Janice
Hladki

"REMEMBERING OTHERWISE": COUNTER-COMMEMORATION AND RE-TERRITORIALIZATION IN INDIGENOUS FILM AND VIDEO ART

Image practices have significant resonance under global conditions of visual scrutiny, securitization, and continuously emerging biopowers.[1] Nation states deploy visual media to determine national insider/outsider status and citizenry, to guard borders, and to regulate access to resources. Artists who seek to create work that sustains a democratic public sphere find access to funds, histories, and public memory constrained by global neo-liberal politics.[2] Nevertheless, alternative/experimental film and video art has been particularly important to the re-invigoration of a democratic public sphere, and such moving image art by Indigenous makers in particular is notable for how it contests and re-imagines cultural discourses about globally resonant, nation-state commemorations and the territorial claims embedded in the celebrations. In Canada, this artistic work invigorates contemporary protest practices, such as the Indigenous grassroots "Idle No More" movement, which has spread to locations worldwide and which rallies against ongoing nation-state oppressions regarding land expropriation;

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[1] See Lazzarato, Maurizio. (2006). From biopower to biopolitics. *Tailoring Biotechnologies*, 2(2), 11-20.; Magnet, Shoshana Amielle. (2011). *When biometrics fail: Gender, race, and the technology of identity.* Durham, Duke UP.; Puar, Jaspir. (2007). *Terrorist assemblages: Homonationalism in queer times.* Durham: Duke UP.; Zimmermann, Patricia. (2000). *States of Emergency: Documentaries, wars, democracies.* Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press.

[2] Zimmermann, *States of Emergency.*

environmental devastation, particularly in terms of oil pipeline developments; and government legislation regarding treaty rights. Commemorations of nation building typically ignore Indigenous ways of knowing and acclaim historical developments that suppress Indigenous sovereignty with regard to territory, but artistic Indigenous work provides critical counter remembrance to Western colonialist narratives.

This paper explores how contemporary, Canadian-based, Indigenous film and video by artists thinks or generates ideas[3] about memory in relation to settler colonialism and its devastating effects. This moving image work mobilizes historical and contemporary experiences of geography as well as translocal memories to examine multiple losses, especially the legacies of land expropriation. The creative practices re-terriorialize by countering normative constructions of the nation state, and they de-colonize by unpacking representations of the Indigenous "other." I draw on Roger I. Simon's[4] notions of "remembering otherwise" and "remembering obligation" to consider the pedagogical potential of Indigenous witnessing of the historical trauma of colonization. To situate and make visible these ideas, I focus on "counter-memorial" artworks that "reclaim and recast"[5] the dominant narratives in nation- and city-state celebrations of white settler histories. In particular, I explore works by Alanis Obomsawin (Abenaki), Shelley Niro (Mohawk), and Kent Monkman (Cree), and then, I examine in greater detail a video art piece by Dana Claxton (Hunkpapa Lakota Sioux), an artist who, like the other three practitioners, produces political memory work of counter-commemoration and re-territorialization. Claxton's work, entitled *Anwolek Regatta City* (2005), is a theoretically and formally complex reconstruction of history and memory that mobilizes strategies such as abstract and disjointed imagery, altered archival footage, ambient and electronic sound design, interrupted narrative, and motion change. Claxton deploys memories of Indigenous pasts to insist upon their rupture of the present and the future.

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[3] Bennett, Jill. (2005). *Empathic vision: Affect, trauma, and contemporary art.* Stanford: Stanford UP.

[4] Simon, Roger I. (2005). *The touch of the past. Remembrance, learning, and ethics.* New York: Continuum.

[5] Jiwani, Yasmin. (2011). Pedagogies of hope: Counternarratives and anti-disciplinary tactics. *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, & Cultural Studies,* 33(4), 343.

"Remembering Otherwise" and "Remembering Obligation"

