
INTRODUCTION

MY RADICAL RESURGENT PRESENT

I AM WRITING THIS CHAPTER on a gray, wet winter day, in the café in the sports complex at Trent University as my two kids attend swimming lessons.¹ The doors of the complex have Trent's logo on them—the French “explorer” Champlain's sword, jutting into waves, or as my elder Doug Williams often cynically jokes, “the heart of the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg.”² My kids pass the symbol with a casual “they should change that” and “don't have a fit, Mom.” They have grown up in their territory, learning with a community of artists, makers, and elders, a luxury that not all of us, including myself, have had. Because of that, I see a strength in them that I don't see in myself. I see an ability to point out and name colonialism, resist and even mobilize to change it. They know more about what it means to be Nishnaabeg in their first decades than I did in my third. This intimate resurgence in my family makes me happy.

Over a decade ago, I was listening to Doug speak to a group of Canadians in a coffee shop in downtown Peterborough, a city in central Ontario between Toronto and Ottawa. Peterborough is known to be a conservative hockey town (really, a small city) on the edge of cottage country. Doug wanted his audience to

know where they were, and he began by telling them what the land used to look like. The non-Native audience was nearly silent, transfixed by each sentence he spoke. So was I, because as he was speaking, I was recognizing that the land I know as my home has been devastated by settlement, industrial development, the construction of highways and roads, the Trent-Severn Waterway, and four centuries of dispossession. I understood that the landscape I knew as home would be almost unrecognizable to my Ancestors, and I hadn't known previously that I could barely even imagine the worlds that had already been lost. In the weeks after that talk, I spoke with Doug about what he had shared. As we drove around our territory in the months that followed, he pointed out where the Wendat (Huron) villages used to be, where hunting grounds were located, the former locations of black oak savannas and tallgrass prairies. I began to start my own talks with a narrative of what our land used to look like as a quick glimpse, albeit a generalized one, of what was lost—not as a mourning of loss but as a way of living in an Nishnaabeg present that collapses both the past and the future and as a way of positioning myself in relation to my Ancestors and my relations. I want to do the same here in this book.

Nogojiwanong (the place at the end of the rapids, or Peterborough) is in the heart of the Michi Saagiig part of the Nishnaabeg nation, and we call our nation “Kina Gchi Nishnaabeg-ogamig—the place where we all live and work together.”³ Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg territory is along the north shore of Chi’Niibish, or Lake Ontario. Chi’Niibish literally means “big water,” and we share this lake with the Rotinonhseshá:ka.⁴ Michi Saagiig means “at the mouth of the rivers,” and that name comes from our history as people that spent time at the mouths of the rivers draining into Lake Ontario.⁵ We are travelers, moving throughout our lands rather than settling in one place. We are the eastern doorway of the Nishnaabeg nation, and we have responsibilities to take care of our relationship with the Rotinonhseshá:ka. We also have diplomacy with the Rotinonhseshá:ka Confederacy; there are at least four wampum belts (treaties) that remind us of those responsibilities as well.⁶ There is also a wait-in-the-woods cer-

emony between the Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) and the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg. Diplomatically, we have always had close ties to the Wendat. They asked to live in our territory at different points in history, and we made agreements with them so they could. There are wampum belts made, and the oral tradition has a lot of evidence that we lived together quite well: they lived in longhouses and farmed, and we were hunting and fishing, ricing and sugaring, traveling by the waterways.

Michi Saagiig Nishinaabeg are salmon people. Doug tells me Chi'Niibish had its own resident population of salmon that migrated all the way to Stoney Lake to spawn. We drank directly from the lakes, and that was a good, healthy thing to do. There was a large population of eels that also migrated to Stoney Lake each year from the Atlantic Ocean. There was an ancient old-growth forest of white pine that stretched from Curve Lake down to the shore of Lake Ontario, which had virtually no understory except for a bed of pine needles. There were tallgrass prairies and black oak savannas where Peterborough stands today. The lakes were teeming with minomiin, or wild rice. The land was dotted with sugar bushes, the lakes were full of fish.

