POLISHING THE CHAIN SEMINAR SERIES, PART 6: WE ARE ALL TREATY PEOPLE

[Edited Transcript]

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SEMINAR VIDEO:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=93gWboMYu90

SPEAKERS:

Leah Decke	Canada Research Chair in Creative Technologies, NSCAD University
Adrian Smith	Professor, Osgoode Hall Law School
Chris Ramsaroop	Organizer, Justicia for Migrant Workers
Sarah Rotz	Assistant Professor, York University
Lauren Kepkiewitz	Banting Post-Doctoral Fellow, University of Manitoba

HOST:

Dr. Martha Stiegman	Assistant Professor, Faculty of Environmental & Urban Change, York University

MARTHA STIEGMAN:
Hi everyone. Aanii, boozhoo, seigo. Hello and welcome. My name is Martha Stegman. I'm an Assistant Professor here at York and the Faculty of Environment and Urban Change. It's my pleasure to welcome you all to the final edition of Polishing the Chain, which is this year's edition of our faculty's annual seminar series.

It's always great to know who is in the room. So, I would love to encourage all of you to use the chat, to say hi and let us know where you're joining us from and what brings you here. The title of today's seminar is "We are all Treaty People" and it's the last of six events that were held over the course of this academic year that have been exploring what it means to be a treaty person here in Toronto. And they are all on YouTube and they have all been really amazing conversations. And Tara, maybe you can put the link to our YouTube channel in the chat for people who didn't make it to the previous conversation so that they can check them out. We have folks from Montreal, from Kingston, Max is on campus. Thanks for coming out!

I'm just going to begin with a land acknowledgement and a few comments to frame the conversation before I introduce today's speakers. So, the area known as Tkaronto has been caretaken by the Anishinaabek Nation, the Haudenosaunee Confederacy and the Huron Wendat, and it's now home to many First Nation, Inuit and Metis communities. I want to acknowledge the current treaty holders, the Mississaugas of the Credit First Nation. And I also want to acknowledge that this territory is subject of the Dish with One Spoon Wampum Belt Covenant, which is a peace agreement between the Anishinaabek and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. As we've learned throughout the Polishing the Chain series, there's a web of interconnected and sometimes conflicting historical treaties that are relevant for those of us here in Toronto, these include the Gaswenta or the Two-Row Wampum, the British-Haudenosaunee Covenant Chain, the 1764 Treaty of Niagara and the so-called Toronto Purchase. And through the series, we've been learning about the original spirit and intent of these agreements from Indigenous perspectives. So, Hayden King and Eva Jewel from the Yellowhead Institute told us about how they understand treaty making within Indigenous legal traditions, as a process of what they called "ongoing continuous consent", or as frameworks to work out our responsibilities to each other at multiple nested scales. As the title of Vanessa Deon Fletcher's artwork suggests, treaties are about relationships, they're not a transaction.

So many of our speakers this year talked about treaty making as a nation-to-nation relationship, but they stress that within Indigenous legal traditions, these larger political agreements are anchored in relationships and in reciprocal responsibilities with land and with all beings that are understood to have spirit and agency. Carolynne Crawley from the Indigenous land stewardship circle and Adrian Xavier-Lickers who's the director of the Indigenous studies program at McMaster, who I know Lauren and Sarah work

closely with; and Rick Hill, Tuscarora treaty expert, really almost all of our speakers emphasized the respect and the care for all beings, the stewardship responsibilities, and the personal commitment treaty entails that shows up in how we live our lives at the day-to-day level. But of course, we've also learned about how the Crown has used the treaty making process as a strategic tool of dispossession, as Haden King put it. We've learned how the treaty making process was manipulated, how the promises and the commitments that were made by the British have been continuously violated. Rick Hill put it very succinctly, he said that we need to be careful how we hold up agreements that were made with theaves.

So those of us who are here now, as settlers, as uninvited guests, as treaty people, and as Torontonians, we have responsibilities to learn about and to uphold the original spirit and intent of the agreements that have allowed us to be here, to hold our governments to account, to understand and to challenge settler colonialism, to support Indigenous-led efforts towards decolonization and to decolonize ourselves and our relationships with the land. And of course, those responsibilities look different for each of us, depending on the level of privilege we're afforded by Canadian society and by the Canadian state.

So in today's talk, we're going to be exploring how non-Indigenous led social movements, artists and engaged scholars are navigating this terrain. And to do that, we've invited a group of artists, organizers, and scholars, who I have tremendous respect for. Artists and scholar Leah Decker, Adrian Smith and Chris Ramsaroop from Justicia for Migrant Workers, and Sarah Rotz and Lauren Kepkiewitz of the collective RAIR. Leah, Adrian, Chris, Sarah and Lauren are going to talk to us about their work, how they understand their treaty responsibilities or their places within broader struggles towards decolonization. They're going to talk to us about how they navigate relationships of accountability with Indigenous peoples and with their Indigenous collaborators. And, as we talked about in our conversations that are leading up to today's event, this is not a group of people who have it all figured out and came to give us the answers. The work of unsettling Canada is not supposed to be comfortable. I don't know that it's possible, or that it's even desirable for us to feel as though we're doing enough or that we're doing all the right things, giving the immensity of the settler colonial juggernaut that is this country. But this is a group of insightful, careful, and brilliant scholars and artists whose work I'm very much looking forward to hearing about and who I'm very excited to hear think through these questions. But before I pass the mic, I just need to take a few minutes to thank the many people and organizations that have helped to make this series possible.

So firstly, I want to acknowledge Jumblies Theater and Arts' Talking Treaties project, the York Center for Indigenous Knowledges and Languages, and Deb McGregor's Indigenous Environmental Justice project, who along with the Faculty of Environment and Change are co-presenting the series as a whole. We've also gotten support from the Toronto Biennial of Art, the Osgoode Hall Law School, York's Vice President of Research and Innovation, the Indigenous Teaching and Learning Fund, YUFA's community projects and Lisa Myers' Research Chair in Indigenous Art and Curatorial Practice. I also want to acknowledge my collaborators, Ange Loft and Victoria Freeman, who I've been working and thinking about treaties very intensely with over the last few years in the context of the Talking Treaties project. This series very much comes out of the work that we've been doing together, researching and writing A Treaty Guide for Torontonians that's going to be launched at the Toronto Biennial of Art in a month and a half. And I also want to say chi miigwech to my colleagues, Deborah McGregor and Lisa Myers, who have helped with conceptualization and fundraising. And of course, for Tara Chandran, the research assistant who makes it all happen. So that's enough for me. I'm going to now pass the mic to our first speaker, Leah Decker.

Leah Decker is a white settler, intermedia artist, educator and scholar who divides her time between Treaty One territory in Winnipeg and K'jipuktuk, Halifax where she is the Canada Research Chair in Creative Technologies at NSCAD University. Leah holds a PhD in Cultural Studies from Queen's University and an MFA in New Media from Trans Art Institute and was a SSHRC post-doctoral fellow at York in 2019-20. Decker has exhibited, presented and screened her artwork widely in Canada, as well as internationally. Her most recent writing has appeared in C-magazine, Qualitative Inquiry and Performance Matters Journal, and the Special Issue of PUBLIC Journal that she co-edited with Carla Taunton that's called "Beyond Unsettling Methodologies for Decolonizing Futures" which was published in 2022. So please join me in welcoming Leah Decker.

LEAH DECKER:
Hi and thank you for that, Martha. Thank you all for being here and, Tara for putting this together and again, Martha for inviting me. And I should say too, that I'm really looking forward to hearing my fellow panelists. I'm speaking to you

from K'jipuktuk Halifax, which is in the unceded territory of the Mi'kmaq people. And these lands are subject to the Peace and Friendship Treaties that were originally signed by Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik leaders in 1725. And I'd also like to acknowledge Treaty One territory where I've lived and worked for a number of years and I still go back and forth to, and this is the territory of Anishinaabe, Cree, Oji-Cree, Dene Dakota, and Métis Nations. And Treaty One was negotiated and signed by the leaders of the Anishinaabe Swampy Cree peoples of what's now known as Southern Manitoba, and that was 1871. Of course, Treaty One is the first post-Confederation Treaty and as Martha said, you know, these treaties, as with others, were not a transaction. They were not about surrendering land or sovereignty, and they were intended to guide relationships between nations.

And with that said, as I told Martha when she invited me to be on this panel, my work doesn't specifically address treaties or treaty relationships, or it doesn't do that in that language. But it does engage with the idea of being in spaces of Indigenous sovereignty and with the responsibilities of being in relation in these spaces and particularly from my positionality. So, I'm going to talk just a little bit about who I am because as an artist, you know, my work has come from this place of understanding and reckoning who I am and what this means. So I'm Ashkenazi Jewish and I identify as a white settler. My ancestors migrated from Romania, Ukraine and Russia between the late 18 hundreds. Oh I should say, Tara could you start the PowerPoint? And I'm not sure if I will be able to tell if it's on. Okay, great. Sorry about that. That should be up there. So yes, my ancestors migrated, in the late 18 hundreds and the first quarter of the 20th century, and they settled in Saskatchewan in Treaty Four territory and Treaty Six territory, and then also in Winnipeg and in Treaty One territory.

