is regarded as essential to ensuring survival as Indigenous peoples and vital if steps towards authentic decolonization are to be made.

4. Unsettling engagements

Given this strong inward focus, one could be forgiven for thinking that resurgence has little interest in seeking, or even entertaining, further engagement with settler society. Yet this is not exactly so. While the prevailing normative-discursive environment and the forms of engagement it typically supports are rejected for their harmful and counterproductive effects, resurgence does not advocate the permanent or absolute cessation of contact with settler society nor seek to reduce it merely to strictly functional necessities. In fact, it demonstrates an interest in actively promoting engagement with members of settler society, whom it figures as potential—arguably even vital—co-protagonists in decolonization rather than inevitable antagonists. Thinkers of resurgence in this sense seek a renewal of dialogue based on genuine mutual respect and reciprocity, and through which decolonization and mutually agreeable terms of coexistence can be pursued.

The task associated with the more immediate present, however, is to unsettle the norms, values and behaviours that obstruct pathways towards such dialogue. The need, as Alfred puts it, is to bring non-Indigenous people to the "realization that their notion of power and its extension over indigenous peoples is wrong by any moral standard" (2009a: 180).

Settler society must, in this regard, writes Simpson, be encouraged to pursue a "re-education project that would enable its government and its citizens to engage with Indigenous Peoples in a just and honourable way in the future" (2011: 23). This reflects an important secondary drive within the resurgence movement operating alongside (but always inferior to) the primary objective of rejuvenating Indigenous culture and nationhood. Whereas an imperative of disengagement best supports that primary objective—at least under present conditions—this secondary dimension seems to pull in the opposite direction. It drives for engagement as a basis for undermining the "intellectual and moral foundations" of the settler-colonial order and thereby opening possibilities for renewed dialogue (Alfred, 2009a: 180).

The tension between these opposing drives is, in practice, resolved by their hierarchical relationship. That is, disengagement from the prevailing normative-discursive environment and positive enactment of alternative social realities takes absolute priority, and opportunities for settler engagement must, accordingly, be structured into these practices and rendered compatible with them. To some extent, this is demonstrated with the resurgence literature where the primary addressee is typically Indigenous but where an ongoing (often background) conversation with settler society regarding the harms associated with generally accepted norms, values and concepts is also detectable. It is perhaps even more notably evident, though, in some of the everyday practices from which these scholarly discourses take their lead.

Corntassel offers the example of Lekwungen activist Cheryl Bryce whose efforts to maintain and strengthen Indigenous presence on her homelands in the (now) Victoria region of British Columbia—including re-establishing the *Kwetlal* food system—involve creating "teachable moments" designed to convey the histories and contemporary struggles of groups in the region (2012: 98). The purpose of these forms of "insurgent education," Corntassel observes, is "to make settlers uncomfortable and to urge people to practice healthier relationships so that the land itself can also heal" (98). Here, then, efforts to rejuvenate culture and positively enact alternative social realities are in practice alloyed with the creation of opportunities for members of settler society to engage and learn about injustices faced and to consider how their own actions and beliefs contribute to them and might be changed accordingly.

Resurgence displays, then—and perhaps ironically, precisely through the "turn away" that most vividly characterizes it politically—an ongoing commitment to engagement with settler society. Through resurgence, Alfred writes:

> 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. I want to provoke. To cause reflection. To

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> motivate people to creatively confront the social and spiritual forces that are preventing us from overcoming the divisive and painful legacies of our shared history as imperial subjects. (Alfred, 2009b: 35)

This drive has a certain immediacy; it is not a distant objective or merely rhetorical gesture but connected to the very possibility of moving towards renewed dialogue. It also has two distinct facets that need to be highlighted. The first is more obvious in that part of what must be unsettled is the dominant social imaginaries and normativities of the settler colony, especially those elements that contribute most to its easy reproduction. The second is somewhat less obvious but no less important. It pertains not to the need to change what settlers think, exactly, but rather how they act. For barriers to reciprocity are found not only in the ways that settlers imagine and speak about the social world but also how they typically behave and orient themselves within it. I will concentrate here on drawing out this "behavioural" facet more clearly since it is only indirectly apparent in the forms of engagement resurgence promotes. The "ideational," which is more explicit (although still largely indirect), will be the subject of the following section.