"Remembering Otherwise" is the title of Roger I. Simon's introduction to his book *The Touch of the Past: Remembrance, Learning, and Ethics*. In mapping out his approach to memory, Simon underlines the idea of "practices of remembrance," particularly in terms of questioning those histories that produce norms of "social coherence" and generating representations of the past that inscribe recognition of and responsibility to alterity.[6] In thinking about "global memory," Simon is particularly attentive to how violences of colonialism are implicated in enlightenment histories of global relations and in contemporary globalization agendas. He underlines critical thought and suggests that the "practice of social memoration, of remembrance, must be considered a form of indeterminate critical pedagogy, a practice of inquiry and learning."[7] Remembering otherwise, particularly in relation to a violent colonial past, means a shift from accounts that reproduce historical experience through normative knowledges to critical re-formulations that destabilize those narratives and representations. In remembering differently from established commemorations, Obomsawin, Niro, Monkman, and Claxton, provide new learning that disorders understandings about the past, territory, and the state. In addition, their work also invites, in fact, demands, accountability from the spectator: a remembrance obligation. With this concept, Simon considers how ethical and political remembrance learning, through encountering images and words, can produce responsibility to an other, such that we take the "memories of others (memories formed in other times and spaces) into our lives and so live as though the lives of others mattered."[8] This remembering obligation "disrupts the presumptions of the 'self-same' and it entails "a difficult inheritance to those called to receive it."[9] The learning is indeterminate because it is a process rather than an arrival, and it is difficult because it means self-examination about the spectator's position in relation to the difficult inheritance: "instead of offering the deadening mantle of guilt, it challenges us to act in the name of a collective responsibility to continue the quest for justice and the establishment of new forms of interdependency that

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[6] Simon, *Touch of the past*, 3.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Simon, *Touch of the past*, 9.
[9] Ibid, 4.

honor the dignity and specificity of the other people's lives."[10] Remembering otherwise and remembering obligation, from Simon's point of view, are conduits for community formation and necessities for democratic social relations. Jacques Rancière is also concerned with building community and democracy, what he calls "the anticipation of a community to come,"[11] and, like Simon, constitutes pedagogy as an indeterminate process with transformative capacity.[12] At stake for both of these theorists is the critique of global neoliberalism, in terms of the regulation of citizenship and the prominence of political apathy and individualism,[13] as well as an examination of the potential for responsibility/obligation under these global conditions.

Ideas about remembering otherwise and remembering obligation are particularly compelling for an analysis of Indigenous film and video that, through counter-memorial practice, confront histories of colonization and the attempted genocide of Indigenous peoples. The moving image works discussed in this paper are forms "indicating an event whose effect continues into the present."[14] They realize "the entanglement of memory and imagination in relation to images"[15] and register trauma not only in the remembrance practices of the artists about their particular Indigenous histories but also in the reiteration of that trauma by nation-state commemorations, which, for Indigenous peoples, celebrate brutal invasions, the appropriation of land, environmental devastation, and assimilation taxonomies that destroy language and culture. Global neoliberalism for Indigenous peoples is understood as a prioritization of markets and profits, privatization, and individualism. Discourses of commemoration support the global circulation of ideologies that position Indigenous lives as necessarily subjugated, excluded, and assimilated. As Pamela Wilson and Michelle Stewart argue, Indigenous challenges to the conditions of domination and dispossession that result from past and

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[10] Ibid, 31.

[11] Rancière, Jacques. (2010). *Dissensus: On politics and aesthetics*. London: Continuum, 199.

[12] Ibid; see also Rancière, Jacques. (1999). *Dis-agreement: Politics and philosophy*. Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press.; Means, Alex. (2011). Jacques Rancière, education, and the art of citizenship. *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, & Cultural Studies*, 33(1), 29.

[13] Magnet, *When biometrics fail*; Means, Jacques Rancière, education, and the art of citizenship.

[14] Van Alphen, Ernst. (2005). *Art in mind: How contemporary images shape thought*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 170.

[15] Van Alphen, *Art in mind*, 48.

present colonization are not simply counter measures but are necessary interventions for Indigenous survival.[16]

Indigenous Memory Work: Resistances to Settler Colonialism

Dana Claxton's work is situated within a broad sphere of representational practice by Canadian based Indigenous filmmakers and video artists who counter the ongoing circulation of stereotypical imagery and who radicalize memories about communities displaced by colonialism. The appropriation of land is a key characteristic of colonialism,[17] and these artists respond to the Eurocentric view of land as a commodity, to Canadian nation-state histories of severing Indigenous people from the land, and to Canadian commemorations that, for Indigenous people, celebrate their displacement. Before turning to Claxton's video art work *Anwolek Regatta City*, I contextualize her piece by discussing three works that generate solidarity of counter-commemoration and de-territorialization artistic practice. They are characterized by an interrogation of "the stakes of globalization for Indigenous cultural expression, both individual and collective."[18] The moving image works include a feature-length, non-traditional documentary film by Obomsawin; a short film by Niro; and a video art work by Monkman. While each of these artists has a different Indigenous ancestry, their film and video work jointly offers a contestatory art approach that confronts the Eurocentric expression of commemorating the arrival of white settlement to North America.