It sounds idyllic, because compared to now it was idyllic. Our knowledge system, the education system, the economic system, and the political system of the Michi Saagiig Nishinaabeg were designed to promote more life. Our way of living was designed to generate life—not just human life but the life of all living things. Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg were travelers; we rarely settled, and this was reflected in our politics and governance, in our diplomacy with other nations, and even in the protection of our land. Stable governing structures emerged when necessary and dissolved when no longer needed. Leaders were also recognized (not self-appointed) and then disengaged when no longer needed. It was an emergent system reflective of the relationality of the local landscape. I think of our system of governance as breathing—a rhythm of contraction and release.

There was a high degree of individual self-determination in Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg society. Children were full citizens with the same rights and responsibilities as adults. They were

raised in a nest of freedom and self-determination. Authoritarian power—aggressive power that comes from coercion and hierarchy—wasn't a part of the fabric of Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg philosophy or governance, and so it wasn't a part of our families.

People were expected to figure out their gifts and their responsibilities through ceremony and reflection and self-actualization, and that process was really the most important governing process on an individual level—more important than the gender you were born into. In the context of gender fluidity and sexualities and relationship orientations outside of colonial conceptualizations, I see this idea of freedom as one that permeated the fabric of precolonial Nishnaabeg society.

When Champlain visits us and refers to the freedom our children have within our society, and our nonpunitive, attachment-based parenting, it's his white male way of acknowledging that freedom and authentic power.⁷ His sword did not pierce the hearts of the Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg. We are still here.

Over the past two hundred years, without our permission and without our consent, we have been systemically removed and dispossessed from most of our territory. We have fought back as our homeland has been stolen, clear-cut, subdivided, and sold to settlers from Europe and later cottagers from Toronto. The last eels and salmon navigated our waters about a hundred years ago. We no longer have old-growth white pine forests in our territory. Our rice beds were nearly destroyed. All but one tiny piece of prairie in Alderville has been destroyed. Most of our sugar bushes are under private, non-Native ownership.

Our most sacred places have been made into provincial parks for tourists, where concrete buildings cover our teaching rocks. Our burial grounds have cottages built on top of them. The rivers have lift locks blocking them. The shores of every one of our lakes and rivers have cottages or homes on them, making it nearly impossible for us to launch a canoe. Our rice beds have been nearly destroyed by raised water levels from the Trent-Severn Waterway, boat traffic, and sewage from cottages.

We live with the ongoing trauma of the Indian Act, residen-

tial schools, day schools, sanatoriums, child welfare, and now an education system that refuses to acknowledge our culture, our knowledge, our histories, and experience. At the beginning of the colonial period, we signed early treaties as international diplomatic agreements with the crown to protect the land and to ensure our sovereignty, nationhood, and way of life.⁸ We have fought against the gross and blatant injustice of the 1923 Williams Treaty and its “basket clause” for nearly one hundred years, a treaty that wasn’t a treaty at all within our political practices but another termination plan.

Heralded as the “first modern-day treaty,” it resulted in eighty-nine years without hunting and fishing rights. My grandmother grew up eating squirrel and groundhogs because if her parents were caught hunting deer or fishing, they were criminalized. In the fall of 2012, as a result of a civil suit, the province of Ontario sent us a letter indicating that it will recognize our treaty rights secured in the earlier, 1818 treaty over a hundred thousand acres in southern Ontario. We will see. We have been living our understanding of our rights, and nearly every year since the treaty was signed, people are charged by conservation officers for hunting and fishing “out of season.”⁹

This is the context within which I experience resurgence. This is the very real urgency of resurgence. Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg, like other Indigenous peoples living in the most urban and industrialized parts of Canada, have virtually no land left to be Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg. There are very few places to retreat to the bush, and almost none where you can’t hear the rumble of traffic or run into a cottager or tourist. My kids regularly remind me of this. On their first visit to Yellowknives Dene First Nation territory, they remarked that they could be more Nishnaabeg in Dene territory than in their own. They asked why there were no police or white people watching us fish, a hundred kilometers off grid outside of Sombe’ke (Yellowknife). Settler surveillance for them is a normalized part of being on the land. They expect it.