One way to get at this behavioural component is to consider an objection Simpson (2016: 31) raises to being asked to respond to "what can white allies do" questions when giving talks on resurgence. The problem with such questioning, Simpson finds, is that even when motivated by basically good intentions, it serves only to centre thought and discussion on "whiteness" and in the process effectively erase everything just said regarding the Indigenous-centric nature of resurgence. And yet it seems unlikely that the problem here is really the basic impulse to ask "how can I/we change." After all, the common refrain in the resurgence (and wider decolonial) literature is that settlers cannot remain who and what they are if colonial oppression is to be overcome. What is problematic here, rather, is the way in which this question is imposed on and in the *space of resurgence*. For it must be recognized that even in the more academic settings that Simpson is talking about, articulations of resurgence possess an important performative dimension. That is to say, they represent not only espousals of the virtues of positively enacting alternative social realities but also attempts to engender this lesson: to create spaces in which Indigeneity is centred (however cursorily or temporarily) and in which it is affirmed and *demonstrated* as a productive force in the world. This is the primary imperative behind the movement and it is, as I have said, only as a secondary act or gesture to the creation of these spaces that settlers are invited into them. Consequently, to impose settler subjectivity at their centre can only be regarded as a hostile and essentially colonial act. It is to blithely cast settler interests to the forefront of thought and discussion and render resurgence, in a sense, answerable to them. The result is a subversion of the

movement's primary aims and thus a violation of its implied conditions of hospitality.

Insofar as spaces of resurgence are opened to settler engagement, then, they actually call for a quite specific mode of presence. The precise language in which Alfred's statement above is couched is perhaps instructive in this regard. The emphasis there is on *showing* alternatives to settler society, *provoking* reflection and *motivating* creative confrontation with existing social realities and dominant normativities. The implication, as such, is that while members of settler society are invited into spaces of resurgence for these purposes, any guidance received is likely to be more indirect than it is direct. Resurgence cannot jeopardize its own primary aims by allowing settler interests to colonize or commandeer the spaces it creates. Nor can it be fully responsible for, or indeed truly compel, the kinds of self-realization needed if settlers are to move to positions where reciprocal dialogue is possible. On both counts, what is called for is a modality of presence in which impulses to speak, to interrogate and to demand are suppressed in favour of listening and more introspective reflection. Which is to say that the question "how can I/we change," rather than being projected outwards into spaces of resurgence, is more appropriately turned back on the settler position itself in a movement of self-examination and self-criticism conducted in light of resurgence as a source of insight and critique. This is more in keeping with the movement's primary aims and seemingly most conducive to continued hospitality.

What this means, I want to suggest, is that—at least insofar as settler society is concerned—spaces of resurgence are structured not on but *for* the principle of reciprocity. They presuppose Indigenous centricity and authority, and in doing so figure settlers as guests: if they are to remain welcome, settlers are under requirement to adapt their behaviour to meet with conditions of hospitality that they have no say in determining. The effect is a significant departure from the norms of the settler colony where colonially secured power and privilege generally function to settlers' advantage in enabling them to call the shots. Moreover, by establishing the *act* of respect for Indigenous being and authority—rather than merely the abstract value or claim—as the basis for continued hospitality, these sites of engagement encourage settlers to take up stances more conducive with a longer-term cultivation of reciprocity. While, admittedly, such work to disrupt behavioural norms is a more implicit feature of the forms of engagement resurgence fosters—and perhaps a structural consequence of the movement's aims more than anything else—it is no less important than more direct challenges to the ideational norms of the settler colony. If reciprocity is to be cultivated, progress in both domains is surely essential.

Resurgence, then, I suggest, far from rejecting further engagement with settler society, is internally driven to foster it—albeit on quite specific terms. The immediate objective in this regard is to unsettle the behavioural

and ideational norms that currently obstruct movement towards a reciprocal politics of justice and decolonization, which remains the longer term goal. In the next section, I move to focus more closely on the ideational side of this.

5. Challenging the Ideational Terrain of the Settler-Colony

The more apparent aspect of the engagement resurgence fosters is to challenge the social imaginaries and norms that currently hold sway in the Canadian settler colony. Even this, however, as already indicated, remains more indirect than direct given the need to rejuvenate Indigenous culture and nationhood and the threat that centring settler subjectivity poses to this goal. Nevertheless, the challenges brought against prevailing norms and values in these contexts are far reaching and profound. Here I outline five key thematic areas in which obstacles to reciprocal dialogue on matters of justice and decolonization are identified within the resurgence literature. Making movement towards new grounds of engagement seems to depend upon the contingent and contested nature of dominant norms in each of these areas becoming better appreciated, and commitments secured to explore possibilities beyond them.

Settler colonialism as (impermanent) structure

For the resurgence movement, as we have seen, colonialism is an active and evolving structure of domination in place on the lands and waters now called Canada. The injustices connected with it, accordingly, are ongoing as well as historical, perpetuated on a daily basis through familiar institutions, practices, and choices made by settlers at all levels of society. The movement presses, accordingly, at a basic level, for greater appreciation of the unfolding experience of colonial domination and oppression.

