

Mutual Futures: A Conversation Between Krishnamurti and Deloria

Adrian M. Downey

Abstract

In this article, the author offers a reading of selected works by Jiddu Krishnamurti and Vine Deloria Jr., discussing their intersections and tensions. Both Krishnamurti and Deloria were public intellectuals fundamentally concerned with human liberation, but they approached that liberation in ways that might be perceived as mutually exclusive. This perceived mutual exclusivity, however, is often based in readings of Indigenous sovereignty as a project of recognition by settler states rather than as a project of refusing those same settler states. When sovereignty is understood as emanating from a relational Indigenous worldview, there is alignment within the thinking of Krishnamurti and Deloria and, more broadly, the possibility for a future of mutuality between Indigenous and diasporic peoples.

Keywords: Jiddu Krishnamurti; Vine Deloria Jr.; Public Intellectuals; Indigenous Worldviews; Sovereignty; Social Change.

Diasporic and Indigenous Co-Resistance

Jiddu Krishnamurti, the Indian-born spiritual philosopher to whose thinking this special issue is devoted, can be seen as a public intellectual. As a public intellectual, however, he was unique. He was not concerned with a particular social issue, did not call specific governments or individuals to account, nor did he ever seem angered by the state of the world (and perhaps there is a lesson in that). He was sometimes frustrated, but it never came from a place of anger, and this may have been because of the scope of his inquiry. Rather than dealing in any specific manifestations of oppression within the modern world, Krishnamurti tackled the roots of oppression within human consciousness. Within this scope of inquiry, Krishnamurti exhibited more of the qualities associated with public intellectuals. He was passionate about his cause—the liberation of human consciousness—taught relentlessly on the topic, and he was always willing to engage debate and dialogue around the issue. Indeed, dialogue was central to his work as a public intellectual, engaging with physicist David Bohm, philosopher Iris Murdoch, and the inventor of the polio vaccine, Jonas Salk, among others (Krishnamurti, 1996; Krishnamurti & Bohm, 1985). These dialogues were one of the key ways through which Krishnamurti shared his message with the wider world—one of the ways in which his intellectual and spiritual work was made public.

One absence from the diversity of perspectives with which Krishnamurti engaged during his lifetime was the North American Indigenous community. There are few references to Indigenous people throughout Krishnamurti's work, and he certainly never publicly engaged in dialogue with Indigenous community members. That absence is at least partially a product of the time in which Krishnamurti was active: in the last 20 years, much more attention has been paid

to Indigenous scholars, Knowledge Keepers, and Elders. Though perhaps unsurprising, this absence is striking, particularly given the affinity some Indigenous folks have expressed for Krishnamurti's writing. For example, Cree/Métis poet Marilyn Dumont writes of her own experiences reading Krishnamurti and the connections she encountered:

I even quit high school after reading *Education and the Significance of Life* by Jiddu Krishnamurti, who regarded life and others in a way that I could recognize from my own Indigenous life of growing up on the land in part Cree language, part English language. (Dumont in Dumont and Vermette, 2019, p. 70)

Likewise, several Indigenous academics have expressed resonances between Krishnamurti's thinking, or those who interpret it (i.e., Kumar, 2013), and Indigenous worldviews (e.g., Obed, 2022).ⁱ

In some ways, the absence of dialogue between Krishnamurti and Indigenous thinkers can be read as an extension of the wider phenomenon of alienation between Indigenous and diasporicⁱⁱ communities (Chung, 2012; Gyepi-Garbrah et al., 2014). Within settler colonial capitalist society and its institutions, such as education, there is often a competitive, mutually exclusive language ascribed to diasporic and Indigenous oppression (Coleman, 2016). Even though these systems of oppression work on both Indigenous and diasporic peoples—though admittedly in different ways—solidarity and dialogue exist in isolated, usually urban (Gyepi-Garbrah et al., 2014), instances rather than as a conceptual norm. There are, of course, folks trying to change that. For example, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2017), a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg writer and scholar, has articulated the need for constellations of co-resistance against these oppressive and competitive logics of the settler state. This co-resistance decenters the need

for white settler allyship, instead advocating a shared resistance among marginalized peoples to the macro-level structures of oppression.

Many others have contributed to the call for more dialogue between Indigenous and diasporic peoples (e.g., Coleman, 2016; Khan & Cottrell, 2017; Lawrence & Dua, 2005). The current paper is an engagement with that larger call for solidarity, and it seeks to frame a future of mutuality through intimate relationships with sovereign, sentient land. To do this, I draw Krishnamurti's thinking into conversation with that of Vine Deloria Jr. Deloria was a member of the Standing Rock Sioux Nation, a theologian, a lawyer, and perhaps the most well-known Indigenous author of his generation. Like Krishnamurti, he can be read as a public, though reluctant, intellectual (Wilkins, 2012). Beginning his career as a member of the American Indian Movement of the 1960s and 70s, Deloria was consistently engaged with the politics of Indigenous North America (Wilkins, 2018). However, in a number of works he also considered the foundations of Indigenous thought, Indigenous spirituality, and Indigenous education. In all these things, there is a stimulating conversation to be had with Krishnamurti.

I begin the conversation between Krishnamurti and Deloria by briefly characterizing the general thinking of both. I then move on to highlight several overlaps and key differences in their thinking through the context of sovereigntyⁱⁱⁱ—a notion core to Deloria's thinking and Indigenous studies more broadly. The discussion of difference offers some insight into the larger conversation between diasporic and Indigenous peoples. I then tie this consideration of Indigenous and diasporic peoples into a discussion of both Deloria and Krishnamurti's thinking about education. I conclude this paper by suggesting that there is a futurity in intimate relationships with land, a futurity of mutuality.

Krishnamurti and The Problem of Self

Within the context of this special issue, Krishnamurti needs no introduction. His life story is unique and interesting, but fairly straight forward. He was selected at an early age to be a leader within the International Theosophical Society, was educated in England, and eventually broke with the theosophic movement, instead focusing on sharing his own teachings. Krishnamurti's legacy is expansive in that, since his passing, schools, journals, and scholars have devoted themselves to the methods and content of his inquiry (e.g., Krishnamurti, 1986).