They also expect that we will be there anyway, in spite of environmental destruction, despite the violence of surveillance

culture, because they were born into a centuries-old legacy of resistance, persistence, and profound love that ties our struggle to other Indigenous peoples in the Americas and throughout the world. It is not happenstance or luck that Indigenous peoples and our lands still exist after centuries of attack. This is our strategic brilliance. Our presence is our weapon, and this is visible to me at every protest, every mobilization, every time a Two Spirit person gifts us with a dance at our powwows, every time we speak our truths, every time we embody Indigenous life. It is visible to me in the Unist'ot'en camp, in the hearts of Moosehide Tanners Against Fascism in Denendeh, in the work of the Native Youth Sexual Health Network, in the forty years of mobilization against mercury contamination and deforestation at Grassy Narrows First Nation, in Elsipogtog, Kanehsatà:ke, Listuguj, and of course in the phenomenal mobilization against the Dakota Access pipeline in Standing Rock, North Dakota, by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and the Oceti Sakowin (The Great Sioux Nation).¹⁰ It is visible to me when we refuse to replicate transphobia and anti-Blackness in our territories. It is our Ancestors working to ensure we exist as Indigenous peoples, as they have always done.

From this standpoint, it doesn't matter who is president or prime minister, because our most important work is internal, and the kinds of transformations we are compelled to make, the kinds of alternatives we are compelled to embody are profoundly systemic. I am strongly interested in building an Nishnaabeg presence, an Nishnaabeg present, that embodies and operationalizes the very best of our nation because this is what we have always done. My Ancestors struggled, sacrificed, and fought much worse than I have to get me here, and I have the same responsibility to my future relations.

I Am Not a Nation-State

During the winter of 2013, Idle No More organizers in Toronto recognized that although Indigenous peoples have been talking about nationhood for years, the idea of Indigenous nationhood is a concept still very misunderstood by Canadians.¹¹

In response, the Toronto organizers launched a dialogue called “Nation to Nation Now—The Conversations,” which took place at the end of March in Toronto. They invited speakers from both the Rotinohsheshá:ka Confederacy and the Nishnaabeg nation to come together and share about what nationhood means to us from within our own political practices. Nishnaabeg curator and artist Wanda Nanibush moderated a discussion between myself and Nishnaabeg elder/artist and language speaker Robert Houle.

Robert and I were on first. I got up very early and drove into the city on the 401, following the north shore of Lake Ontario. I remembered our old stories of what the land used to look like, and I wondered if my great-great-grandmother would even recognize her homeland with the nuclear plant, the condos, and the six lanes of traffic that never stop day or night. I wondered if she were here with me, in the car, driving as the sun came up, if she would feel home. It struck me at that moment that our nationhood, my nationhood, by its very nature calls into question this system of settler colonialism, a system that is such an overwhelming, violent, normalized, and dishonest reality in Canada and so many other places. It is the force that has removed me from my land, it has erased me from my history and from contemporary life, and it is the reason we currently have thousands of missing and murdered Indigenous women and Two Spirit/queer people in Canada.

When I arrived at the conference venue several cups of coffee and two traffic jams later, I wasn't thinking about my grandmothers anymore. I was thinking about what I wanted for my own great-grandchildren. It was very simple. It is very simple. Indigenous freedom. I include it here because Indigenous freedom is a guiding vision or manifesto for what follows, and it starts with being very clear about what I want out of the present and what I expect from the future. What does it mean for me, as an Nishnaabekwe, to live freedom? I want my great-grandchildren to be able to fall in love with every piece of our territory. I want their bodies to carry with them every story, every song, every piece of poetry hidden in our Nishnaabeg language. I want them

to be able to dance through their lives with joy. I want them to live without fear because they know respect, because they know in their bones what respect feels like. I want them to live without fear because they have a pristine environment with clean waterways that will provide them with the physical and emotional sustenance to uphold their responsibilities to the land, their families, their communities, and their nations. I want them to be valued, heard, and cherished by our communities.

I want my great-great-grandchildren and their great-great-grandchildren to be able to live as Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg unharassed and undeterred in our homeland.

The idea of my arms embracing my grandchildren, and their arms embracing their grandchildren is communicated in the Nishnaabeg word *kobade*. According to elder Edna Manitowabi, *kobade* is a word we use to refer to our great-grandparents and our great-grandchildren. It means a link in a chain—a link in the chain between generations, between nations, between states of being, between individuals. I am a link in a chain. We are all links in a chain.

Doug calls our nation Kina Gchi Nishnaabeg-ogamig, the place where we all live and work together. Where Nishnaabeg are in deep relationship with each other. Our nation is a hub of Nishnaabeg networks. It is a long *kobade*, cycling through time. It is a web of connections to each other, to the plant nations, the animal nations, the rivers and lakes, the cosmos, and our neighboring Indigenous nations.