And I'm using this term "settled" very intentionally. If you can go to the next slide, this is the ship's manifest from, or which was the official, immigration document from my maternal grandfather, Aaron Goddesfeld, or who was later known as Earlyfield. And he was the last of my ancestors to arrive. And next slide. You can see on the upper left corner of the page has written the word "settlers" and on other pages, the terms "returning Canadians" or "tourists" are also used. So, this document is really, an important kind of touchstone in my work because it really implicates me in the colonial project of settlement as indicated by that handwriting in the top corner. When I say settlement here, we can think more accurately as understanding it as invasion, dispossession and occupation that's ongoing. And identifying as a settler is a way of placing myself in relation to the intersecting forces of settler colonialism and white supremacy that are at play in those conditions. And it's also a way of recognizing that I inherit the benefit for both of those forces regardless of my actions or my intentions.

I'll just let you peruse some of my work while I chat. So for me, these reckonings come with responsibility to contribute to the disruption of existing power dynamics towards what we can understand as decolonial or non-colonial paradigms, and to do that in ways that are tied to and appropriate to my positionality and also my professional and other capacities. And I draw in part on a Stolo scholar Dylan Robinson's work, thinking of this responsibility as intergenerational responsibilities, that stem from the position of being what Robinson refers to as "an intergenerational perpetrator". And just to quickly circle back, I use the term "decolonial" or "decolonizing" in a way that aligns with Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith and others who frame decolonization as a comprehensive process of transformation that really requires the interruption of colonial power in all its forms, but without losing sight of core goals relating to of course, Indigenous land rights and sovereignty, you know, reparation, repatriation etc. And this obviously requires, you know, a radical transformation of systems and structures and that kind of transformation arguably will not take place without a significant upheaval of colonial ways of thinking, being, and relating those kinds of ways that are normalized in settler states, particularly among dominantly positioned people.

This is where I think artistic interventions can be particularly effective because of their capacity to, you know, create counter narratives and reveal stories that have been overwritten, and dislodge positions that are very entrenched, and help to engender a kind of critical reflection as well as offering models for alternative ways of being in relation. So, it's that responsibility to take on an equitable share of the labour in generating the shifts and upheavals that I refer to. And also then these capacities for artistic practice to support that process and really those things together are what have driven my work. So, I've focused on developing methodologies for white settlers in particular, as that is who I am, so methodologies to do this work and mobilizing them through my art practice and then analyzing and articulating them in my scholarship. And of course, you know, I work with white settler methodologies, but this does not mean that my work occurs in a kind of white settler vacuum. The work I do is really grounded in the condition and ethics of being in relation. And as I've already alluded to this means reckoning with the ways I am

in relation or implicated in existing systems, instructions and beliefs. It also means considering critically the way I'm in relation with the land, human and more than human communities, with knowledges, scholarship, with publics, institutions, colonies. And it entails ensuring, or certainly trying to ensure that I'm in relation with these entities in ways that are non-consumptive and non-extractive.

Being relation also signals the imperative of co-resistance. And, you know, here, I'm talking about our co-resistance with Indigenous-led decolonial movements, BIPOC anti-racists movements as well as with colleagues and communities, etc. And this imperative of coexistence often, but not always, leads me to collaboration. And the work I'm going to introduce today demonstrates some of the ways that collaborative work unfolds in my art practice and my research creation practice.

Next slide, please. And with that and you can also prepare the first video. So, with that, I'll show you a clip from the 2015 performance video called Founder, which I collaborated with Cree-Métis media artist and musician, Cheryl L'Hirondelle. And I know I'm taking a risk by showing a video on Zoom, but I'm hopeful. And I'll just say that this clip includes some of the beginning and, some footage towards the end. So let's cross our fingers and hope that this works well.

FOUNDER VIDEO

You can put the PowerPoint back up where it was. So, as you can see in the credits, the song Cheryl's singing, Kitaskihkanaw is a Cree re-interpretation of Woody Guthrie's This Land is Your Land, which itself is a song that was co-opted as an anthem of settler emplacement, both in the US and Canada. So, Founder draws these acts of agency and refusal that challenge settler colonial sovereignty and assert Indigenous sovereignty. And as well as addressing both the appropriation and assertion of Indigenous knowledge, culture, and worldviews, and it does this from our respective positionalities and experience. And so, it's really a conversation of doing and undoing, learning and unlearning that speaks to these various responsibilities and different labours of making change. And I should say that when you see the video, not on Zoom, the audio will actually sync with what you're seeing.

I'm going to leave it there and just say that Cheryl and I have written about this work for a forthcoming book called Creative Conciliation: Reflections, Responses and Refusals, and that's edited by Jonathan Dewar, Kara Hold and Jennifer Robinson. So more will be coming out about that, probably this coming year. You can go to the next slide.

Photo 1 – "Maple Product Display at Montreal Airport" (screen capture from "We are all Treaty People" seminar)

I'm just really scratching the surface of these works. So you know, hopefully we can get into more conversation as we move on. So similar to Founder in many of my works, this next project that I'm going to talk about intervenes in iconic forms of visual material culture that are markings of Canadian-ness, and this project works with maple syrup products and the maple leaf, as the focus of the intervention. So, you know, we're familiar with maple syrup as this kind of iconic aspect of Canadiana. It really enmeshes the appropriation of Indigenous knowledge and technologies with the kind of settler replacement that comes through connections to the land. And you can see examples of the product. We're probably all familiar with these kinds of displays at airports and other kind of tourist shops. And it's the maple sugar candy which you can see, in the image here [see Photo 1] is most commonly produced in the form of a maple leaf. And that's what we're working with in this project. You can go to the next side.

Photo 2 – "Maple Sugar Candies Created by Artists for the Uh Oh, Canada Project" (screen capture from "We are all Treaty People" seminar)

So this project is called Uh Oh, Canada, and in it, I invited seven artists to join me in creating a kind of unsettled or unsettling set of maple sugar candies. And the artists are: Siksika artist Adrian Stimson, mixed Black diaspora poet Cecily Nicholson, Anishinaabe artist Lisa Myers, Tahltan artist Peter Morin, Cheryl who we just heard from previously, Métis artist David Garneau, white settler Canadian artist Michael Barnett and myself. And you can go to the next slide. So, each artist designed one candy for the set. So rather than taking the form of the maple leaf, the candies reflect aspects of Indigenous resistance and knowledge and facets of the colonial project - past and present. And they really convey stories missing from, or misrepresented within Canada's preferred public imaginary or preferred memory. And you can see here [see Photo 2], the stacks of boxes and boxes given away at public events and in public spaces. And so, the packaging is designed that they initially kind of pass as a regular maple syrup product.

And you can go to the next side. And so, it's kind of a process of discovery for those receiving the candies first, there's this packaging that kind of passes. And then it becomes clear because of the clear box that these aren't maybe your everyday maple sugar candies, and then under the candies, presumably once you've eaten them, you find a catalog, that provides further context. And you can go to the next slide.

Photo 3 – "Catalog Included in the Maple Sugar Candies Boxes" (screen capture from the "We are all Treaty People" seminar).

These are the individuals [see Photo 3]. So, one of the things that's in the catalog are the statements from the artists. And so, these are the artists statements you can click through. Actually, we don't have time to read them, but you can go to my website to see them, closely. And this is where, you know, we really dig into the, the sort of meat or candy of the project. So, it was launched in 2016 on Canada Day at Parliament Hill in Ottawa. And we gave away over 300 boxes to the people who were celebrating, had some really interesting conversations. And since then, they've circulated to my knowledge, as far as Chile, Ireland, and Australia. I continued to expand on this project and I've recently created a kind of pilot version of an interactive web platform that houses 3D digital versions of the candies that are interactive versions of the original eight. And I have other plans for expanding the project in different ways, including bringing more artists in. And so, I just, you know, I think of inserting counter narratives into these mainstream and often celebratory public spaces, as well as an - and very importantly - the body itself, by eating the candies and in doing this, it really questions how we learn and considers how we may learn and unlearn in, in other ways. So, it aims in some fashion to do some of this work and shifting ways of thinking and shifting beliefs and knowledges towards decolonial possibilities.

