CANADA'S RECONCILIATION FANTASY

AN ANALYSIS OF STATE-CENTRED RECONCILIATION
WITH HELP FROM DISCOURSE ON JAPANESE CANADIANS' CAMPAIGN FOR REGRESS

SNAPSHOT
A BRIEF BACKGROUND OF GOVERNMENT APOLOGIES AND RECOGNITIONS

CONSTITUTION ACT, 1982

The Constitution Act of 1982 included section 35 that legally recognized and affirmed the inherent rights of First Nations, Métis and Inuit peoples.

RCAP

The Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples was established in 1991 to address the histories and realites of Indigenous-settler relations in Canada. Published in 1996, the report offers a vision of reconciliation between Aboriginal peoples and Canada based on the core principles of "mutual recognition, mutual respect, sharing and mutual responsibility (Coulthard, 118).

TRC

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission was established in 2008 as a result of the Residential Schools Settlement Agreement. The TRC sought to address the the devastating legacies of residential schools (Corntassel, Chaw-win-is, & T'lakwadzi,140). Published in 2015, the TRC's mandate states "there is an emerging and compelling desire to put the events of the past behind us so that we can works towards a stronger and healthier future" (Corntassel, Chaw-win-is, & T'lakwadzi,144)

OFFICIAL RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL APOLOGY

On June 11, 2008 then Prime Minister, Stephen Harper, and his conservative government issued an official apology to Indigenous survivors of the Residential School System. It was characterized as the first step on the road to reconciliation (Coulthard, 105).

JAPANESE CANADIANS REDRESS

The National Association of Japanese Canadians (NAJC) campaigned in the 1980s for redress from the Canadian government for the wrongful interment of Japanese-Canadians during the Second World War. In 1988, Brian Mulroney's conservative government gave an official acknowledgement of the human rights violations perpetuated against Japanese Canadians and announced financial compensation.

WHY DO THESE MATTER? THE PERSISTENT CHARACTER OF SETTLER-COLONIALISM

The recognitions and apologies regarding Indigenous peoples are important because they are often used as symbols in Canada to portray the notion that Indigenous-settler relations have entered a new era of reconciliation. However, these recognitions and apologies are framed within a strategic reductive narrative that negates the ongoing implications and systems of colonialism by situating the events recognized and apologized for in the past. In doing so, the framework of reconciliation is one that serves the settler-state rather than Indigenous peoples.

COLONIALISM A STRUCTURE, NOT AN EVENT

A core problem with the reconciliation fantasy in settler Canada is the idea that colonialism is an event instead of a structure (Coulthard, 125). The characterization of colonialism as a historical event works to erase the ongoing structures of colonialism in settler Canada. By not addressing these structures, reconciliation as it is framed now cannot bring Indigenous-settler relations into a renewed era. Instead, the settler state's framework of reconciliation continues to perpetuate the dispossession of Indigenous peoples by not acknowledging and deconstructing the structures of colonialism (Coulthard, 120) .
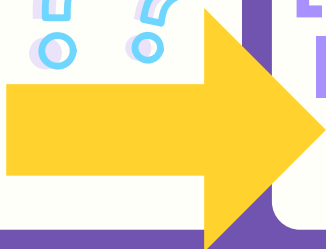
WHAT IS THE FANTASY? ??? THE NOTION OF A NEW ERA OF MUTUAL RESPECT IN INDIGENOUS-SETTLER RELATIONS

WHAT IS STATE CENTRED LANGUAGE

The framing of reconciliation, apologies, and recognitions in settler Canada is constrcuted by state-centred language. The language of commissions such as the TRC or the Residential School Apology is constructed by and for the settler state to maintain the status quo (Corntassel, J., Chaw-win-is, & T'lakwadzi, 155). The status quo being upheld maintains an asymmetrical relationship in which the settler-state is dominant. This can be analyzed by deconstructing the framework down to its core language of land certainty, abolition of settler guilt, and historical temporalization. This language highlights that reconciliation in settler Canada is not creating and maintaining a mutually respectful relationship between Indigenous peoples and settler peoples but rather re-affirming a relationship based in colonialist structures that benefit the settler-state.

LAND CERTAINTY

Underlying the apologies and recognitions of reconciliation is the question of land certainty. The importance of land certainty for the settler-state is to dissolve any concern surrounding land jurisdiction that poses a threat to the settler-state economy. Land certainty is the continued character of settler-colonialism that requires land to uphold settler-state authority. Certainty of land is common language used in many frameworks that portray notions of reconciliation, such as the BC Treaty Process (Corntassel, J., Chaw-win-is, & T'lakwadzi, 145)

HISTORICAL TEMPORALIZATION

The narrative of settler-state reconciliation is rooted in the idea of colonialism as an event. This leads to a framework of historical temporalization (Coulthard, 120). Historical temporalization means the apologies and recognitions situate land and resource theft to the past, as historical exceptions of settler-Canada's character. This negates ongoing trauma, structures of colonialism, and systemic erasure of Indigenous rights to self-governance and self-determination (Corntassel, Chaw-win-is, & T'lakwadzi, 152)
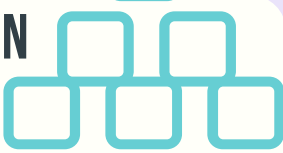
ABSOLUTION OF SETTLER GUILT AND RESPONSIBILITY

By denying the ongoing structure of colonialism through historical temporalization and the goal of land certainty, the framework of reconciliation is incapable of addressing the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous lands and the denial of self-determination. Because of this, reconciliation only serves to resolve settler guilt and absolve settler-state responsibility to upholding treaties and renewing a relationship of mutual respect (Coulthard, 127).