Kina Gchi Nishnaabeg-ogamig is an ecology of intimacy.

It is an ecology of relationships in the absence of coercion, hierarchy, or authoritarian power.

Kina Gchi Nishnaabeg-ogamig is connectivity based on the sanctity of the land, the love we have for our families, our language, our way of life. It is relationships based on deep reciprocity, respect, noninterference, self-determination, and freedom.

Our nationhood is based on the idea that the earth gives and sustains all life, that “natural resources” are not “natural resources” at all, but gifts from Aki, the land. Our nationhood is based on the foundational concept that we should give up what we can

to support the integrity of our homelands for the coming generations. We should give more than we take.¹²

It is nationhood based on a series of radiating responsibilities.

This is what I understand our diplomats were negotiating when settlers first arrived in our territory. This was the impetus for those very first treaties—Nishnaabeg freedom, protection for the land and the environment, a space—an intellectual, political, spiritual, artistic, creative, and physical space where we could live as Nishnaabeg and where our kobade could do the same.

This is what my Ancestors wanted for me, for us. They wanted for our generation to practice Nishnaabeg governance over our homeland, to partner with other governments over shared lands, to have the ability to make decisions about how the gifts of our parent would be used for the benefit of our people and in a manner to promote her sanctity for coming generations. I believe my Ancestors expected the settler state to recognize my nation, our lands, and the political and cultural norms in our territory.

My nationhood doesn't just radiate outwards, it also radiates inwards. It is my physical body, my mind, and my spirit. It is our families—not the nuclear family that has been normalized in settler society, but big, beautiful, diverse, extended multiracial families of relatives and friends that care very deeply for each other.

This is the intense love of land, of family, and of our nations that has always been the spine of Indigenous resistance. The fact that I am here today is a miracle, because it means my family, like every Indigenous family, did whatever they could to ensure that I survived the past four hundred years of violence. For my kobade to survive and flourish the next four hundred years, we need to join together in a rebellion of love, persistence, commitment, and profound caring and create constellations of coresistance, working together toward a radical alternative present based on deep reciprocity and the gorgeous generative refusal of colonial recognition.

This vision for a present has the potential to create Nishnaabeg futures that categorically refuse and reject dispossession and settler colonialism and the violence of capitalism, heteropatriarchy, white supremacy, and anti-Blackness that maintains them.¹³ To me, Indigenous nationhood is a radical and complete overturning of the nation-state's political formations. It is a vision that centers our lives around our responsibility to work with our Ancestors and those yet unborn to continuously give birth to a spectacular Nishnaabeg present. This is a manifesto to create networks of reciprocal resurgent movements with other humans and nonhumans radically imagining their ways out of domination, who are not afraid to let those imaginings destroy the pillars of settler colonialism.

This is my beginning. This is my radical resurgent present.

ONE NISHNAABEG BRILLIANCE AS RADICAL RESURGENCE THEORY

GILBERT DROVE THE KIDS from the reserve into town for school every morning, and sometimes when we would come to visit, he would drive another lap around the reserve to pick up all the Elders in his yellow and black bus, driving us to the treatment center or out to the community trapline on the edge of the reserve. I was in my midtwenties. Young. I didn't yet know which things in life are rare and which things happen all the time if you remain open and happen to be in the right place at the right time. Over two years, spending time with a group of twenty-five Elders who had known each other and their land for their entire lives was an extremely rare situation. One that in the next twenty years of my life wouldn't be repeated with the same depth.

I've gone back to this experience over and over again in my head and in my writing because it changed the way I think in a fundamental way. It changed the way I am in the world. I want to reconsider it here because this experience is foundational to my work on resurgence and to who I have become. I considered

parts of this story in the short story “lost in the world where he was always the only one,” published in *Islands of Decolonial Love*, although somewhat fictionalized, as a way of linking our current reality to the Nishnaabeg sacred story of a little boy who is taken to the skyworld to learn from seven Elders and then returned to the earth to share his new knowledge with the Nishnaabeg.¹ Meaning, we all have to be, in some way, that little boy. Like that boy, those Elders that I learned from for those two years actually gave me something that has propelled my writing and thinking ever since. It was the greatest gift.