And you can shift to the next slide. Okay. So, the last work I'm going to touch on continues that thread of, of learning and unlearning and returns to this idea of, of being in Indigenous sovereignty that's embedded in Founder and many of my other works. And when I talk about this notion of being in Indigenous sovereignty, I want to acknowledge settler Australian scholar, Fiona Nickel, who points out that white Australians are living in Indigenous sovereignty, whether or not they or their governments recognize that fact. And the same can be said here in Canada. And so that's where this phrase being in Indigenous sovereignty comes from.

So, In Care Of is one of my current projects and it's very much in process. It's very much a process-based project too, as social engagement aspects and aspects of collaboration - it's really embedded in collaboration. And it's predicated on visiting practices. So, it's very much indicative of a work I'm doing now that brings together these ideas of being in Indigenous sovereignty, intergenerational responsibilities, and being in relation through the concept of guesting and hosting. And I'm working with a number of artists on this. I'm going to just show one example but before I get to that I'll just talk a little bit about this project and what I was thinking of. One of the things that I was thinking about in relation to this project is Call to Action #45.1, which appeals for, and I'll quote, "the repudiation of concepts used to justify European", and here I read Canadian "sovereignty over Indigenous lands". So, I was also thinking about how possible, and for the most part for white settler folks, how common it is to move about the

lands that we call Canada with little or no regard for the presence or protocols of the Indigenous nations, whose territory we pass through, or for that matter, the treaty obligations in different places.

And I was also thinking about aspects of Canadian culture that celebrate colonial dominance and really help to make settler emplacement on the land possible in these ways. And in particular, I was thinking about the landscape painting traditions of the Group of Seven, you know, among other things, their work rhetorically kind of transformed the territories of distinct and sovereign Indigenous nations into a Canadian landscape. And in this way, it really helped to entrench the colonial sovereignty and Indigenous dispossession that's referred to in Call# 45.1. And it has to be noted too, that, you know, given the kind of enduring iconic status they have and the ubiquity of their, the presence of their artwork in the present, these colonial projections really continue to cultivate feelings of settler entitlement in the present, and really helped to embed that into a Canadian identity.

So, with those things in mind, for this project, I want them to engage with the territorial political and cultural sovereignty of Indigenous nations through respectful and accountable and reciprocal practices of visiting that can offer alternatives to the ways land and place are often understood and concerned and encountered by white settler meetings. And I also wanted to intervene in the colonial and extractivist practices that are kind of emblematic of the Group of Seven and other aspects of Canadian art for that matter. So, my idea was to visit with folks that I know in their territories and collaborate on works that offer a relational view of place, that's embedded in the ethic of being in Indigenous sovereignty and through protocols of specific nations. And this in-person visiting was actually delayed before COVID because of wildfires in BC where I was going to visit, and now it's been further delayed because of COVID. So, like many people myself and my collaborators pivoted the project to function without traveling and without in-person contact. And you can just click the slide. I'm going to end with a brief clip of what resulted or what is resulting in the collaboration for this project, with the Tahltan artist, Peter Morin.

And I'll emphasize that what you're seeing is a process, not necessarily a product or an outcome of the work. So, it's a bit of a glimpse behind the curtain. And I'll just say that Peter is reading from a book of Tahltan stories that were collected and transcribed by white anthropologist, James Tate in the early teens of the 1900s. And I am drawing from photos of Tahltan territory near Telegraph Creek that Peter sent to me and that we picked together. And what you're going to see is a clip towards the end of an hour-plus session.

PLAY VIDEO

So as I said, this is process that you're seeing, it's a little peek behind the curtain. And I'll just end by saying, that, you know, if I think about engaging intergenerational responsibilities from a white settler perspective, I'm, you know, it really sometimes involves walking with or collaborating, as I've shown here. And sometimes it requires stepping forward as an individual, but also entails knowing when to step back or entirely out of the picture. And with that, I will say thank you for your kind attention. And please if you want to see more, look at my website and if you want to be in touch, shoot me an email. So, thank you very much for your attention.

MARTHA STIEGMAN:
Leah, thank you for sharing just a glimpse of that really powerful and incredible body of work. My parents also got settler cards. When my parents came from the States in 1970 to Halifax and I found their first kind of ID card that had been issued by the Canadian state in 1970 and the category that they were assigned was "settler". So, as a white settler, I also very much appreciate your framing of your positionality and your idea of intergenerational perpetrators as well. Anyway, I'm sure people have responses and questions for Leah, but I'm going to ask you to hold them because we're going to hear next from Adrian Smith and from Chris Ramsaroop who are long-time collaborators as part of Justicia for Migrant Workers.

So, Adrian Smith has taught at Osgoode Hall law school since 2018, returning to where he first began studying law in 1998. Prior to joining, he taught in Carleton University's Department of Law and Legal Studies, cross-appointed to the Institute of Political Economy and the Institute of African Studies. He recently completed a three-year term as academic director of Parkdale Community Legal Services, teaching the intensive seminar on poverty law. His areas of interest broadly relate to law, political economy and development with a focus on the regulation of labour and colonial and settler colonial contexts, including temporary labour migration in Canada.

Chris Ramsaroop is an organizer with Justicia for Migrant Workers, which is a grassroots activist collective that's been organizing with migrant workers for nearly 20 years.

Justicia's work is based on building long-term trust and relationships with migrant workers and includes engaging in direct actions, working with workers to resist at work, launching precedent-setting legal cases and organizing numerous collective actions. Chris is also an instructor in the Caribbean Studies program at the University of Toronto and a clinic instructor at the University of Windsor's Faculty of Law. And he's also working to complete his PhD at OISE at the University of Toronto. Chris and Adrian are people who I've known through the food movement in Canada for many years, and I'm very excited to hear from both of you to share with us about your work.

ADRIAN SMITH:
That's great. Thank you, Martha. I'm just going to turn my slides on. So, I'm going to start. I think during our collaborators pre-meeting I said I'd set up the pins and Chris would knock them down. But Chris then started sending me bowling photos, bowling uniforms and stuff. So, I refuse to use that metaphor anymore. So, I think I'm just going to set the table for Chris and then we'll eat or something of that nature.

MARTHA STIEGMAN:
Do you have images of the bowling uniforms in your PowerPoint, Adrian?

ADRIAN SMITH:
No, I don't want to scare anybody away. But at any rate, thanks so much, Martha, it's great to be here with you and all of the collaborators, participants, and so on. And I did want to say to you, Martha, I haven't had the chance to say it that since I've seen Seeking Netukulimk, I've used it in my teaching every year. That's an important intervention in the world, so thank you for that as well.

So, I am going to try to engage here with some of the historical context of sorts to discuss settler colonialism and global capitalism, the centrality of exploitation and dispossession. And then I'm going to do a little bit of setting up, as I said for Chris, in terms of temporary labour migration to Canada. There are national state regimes of temporary labour migration. Canada has its own. There are two that we will talk about momentarily, but I think the theme of the work that Chris and I have done collaborating together now for quite some time, I won't say how long Chris, is that we believe in the historical continuities and extricating the historical continuities in the forms of regulation of labour through the histories of the Americas.

Photo 4 – "The Past Isn't" (screen capture from the "We are all Treaty People" seminar)

And we often talk about the fact that there are these continuities that others ignore and they're racialized continuities as well. And so this slide [see Photo 4] to me says it all: "The past isn't."

So, the first program is the Seasonal Agricultural Workers Program [SAWP]. I'm sure folks know about this already. I won't go into great detail, but it started in 1966, bringing in workers from Jamaica and then expanded through the Caribbean, to the smaller islands and to Mexico in the mid 1970s. And it brings close to 40,000 workers, many of whom come to Ontario. It's a bilateral country-to-country agreement, not a treaty. And that's an important distinction because then that means the countries that participate don't have any treaty rights in international law or otherwise. The employers are expected to provide housing on or near the operations, the growing operations.

There's also the temporary foreign worker program, TFWP, which has an agricultural stream. Whereas the SAWP program that I just mentioned brings in workers from the Caribbean and Mexico, this TFWP agricultural stream is broader and can bring in workers more or less from anywhere in the world. It's a unilateral program, so there are no country-to-country agreements. And so we get workers from Guatemala, the Philippines, Thailand, and so on, again, working in the agriculture sector, including in greenhouses and fields and beyond.

Much of my own work has been focused on thinking about the structures and struggles of living together on these lands and in these territories and how agriculture, labour – and especially migrant labour -- and racialization and racism are part of that story. In many regards it was begun as my own effort to situate my own self within these processes, and my own family's history of being pushed into these circuits of migration coming from the Caribbean, from Trinidad and Tobago and from Guyana, respectively, my mom and my dad.