This perhaps requires clarification given that the recognition era has witnessed concerted effort (often under the banner of reconciliation) to address denial and ignorance in settler society as to the more manifestly unjust episodes of Canadian colonial history. Notwithstanding the importance of such steps in raising awareness of some aspects of colonial injustice, thinkers of resurgence criticize the tendency for such moves to represent injustice in overly historical terms (Corntassel and Holder, 2008). Although acknowledgment is generally offered of continuing patterns of suffering among Indigenous communities, these are typically portrayed as harmful *legacies* of injustices committed in the past, caused through the malintent and misjudgement of past society and government (see Alfred, 2009c; Irlbacher-Fox, 2009). Indeed, it can be argued that the very logic of reconciliation steers understandings in this direction

insofar as the contemporary state order is presented as an uncontroversial and inevitable site of reconciliation (see Short, 2005). The result, it is argued, is to miss how such patterns of suffering are connected to active, evolving injustices rooted in dispossession and disempowerment. It is also to imbue the current state order both with a sense of innocence in respect of the enactment of injustice, and with a sense of permanence or inevitability.

Understanding colonialism as an unfolding experience of injustice connected to a contingent form of social ordering—namely, the sovereign state—is identified by thinkers of resurgence as a crucial starting point for moving towards renewed dialogue. To take colonialism as a purely historical problem is to preclude from the outset the kinds of radical social transformation that will be needed if its foundations are to be addressed. It also easily imbues the current state order, premised as it is on the fundamental dispossession of Indigenous land and self-determining authority, with an air of inevitability and/or innocence. Such presumptions must be left behind if renewed dialogue is to be possible.

The problem of sovereignty

The visions of decolonization that resurgence thinkers advance typically revolve around the attainment of mutually agreeable terms of coexistence between Indigenous and settler peoples. While the specifics of these future relationships must be worked out in the process of their practical construction, in general terms they will include forms of nation-to-nation arrangement in which the equal status and self-determining authority of the parties is affirmed and capacities for self-definition, self-defence and self-sufficiency are assured (Alfred, 2009b). One possibility for achieving this might be through forms of federalism that reflect both Western and Indigenous political traditions (Alfred, 2009a: 77; see also Tully, 2008: ch.7). Whatever the eventual model is, however, it will need to be flexible enough to contend both with needs for mutual self-determination and with the complex social and geographical entanglements that characterize contemporary Canada. Resurgence therefore challenges any simple presumption of existing state sovereignty models as necessary or appropriate to a decolonized future.

There is, however, potential for confusion on this point since the language of sovereignty occupies a prominent place in Indigenous politics and critique, including in some sections of the resurgence literature. That is to say, sovereignty both names something of the political structures that Indigenous peoples contest and plays a crucial role in discourses and practices of resistance; indeed, the claim of "native sovereignty" has proven particularly important in challenging assumptions about the "internal" or "domesticated" status of Indigenous nations.

The prominence of the language of sovereignty in Indigenous politics should not, however, be mistaken for a sign as to the concept's simple adoption or uncontested status. Alfred argues that while sovereignty clearly holds considerable value as an "externalized concept" (2009a: 134) for use in expressing discontents and aspirations in the present political climate, its adoption and internalization within Indigenous communities is more problematic and uncertain. Of perhaps greatest significance is the threat that it sees anti-colonial struggles interpellated within a "neo-colonial framework of authoritarian jurisdiction and territorial control and domination" (Coulthard, 2016: 95). Yet simply abandoning the language of sovereignty is often regarded as neither possible nor beneficial. In commenting on his own use of the term, Coulthard writes:

> In choosing to use the language of land and sovereignty … I not only aim to acknowledge that this is the language through which our struggles are most commonly articulated in our communities, but in doing so also register what Audra Simpson would refer to as my *refusal* to surrender this common language of contestation and resistance over to our enemies. (2016: 96, italics in original)

The prevalence of the term "sovereignty" does not, then, equate to uniformity in the sense and meaning attached to it, or in terms of the implications for social organization that its deployment holds. Rather, sovereignty as a concept is itself a site of decolonial struggle and contestation. Familiar norms of authority and social ordering are being contested through it as well as in departures from it, and there is need for sensitivity to this fact as settlers engage with practices and discourses of resurgence.