DECONSTRUCTING THE FRAMEWORK

AFFIRMATION OF AN ASYMMETRICAL RELATIONSHIP

Given the settler framework of reconciliation is based in land certainty, historical temporalization, and absolution of settler guilt and responsibility it is clear that settler-based reconciliation works to restore and affirm an asymmetrical power relationship with Indigenous peoples.

JAPANESE CANADIANS   THE MOVEMENT OF IDENTITIES

Roy Miki's chapter "Turning In, Turning Out: The Shifting Formations of 'Japanese Canadian' from Uprooting to Redress," in *Situating 'Race' and Racisms in Space, Time & Theory: Critical Essays for Activists and Scholars* is a good point of reference for understanding the imposition of settler Canada in constructing identities and dictating the narrative. In terms of Japanese Canadians' campaign for redress, Miki asserts that although the settler state has often racialized and manipulated the identity it gives to Japanese Canadians, the redress campaign highlighted the power of understanding that identities are always in movement (Miki, 109). The understanding of identities in this case means that the transformation of the term "Japanese Canadian" by Japanese Canadians shows that maintaining fixed-origin identities is both a racialized and controlling system of identity.

SO, WHAT ERA IS INDIGENOUS-SETTLER RELATIONS IN?

AN ERA OF LEGITIMIZING AND REINFORCEMENT OF COLONIAL RELATIONSHIPS

(Corntassel, J., Chaw-win-is, & T'lakwadzi, 155)

## RECONSTRUCTING RELATIONSHIPS OF RECIPROCITY AND PEACEFUL COEXISTENCE

THE SHAPING OF RESENTMENT

Glen Coulthard argues that the settler state frames Indigenous resentment as an "inability to get over the past "(Coulthard, 109). He asserts that Indigenous peoples' resentment is actually a sign of critical consciousness that is aware of the continued injustices despite the guise of an era of renewed, mutual relations. Greater than this, he believes that resentment should be understood as a collective expression of a peoples who care deeply about their land and communities. In this way, Coulthard's assertion of resentment embodies Miki's argument about the movement of identities and the importance of identities not being tied to a fixed-origin of racialization, such as resentment identifying a peoples that are "unable to get over the past".

TRUTH-TELLING TO COMMUNITY MOBILIZATION

Jeff Corntassel, Chaw-win-is, and T'lakwadzi have put forth a framework that addresses the ongoing impacts of residential schools and the lived experiences of resilience and resurgence that need to be shared with intergenerational survivors and other Indigenous peoples. This framework is built on the idea of truth-telling to restore balance in communities that will lead to community-centred visions of renewal and resurgence.
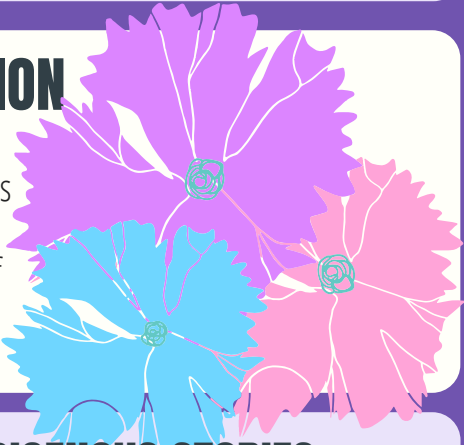
SOME MAIN THEMES IDENTIFIED IN HAA-HUU-PAH INDIGENOUS STORIES

Haa-huu-pah are the stories of lived values that form the basis for Indigenous governance and regeneration. Corntassel, Chaw-win-is, and T'lakwadzi offer Haa-huu-pah as an alternative to the states version's of reconciliation by focusing on stories of resilience that are crucial to the resurgence of Indigenous communities.

RE-STORYING

A process of decolonizing spaces to allow for counter narratives and Indigenous resurgence

HOMELANDS

Indigenous restorying processes cannot be disentangled from ongoing relationships to their homelands

FAMILY

Indigenous families continue to be impacted by systems of colonialism with the disproportionate number of Indigenous children taken into the child welfare system.

Bibliography

Coulthard, Glen S. Chapter 4 "Seeing Red: Reconciliation & Resentment." *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014): 105129.http://web.b.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/ehost/ ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzg1MzUxNV9fQU41?sid=cbb436a6-882c-4c48-be85- f60edb59e1e1@sessionmgr102&vid=0&format=EB&lpid=lp_105&rid=0

Corntassel, Jeff, Chaw-win-is and T'lakwadzi. "Indigenous Storytelling, Truth-telling, and Community Approaches to Reconciliation." *ESC: English Studies in Canada* 35.1(March 2009): 137-15

Miki, Roy. "Turning In, Turning Out: The Shifting Formations of 'Japanese Canadian' from Uprooting to Redress," Situating 'Race' and Racisms in Space, Time & Theory: Critical Essays for Activists and Scholars edited by Jo-Anne Lee & John Lutz (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005): 94-113.http://deslibris.ca.ezproxy.library.uvic.ca/ID/407600