And what I've arrived at is that, and especially here I'm thinking about the relationship between settler colonialism and global capitalism, I'm struck by how, when we think about settler colonialism, or even this sort of relatively new understanding that folks are arriving at – you know, we are all treaty people – who is the "we" is both, structurally speaking, stubbornly persistent yet shifting. Who is the "we" shifts because we're in a world in motion - there's movement and migration, of course. And so, we have folks that have tried to capture that, including Hannah Arendt, who talks about the freedom of movement and it being the sort of "prototypical gesture" of being free. Freedom of movement as sort of the precondition for people's actions in the world. And on some level, I want to push and challenge that idea. And I don't want to challenge it by saying that motion or movement is not important, but actually by saying that the concept of freedom of movement itself is what we could call enclosed - it's contained. And we need to see that there is something else outside of freedom of movement and that something else is essential to our critiques of settler colonialism and to global capitalism.

No doubt you would know that capitalism is about the production of pliable labour for surplus extraction, and that racialization is a primary way or mode of producing that pliability. And that's produced by creating a differentiation, the differences between the labour that's produced - racialized differences, a racialized hierarchy. It's important to note in that context, that the histories of global capitalism, although treated as something of a linear story, is far from it. We can take 17th century Barbados as an example, which distinguishes itself as the first society with a majority slave population and soon after becomes a powerhouse of sugar production. And it has this curious concoction of workers, which inhabit the island colony, enslaved Indigenous peoples stolen from Guyana and elsewhere to harvest cotton and tobacco, white indentured servants from England, Ireland, Scotland, also primarily in cotton and tobacco, a good number of whom at the hands of Cromwell, found themselves "Barbadoed" in the euphemism of the day, or as we would say today, deported, exiled and expelled to the island of Barbados. And then a sizable and growing population of enslaved people, primarily from Africa, who were tasked with harvesting sugarcane. The Barbados example can stand in some respect, the rest of the Caribbean and on some level in relation to the rest of the Americas. What's missing here from our understanding of global capitalism is that settler colonialism is as a formation and it's about the dispossession. It's about what one scholar put, "it's territorially acquisitive in perpetuity". In other words, it's about the processes of dispossessing, about the theft of land and territories or the authority over one's relationship to those lands.

Leanne Simpson talks about this as a gendered structure. She says "I experienced settler colonialism as a gendered structure and a series of complex and overlapping processes that work together as a cohort to maintain that structure." But it's also a racialized structure and no doubt Leanne Simpson appreciates this. There's something of a theoretical swing of late in critical understandings, away from the idea that racism emerged out of capitalism to the idea now that capitalism emerged out of racism. And of course, this is marked by folks that are talking about racial capitalism, or as I talk about racialized capitalism, some of that lineage, no doubt, extends to Cedric Robinson's work from 1983, Black Marxism. And irrespective of how we see things, it's important now to appreciate that the entire regime of production and social reproduction of global capitalism is a racialized production. So rather than imposing a sort of a dichotomy between gendered and racialized formulations, we need a more dynamic one in which the elements of class racialization and gender and so on persist all at once as Himani Bannerji would say, or has said.

In this then, we can start to think about colonialism and I want to go to Fanon's ground-breaking distinction or description. The colonial world and the anti-colonial inferno of Fanon's intervention marks the socio-spatial encounter between the settler and the native. It's "a world cut in two", as Fanon says, "a system of compartments". It is spacious for the settler and for the native, it's "a narrow world strewn with prohibitions". This is a direct quote of course, from Fanon, "the settler owes the fact of his very existence that is to say, his property, to the colonial system".

But where do migrant workers fit in this? Where does the migrant worker call home or homeland in the colonial encounter? So, to appreciate it, we need to recognize the essential features of the figure of the migrant. Of course, the migrant is a figure. There's no such thing as "the migrant". It's a political and legal construction, an imposition, imposed. And in that, the essential features are racialization and foreignness on one side, and of course those are more or less synonymous when we talk about migrant labour, and then movement on the other. The settler colonial racial relation is set to turn on the displacement and replacement of the native in a given territory. In privileging territorial dispossession in the first instance, this treats it as the principal resource. And I want to push back on that somewhat. Because then certain accounts while acknowledging that

it's the principal resource, then turn around and summon the work and labour through something like a rear-guard account, through the back door as such, noting almost immediately how dispossession requires and I'm quoting here "physical power and the supporting infrastructure of the state". We could call that work and labour. So, we have the historical and ongoing work of displacement and dispossession of Indigenous peoples and territory occurring, not solely through settlers and their progeny, but also through the deployment of racialized, unfree migrant labour. This produces a rather strange juxtaposition, right, of the foreign other, the racialized unfree migrant labourer, or labour, and the so-called Indigenous other. We see that in a structural relationship of settler colonial Canada, the migrant other, and Indigenous other are linked through the undertaking - and now I'm thinking about temporary labour migration and agriculture – of agricultural work in service of settler capitalist accumulation.

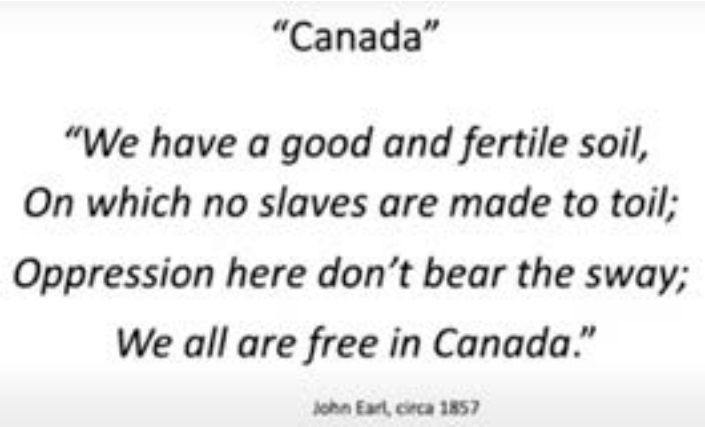

Photo 5 – "John Earl's Poem from 1857" (screen capture from the "We are all Treaty People" seminar)

Photo 6 – "Sidewalk from High Park in 2020" (screen capture from "We are all Treaty People" seminar)

Here's [see Photo 5] a nice representation of that - a poem from 1857, a school teacher in the Norfolk county area.

I'm about to talk a little bit more about Norfolk County and of course, Norfolk and Haldimand go together. And then of course, when we think about Haldimand, we think about the Haldimand Tract and Six Nations. We need to keep those connections alive here. Here's the mythology surrounding Canada at the time and one that you would be familiar with. "We have a good and fertile soil on which no slaves are made to toil; Oppression here don't bear the sway; we all are free in Canada." And of course, we could look through and find other evidence of these kinds of mythologies operating. I found this [see Photo 6] in High Park in 2020. And there are other kinds of representations.

We have a sense then that the migrant farm labour is used to undercut the very existence, the survival, of Indigenous peoples and communities. But surely there's a great deal left out of this story. And I want to pick up on some of that with a little bit of the time that I have left. I will try to do so relatively quickly. Because if we leave the story at that, if we are to merely take the migrant as a structural impediment to ending settler colonialism, this would miss out on the lived existence of black migration, I want to call it, on what we might refer to as the racialization of movement across space and time, within the development of global capitalism. This would effectively miss out on violence perpetuated across black labouring bodies within the afterlife of slavery, as Saidiya Hartman points out.

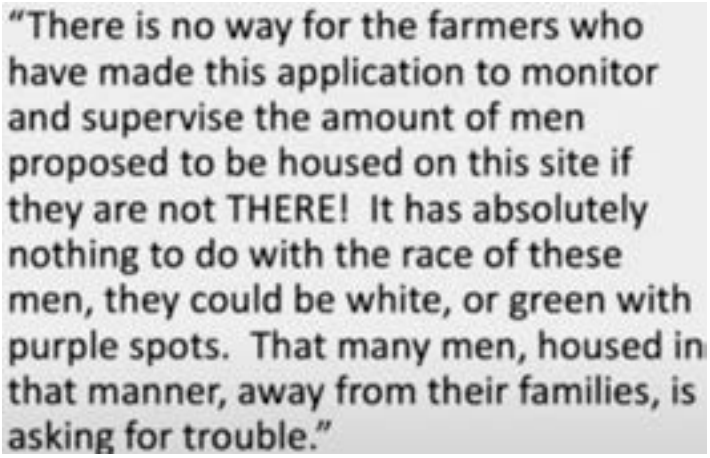

Photo 7 – "On Worker Supervision" (screen capture from the "We are all Treaty People" seminar)

So we need to dig a little bit deeper. I want to take you to Norfolk for a couple of quick examples. In late 2011, there was a potato grower who sought to turn an abandoned school house into housing for migrant workers. And in doing so, it invoked the need for zoning bylaw amendment, which allowed them for public consultation. And so we heard from locals about their feelings, about turning the school house into housing for migrant workers. Here [see Photo 7] is one intervention that was produced. "That has

nothing to do with the race of these men that could be white or green with purple spots that many men housed in that manner away from their families is asking for trouble."