Krishnamurti is fundamentally concerned with freedom and human nature. True freedom, for Krishnamurti, comes through internal change—it is freedom from conditioning, freedom from orthodoxy, and freedom from comparative and competitive ideological measurements of the self compared to others. This idea of internal change leading to outward societal change is a contentious one, with many contemporary social theorists arguing it as a sort of privileged navel gazing. “What of the material circumstance of oppression?” they might ask—to which Krishnamurti (1953) might respond

systems, whether educational or political, are not changed mysteriously; they are transformed when there is a fundamental change in ourselves. The individual is of first importance, not the system; and as long as the individual does not understand the total process to himself [*sic*], no system, whether of the left or of the right, can bring order and peace to the world. (p. 16)

Krishnamurti's vision of societal change, then, is through individual liberation from the problems and conflicts of the self. Those conflicts, as alluded to above, emerge from the fragmented understandings bought and sold in western education (Krishnamurti, 1953). Students are invited into school systems largely with the promise of better career prospects—however deceitful that notion might be (Saul, 2021)—and given a technical training toward their imagined

future of economic stability. In the process of that career training, they gain specialty, but they lose themselves. They become experts in one aspect of human experience while losing touch with the whole process of life. In this way, Krishnamurti is known as a holistic educator—someone intimately taken with the idea of integration and teaching the whole child as well as the whole experience of human existence, rather than its fragmented parts.

Social conditioning is one of the major sources of inner turmoil according to Krishnamurti's thinking (i.e., Krishnamurti, 1963). As people grow up in a particular society, images of that society's ideals are tacitly passed on. The ideal of the good worker in western society, for example, might include elements of the protestant work ethic and the willingness to put one's work above one's family, or even one's own bodily wellness (e.g., Downey, 2021; Weeks, 2011). The ideal is abstract and can never be actualized within the world. As human beings compare ourselves over and over to the abstract ideal, we constantly find ourselves inadequate. This creates negative affect—anger, frustration, fear. This negative affect is never part of the ideals toward which we strive. Thus, a cycle of negativity emerges, creating a psychological and emotional cloud around the actual issue and making it more difficult to discern from where this negativity originates (see Krishnamurti 1953; 1954; see also Kumar, 2013).

Krishnamurti's answer for this negativity is to be aware of *what is*. To get beyond the cloud of negative affect, one inquires deeply. If one feels anger, one should sit with one's anger and understand from where it emerges. Anger may be only a symptom of a deep fear of not living up to one's ideals. This is not a simple process—and it *is* a process, not an event. Inquiry is a continuous act, an ongoing journey, as life itself is an unfolding journey. True education for Krishnamurti is found through integration and self-understanding (Krishnamurti, 1986). Without

self-understanding, there cannot be integration. Some Indigenous thinkers also emphasize self-understanding, often through the idea of a self-in-relation (e.g., Graveline, 1998; Styres, 2017) where the relations through which one understands oneself are not just human, but also animal, plant, Earth, and sky. Among the earliest articulations of this perspective was Deloria's (1994) emphasis around the power of place.

Deloria and The Power of Place

Deloria's writing is often impressive in its interdisciplinarity, drawing together fields as diverse as law, theology, philosophy, and science. While some of his work has received criticism from orthodox academia—particularly his willingness to entertain and engage with non-dominant views of science—his writing is considered foundational in Indigenous studies in North America (Wilkins, 2006, 2018). To attempt to engage with all Deloria's writing is far beyond the scope of this paper. Indeed, to tackle even what Lumbee scholar David E. Wilkins (2006, 2012) refers to as the Delorian trilogy of ideas—tribal sovereignty, self-determination, and place and space—is a rather substantial undertaking. This paper, while touching on all three of those ideas, focuses most explicitly on Deloria's thinking on place and space and the understandings of sovereignty emergent from that thinking.

Deloria's intellectual endeavour was ultimately aimed toward the liberation of Indigenous people in North America. He was particularly focused on the laws, policies, and dispositions of the various governments of the United States toward Indigenous people. In a recent biography, Wilkins (2018) details the trajectory of Deloria's intellectual career as one engaged with legal decisions and policy. Wilkins suggests that nearly every text Deloria wrote contained scathing review of specific policy and legal decisions related to Indigenous peoples in the United States, as well as recommendations for how those policies should be changed. The specificity of

Deloria's intellectual work is worth remembering in the current conversation, as it showcases a fundamental difference of scope between Deloria's project and Krishnamurti's. Where Krishnamurti was concerned with liberation at the level of the self and human liberation, Deloria was concerned with the liberation of Indigenous peoples as a collective from what today would be considered the endemic nature of settler colonialism in western society (Brayboy, 2005).

His legal and policy work, however, always emerged from a deeply-rooted understanding of Indigenous knowledges.^{iv} As alluded to above, one of the biggest contributions Deloria made to Indigenous studies was to articulate in writing what many Indigenous peoples always knew—that there was a fundamental difference between western ways of knowing and Indigenous ones, a difference between a historical or temporal view and a place-based or spatial view of the world. This was spelled out most carefully in *God is Red* (1994), original published in 1973.

In *God is Red*, Deloria is concerned with religion, particularly the differences between Christianity and Indigenous spiritualities. Christianity, Deloria suggests, maintains a linear view of time that is intimately linked to its theological assumptions. The line of progression begins with the creation, extends through the Garden of Eden and the life of Jesus Christ, before ultimately culminating in His return. Deloria further argues that beyond biblical history, popular theological interpretation tends to place western societal progress in the domain of divine temporality, particularly in America. Along with this historical view of the world, and the accompanying notion of societal progress—which has been critiqued by many curriculum theorists (e.g., Downey, 2020; Egan, 2003; Kumar, 2013)—Deloria also highlights Christianity as taking a mechanical view of the natural world. Deloria traced this mechanical view through Christian history, showcasing its roots in early biblical mythology. This mechanical view of the world—where nature is seen as a commodity to be dominated, transformed, and used by human

beings—has clear manifestations in North America today: pipelines, oil spills, and overfishing to name a few (LaDuke, 2020).