Relationships with land and ecosystem

The process of working out mutually agreeable terms of political coexistence must naturally take place in conjunction with efforts to find compatible ways of living on and from the land. Thinkers of resurgence are highly critical of the understandings of human relationships with land and ecosystem that currently dominate within settler society, particularly their tendency to reduce the natural world to a material object available to be owned, traded and exploited as human interests demand. Coulthard explains that although the material value of land is certainly appreciated in traditional Indigenous frameworks, this is embedded within a broader ethical order. Land, he notes, is understood as a complex "field of relationships" rather than merely a material object: it constitutes "a way of knowing, of experiencing and relating to the world and with others" and "human beings are not the only constituent believed to embody spirit or agency" within this system (2014: 61). Rather, people hold certain obligations to the land, water, flora and fauna in much the same way as they do

with other people, and meeting these obligations is crucial to sustaining a reciprocal relationship in which the basis of human survival and flourishment is provided in return (Corntassel, 2012). Resurgence places strong emphasis on reconnecting with land and ecosystem on these bases and asserts the capacity to maintain these relationships indefinitely into the future as a crucial aspect of any terms of coexistence.

Appreciating the contingency that surrounds prevailing norms and assumptions concerning land and ecosystem is thus crucial to overcoming obstacles to reciprocal dialogue. Whether future political arrangements are to be based on clear geographical and jurisdictional delineations or on more complex and fluid models of co-governance, there will inevitably be shared challenges and dilemmas as well as opportunities and action (or inaction) with significant consequences for each party. If a basis is to be found for pursuing mutually agreeable solutions to being on and living from the land, and taking advantage of the varied opportunities for human flourishment it offers, an openness to the contingency of present normative frameworks and a willingness to explore possibilities beyond them appears essential.

Political economy

A crucial part of establishing compatible ways of being on the land must be an accompanying problematization of the capitalist economic frame that presently occupies settler imaginaries. Imperatives of capitalist accumulation and development have played a pivotal role in the history of Canadian colonialism (as they have elsewhere) and the prevalence of capitalism as an organizing framework of thought, action and possibility remains a key site of struggle for the resurgence movement (Alfred, 2009a, 2009b; Corntassel, 2012; Coulthard, 2007, 2014; Simpson 2011). The historical and ongoing entanglement of capitalism and colonialism is such that the two often appear inextricably entwined and even as internally connected. Resurgence counsels Indigenous communities to reject the incentive and opportunity structure of the capitalist political economy and commit to rebuilding independent and sustainable land-based economies in their struggles to decolonize.

If movement towards reciprocal dialogue on decolonization and future coexistence is to be possible, the hold of the prevailing economic frame must be significantly loosened. In the absence of this, there is potential for entrenched capitalist interests to corrupt and derail otherwise good-faith efforts to work out suitable models of political coexistence and compatible ways of being on the land. While it is unrealistic to expect even those sections of settler society thoroughly committed to decolonization to fully leave behind capitalist imaginaries—or even to fully appreciate what this entails—a basic openness to the contested status of the political economy

and its entanglement with colonial injustice does seem to be a necessary starting point for moving towards reciprocal dialogue on decolonization. From there, possibilities for alternative economic models better suited to and reflecting a decolonized (or decolonizing) world might be collaboratively explored.

Language

Underpinning each of the preceding areas is a need to critically evaluate, test, stretch and, where necessary, step outside of the extant linguistic worlds of the prevailing social order. The rejuvenation of Indigenous languages is identified by thinkers of resurgence as crucial to the decolonization process. The pressures and violences of Canadian colonialism have greatly perpetuated Indigenous language loss. As Alfred observes:

> extreme and hostile racist aggression by white people, social degradation, and forced assimilation, combined with the construction of economic opportunities predicated on speaking European languages, meant that it was a reasonable decision to abandon Onkwehonwe languages and adopt the colonizers' languages. (2009b: 247)

The importance of language, it is argued, is that it provides a gateway to knowledge, ethical orders, values, and concepts embedded in traditional frameworks which can offer support and guidance to communities attempting to construct decolonized social futures. In this sense, rejuvenating Indigenous languages is considered important not simply as a mode of resistance but also because doing so holds potential for discovering alternative "framework[s] for defining the conduct of a good life and a notion of justice between peoples" (246).

If members of settler society are to find themselves better situated to pursue reciprocal dialogue with Indigenous peoples, an aversion to simply imposing familiar linguistic frames seems important. In part, this is about avoiding simple replication of colonial assaults on Indigenous languages, which always also constitute broader assaults on culture and being. But it is also because there is potential value in pursuing conversation between linguistic worlds, and perhaps even collaboratively constructing new ones. If language operates, as Alfred (246) suggests, as a repository of particular understandings, concepts and patterns of knowledge that shape the way in which people see the world and reconstruct it through their interactions, then unsettling existing norms at this level might prove crucial to moving towards grounds on which new, decolonized models of coexistence can be thought and articulated.