150 years earlier, there was an important intervention in that same area, in Norfolk - a legal challenge that unfolded over the integration of a black student into a local public school, in Charlottesville township, which is in Norfolk. So, a local farmer, George Washington, challenged the shifting of school district boundaries, appealed to Egerton Ryerson, who said, "sorry, I can't help you. You should go to court." And George Washington, on behalf of his son, Solomon, was successful in court, but couldn't afford to pay the court fees. And I should say George Washington was a pretty well to do farmer, is our understanding, and lost the farm because he couldn't in fact pay those fees. And as a result, became a labourer about a hundred or so kilometers away, according to Rachel Zeller's important recent work. So, we can see examples here of the life of a black farmer being undercut in these conditions just as we saw in 2011. So that was 1857, the 1850s, just as we saw in 2011, with migrant workers and their housing being undercut and therefore their existence in the community being undercut.

I'm seeing I'm running out of time here. So, I'd like to try to push forward a little bit. I'll leave some space here for Chris to do his thing. So much more to say, but I want to just leave you with two sorts of interventions here. And I think what we should see is that important to the idea here is not just freedom of movement, but what Fred Moten calls fugitive movement or what CLR James called spontaneity, creative human activity. That creative human activity, that fugitive movement, is movement that is autonomous - it can't be enclosed or contained in the sense that we should read Fanon as being, not just someone who describes colonialism, but someone who prescribes an understanding of resistance to colonialism - as one that should never be enclosed or contained. And so with that, I'd like to leave you with the understanding that then there was something beyond freedom of movement. We could call it fugitive movement. We could call it spontaneity. We should see it as autonomous movement and can never be contained and that needs to be central to our struggles. Given the amount of time I've used, I'd like to stop there and I'll pick up on the rest in the discussions. Thanks for your attention.

MARTHA STIEGMAN:
Thank you so much for that, Adrian. Chris, over to you.

CHRIS RAMSAROOP:
I just want to check how much time do I have?

MARTHA STIEGMAN:
15 minutes?

CHRIS RAMSAROOP:
All right. I'll try to do this in 10 minutes. So, I will leave some stuff to the Q & A. I just want to respond briefly - we had a conversation about maple syrup in the previous presentation. I want to take up some points with respect to maple syrup during the Q & A. It's really important, actually. It's an important connection between migrant labour and what your important work is. And Adrian doesn't know this, but I am planning to get bowling outfits for the rest of Justicia - that's at our upcoming meeting.

So I try to be as quick as possible here. I think that Adrian did lay an incredible foundation for what I want to try to discuss, not as I guess sophisticated and impressive as what he's done, but let me try to add a few additional points to what he's saying. So, thank you for providing the space today to share some of my initial thoughts. A few years ago at the Food Secure Canada conference, there was an exchange regarding the role of migrant labour here in Canada. Someone arose to speak strongly against the presence of migrant workers from the Global South. The reasons provided were: stealing jobs from Canadians, taking away the opportunities from Indigenous communities and basically overall decreasing labour in Canada. Irrespective of what I said regarding the structural issues that lead to migration of migrant workers to here in Canada, it had no effect. And I suspected that many people held the same beliefs and notions with respect to the arrival of temporary foreign workers. There are questions regarding the role of land and property and the role of Canada as a settler state whereby we need to engage in critiques with respect to the role of the nation state and its ongoing genocide of Indigenous communities.

However, simultaneously, we need to ensure that our analysis does not condemn or attack migrants and that our focus is on structures, not peoples. Additionally, our critiques should not solely focus on the parameters within the nation state, but also need to interrogate Canada's role as an Imperial and colonial actor whose multinational operations are perpetuating genocide, not only within our own "borders", but across the global south as well. Whether it's Canadian corporations and the poisoning of lands and water such as the Omai mines in Guyana where in 1995, 4.2 million cubic meters of cyanide containing slurry escaped after a dam broke. This accident of course has had irreparable damage to the Essequibo rivers in Guyana. Or the role of Canadian gold companies, such as Omai Gold

and other mining companies in CRNA. And how they've negatively impacted the community such as the Saramaka, which are a Maroon community in Suriname. Finally, the role of the Cabot luxury golf development in St. Lucia that is currently threatening Indigenous grave sites that have existed untouched for over a thousand years. Canada's role in genocide exists the world over.

Returning to migrant workers here in Canada, as many know, many migrants that are employed in agriculture, whether it's through formal arrangements, such as the TFW program, are from Indigenous communities that have been ravaged by war, wealth extraction and displacement. How do their voices become centered in these discussions? And that we address the structural issues that lead towards migration rather than demonize migrant communities. This would centrally position the role of Canada's food system and its agricultural Imperial wing whose power and influence is leading to communities across the global south not being able to feed themselves. In the Caribbean, for example, once the nations that were food self-reliant are now food dependent on imports from the global north. Our processes and perils of Caribbean and other regions are on global dependence for food from the north. I'm also very cognizant of the role that Canada's agriculture has played in the displacement of Indigenous lands and that's something that we need to further discuss both here and abroad.

I am also thinking about what areas of solidarity exists between Indigenous communities and migrant labourer. What possibilities for solidarity within the nation state as well as globally exist? Thinking through some of our most recent interventions regarding the DNA sweep. And some of you may or may not be know what the hell I'm talking about. In 2013, there was a DNA sweep near Tillsonburg, Ontario, as a result of sexual assault. A general description of a suspect was provided. 96 migrant farm workers from the Caribbean were asked to provide their DNA. On one farm where the majority of workers were employed, the boss made it clear that any worker who did not provide their DNA would not be able to return to work the following year. The Ontario Provincial Police, the police force that conducted this review, promised workers that their DNA would be destroyed. It's important to note that irrespective of what these workers looked like, they were all considered suspects. Before even interviewing the workers, they collected their DNA. As a result of a systemic review conducted by the OIPRD (Office of the Independent Police Review Director), not only did we find out that there were concerns about the consent forms, but that the DNA collected by the police were never destroyed, and they're kept forever at the center for forensic science lab here in Toronto. As there are both human rights implications and the class action proceeding, we find out that there are anywhere between 7 to 12,000 people whose names are held in this database. These numbers are only for Ontario. So there're questions regarding consent, privacy, racialized policing, power and domination with respect to marginalized communities. Subsequent to the 2013 DNA sweep, the Royal Canadian mounted police, or the RCMP conducted a similar DNA sweep on the Garden Hill First Nation after the murder of 11-year-old, Theresa Robinson. Approximately 2000 people who identified as men between the ages of 16 to 66 provided DNA samples. It's not a coincidence to me that at least migrants and Indigenous peoples are targeted through broad sweeps, such as these.

This begs the question of what sites of solidarity exists and how do we move forward? How do we address the practices of racialized policing that perpetuate ongoing, colonial and social relations within rural communities or Indigenous communities? Similarly, my gut is telling me that in similar practices to Ontario, the DNA from the Garden Hill First Nations is more than likely to be kept in a similar database forever.

Akin to carding, our collective struggles to examine the destruction of DNA currently being held, is situated within longstanding practices of how marginalized communities are discriminated against by policing. On a side note, with our ongoing DNA human rights case, it's also no surprise that the same legal teams representing the government in our DNA case are the same legal teams that are representing the state and trying to suppress the rights of Indigenous communities in such important, critical struggles, such as the Land Back movement near Caledonia. So, the same legal suppression, same legal tactics are being used against Indigenous communities as they are with migrant workers. In addition, consider what Adrian mentioned with respect to the erasure and dispossession of both land and labour in rural Ontario. How do we read another recent legal decision such as in [Schuyler Farms Limited v. Dr. Nesathurai, 2020 ONSC 4711], in a longer lineage of racial and legal exclusion?

Basically, what the Nesathurai legal decision was, that the chief medical officer had limited the amount of migrant workers per bunk house in the Haldeman-Norfolk area. The employers organized, lobbied and had tried to have this repealed so it didn't impede their access to production. The first few levels at the health review board, they lost. At

divisional court, through our intervention, we were successful. We saw tremendous political lobbying by farmers to basically engage in white nationhood and to continue this longer lineage of racial exclusion.

There's a lot more than I want to talk about in the Q & A, but I just want to leave with these five questions:
How do we ensure that resistance to settler colonialism does not reinforce nationalism, where we view Indigenous relations only as a product of what is internal to the Canada and not what is external?
How do we ensure that our discussions about unsettling Canada does not reinforce global hierarchies and systems of apartheid?
How do we link Canada's role as an imperial power to destruction of lands across the world that are contributing to people being forced to move?
How do we address the cooptation and the current dialogue being used to reinforce neo-liberalism?
How do we address issues of food sovereignty, that address global migration and the role of capitalist agriculture production and social relations with the global south?