These two interrelated points—the temporal scope of Christian worldview and the mechanistic view of the natural world it promotes—are contrasted by Deloria with North American Indigenous spiritualities.^v According to Deloria, Indigenous spiritualities are spatial rather than temporal; they are based around specific places that maintain spiritual power and with which relationships were/are built over the course of many generations. In many Indigenous stories, for example, where something happened matters infinitely more than when it happened. Indeed, writing by Indigenous scholars since Deloria’s passing has often showcased the profoundly interconnected relationships between story, place, and power within Indigenous worldviews (e.g., Archibald, 2008; Styres, 2017; see also Stonechild, 2016, 2020). Indigenous spiritualities do not view places as inanimate, but rather as alive, sentient, and sovereign^{vi} (Deloria, 1994). For Deloria, the notion that place is alive leads into the central premise of *God is Red*—that place affects human thought, and that in North America, the Land^{vii} demands Indigenous spiritualities. North American Indigenous spiritualities are often characterized as having profound relationships with the natural world or what some well-known authors articulate as professing a “sacred ecology” (Cajete, 1994); in *God is Red*, Deloria articulates the logical, spiritual, and practical foundation of sacred ecology in a spatial understanding of the world. In that, Deloria has been highly influential in Indigenous studies.

Another idea in *God is Red* significant to the current conversation is Deloria’s characterization of Indigenous spiritualities, and the view of human personality they engage, as being communal rather than individualistic. While authors in the last 30 years have often pointed to the foundations of western individualism in the liberal legal tradition (e.g., Razack, 1998),

Deloria suggests that western individualism is a product of the protestant emphasis on a personal relationship with God. Regardless of its foundation, individuality is clearly a cornerstone of western society. Deloria contrasted this with Indigenous communal mentality, in which the individual was essentially defined by their role within community—a notion I will discuss further later. While the absence of self may seem like a radical departure from the project of modern education, so concerned with self-esteem, there are clear resonances here with Krishnamurti's thinking—namely that self is not something to be given more esteem, but rather something that ought to be better understood and ultimately given away (see Kumar & Downey, 2018).

Deloria continued the project of *God is Red* in a less widely read text called *The Metaphysics of Modern Existence* (2012), originally published in 1979. There, rather than continuing the comparative analysis of Christianity and Indigenous religions, Deloria works at synthesizing the insights from Indigenous spiritualities and western science and philosophy. This work shows a facet of Deloria's thinking that often goes under appreciated: he was not simply interested in critique for its own sake, but rather sought the integration of human knowledges for the benefit of Indigenous peoples first and foremost, but all human and non-human life as well (Wilkins, 2012). In this there are similarities with Krishnamurti, who was disinterested in siloed academic knowledge for its own sake, but rather sought the integration of the whole process of human life. Beyond *Metaphysics*, Deloria also continued to write about Indigenous spiritualities, but *God is Red* remains the most read of his texts on the subject and, thus, serves as the foundation for the subsequent discussion.

The two other ideas in the Delorian trilogy (Wilkins, 2006)—sovereignty and self-determination—emanate from this primacy of place and land to Indigenous peoples. As

Indigenous Hawaiian scholar Manulani Meyer (2008) writes “Indigenous people are all about place. Land/*aina*, defined as ‘that which feeds,’ is the everything to our sense of love, joy, and nourishment. Land is our mother. *This is not a metaphor*” (p. 219). Deloria acknowledged this, and since his passing others have continued to shape these concepts, among others.^{viii} From that foundational relationship with land emerges the rights and responsibilities of relationship with that land. As I will suggest below, this conceptualization of sovereignty as rooted in and emergent from relationships with land is central to conceptualizing a futurity of mutuality and solidarity between diasporic and Indigenous peoples.

Convergences and Divergences: Sovereignty and Humanism

In any conversation or dialogue, there are bound to be points of contention. Such is clearly the case in the current context. The most obvious point of dispute would be Krishnamurti’s complete dismissal of nationalism as a form of division built up from the root of hierarchical relationships. This is a problem for Deloria, who argued for Indigenous nationalism and sovereignty for Indigenous communities (Wilkins, 2018). Indeed, it is hard to make an argument against Indigenous sovereignty today, and I certainly would not be interested in doing so. Krishnamurti may be right that nation states as envisioned and enacted in the western world have consistently led to divisions among human populations, class stratification, war, and oppression, but the critique of humanism by anti-colonial thinkers holds some weight here. Krishnamurti, who is clearly a kind of humanist in the assertions that there is a universal human nature, is keen to acknowledge oppression but frames it as a universal experience of suffering rather than a specific process. Anti-colonial thinkers have often critiqued this universal scope as ignoring the unique social experiences of different human beings—and particularly the history of power imbalances within colonial relationships (e.g., Mignolo & Walsh, 2018). To those who

say, ‘we are all human’ the critique comes ‘but what of us who were never deemed human?’ (Braidotti, 2013).

Within the specific context of Indigenous sovereignty, the point is well taken. It may be accurate for Krishnamurti to say that nationalism creates division between people of the world, but Indigenous people whose land—the very essence of who they are—has systemically been taken away from them and occupied by others, have every right to seek the return of that which was, and continues to be, stolen. If as Krishnamurti (1953) says, “we must be free, not at the end, but at the beginning” (p. 61), for Indigenous nations this demands the repatriation of land and the sovereign rights to that land (Tuck & Yang, 2012).