I was working with Professor Paul Driben, an anthropologist from Lakehead University at the time. We had been hired by the Effects on Aboriginals from the Great Lakes Environment (EAGLE) project of the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) to work with the Anishinaabeg reserve community of Long Lake #58, located in the boreal forest of northern Ontario, about three hundred kilometers northeast of Thunder Bay, to create a land-use atlas. The band council sent us to the Elders. This was not a unique project in the 1980s and 1990s. Traditional Ecological Knowledge was in its heyday in the eyes of white policy makers, academics, and even Aboriginal organizations. The idea was that if we documented on paper the ways that we use the land, policy makers would then use the information to minimize the impacts of development on our lands and ways of life. The idea was that clearly documented land use would bring about less dispossession, as if dispossession occurs by accident or out of not knowing, rather than being the strategic structure it is. The project was to gather the individual cognitive, territorial maps Elders held in their heads into a collective, a visual re-mapping and translation of some aspects of Indigenous Knowledge into a form that would be *recognized* by industry and the state.

Of course, I don't think the Elders involved in these studies were naive. I think what I saw, and perhaps what they saw, was a process that could be used as a tool to generate cohesion, pride, and rebuilding within our own communities when our own people saw visually and so clearly what dispossession, displace-

ment, encroachment, and industrial extractivism look like over our territories across time. Laid out in a visual way, the magnitude of the loss cannot be explained away, the strategic nature of colonialism cannot be ignored. The driving force of capitalism in our dispossession cannot be denied.

I was suspicious of Dr. Driben in the beginning. He wasn't Native, he was an anthropologist of all things, but he had created these maps before with other Nishnaabeg communities. Sitting in his windowless cement office in the basement of a building at Lakehead University eating subs, I could tell by the details on the maps that Elders trusted him. I could tell by the bunker-like nature of his office far removed from the upper echelons of the university that perhaps the university didn't. This boded well for our relationship.

Paul did something that has stayed with me and has always informed my approach to working with communities and to research. He was invited into the community to do a specific task, which in the end he delivered, but he actively and continually divested himself of the false power the academy bestowed upon him when he drove onto the reserve. He asked the Elders if they thought the project was a good idea. They said it was. He asked them how best to proceed. They told him. He asked them if they would be the decision makers. They agreed, and then they were, and he got out of their way.

This was an overwhelmingly different way of conducting research than I had experienced in two biology degrees. At the time, I could only frame it within collaborative or participatory or community-based methodologies, but it was really none of those. Those kinds of methodologies to some degree privileged Western theories, epistemologies, or knowledge systems, and the process that emerged in this situation was Nishnaabeg to the core. These methodologies assume there is a role for the academic. Paul did not. He came into their circle on the terms of the experts, the Nishnaabeg Elders, not the other way around.

Which enabled me to come into their circle, as a young Nishnaabeg person with very few useful skills to them other than youth. Western education does not produce in us the kinds of

effects we like to think it does when we say things like *education is the new buffalo*. We learn how to type and how to write. We learn how to think within the confines of Western thought. We learn how to pass tests and get jobs within the city of capitalism. If we're lucky and we fall into the right programs, we might learn to think critically about colonialism. But postsecondary education provides few useful skill sets to those of us who want to fundamentally change the relationship between the Canadian state and Indigenous peoples, because that requires a sustained, collective, strategic long-term movement, a movement the Canadian state has a vested interest in preventing, destroying, and dividing. Postsecondary education provides very few skill sets to those who want to learn to think in the most complex ways possible within the networked system of Indigenous intelligence. In fact, I needed to leave all of that kind of education behind in order to come into this with hesitation and an open heart. The parts of me that I drew on in this circle of Elders were liabilities at university—gentleness, humility, carefulness, and the ability to proceed slowly.

