



THE WHITE POSSESSION OF THE MI'KMAQ FISHERIES

USING AILEEN MORETON-ROBISON'S "THE WHITE POSSESSIVE"

THE WHITE POSSESSIVE

"The problem with white people is they think and behave like they own everything." - Dennis Benjamin Moreton

What Is It?



Moreton-Robinson describes White Possession as a discursive predisposition servicing the conditions, practices, implications, and racialized discourses that are embedded within and central to white first world patriarchal nation-states. What she means is that White Nation-states such as Canada, the United States, Australia, New Zealand and Hawai'i have created and perpetuated a discourse of ownership of the lands taken from indigenous peoples using "Possessive logics" as Moreton-Robinson calls them, which are ways of rationalization that are supported by a desire to invest in reproducing and reaffirming the nation-state's ownership, control and domination. White possessive logics are used to circulate meanings about ownership of the nation as part of common sense knowledge and socially produced conventions. It is in this way that the dominant white population comes to believe that the nation-state does and should belong to them.

How Does It Function?



The founding fathers of Australia, the US, Canada, and New Zealand all implemented policies intended to keep these new nation-states as white nations. In Australia it was the White Australia Policy, In Canada immigration acts strongly preferred the migration of British citizens. So from their very foundation, these nation-states have used possessive logics to claim themselves as white nation-states. The names given to the land, cities and streets by settlers further represents the white possession of the lands belonging to indigenous peoples. Through the materiality of these significations, ownership is perceived by the white settlers. Race and the state work in tandem. Institutions, government, media, police, army, courts, and settlers are constantly working to reproduce and reaffirm white possession of nations like Canada. This work takes on many forms. One is the perpetual indigenous dispossession by their expulsion from traditional lands, education systems designed to assimilate students to white settler society, the prohibition of traditional practices and languages and more. Other forms include the continued refusal of indigenous sovereignty and highly administered piecemeal concessions. The state may acknowledge the specific rights of indigenous peoples but do not grant those rights in practice or the state may make small and inconsistent compromises without ever fully instating and abiding by the specific rights of indigenous peoples including the right to land subsistence and sovereignty.

THE CASE OF THE MI'KMAQ FISHERIES DISPUTE

In September of 2020 tensions between Mi'kmaq fishers and non-indigenous fishers began to rise after Sipekne'katik First Nation launched a self-regulated lobster fishery outside the federally regulated commercial fishing season.

Violence ensued and culminated in non-indigenous fishers setting fire to a lobster pound holding the catch of Mi'kmaq fishers.

The Mi'kmaq fishers have a constitutionally protected treaty right to fish in pursuit of a moderate livelihood

The actions of white fishers is a prime example of settlers being heavily invested in the nation being a white possession. Furthermore, the inaction of the police and government in not stopping settler violence confirms the investment of the state in keeping the nation a white possession.

Robinson, A. (2015). Introduction. In The white possessive property, power, and indigenous sovereignty (pp. Xi-Xxiv). Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Global News (2020, October 20). A timeline of Nova Scotia's lobster conflict between Mi'kmaq and commercial fishers. Retrieved November 16, 2020, from <https://globalnews.ca/news/7408638/lobster-conflict-timeline/>