The incommensurability of this project of repatriation (or rematriation; see Tuck, 2011) is uncomfortable for many folks, and there are some voices who are critical of the notion of Indigenous sovereignty as deleterious to the project of racialized emancipation by way of its tacit validation of settler colonial, white supremacist, capitalist nationalism (Sexton, 2014; Wilderson, 2010 as cited in Day, 2015). According to Iyko Day (2015), however, those voices see Indigenous sovereignty as a project seeking state recognition rather than as an active refusal of the state, and although Deloria might not have used the terminology of refusal, the generation inspired by him has (e.g., Coulthard, 2014, Simpson, 2007; Tuck & Yang, 2014). Generally, Indigenous nations are not seeking sovereignty on the terms of other nations but, as I explain below, on their own terms (Coulthard, 2014).

Sovereignty has generally been framed in the western concept of nationhood and/or the nation state, but many Indigenous worldviews frame the concept differently (Simpson, 2011)—in terms of kinship, treaty, and relationship rather than hierarchy and control. Indeed, if one takes Deloria’s discussion of “tribal religions” in *God is Red* as representative of Indigenous

worldviews broadly, one is convinced of the myriad ways in which Indigenous worldviews fundamentally differ from western ones. In this, some commonalities between Indigenous thought and Krishnamurti's writing are made clear. Specifically, the idea of relationship is central to both. Krishnamurti (1953) says that

relationship is a mirror in which the self and all its activities can be seen; and it is only when the ways of the self are understood in the reactions of relationship that there is creative release from the self. (p. 55)

In my reading, this passage showcases two things. First, it suggests that unlike the enlightened thinkers of certain religious groups, Krishnamurti seems disinterested in removing oneself from worldly concerns to achieve enlightenment. He is seeking out—or perhaps simply accepting—the conflict of relationship in order to discover the truth of the conflicts within the self. Second, Krishnamurti seems disinterested in the simple, well-defined, hierarchical relationships of many societies, but especially the west. Rather, Krishnamurti sees the complexity and inherent conflict of all relationships, and entering into that conflict offers an avenue to better understand ourselves.

In this, there is some similarity with Indigenous worldviews. As alluded to above, Deloria makes the point that individualism, as known in the western sense, is rather ludicrous to Indigenous peoples, as fundamentally “there is no salvation in tribal religions apart from the continuance of the tribe itself” (1994, p. 194). Deloria goes on to suggest that this difference from western worldviews is widely observable and quotes Harvey Cox as saying “Tribal man [*sic*] is hardly a personal ‘self’ in our modern sense of the word. He [*sic*] does not so much live in a tribe; a tribe lives in him [*sic*]. He [*sic*] is the tribe’s subjective expression” (Cox, 1965, p. 30 as cited in Deloria, 1994, p. 195). Cox was, of course, making the point that Indigenous

people were somehow less-than White European settlers because of this collectivism, but like many white settlers interpreting Indigenous thinking from the outside, Cox completely missed the point. Deloria recontextualizes this quote and suggests that for many Indigenous peoples, human personality was not as much an individual affair as it was an extension of the relationship among an Indigenous community, and between the Indigenous community and the specific place in which they had lived for generations (see also Deloria & Wildcat, 2001). The point of convergence here is around relationship as an avenue for self-understanding and perhaps even the dissolution of the individual self in favour of a being-in-relation. It is this being-in-relation that I read as a form of, or precursor to, “enlightenment” both in Krishnamurti’s thinking and Deloria’s description of Indigenous worldviews. As suggested above, Indigenous authors have also commented on this relational state of being as the foundation of Indigenous worldviews (e.g., Archibald, 2008; Cajete, 1994; Ermine, 2007; Graveline, 1998; Stonechild, 2016; Styres, 2017; Wilson, 2008).

To return to the point about sovereignty and nationalism, this emphasis on relationality absent of hierarchy as a defining aspect of Indigenous worldview suggests that the concept of sovereignty understood within Indigenous worldviews is based on relationality and kinship rather than hierarchy and domination. Though this language is perhaps a more recent development in Indigenous studies, there are certainly hints of this idea in Deloria’s writing. For example, he writes that for Indigenous people, “religion is not conceived as a personal relationship between the deity and each individual. It is rather a covenant between a particular god and a particular community” (1994, p. 194) and continues later that “political activity and religious activity are barely distinguishable” (p. 194).

This description resonates with the understanding of treaty presented by Mi'kmaw scholar Fred Metallic (2016) from the community of Listuguj. Treaties, in a western legal understanding are agreements between two sovereign nations, and while that understanding is vital in the current socio/geo-political context, treaties can be understood as sacred agreements of mutual respect and understanding in a Mi'kmaw worldview (Metallic, 2016). In Metallic's words:

Treaty-making is part of our sacred ordering, and every time a treaty is made we are adding to this order; in essence, we are adding to our extended family. We are all brothers and sisters in Creation. Treaties are covenants to that order and guide us in our relationships. (2016, p. 46)

In this way, the Peace and Friendship Treaties that form the basis of the relationship between the Mi'kmaq Nation and the Canadian Nation (by way of the British Crown)—and which inherently recognize Mi'kmaw sovereignty in Atlantic Canada (Paul, 2022)—offer a framework for understanding sovereignty as an invitation into mutuality and kinship rather than submission to hierarchical dominance. This is a sovereignty, I think, both Krishnamurti and Deloria might support.

While there are doubtlessly other tensions to which I have not attended here, this discussion of sovereignty has provided an opportunity to highlight the significance of relationship to both Krishnamurti and Indigenous worldviews. Furthermore, by referring to Metallic's (2016) understanding of treaty, I have suggested a consonance between Krishnamurti's understanding of relationship and Indigenous worldviews. In that, there is perhaps a common path forward. In this discussion, however, the above critique of Krishnamurti's humanism lingers. There, more recent humanist voices might offer resolution.