During the next two years, the Elders, who in my memory are now eagles, took me under their wing. I wrote down on large topographical maps every place-name for every beach, bay, peninsula, and island they could remember—hundreds and hundreds of names. We marked down all of their traplines, and the ones before that and the ones before that. We marked down hunting grounds and fishing sites, berry patches, ricing camps, and medicines spots. We marked down birthplaces and graves. We marked down places where stories happened. We marked down ceremonial sites, places where they lived, places where life happened. We also marked down the homes of their relatives—places where moose and bears lived, nesting spots and breeding grounds. We marked down travel routes, spring water spots, songs and prayers. Places where feet touched the earth for the first time. Places where promises were made. The place where they blocked the tracks during the summer of the so-called Oka Crisis.²

We also recorded pain. The prisoner-of-war camp, the in-

ternment camp, and its school that some Nishnaabeg kids attended so they could continue to live with their families and not go to residential school. The 150 years of clear-cuts. The hydroelectric dams, the direction the lake was supposed to flow. The flood, the road, the railway tracks, the mines, the pipeline, the hydrolines. The chemical sprays, the white people parks and campgrounds. Deaths.

The overlays showed decade after decade of loss. They showed the why.

Standing at the foot of a map of loss is clarity.

Colonialism or settler colonialism or dispossession or displacement or capitalism didn't seem complicated anymore. The mess I was wrapped in at birth didn't seem so inevitable. It seemed simple. Colonizers wanted the land. Everything else, whether it is legal or policy or economic or social, whether it was the Indian Act or residential schools or gender violence, was part of the machinery that was designed to create a perfect crime—a crime where the victims are unable to see or name the crime *as a crime*.³

But this isn't even the most important thing I learned from the Elders of Long Lake #58 in the middle of the 1990s. They gifted me with my first substantial experience with Nishnaabeg thought, theory, and methodology in a research context, and Nishnaabeg intelligence in life context. Paul showed me the kind of researcher I thought I wanted to be, but in reality I wanted to be able to think like those Elders, not him. By taking such a radically different approach to both community and research, Paul divested his power and authority as an academic that had been placed on him by the academy and then by an Aboriginal organization and placed that responsibility where it belonged: with the leaders and the intellectuals of the community. Paul was a holder of space. He created the space for Elders to not just say the prayer and smudge us off at the beginning of the meeting but to be the meeting. He created the space to put Nishnaabeg intelligence at the center and to use its energy to drive the project. Those Elders gave me my first glimpse of Nishnaabeg brilliance—theory, methodology, story, ethics, values all

enmeshed in Nishnaabeg politics and encircled by the profound influence of the world. They pulled me into an alternative Nishnaabeg world existing alongside the colonial reality I knew so well. This has propelled my life.

This experience more than anything else opened my mind and heart to the brilliance and complexity of Nishnaabeg embodied thought. It resonated in a profound way in me and has driven two decades of living, making, writing, and research. Sometimes it is the only thing I am absolutely sure of, and more than that, I am absolutely sure that we as Nishnaabeg cannot survive as a people without creating generations of artists, thinkers, makers, and doers that live in Nishnaabeg worlds, that are in respectful relationship with each other, that create a movement that joins us to other Indigenous nations to protect the land and bodies. We need to live deliberately and with meaning.

I think about the maps those Elders carried in their bodies as two-dimensional representations of the networks they live and their parents and grandparents lived. I think about the maps my generation carries in our heads or maybe in our phones. I think about the networks the next generation will carry in their bodies. I think about how the networks we have in our heads today create the networks our children have in their heads as adults. It is this experience more than any others that has led me to center Nishnaabeg intelligence in my life, in my work, and in my thinking about resurgence.

Years later, when I would begin thinking and writing about Indigenous resurgence as a set of practices through which the regeneration and reestablishment of Indigenous nations could be achieved, the seeds those Elders planted in me would start to grow with a strong *feeling*, more than thinking, that the intellectual and theoretical home of resurgence had to come from within Indigenous thought systems, intelligence systems that are continually generated in relationship to place. I realized that the Elders of Long Lake #58 had pulled me into an Nishnaabeg world, and that this world was a very fertile place for dreaming, visioning, thinking, and remembering the affirmative Indigenous worlds that continue to exist right alongside the colonial

worlds. I got a strong sense from them that our intellectual systems are our responsibilities, that they are an extension of our bodies and an expression of our freedom. There was no room in their Nishnaabeg world for the desire to be recognized and affirmed by the colonizer. There was no room in their Nishnaabeg world to accommodate or center whiteness.