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The preceding is intended merely as a kind of preliminary mapping of the ideational terrain that the resurgence movement problematizes and

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contests, and which the engagements it fosters steer towards. The importance of this is that it both clarifies some of the major obstacles to reciprocity identified by the resurgence movement and offers orientation to settlers seeking further engagement. While perhaps operating at a relatively high level of abstraction as a result of being drawn primarily from scholarly discourses of resurgence, this mapping nevertheless speaks also to the kinds of challenges arising in and through engagements of an "everyday" and local kind. These features of the prevailing normative-discursive environment are challenged in myriad ways, whether in the form of direct critique or the simple demonstration of alternative ways of being. Exposing and destabilizing norms and values in each of these areas is, it appears, necessary if the potential to move towards renewed dialogue on justice and decolonization is to be realized.

It must be underlined, though, that none of what I have said here is intended to imply that members of settler society must be prepared to simply abandon current norms, values and beliefs in all respects, or that they ought to uncritically accept Indigenous alternatives in their place. Such a position would not only be clearly unrealistic, it would also, in my view, mark a serious misreading of the motivations behind resurgence's drive for engagement. That drive, to paraphrase Alfred, is towards provoking reflection and motivating people to creatively confront the forces that currently obstruct progress towards a renewed relationship between Indigenous and settler peoples. The point, as such, is to cultivate ethics of openness, sensitivity and responsiveness that would enable a transformative and collaborative politics of decolonization, not to simply invert existing normative hierarchies. Undoubtedly there will be hard lines involved in some respects. A particularly notable one, for instance, is likely to surround the capitalist political economy, which is generally regarded within the resurgence bracket as fundamentally antithetical to decolonization and Indigenous self-determination. But the process of unsettling dominant norms and values that resurgence currently drives for is just that, about *unsettling* them, demonstrating their essential contingency and the experiences of harm they produce or exacerbate. It asks, or invites, members of settler society to participate in a process of transforming the collective social world so as to overcome these harms and open up possibilities for forms of coexistence based on mutual recognition and non-domination. It does not ask them to reject everything that is socially, culturally and historically distinct about settler society or to assimilate to a new social order structured exclusively around Indigenous normativities. The absurdity of such an inversion of colonial logic and history should be clear, as should the paranoia that such suppositions signal (or aim to ferment). The point, to repeat, is to unsettle with the aim of cultivating ethics of openness, sensitivity and responsiveness, each of which is essential if a genuine process of decolonization and renewal of Indigenous-settler relationships is to be cultivated. My aim in mapping this contested terrain here, accordingly, has not been to try to

draw premature conclusions on positions that will need to be adopted but merely to indicate where attentions might fruitfully be directed and where greater openness and responsiveness seems to be needed most.

Conclusion

The resurgence movement is characterized, I have argued, by a tension between drives for disengagement and engagement in respect of settler society. And while it is the former that is most vividly apparent given present circumstances, the latter can be understood as equally important to the movement's longer-term objectives. I have attempted here to demonstrate both sides and to consider the ways in which they are connected. I have done so with the intention of emulating the same drive for engagement I find within resurgence, and thus contributing to the task of opening possibilities for the emergence of a collaborative politics of decolonization.

It seems appropriate on this subject, however, to underline the fact that even the kind of renewed dialogue that has been the background aim here—and which presently seems itself such a long way off—is far from identical with the actual condition or state of decolonization. As Tuck and Yang put it, decolonization cannot be reduced merely to a "metaphor for other things we want to do to improve our societies" (2012: 1). Rather, it carries distinctive historical and political content, requiring profound material changes to the Canadian landscape including (but not limited to) rematriation of stolen and other illegitimately appropriated lands and waters; substantial reparations for injustices inflicted and associated patterns of harm and suffering; and recognition and reinstatement of self-determining Indigenous political authority and legal jurisdiction. To strip the term of this radical meaning can only be to support interests of continued colonial domination. Resurgence attempts to move towards a politics committed to, and potentially capable of, such transformation. But even success in this regard marks merely a step slightly farther along the path towards decolonization, not its realization.

Members of settler society should be under no illusions in this regard as (or if) they take up opportunities for engagement extended through resurgence. To participate in a process of unsettling norms and exploring alternatives does not automatically render oneself any less complicit in perpetuating colonial injustice, and it emphatically does not render the experience of such injustice any less acute or real. It can, however, better demonstrate a commitment to tackling the complexities involved in decolonizing the Canadian landscape.

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