Achille Mbembe (2019), for example, recognizes the complexity and pervasiveness of ongoing settler colonial, state, and economic violence while also suggesting a potential in the unified humanity, provided that that humanity operates with what he calls an *ethics of the passerby*. The passerby is not a tourist, nomad, or bohemian, but rather one

who has left, quit his [*sic*] country, lived elsewhere, abroad, in places in which he [*sic*] forges an authentic dwelling, there by tying his [*sic*] fate to those who welcome and recognize their own face in his [*sic*], the face of humanity to come. (p. 187)

Mbembe's formation here has clear resonances with Krihsnamurti's thinking around the dismantling of nationalistic barriers and hierarchies, but Mbembe also speaks of the power and responsibilities of place:

One can inhabit a place...only by allowing oneself to be inhabited by it. Yet inhabiting a place is not the same thing as belonging to this place. Being born in one's country of origin is a mere accident; nevertheless, it does not dissolve the subject of all responsibility. (p.187)

Mbembe (2019), thus, points toward a futurity of mutuality—a future found through authentic connection with place and the people of that place.

Dismantling Competitive Futures

The above discussion of sovereignty and humanism informs the subsequent discussion of education, and specifically the sort of societal future that is envisioned through statements of what education should be. Both Deloria and Krishnamurti have written specifically about education: Deloria in his 2001 book with Daniel Wildcat (Yuchi / Muscogee Nation) *Power and Place*, and Krishnamurti in his 1953 book *Education and the Significance of Life* among others (e.g., Krishnamurti, 1986). Both these texts, in focusing on education, are involved with the task

of envisioning a future. In that way, they are futurities—ways through which possible futures are rendered knowable in the present (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013).

Futurities have recently become influential in Indigenous studies (e.g., Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, 2019) and in the wider literature of critical studies (e.g., Haraway, 2016). Indigenous studies has been particularly focused on the way that settler futurities, such as those tacitly envisioned through Eurocentric education, necessarily displace or erase Indigenous futurities (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). Settler colonialism can be seen as built on three structured antagonisms: White ascension, Black containment, and Indigenous erasure (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015). In order for White settlers to generate economic surplus, they need land and people to work the land. This has meant removing folks from the land (Indigenous erasure) and creating systems of coercive labour (Black containment). While there might be a tendency to think of settler colonialism as historic, it is an ongoing process and continues today through phenomenon like the removal of Indigenous land defenders from their traditional territories, the over-representation of Indigenous people in corrections facilities, and the absence of Indigenous voices from curriculum scholarship, decision making, and implementation (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). In my reading, this formation of settler colonialism denies the tendency toward framing oppression in terms of binaries—black/white, settler/Indigenous, proletariat/bourgeoisie—acknowledging the intersecting, but different, experiences of oppression between diasporic and Indigenous peoples both historically and in the present (see also Day, 2015).^{ix} Settler colonialism, in all its myriad manifestations, places in direct competition the futures of Indigenous people and the futures of settlers. While settler futurity requires the destruction, displacement, and dispossession of Indigenous peoples, Indigenous futures are essentially non-destructive—just as some Indigenous visions of sovereignty are based in kinship,

relationality, and the sacredness of all life. This point matters significantly in education, and specifically for the relationship between Indigenous and diasporic peoples.

In the Indigenous education courses I teach, I often assign texts that present uncompromising visions of decolonization and Indigenous sovereignty (e.g., Tuck & Yang, 2012). When students encounter these texts, they often voice their discomfort; they do not see themselves in these conversations, and that is difficult for them. There is nothing unique about this discomfort nor the students' reactions to it, and my contention is that these reactions result from a reversal of the tacit assumption of a settler futurity. Rather than feeling secure in the fact of their continuance on this land, when presented with a vision of decolonization that challenges that continuance, settlers are left feeling shaken and uprooted—in much the same way that Indigenous folks have felt for the last 500 years. Settler futures are challenged through Indigenous sovereignty, and this causes anxiety.

There is a pedagogical value in the discomfort, and even shame (Peters, 2016), emergent from that anxiety of displacement (Boler, 1999). For Krishnamurti, any emotion can be a call to inquiry—from where does this discomfort emerge, and how can it help me understand myself? Indeed, discomfort and shame can sometimes lead toward a deeper understanding of the social issues at work in producing those affects and, more pressingly, toward an understanding of one's personal implication within those structural oppressions (Ahmed, 2014; Boler, 1999). There is, then, a value in staying with those troubling affects emergent from complacency and complicity with settler colonialism.

However pedagogically and politically significant the anxiety may be, it is ultimately based on a false assumption. Both Deloria and Krishnamurti, as well as a host of other authors (i.e., LaDuke, 2020), agree that the dominant western worldview is destructive, particularly

where the relationship with the natural world is concerned. On the other hand, and as suggested above, many Indigenous worldviews consider all life is sacred (Cajete, 1994; Deloria, 1994). Indigenous futures, then, do not necessitate the absence or destruction of either settlers or diasporic peoples in the same way that settler futures do (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). To consider the subjugation of any form of life, human or otherwise, would be absurd from an Indigenous perspective (Deloria, 1994). Indigenous futures do necessitate sovereignty and the repatriation of land, and that does require the divestment of power and privilege from settler folk, but Indigenous sovereignty is a relational one, built on a foundation of sacred reverence for life—it is a refusal of the hierarchies, dichotomies, and systemic oppressions of western society in favour of something more mature (Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2017).

In a video about the Land Back movement, Mi'kmaw lawyer, professor, and activist Pam Palmater makes the practical possibilities of Indigenous sovereignty clear:

What we should be imagining is what Canada could look like if we started returning so-called Crown Lands back to First Nations. Who would you rather control these enormous areas? Corporations who only see in the land dollar signs over the next financial quarter? Or First Nations who have been taking care of the lands for generations? Instead of getting a permit from the government to destroy the land companies would need a permit from our Nations to responsibly use the land. As the rightful caretakers of the lands, First Nations could insist on sustainable logging, eco-tourism, and responsible development. In place of dams, mines and pipelines, lands returned to First Nations could host solar and wind farms helping power a new post-carbon economy. (Palmater, 2021, para. 17).