And just to close off with what Adrian said, it's really important to think about the role of mobility, the role of resistance and the role of ongoing solidarity amongst communities as we proceed to think about our food justice and migrant justice communities moving forward. So thank you very much. Peace out.

MARTHA STIEGMAN:
Wow. Thank you so much, Adrian and Chris for that incredibly lucid breakdown of settler colonialism in Canada, its relationship with global capitalism and processes of gendered and racialized oppression and the way that, that pits migrant workers and Indigenous people against each other in some cases, but also creates perhaps interesting grounds for solidarity as well. And I'm looking forward to hearing more and exploring more of that in the Q & A. Thank you. I'm going to pass the mic now. I'm going to introduce our last two speakers who worked together very closely in the RAIR project and other scholarship as well and activism.

So Sarah Rotz is an assistant professor here at York and EUC. Sarah's work is grounded in environmental justice with a focus on land and food systems. Much of her work aims to situate political economic processes, such as agri-food industrialization, financialization, and policy with a lens of settler colonial patriarchy and racial capitalism. Sarah is a collaborative and interdisciplinary scholar who also explores the ethics, politics and processes of research. She draws from anti-colonial feminist and community-based methodologies to engage in accountable and reciprocal research practices for more just and sustainable land and food futures.

Lauren Kepkiewitz is a Banting post-doctoral fellow at the University of Manitoba. Her research examines settler colonialism and food movements, as well as food sovereignty in mountain communities in and around where she lives in Chanh Pay Oda. She's also part of the RAIR collective, which is a collaborative research project that aims to support Indigenous land rematriation, land sharing and land back. So it's my pleasure to welcome Sarah and Lauren who are also people I've gotten to know through the food movement over the years.

SARAH ROTZ:
Thank you, Martha. Can you hear me okay? Okay. So I wanna thank you, Martha, for having us here. I'll start off a little bit and then Lauren can jump in. So, I first just want to situate myself. I'm speaking from unceded Algonquin territory in and around the Ottawa-Gatineau region, but I also have ongoing connections to Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee territory. As Martha said, I work at York, but I also grew up in the Niagara region, so long-standing connections there. And I'm a white settler and my ancestors are Acadian on my mom's side. So going back ancestors from France who colonized the Eastern coast of Canada, PEI, specifically going back to what I've been able to investigate, as much as I can to the 1600s. And then I also have Austrian, English and Irish ancestry arriving around three generations back.

And I also want to echo Martha's point earlier, about not having figured it out. So I'm going to just talk a little bit about some of my research and the ways in which some of that research and my activism as well, has sort of helped us situate some of the processes that Lauren and I are both grounded in through the RAIR project and working through right now. And I also want to say thanks to Adrian and Chris for that excellent analysis of the food system, and its foundations in settler colonialism and oppression. So, I just want to sort of, I'll build off of this a little bit, just to speak to some of the investigations of my work around the settler colonial foundations in the food system, and then why this brings us to some of the work that Lauren and I are doing right now. And Lauren has also, I don't want to speak for Lauren, but has also done a lot of this work focusing on the ways that the food system here in so-

called Canada, but also other settler colonial contexts, like the US and Australia, are really underpinned by the project of colonialism and the ways in which colonialism drove the process of land theft and accumulation, and then gave rise to the food system that we all sort of exist in, in different ways, and live within today. And so really what a lot of my research has tried to show is how settler land acquisition really allowed for and shaped these food economies, or settler food economies, through labour, land and consumption. And so, you know, it's no surprise that land use regimes and food policy now, some work that Lauren and I have worked on, have both evolved to support and serve settler economies.

In my PhD research, I actually worked with white settler farmers, or interviewed settler farmers specifically, and what became really clear to me and I think Adrian really spoke to this, is that the material, the physical, the territorial, the land-based interest of farmers and the industry have been really to sort of maintain that resource control, maintain and grow settler enterprises, going back to the late 18 and early 1900s of food growing. And, and now we're seeing you know, exponential levels in corporate concentration, and that's creating sort of new economic tensions and inequities, which a lot of people are focusing on in food policy: these economic inequities. But I think we always need to sort of go back to the colonial and racial hierarchies that are at its root. And we can't really lose sight of that in the midst of these economic inequities. And so, you know, in my research, what I really found were the sort of consistent narratives of supremacy and territoriality when speaking of themselves as farmers in relation to Indigenous communities. I also asked a lot about migrant farm workers.

And so in this work, what I really wanted to understand is how these colonial underpinnings shape the spatial and social identity of white settler farmers and how this identity again is sort of used to justify their ownership over colonized land while also then limiting access to non-settler and specifically migrant farm worker populations. And so, as Adrian also pointed to, colonialism then is very much intimately tied to, and really can't be separated from the evolution of capitalism. And then how, you know, Canada then deploys this wealth accumulated by dispossession and displacement of Indigenous nations to then extract resources and labour from many other regions across the world from, as we know Guatemala to the Philippines.

Just to be a bit more specific when talking about the rise of the dominant food system, and a lot of historians have talked a lot about the ways in which this was marked by the rise of settler European farm families who were sort of "given" or "gifted" and that's in the words of the colonial government, by receiving large acreages of land, 100-200 acres for nearly nothing. And there's extensive historical documentation, archival documents showing how English common law, private property rights, were fundamental to this land seizure, and Sarah Carter's, book Imperial Plots talks about the intersections between colonialism and patriarchy here and the ways in which this really allowed for the sort of patriarchal household unit to be able to kind of reproduce itself and reproduce labour - its means of subsistence - and then provide food for the expanding settler population across Canada.

And so, I think what I often want to get at when I'm speaking, especially to settler populations, is the ways that settlers were able to engage in profit-oriented food production on these large acreages, actually really gave rise to the market-based agri-food system that we have as being capital-intensive, industrial scale and so forth. And this was very much premised on that land theft - it required that. And so now, the vast majority of agricultural land had been built by and for settler populations. In fact, nearly about 95% of farmland today is managed by white settler families in some form or another. And farmers that I interviewed were living on farming land on average four generations, but going back eight or nine generations. And so, you know, regardless of the motives of individual settlers, we know that there's a purpose of the structure - settler colonialism evolves purposefully - there's intent to that in terms of elimination and accumulation by dispossession. So I think, you know, then it becomes no surprise when we see the ways in which Indigenous food growing, gathering, harvesting, has been restricted. Meanwhile, you know, we see restricting Indigenous involvement in settler agriculture over time as well. So it's really sort of a loose-loose.

And then one thing I think that I try to clarify in my work as well for other white settlers, is the way that this idea of the family farm that's so often referred to very romantically and un-problematically when we look at Ontario, across Canada, is that it emerged as the engine of Canadian agricultural production because it unilaterally seized land rights and food growing and gathering and access from Indigenous nations and people, and then redistributed those rights, I mean, legally, according to them but very much unethically and illegally. I think when we think about, you know, how do we think about law and what is legal, but they redistributed those rights to incoming white European families. So that's really where the, you know,

the centrality of coloniality really made the magnitude of land expansion in Canada possible. And so, within this sort of structure of settler colonialism shaping land and food, we've been thinking a lot about and exploring ways to support and prioritize Indigenous Land Back, land access, rematriation, which aren't all the same things, I understand, and also working through ways to undertake our obligations as settlers, ourselves, myself as a settler, and to remain accountable, as treaty people living in so-called Canada.

So, this is what brings us to the RAIR project. And I'll let Lauren speak a little bit to that project.

LAUREN KEPKIEWITZ:
Thanks Sarah. So yeah, I'm going to talk a little bit about the RAIR project, and sort of in response to some of the context that Sarah's set up as well as Adrian and Chris. The RAIR project really began with questions like, how do we support Indigenous land access and Indigenous land rematriation within colonial structures of land ownership? As well as within settler colonial society more broadly, and imperial and extractive relations globally as well. Which I think Chris fairly strongly highlighted. And then also on a sort of smaller level, how do we do that, as academics and within colonial structures of academia as well.

So, RAIR brought together a collaborative team who were interested in exploring these questions, including both Indigenous and settler scholars, as well as community activists and farmers, and we come from different social locations and different professional spaces. So, some of the things that I'm sharing today, particularly in relation to RAIR, draws on the collective work of RAIR which includes Danielle Boissoneau, Adrian Xavier-Lickers, Terran Giacomini, and Ayla Fenton, as well as Sarah and myself. So I just want to also send a shout out to the folks who aren't here and just to say that some of the things that - particularly in relation to RAIR - that I'm sharing come out of our work together and some of the things that that we've been learning and working on. So the core aim of the RAIR project is to find ways to center Indigenous women and two-spirit peoples, as well as to use the resources of our project, we've got a SSRHC Insight Development grant, as well as a few other resources to support Indigenous activism relating to land and food. So conceptually within this project, we use the concepts of relational accountability and land rematriation as starting points.