The Nishnaabeg brilliance those Elders pulled me into was profound. Their world—a cognitive, spiritual, emotional, land-based space—didn't recognize or endlessly accommodate whiteness, it didn't accept the inevitability of capitalism, and it was a disruption to the hierarchy of heteropatriarchy.⁴ Thinking about it now, I see that it was my first flight path out of settler colonialism. In their very quiet, nondemonstrative, and profoundly gentle way, those Elders refused settler colonialism, driving along the TransCanada in a children's school bus, laughing all the way to their trapline. They refused and generated something different. Everyday. Just like their Ancestors and their Ancestor's Ancestors.

Biiskabiyang and Flight

Biiskabiyang—the process of returning to ourselves, a reengagement with the things we have left behind, a reemergence, an unfolding from the inside out—is a concept, an individual and collective process of decolonization and resurgence.⁵ To me, it is the embodied processes as freedom. It is a flight out of the structure of settler colonialism and into the processes and relationships of freedom and self-determination encoded and practiced within Nishnaabewin or grounded normativity. In this way, it is a form of marronage.⁶ Scholar Neil Roberts describes the concept of marronage (derived from Awawak and Tainos thought) in his book *Freedom as Marronage* “as a group of persons isolating themselves from a surrounding society in order to create a fully autonomous community,”⁷ like the act of retreating to the bush, or resurgence itself. Breaking from contemporary political theory's vocabulary to describe this flight, Roberts writes, “marronage is a multidimensional, constant act of flight that involves what I ascertain to be four interrelated pillars: distance,

NOTES

Introduction

1. A previous version of the section "I Am Not a Nation-State" in this chapter was first published on the Indigenous Nationhood Movement's *Nations Rising* blog, which no longer exists, and was reposted at <http://leannesimpson.ca/i-am-not-a-nation-state/>.

2. Doug Williams is an elder from Curve Lake First Nation. The French explorer Samuel du Champlain was the first white explorer through our territory in 1615.

3. Leanne Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence* (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2011), 14.

4. Rotinohseshá:ka and Haudenosaunee are both words for Iroquois peoples. Since I wrote part of this book in Montreal, I have used the Kanien'kehá:ka terminology in this manuscript. According to Ellen Gabriel, Rotinohseshá:ka means "People of the Longhouse" in Kanien'kéha (language of the Kanien'kehá:ka or Mohawk people).

5. Alternatively rendered as Mishi-zaagiig, "People of the large river mouth," as shared with me by the editors Alan Corbiere, Deborah McGregor, and Crystal Migwans in the publication *Anishinaabewin Niswi: Deep Roots, New Growth* (M'Chigeeng, Ont.: Ojibwe Cultural Foundation, 2012), 42n4.

6. Leanne Simpson, "Looking after Gdoo-naaganinaa: Precolo-

nial Nishnaabeg Diplomatic and Treaty Relationships," *Wicazo Sa Review* 23, no. 2 (2008): 29–42.

7. See Champlain's journal of his 1615 voyage, entry 321, available at https://archive.org/stream/voyagessam00chamrich/voyagesam00chamrich_djvu.txt.

8. I am using the terms *sovereignty* and *self-determination* within the context of Nishnaabewin and Indigenous political theory and practices.

9. This first part of this section is based largely on oral tradition passed down to me from Doug Williams. Some of this is recorded in his new, unpublished manuscript, but the vast majority of it was learned within Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg Knowledge system over a fifteen-year period, from 2000 to 2016.

10. For historical context, see Nick Este, "Fighting for Our Lives: #NoDAPL in Historical Context," *The Red Nation* (blog), September 18, 2016, <https://therednation.org/2016/09/18/fighting-for-our-lives-nodapl-in-context/>.

11. Throughout this book when I use "Idle No More," I am referring to the broad movement that took place during the winter of 2012–13, not the organization.

12. I first learned this in the late 1990s from Robin Greene-ba, a Treaty 3 elder from Shoal Lake.

13. I am grateful for the brilliant scholarship of Rinaldo Walcott, Katherine McKittrick, Christina Sharpe, Luam Kidane, Hawa Y. Mire, Fred Moten, Idil Abdillahi, and Robin D. G. Kelley; the poetics and scholarship of Dionne Brand, Claudia Rankine, Alexis Pauline Gumbs; and the actions of Black Lives Matter Toronto for challenging me to think about anti-Blackness, Black life, and Black futures alongside Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg futures and for compelling me to begin to think about an Nishnaabeg presence that structurally detonates anti-Blackness from our radical alternatives. These ideas are far from complete, but I look forward to thinking through this together.