The Land Back movement, as one manifestation of sovereignty movements more broadly, is not about displacing settler folks from their homes. It is about reclaiming Crown Land from

occupying colonial governments and honouring the millennia-old treaties with the land-beings (Metallic, 2016) through respect for their autonomy (see Palmater, 2021). The only folks who ought to be made anxious by the idea of Indigenous sovereignty are those who would misuse the land for profit, including governments and the fossil fuel industry among others.

Under settler colonialism, the concerns of diasporic and Indigenous peoples are often framed competitively (Coleman, 2016). Settler colonialism would have it that there is only so much attention offered to social justice issues, and so groups must fight for that attention. This competitive, comparative framing has perhaps resulted in an absence of discussion between diasporic and Indigenous populations (Chung, 2012) and, while there are more and more of these dialogues taking place (e.g., Gyepi-Garbrah et al., 2014; Khan & Pushor, 2023), this silence between marginalized groups has served only the interests of the status quo. Solidarity networks built on a mutual understanding of settler colonialism work to displace this comparative and competitive framing and, thus, the tacit normativity of settler futurities (Simpson, 2017; Simpson & Maynard, 2020). There is a future apart from settler colonialism; it is a future of dialogue, mutual solidarity, and co-resistance between Indigenous and diasporic peoples. It is a future in Indigenous sovereignty and the kinship emanating from it.

Mutuality, Land, and Education

Though the terminology may be different, both Krishnamurti and Deloria were, I think, intimately aware of all that I have just presented, and their thinking about education is the context in which that becomes clear. Krishnamurti and Deloria share a common critique of modern education: that it is largely mechanical, superficial, and incomplete. For Krishnamurti (1953), the mechanical nature of modern education systems and their superficiality stem from the siloing of elements of the human experience into different disciplines, and the mobilization of

those disciplines toward individual career advancement and expertise. This is not true education for Krishnamurti. True education is self-understanding, and it can only come from direct encounter with life as it is, in its entirety. In chapter five of *Education and the Significance of Life*, Krishnamurti discusses the school. There, he puts a great deal of emphasis around the individual nature of true education, critiquing the idea of mass education common in western institutions. Ultimately, Krishnamurti's vision of education is holistic, consensual, and based on relationship, self-understanding, and direct encounters with life: "Education in the true sense is helping the individual to be mature and free, to flower greatly in love and goodness" (Krishnamurti, 1953, p. 23).

For Deloria (2001), the mechanical and incomplete nature of western education stems from metaphysics. Deloria critiques western education as being formed largely by scientific understandings and highlights the ways those scientific understandings fail to integrate certain dimensions of human experience—the spiritual or incorporeal power. According to Deloria, "The teachings of the tribe are almost always more complete, but they are oriented toward a far greater understanding of reality than is scientific knowledge" (Deloria in Deloria & Wildcat, 2001, p. 4). Daniel Wildcat contextualizes Deloria's critique of the foundations of western education, suggesting what the project of Indigenizing education might entail:

Deloria's essays are not primarily about raising standards or improving tests scores; rather they constitute a reasonable call to consider the advantages of building an educational practice on a foundation of American Indian metaphysics that 'is a unified worldview acknowledging a complex totality in the world both physical and spiritual'. (p. 9)

Ultimately, then, Deloria and Wildcat, along with many other Indigenous educators (e.g., Cajete, 1994; Graveline, 1998; Styres, 2017), advocate for a holistic, integrated educational experience rooted in specific local Indigenous knowledges.

Fundamental to this process is developing and maintaining relationships to the personality of specific places. Deloria's formulation of the personality of place discussed above takes on specificity in the context of his writing with Wildcat. He summarizes thus: "Power and place produce personality. This equation simply means that the universe is alive, but also contains within it the very important suggestion that the universe is personal and, therefore, must be approached in a personal way" (p. 23). Deloria goes on to articulate the formation of Indigenous knowledge as a process of building those personal relationships—not just with the human, but with Land. This idea of Indigenous epistemology as rooted in relationship is often articulated by other Indigenous scholars in the context of Indigenous methodologies (e.g., Wilson, 2008). In the context of education, however, I think it encourages an acknowledgement of Land's role as first teacher (Simpson, 2014; Styres, 2017)—the one who teaches how to be human, good relations, and good Ancestors. Land is the foundation of Indigenous understandings of the world, the self, and the cosmos, and as Deloria (2001) suggests "its perceived relationships are always ethical" (p. 27). In this way, Land is the frame through which sovereignty can be understood as relational, treaty can be understood as an invitation to kinship, and futurities can be shaped by mutuality. If there is a place where Krishnamurti and Deloria converge, it is in the need for an integrated, holistic education—an education where students can make sense of themselves, their relationships, and the social forces acting on them. This place, I suggest, is most readily found in the humanizing force of Land. Our task as educators is to seek out personal relationships with the places we live, work, and teach—understand the histories of those places

and connect to their power and personality. From there, self-understanding and integration emerge. From there, kinship emerges. From there, a shared future is possible.

References

- Ahmed, S. (2014). *The cultural politics of emotion* (Second ed.). Edinburgh University Press.
- Archibald, J. (2008). *Indigenous storywork: Educating the heart, mind, body, and spirit*. UBC Press.
- Boler, M. (1999). *Feeling power: Emotions and education*. Routledge.
- Braidotti, R. (2013). *The posthuman*. Polity.
- Brake, J. (2021). Ktaqmkuk. *Maisonneuve*.
<https://maisonneuve.org/article/2021/06/29/ktaqmkuk/>
- Brayboy, B. M. J. (2005). Toward a tribal critical race theory in education. *Urban Review: Issues and Ideas in Public Education*, 37(5), 425-446.
- Cajete, G. (1994). *Look to the mountain: An ecology of indigenous education*. Kivaki Press.
- Chung, M., (2012). *The relationships between racialized immigrants and Indigenous peoples in Canada: A literature review* (master's thesis). University of Winnipeg.
- Coleman, D. (2016). Indigenous place and diaspora space: of literalism and abstraction. *Settler Colonial Studies*, 6(1), 57-76.
- Coulthard, G. S. (2014). *Red skin, white masks: Rejecting the colonial politics of recognition*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Day, I. (2015). Being or nothingness: Indigeneity, antiblackness, and settler colonial critique. *Critical Ethnic Studies*, 1(2), 102-121.
- Deloria, V. (1994). *God is red: A native view of religion*. Fulcrum.
- Deloria, V. (2012), *The metaphysics of modern existence*. Fulcrum.
- Deloria, V., & Wildcat, D. R. (2001). *Power and place: Indian education in America*. Fulcrum.