And we see relational accountability as a really key concept. We draw on the work of Dr. Pualani Kanahele and many other critical Indigenous scholars. And the idea of, or the use of relational accountability, I think really highlights the interdependence and interconnections of all things, including within and throughout the research process, as well as beyond that as well. And some of our members of the collective have suggested that research based in relational accountability might look like "feels work" rather than "field work". And that the emotional and personal aspects of research are really at the heart of research, but also of relationship building and solidarity building and movement building and resistance as well. So relational accountability also highlights the responsibilities that I, as myself as a white settler person and as a researcher, have to all of those around me, human and non-human entities, those who have come before and those who've come after, and this really builds on and draws on the work of Indigenous scholars, such as Margaret Kovach and Shawn Wilson who have articulated, you know, research as relationship. And so this is sort of some of the key foundations of, of the RAIR project. And then we also use land rematriation to really signal and route our relationships to one another with the land and in matrilineal knowledges actions and experiences. And we see rematriation as a way to respond to, you know, ongoing settler colonialism, and also violent harms done to the earth and Indigenous nations.

And so, you know, conceptually that's sort of where the project comes from, but also, you know, we grapple a lot with, you know, how do we actually do this on the ground? I obviously don't have an answer again, what Martha said at the beginning, you know, I'm not an expert in this, but I will take a little bit of an opportunity to talk about how the collective as a whole tries to sort of put some of these concepts of relational accountability in particular into our daily lives, and how we use that within our project. So, you know, obviously COVID has been really disruptive. The project was originally sort of based on in-person gathering, centered around collective dialogue, movement building and collective work on the land. We also began this project before COVID, very much doing a lot of in-person meetings, eating nachos, you know, and getting to know each other that way. And like everybody, you know, had to pivot. But I have to say that one of the things that I think COVID has pointed out within this project as well as beyond is really the importance of those small acts of relationship building that are perhaps easy to overlook. And sometimes, you know, I find myself maybe dismissive of, and that is everything from, you know, making space for those moments of laughter, whether those are over zoom, as well

as making space for being honest about our capacity to do the work that we're doing, and to support folks when they need time away from this work as well. And that rest and that support is also part of this work, and part of solidarity and relationship building. We also, throughout the project, have really committed to, you know, self-reflectivity and ongoing learning, especially white settler folks, such as myself. And we try to make sure that, I guess, I should just speak for myself, but I try to make sure that I'm coming to this work showing up in a good way, and that I have done some of the work of understanding my positionality and my relationship to broader structures of settler, colonialism, capitalism, and patriarchy, white supremacy, and that I don't put that responsibility of doing that work on my Indigenous friends and colleagues, within the collective and beyond.

Of course, I am always learning. And so part of this, I think really, you know, for me, includes, you know, learning from on the ground work, learning from relationships, but also includes, you know, readings and crediting the work of Indigenous scholars and activists. And then on a more material level, the collective really aims to you to transfer financial resources that we have, and that our project has access to, to Indigenous and settler folks who are doing the work of land rematriation and solidarity building on the ground.

So, I'm actually going to pass it back to Sarah to talk a little bit more about some of the institutional constraints and specific academic contexts that we work within.

SARAH ROTZ:
Yeah. I actually first want to mention one of the biggest issues so far, and I think there's probably a lot of academics here that have probably experienced this for a longer period of time than we have in this project. But I want to talk a little bit about the way that institutions really constrain collaborative and community centered work, and actually Martha, your paper, when you talk about in your paper around institutional research ethics, you talk about being able to do research in a good way - oftentimes despite, not because of, institutional protocols and structures. And I often find in a lot of my experiences with institutional grants, ethics, it's really hard to be able to work within those systems and in those systems and also be able to do our work in a grounded and community-centered way.

And so, one of the things we've been asking along the way is how do we make this relational work that as Lauren said, has been for a long time, very much centered on trust building together, theory building, not just analysis, but how do we actually make decisions about the work that we're doing together in a good way? Especially when folks are at really different points in their lives and their careers. A lot of folks are - they're not all academics - some are single parents – you know, different kinds of academic and non-academic positions. And so how do we support one another and how do we do this work together and again, make it sort of legible to funders and academic institutions whose timelines and their expectations are very much rooted in quantification, codification, measurability outcomes and things like that. And I've got to say that even the more progressive, the work that I've done with SSHRC and CIHR, I've seen a lot of nods to supporting community-centered work and maybe they are in the coming years, but it's still, there's still a lot of restrictions that are related to grant administration.

So you know, for our process with ethics, as very much a collaborative group, we had to submit three ethics protocols. One of which took quite a long time because they frankly didn't really understand and it oftentimes, it felt like there was no room for community-centered practice because they really wanted us to have all the answers. Frankly, so much of our process is, you know, here's what we're thinking of doing, but we're working together and we're centering not only the research collective members, but the folks that we're reaching out to in our process. Like we don't, you know, we have an idea of maybe what kinds of activities we want to do, but there's no prescription here. That's like fundamentally part of our process is to not have a prescribed outcome. And there's very little room for like that co-creative practice, both at the sort of ethics level and at the grant level. So that sort of iterative process, I found really difficult to write through in an ethics protocol.

And then, you know, I think there's clear limitations about who gets paid, who gets credit in a grant. I'm sure many others have experienced this before, but when, you know, for instance, we tried to switch a collaborator to a co-investigator, because they were doing a lot of work on the project and they were unable to do that because they didn't hold the proper academic positions, and so that qualified them for this role. And then you also can't pay collaborators who are community members. And so we have had really had to sort of try and figure out ways to compensate folks, justly compensating people for the work that they're doing. There's, you know, and I think this comes out of this safety culture or a culture of wanting to make sure people aren't cheating the system, but it really creates hierarchies in a lot of ways as well, and disparities between the differ-

ent members. And we really noticed that, it tries to formalize hierarchies between our group that we were trying to resist. And so how do we push back against that when you have to have a PI that does particular things and has particular powers? And so pushing back against that was quite difficult. And I mean, there's a lot more detail that we could get into about that process and how we've been trying to push back against that and also hold space for one another and also hold and understand our own obligations and responsibilities as settler members of the collective.

But I also realize it's quarter after two, so I don't want to take up too much time here, but we can respond to some of those specifics around processing, the ways in which we've been trying to do that "field work" together in a good way. And then also actually trying to, you know, get material work done as well, but not doing it in a way that could potentially be harmful, frankly. So, I'll leave it at that. Happy to take questions and Lauren, if you want to like add a couple of things, I know, you know, there's other things that we could really talk about around the ways in which we're trying to also confront settler colonial structures and doing work with colonial bureaucracies and trying to point to things like the coloniality of food policy and land use policy, which Lauren and I are both working on. But so, you know, it's something that we're trying to do together, or, you know, at the same time pushing back against colonial structures and also support Indigenous land back and rematriation.

MARTHA STIEGMAN:
Okay. Thank you so much for that, Sarah and Lauren. Hearing you talk, I'm remembering working as part of the People's Food Policy Project and Dawn Morriston's constant interventions in that process where she was constantly slowing the group down and reminding us that process was important and there was always this tension between needing to get the work done and Dawn reminding us about process and integrity and how we kind of came to the realization that the process was the work. So, it's interesting to hear you talk about your process in that light as well.

So we have 15 minutes, but maybe we can take a little bit more depending on how the conversation goes, before we open it to the audience for questions. First off, I just want to draw everyone's attention to the chat where Chris has laid out his five bowling pins - his questions for us as a group. But I also want to ask, Chris, Adrian, Sarah, Lauren, Leah, if you all have questions for each other? Or responses to each other's interventions? They could involve maple syrup or not. Thanks.

Q&A WITH AUDIENCE

LEAH DECKER:
I would really like to hear that.

CHRIS RAMSAROOP:
Yeah. So it's really, really important. I'm just going to read... so one of the things for us to think about, maple syrup, it's also a large export product. So I want to talk just briefly. This is from a statistical overview, the Canadian maple industry, and then I'm going to talk about what's happened during COVID with respect to the maple syrup industry.

So I'm just going to read page 2. And just in case if people don't know much about it, I definitely about a year ago, didn't know. So the Canadian maple syrup industry accounts for approximately 75% of the world's maple syrup production with 92% of the Canadian production originating from Quebec. Due to favorable weather conditions, Canadian maple producers harvested 14.3 million gallons of maple syrup for 2020 surpassing the 2019 record of 13.2 million gallons produced by 8.3%. This increase production results in total assets of $558.5 million in 2020, up 7.9% from the year earlier. Maple products accounted for 6.4% of all Canadian horticultural farm cash receipts. Canada's world's largest exporter of maple products in terms of value and volume with exports valued at 550 million in 2020, up almost 20% from 2019. Quebec accounted for 96.4% of Canadian maple products and exports in 2020. 68 countries around the world, nearly 60% goes to United States, 9.8% to Germany, 6% of the United Kingdom, 5.2% to Australia, and 4.8% to Japan and 4% to France.