1. Nishnaabeg Brilliance as Radical Resurgence Theory

1. Leanne Simpson, *Islands of Decolonial Love: Stories and Songs* (Winnipeg: ARP Books 2013). The Nishnaabeg story is in Eddie Benton-Banai, *The Mishomis Book: The Voice of the Ojibway* (Hayward, Wis.: Indian Country Communications, 1988), 61–68.

2. The "Oka Crisis" took place during the summer of 1990 as a re-

sponse to the expansion of a nine-hole golf course into a sacred area of the Mohawk community of Kanesatake and involved a large-scale mobilization of land protectors with sites of physical resistance in Kanesatake and Kanawake and solidarity protests across Canada.

3. I heard Justice Murray Sinclair say this about residential schools in his capacity as a member of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission at Queens University on March 27, 2015.

4. I use the term *heteropatriarchy* as an umbrella term to mean the intertwined systems of patriarchy and heterosexism to include its manifestations as heteronormativity, transphobia, and cis-normativity.

5. Leanne Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnabeg Re-creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence* (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2011); and Wendy Makoons Geniusz, *Our Knowledge Is Not Primitive: Decolonizing Botanical Anishinaabe Teachings* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2000), 9–10.

6. Neil Roberts, *Freedom as Marronage* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015), 1–15.

7. Retreating to the bush was a common practice to escape the control of Indian agents, residential schools, coerced farming practices, encroachment, and many of the other impositions of settler colonial society; Roberts, *Freedom as Marronage*, 4–5.

8. Ibid., 8–9.

9. Jessica Marie Johnson, “We Need Your Freedom: An Interview with Alexis Pauline Gumbs,” December 13, 2016, http://www.aaihs.org/we-need-your-freedom-an-interview-with-alexis-pauline-gumbs/?utm_content=buffera2b87&utm_medium=social&utm_source=twitter.com&utm_campaign=buffer.

10. As with *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, this book is based on my own interpretations of Nishnaabeg thought. I do not speak for all Nishnaabeg people. I do not speak for anyone but myself. Like all nations and cultures, there are many different ways of understanding our stories, histories, theories, and intellectual traditions within our collective system of ethics. There always has been and is lots of healthy and robust conversation about these interpretations.

11. Michael Yellowbird's lecture “Decolonizing the Mind: Healing through Neurodecolonization and Mindfulness,” January 24, 2015, Portland State University, Portland, Oregon, is an excellent exploration of how ceremonial practices generate or regenerate neuropathways that provide the capacity to uphold Indigenous ethics and operationalize Indigenous political systems.

12. Some of our people are already doing this, and many of our people have always done this, in particular, language speakers, hunters, trappers, fishers, and medicine people.

13. See chapter 2 in Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, 31–49.

14. I learned this from Doug Williams; see endnote 60 in Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, 46.

15. Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 2014).

16. Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), 60.

2. Kwe as Resurgent Method

1. Leanne Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-creation, Resurgence and a New Emergence* (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2011); Leanne Simpson, *Islands of Decolonial Love: Stories and Songs* (Winnipeg: ARP Books, 2013); Leanne Simpson, "Land as Pedagogy: Nishnaabeg Intelligence and Rebellious Transformation," *Decolonization, Indigeneity, Education and Society* 3, no. 3 (2014): 1–25.

2. *Aki* means land—place, power, relation; it is the opposite of land as commodity. *Aki* is not capital. Throughout this book I used land-based and place-based interchangeably to denote practices that comes from relational reciprocity with *Aki*.

3. See chapter 2, Simpson, *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, 31–49.

4. The Creator, the one who loves us unconditionally, according to Doug Williams; see endnote 60 in *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, 46.

5. See chapter 2, Simpson *Dancing on Our Turtle's Back*, 31–49.

6. This is actually something Indigenous scholars do, and I think have always done. I was reminded of it in reading Mishuana Goeman, *Mark My Words: Native Women Mapping Our Nations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013), when she talks about the mobility of her family causing her to pause at the dichotomy between urban/reservation and reflect more deeply on spatialities (7).

7. The Indigenous academic community, particularly PhD students, have been forced to justify the use of Indigenous methodologies, ethics, and theories and more broadly Indigenous ways of knowing for nearly three decades now. I'd encourage those who find this paragraph surprising to read Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1999) as a start-