- Downey, A. (2020). Mourning our losses: Finding response(-ability) within COVID-19. *Antistasis*, 10(3), 1-4.
- Downey, A. (2021). Posthuman embodiments and overuse injuries amid COVID-19. *The Currere Exchange Journal*, 5(1), 13-21.
- Dumont, M., & Vermette, K. (2018). Animating their words. In R. Taylor (Ed.), *What the poets are doing: Canadian poets in conversation* (pp. 69-79). Nightwood Editions.
- Egan, K. (2003). *Getting it wrong from the beginning: Our progressivist inheritance from Herbert Spencer, John Dewey, and Jean Piaget*. Yale University Press.
- Ermine, W. (2007). The ethical space of engagement. *Indigenous LJ*, 6, 193-203.
- Garba, T., & Sorentino, S. M. (2020). Slavery is a metaphor: a critical commentary on eve tuck and k. Wayne yang's "decolonization is not a metaphor". *Antipode*, 52(3), 764-782.
- Goodyear-Ka'ōpua, N. (2019). Indigenous oceanic futures: Challenging settler colonialisms & militarization. In L. T. Smith, E. Tuck, & K. W. Yang (Eds.), *Indigenous and Decolonizing Studies in Education: Mapping the Long View* (pp. 82-102). Routledge.
- Graveline, F. (1998). *Circle works: Transforming eurocentric consciousness*. Fernwood.
- Gyepi-Garbrah, J., Walker, R., & Garcea, J. (2014). Indigeneity, immigrant newcomers and interculturalism in Winnipeg, Canada. *Urban Studies*, 51(9), 1795-1811.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0042098013502826>
- Haraway, D. (2016). *Staying with the trouble: Making kin in the chthulucene*. Duke University Press.
- Khan, M., & Cottrell, M. (2017). Oh Canada, whose home and native land? Negotiating multicultural, Aboriginal and Canadian identity narratives. *Education Matters: The Journal of Teaching and Learning*, 5(1), 1-34.

Khan, M., & Pushor, D. (2023). Signing Up for Multiple Truths: (Re) telling Who we are as Racialized Canadians and Indigenous Peoples in Relation to Each Other. *Critical Education*, 14(2), 65-85.

Krishnamurti, J. (1953). *Education and the significance of life*. Victor Gollancz LTD.

Krishnamurti, J. (1954). *The first and last freedom*. Harper.

Krishnamurti, J. (1986). *Beginnings of Learning*. Penguin Books.

Krishnamurti, J. (1968). *Life ahead*. Theosophical.

Krishnamurti, J. (1996). *Questioning Krishnamurti: J. Krishnamurti in dialogue with leading twentieth century thinkers*, edited by David Skitt. Krishnamurti Foundation Trust.

Krishnamurti, J., & Bohm, D. (1985). *The ending of time*. Harper & Row.

Kumar, A. (2013). *Curriculum as meditative inquiry*. Palgrave MacMillan.

Kumar, A., & Downey, A. (2018). Teaching as meditative inquiry: A dialogic exploration. *Journal of the Canadian Association of Curriculum Studies*, 16(2), 52-75.

Kumar, A., & Downey, A. (2019). Music as meditative inquiry: Dialogic reflections on learning and composing Indian classical music. *Artizein*, 4(1), 98-121.

LaDuke, W. (2020). *To be a water protector: The rise of the Wiindigo slayers*. Fernwood.

Lawrence, B., & Dua, E. (2005). Decolonizing antiracism. *Social Justice*, 32(4), 120-143.

Martínez, D. (2019). ASU professor's book explores the impact of Native American scholar Vine Deloria Jr. *Science@ASU*. <https://news.asu.edu/20191122-asu-professor-book-explores-impact-native-american-scholar-vine-deloria-jr>

Mbembe, A. (2019). *Necropolitics*. Duke University Press.

- Metallic, F. (2016). Treaty and Mi'gmewey. In M. Battiste (ed.), *Living treaties: Narrating Mi'kmaw treaties* (pp. 42-51). Cape Breton University Press.
- Meyer, M. (2008). Indigenous and authentic: Hawaiian epistemology and the triangulation of meaning. In N. Denzin, Y. Lincoln, & L. Smith (Eds.), *Handbook of critical and Indigenous methodologies* (pp. 217-232). Sage.
- Mignolo, W. D., & Walsh, C. E. (2018). *On decoloniality: Concepts, analytics, praxis*. Duke University Press.
- Obed, D. (2022). Synergies between Indigenous ways of knowing and meditative inquiry. In A. Kumar (Ed.), *Engaging with Meditative Inquiry in Teaching, Learning, and Research* (pp. 154-169). Routledge.
- Palmater, P. (2021, June 2). Canada, it's time for land back. *The Breach*.
<https://breachmedia.ca/land-back/>
- Paul, D. (2022). *We were not the savages: Collision between European and Native American civilizations* (4th edition). Fernwood.
- Peters, N. (2016). Learning shame: Colonial narratives as a tool for decolonization. In M. Battiste (Ed.), *Visision a Mi'kmaw Humanities: Indigenizing the Academy* (pp. 149 -164). Cape Breton University Press.
- Razack, S. (1998). *Looking white people in the eye: Gender, race, and culture in courtrooms and classrooms*. University of Toronto Press.
- Saul, R. (2021). Schooling at the doorstep of dystopia: On educating for unsustainable futures. *Journal of Educational Thought/Revue de la Pensée Educative*, 54(1), 19-38.
- Simpson, A. (2007). On ethnographic refusal: Indigeneity, 'voice' and colonial citizenship. *Junctures: the journal for thematic dialogue*, (9), 67-80.