Now I'm doing this a bit backwards. The reason why maple syrup has so interested me over the last year is during the height of, the height of COVID, many of you have become familiar with the plight of migrant farm workers during COVID and the widespread, you know, the thousands of workers who've been sick, unfortunately many have died, both here and in their home countries, as a result of COVID and, you know, one would expect... and I think we're all a critical bunch here - I think we know differently, but what happened in 2020 at the Christmas holiday time, of course in December when nobody knew, of course, that Canada decided to expand the commodity list for the

Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program. What I'm referring to here is the industries that are permitted to the Seasoned Agricultural Worker Program to bring in migrant labour. And the maple syrup industry was one of these added sectors in 2020. So, we see here during the pandemic, the export commodity increasing, and also to strengthen Canada's role globally is through the expansion of the SAWP agreement to include temporary foreign workers in the industry. And I believe particularly to appease the Quebec agricultural-class employers. So this disconnection here about thinking about the theft, the erasure of Indigenous communities, and then the dispossession and the exploitation of migrant bodies all during the heightened pandemic is something for us to kind of consider, to interrogate, together collectively.

MARTHA STIEGMAN:
Thanks for that, Chris.

LEAH DECKER:
Thanks for that, Chris. I appreciate - that's something that I wasn't aware of and would love to follow up on.

SARAH ROTZ:
I also just wanted to mention too: I've been doing some research on the Ontario Ministry of Food and Agriculture and some of their approaches to Indigenous relations. And one of the big findings there is maybe perhaps unsurprisingly, is the ways in which they very much center and prioritize in sort of industrial practices of what they understand to be traditional Indigenous methods, mainly maple syrup and berries, and very much pigeonhole, "Indigenous farming", in those particular ways that very much conserve the settler economy and the sort of downstream effects of that for the export economy, as you mentioned Chris. And so, you very much see that coming out of government policy and government practice and grant programming over and over again. So you see how it gets translated as well or how it gets sort of reproduced.

LAUREN KEPKIEWITZ:
Yeah. And I just wanted to add to that. I think, you know, part of my research has also been thinking about how, you know, it's easy to talk about sort of the broad corporate food system as participating in and structuring relations in particular ways and upholding the structures of oppression. And so my research also talks about how that happens within like settler food movements and progressive spaces as well, or so-called progressive spaces, particularly white settler spaces and white settler food movement spaces. And just like that, that the ways that whiteness gets reproduced and the failure to ask questions of, you know, whose lands our food systems are on, who's working within these food systems. And that there's often this framing of dispossession continually, in relation to whiteness and white people being dispossessed, whether that's small-scale white settler farmers, without taking up that call- of the way that Indigenous folks have been and continue to be dispossessed of their land. And just the way that, that violence, settler violence continues to play out and how we check that in order to challenge those tendencies in order to show up in better ways as a white settler person.

MARTHA STIEGMAN:
Thanks for that Lauren. Maybe I'll open the floor now to questions from the audience and you can either raise your hand via the reaction button, or you can put questions in the chat as well. Anyone have any questions or comments?

AUDIENCE MEMBER #1 (TALIA):
Hi, thanks everyone for your insights and sharing your incredible work with us today. I'm a first-year master's student at York under the supervision of Sarah and currently developing my thesis research proposal. And I'm particularly interested in food activism in Toronto and if and how food activisms in the city are supporting Indigenous food sovereignty and like, how we can do that better. So Lauren, reading your dissertation has been very informative for me, so thank you. But I'm wondering if anyone has any advice for young researchers like myself, but I also see some of my students from my tutorials here are, so hi and they might be thinking about this too. So yeah, how do we imagine, like short-term projects that are in this colonial extractivist structure of academia? And how do we like design these, if you have any advice for us? I would really appreciate that.

MARTHA STIEGMAN:
I'm going to take a stab at that one. And I think the only comment that I would have is that, it's very, very, I think very, very hard to do grounded relational work in a short-term way. And that in my experience, the only way that that makes sense is if it's part of a larger arc and if it's seen as kind of an opening step in a longer-term process, which is what this work is really, this is lifelong engagement.

LAUREN KEPKIEWITZ:
Yeah, I totally agree Martha. I don't know that I have much, I mean, I could go on, but I don't know that I have much to add and in terms of this.

AUDIENCE MEMBER #1 (TALIA):

Yeah thanks.

MARTHA STIEGMAN:
Are there other questions or comments from the audience or from the panel for each other?

AUDIENCE MEMBER #2 (LISA):
I just wanted to respond a little bit to that for a second. Just thinking about the tensions of land access in urban spaces as well, and thinking about food and medicine - and I wanted to bring it up because we're talking about food, because you know, we're talking about food so much - I was thinking about that and especially in relation to maple syrup, just thinking about it in terms of medicine, and for Anishinaabe people, maple water is, you know, is seasonal medicine that is really important. And then, that there's ceremony around it and it has a cultural, has a really important cultural place. Anyway, so it's really interesting to hear about Chris, what you said, Chris. And also, I was also just wanted to talk, just sort of plant the seed, I guess something from family stories, my own family stories in terms of migrant immigrant work, or I would say rather not migrant labour, but my own family moving from reserve to for-wage labour from sort of central Ontario to south Southern Ontario. And so that in the forties and fifties, before the temporary worker program there were quite a few Indigenous people who were even... they would send a truck to the reserve to move people down seasonally to pick fruit. And so, there's a kind of interesting, something I've thought about a lot, but I think it's a kind of interesting other aspect or another part of the story, I guess, that doesn't always get discussed and it just adds another element, which has been discussed actually today really well. It just, it was that particular part of my own family history that I've been trying to think through and thinking about food systems and migrant labour. Anyway, thank you. This was really great. Awesome. Really well put together, Martha. Awesome. Miigwech.

MARTHA STIEGMAN:
Miigwech. Thanks for that Lisa. Bradley Clemens has another comment in the chat that I think is worth echoing. That yes, long-term commitment is important to consider from the get-go, but also to remember what Hayden King has said, is that white settler allies should be focusing almost exclusively on dismantling our own colonial institutions. We definitely have our work to do.

Leah – as we were looking at some of the images of your work I was really, I was wondering about your process and I was wondering about like, our colleague Deb McGregor kind of talks about, you know, trying to figure out the difference between being appropriate and being appropriating. And so, I was wondering how you kind of navigate that tension in your work as a white settler artist who is trying to live in Indigenous sovereignty and who is collaborating often with Indigenous artists, how you keep that tension alive and how you think about that?

LEAH DECKER:
Thanks Martha, for that question. It's hard to answer that very succinctly because it's very different each time. And certainly, you know, I worked with a lot of material culture that has been appropriated and that is, you know, a part of white settler life, because of being appropriated and subsumed into that aspect of Canadiana. And I mean, I can talk maybe effectively about a project I didn't show, which is Official Denial. Actually, it's not just one project, but it's a lot of work that I did with Hudson Bay blankets. And, you know, in that work, I really looked at the blankets as kind of the original - I'm just going to turn my camera off - So I first look at Hudson Bay blankets as a form of colonial currency, which is what they, you know, came to these lands as. And then they move on to have a role and a place in Indigenous communities through trade and including in use of biological warfare. And so there's a lot of layers to the object as material culture, and there's a kind of extensive genealogy that, spans back... Well, and, the other thing is that they're now in contemporary times, there's this kind of branding of Canadiana, but also a branding of the Hudson Bay company.

So you know, I'm very well aware and of these kinds of complex genealogies and, you know, my intention is to sort of mine those aspects, and I think more often - trying to un-appropriate something, so kind of lay bare some of these stories and implications. And I think to the person who said that the job for white settlers primarily is to take down the white settler institutions. So if I'm working with this construction of the canoe as a you know, aspect of iconic kind of form of Canadian or material culture, or the maple syrup or the blankets it's to do that job of dismantling the colonial structure. It's, you know, I make very careful decisions when, depending on what kind of object or material culture I'm working with. And I do make decisions to do and not do things based on that object, who I'm working with and what context, and, you know, sometimes I fly very close to the line. Yeah, as people are saying it's not always comfortable and it's not always right. I try to inform myself really well and talk to people as well.

I don't know if that answered.

MARTHA STIEGMAN:
Oh, it did. That was fantastic. Thank you so much, Leah. We've gone over time and I want to be respectful of people's time. So we're gonna close now. I want to say a huge thank you to Lauren and Sarah and Chris and Adrian and Leah for being with us today, for sharing your insights and your important work, and to all of you for spending these two hours with us as well.