- Simpson, L. B. (2011). *Dancing on our turtle's back: Stories of Nishnaabeg re-creation, resurgence and a new emergence*. ARP books.
- Simpson, L. B. (2014). Land as pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation. *Decolonization: indigeneity, education & society*, 3(3).
- Simpson, L. (2017). *As we have always done: Indigenous freedom through radical resistance*. University of Minnesota Press.
- Simpson, L. B., & Maynard, R. (2020). Towards Black and Indigenous futures on Turtle Island: A conversation. In R. Diverlus (Ed.), *Until we are free: reflections on Black Lives Matter in Canada* (pp.75-94). University of Regina Press.
- Stonechild, B. (2016). *The knowledge seeker: Embracing Indigenous spirituality*. University of Regina Press.
- Stonechild, B. (2020). *Loss of Indigenous Eden: And the fall of spirituality*. University of Regina Press.
- Tuck, E. (2011). Rematriating curriculum studies. *Journal of Curriculum and Pedagogy*, 8(1), 34-37.
- Tuck, E., & Gaztambide-Fernández, R. A. (2013). Curriculum, replacement, and settler futurity. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 29(1), 72-89.
- Tuck, E., & McKenzie, M. (2015). *Place in research: Theory, methodology, and methods*. Routledge.
- Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, education & society*, 1(1).

- Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2014). R-words: Refusing research. In P. Django & M. Winn (eds.), *Humanizing research: Decolonizing qualitative inquiry with youth and communities*, (pp. 223-248). Sage.
- Younging, G. (2018). *Elements of Indigenous style: A guide for writing by and about Indigenous peoples*. Brush Education.
- Weeks, K. (2011). *The problem with work: Feminism, Marxism, antiwork politics, and postwork imaginaries*. Duke University Press.
- Wilkins, D. (2006). Vine Deloria Jr. and Indigenous Americans. *Wicazo Sa Review*, 21(2), 151-155. Retrieved July 2, 2021, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4140273>
- Wilkins, D. (2012). Afterword. In V. Deloria (author), *The metaphysics of modern existence* (pp. 283-291). Fulcrum.
- Wilkins, D. E. (2018). *Red prophet: The punishing intellectualism of Vine Deloria, Jr.* Fulcrum.
- Wilson, S. (2008). *Research is ceremony: Indigenous research methods*. Fernwood.

ⁱ In the past, I included myself in the category of Indigenous academics who find affinity with Krishnamurti (e.g., Kumar & Downey, 2018, 2019), but today my relationship with Indigeneity is more complicated. While my maternal family are members of the Qalipu Mi'kmaq First Nation (QMFN), and I was also a member of QMFN and a status 'Indian' between 2012 and 2018, in 2018 I was removed from QMFN's founding members list and the Federal Indian Registry because of a political process well beyond the scope of this paper to discuss. Status does not, in and of itself, prove an Indigenous identity, and losing it doesn't mean someone isn't Indigenous, but some folks have questioned whether the formation of QMFN worked toward Mi'kmaw sovereignty—specifically the sovereign right to determine citizenship—in the first place (Brake, 2021). This has given me pause, personally and professionally.

ⁱⁱ In this paper, I use “diasporic” in the broadest possible sense, encompassing the many communities who have come to North America without bringing a claim of sovereignty with them. I consider Krishnamurti a diasporic voice by virtue of his extended, though intermittent, tenure in California.

ⁱⁱⁱ The term “sovereignty” is understood differently in western and Indigenous contexts. These differences become clear throughout the paper. Generally speaking, sovereignty ought to be understood as referring to the authority of a state (i.e., an Indigenous nation) to govern itself. In

North American Indigenous communities, that authority has been under constant assault for the past 500 years (e.g., Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2017). Colonial officials have often used the absence of permanent settlement in Indigenous societies to justify the erasure of an Indigenous nation's sovereignty, but as Leanne Simpson points out in her own nation's context:

“Nishnaabeg concepts of ‘nation’ and ‘sovereignty’ are much different than modern constructs, but they do exist and were expressed” (2011, p. 89). The same might be said for many Indigenous communities in North America.

^{iv} While Deloria often characterized Indigenous beliefs and worldviews with some degree of universality, modern Indigenous scholarship has tended to avoid such “pan-Indigenous” framings, preferring a more located articulation of particular communities’ beliefs and practices. In this paper, I try to name specific communities where possible and emphasize the plurality of Indigenous knowledges and spiritualities, but I also follow Deloria’s framing where needed.

^v Deloria uses the phrase “tribal religions”. I avoid that phrasing to reflect more current terminology (see Younging, 2018).

^{vi} By saying that land (“place” in Deloria’s terms) is sovereign, I mean to recognize the inherent rights of the Earth as a polity. This formulation is my own, though I do think it is implicit in Deloria’s writing.

^{vii} What Deloria called place, many Indigenous scholars today refer to as land or Land, the latter referring to the onto-epistemic underpinnings of Indigenous thought and the former the specific territories of Indigenous people (Styres, 2017).

^{viii} David Martínez (2019), for example, points out that Deloria’s thinking can be built upon: “Deloria was good at articulating the inherent rights of tribes as sovereign nations...but he didn't take that notion into areas like gender relations. The Second Wave Feminist movement was going on during the same time he first appeared, but you don't see any of that in his writing. As scholars today, we can expand by looking at Native women leaders of the time, and we can ask ourselves how gender relations play into the larger conversation about tribal self-determination” (para. 25).

^{ix} This view is not without its critiques. For example, Garba and Sorentino (2020) suggest that the triad of structural antagonisms behind settler colonialism often collapse into a settler-Indigenous binary without a robust treatment of Black oppression. Furthermore, the triad erases African Indigeneity, limiting Indigeneity to those whose land is occupied rather than those who were taken from their lands.