Numerous Indigenous artists opposed the Columbus Quincentenary of 1992, a worldwide event marking the 500th anniversary of the arrival of explorer Christopher Columbus to the Americas. In North America, they protested celebratory events, including art exhibitions, but they also curated and showed

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[16] Wilson, Pamela and Stewart, Michelle. (2008) Introduction: Indigeneity and Indigenous media on the global stage. In Pamela Wilson and Michelle Stewart (Eds.), *Global Indigenous media: Cultures, poetics, and politics* (pp. 1-35). Durham: Duke UP.
[17] Alfred, Taiaiake. (2010). What is radical imagination?: Indigenous struggles in Canada. *Affinities: A Journal of Radical Theory, Culture, and Action*, 4(2), 5-8.
[18] Wilson and Stewart, Introduction, 2.

work in visual art projects designed to unhinge the commemorative activities.[19] In terms of Canadian-based moving image culture, highly awarded filmmaker Alanis Obomsawin created four non-traditional documentary films that investigate 500 years of oppression of Indigenous peoples. As both an artist and an activist, she participated in the 1990 resistance by the Mohawks of the Kanehsatake community, near the town of Oka, Québec, to the commercialization of land historically inhabited by them and continually under dispute and protest since settlement in the 1700s. Obomsawin's films are situated in a specific Canadian context, but they also explore issues of global concern for Indigenous peoples: land, environmental health, sovereignty, and exploitation. This filmmaker re-writes the uncritical memories of discovery and settlement and undermines the practices of memorialization around events such as the Quincentenary.

The first film in Obomsawin's series, *Kanehsatake: 270 Years of Resistance* (1993), was shot in 1990 during what has become known in Canada as the "Oka Crisis," and it was released in 1993 shortly after the Quincentenary. This unconventional documentary represents an impassioned resistance to the commemorative event by exploring the consequences of approval of a golf course on land sacred to the Kanehsatake Mohawk peoples: a burial ground of Indigenous ancestors and a grove of pine trees. Mohawk communities, members of other Indigenous nations, and Indigenous allies arrive in the region to support the Native people who had barricaded themselves into an area surrounding their community centre. Indigenous peoples in nearby Montréal also take action by blockading a bridge. Canadian military forces respond by attempting to stop both blockades, and, at Oka, a 78-day standoff follows. Although government sanctioned aggression seeks to prevent social justice actions by turning protesters away, by denying media access, and by spoiling food intended for the Mohawk group under siege, Obomsawin manages to infiltrate the area controlled by the nation-state forces, providing insider footage of the Mohawk resistance. The site of confrontation represents memories of invasion and survival for the Mohawk, and the film also traces the long history of territorial struggle as a device to remember otherwise in the context of the present moment of conflict at Oka.

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[19] Phillips, Ruth B. (2011). *Museum Pieces: Toward the indigenization of Canadian museums.* Montreal: McGill-Queen's UP, 209.

Kanehsatake, which has been screened widely and has received significant international recognition, "can be described as an anti-colonial film in the widest sense of the term in that it tackles the larger narrative of how colonialism has displaced and subjugated native peoples in Québec." [20] Simon describes the resistance of the Mohawk people to displacement through state-organized military might as an approach that problematizes how memory is socially organized in and for the nation.[21] Obomsawin contextualizes the Mohawk community's opposition to the nation's militarization, which is organized to impose additional loss of land through the golf course at Oka, by providing a historical record, since 1535, that accumulates an overwhelming number of federal and provincial acts designed to enforce the loss of Mohawk territory. In critically interrogating how memory is formulated, for what purposes, on whose terms, and for whose benefit, the film enacts a remembering otherwise of Canada's history. By insisting on a spectatorial encounter that involves new learning and a responsibility to an Indigenous re-framing of the past, *Kanehsatake* generates a remembrance obligation for the future as well as the present. Indigenous poet and theorist Lee Maracle's observation about community memory and its past, present, and future relationality is particularly applicable to *Kanehsatake*: "to claim lineage memory and juxtapose it with current memory is to articulate the most sacred of one's entire thought from the beginning to the present and is intended as future memory."[22] This assimilated orientation to time, a contestation to a Western colonial notion of lineal time, with its systematic organization of development and progress, shapes the Mohawk perspective on persistent resistance at Oka (in 2010, for example) and at other locations in Canada: the Mohawk people sustain their struggle against injustice in a way that integrates the past into the present and the future.

Tracing the history of Oka and the Kanehsatake Mohawks, Obomsawin's deployment of memory inheres in a range of visual modalities, including

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[20] Jiwani, *Pedagogies of hope*, 341.

[21] Simon, *Touch of the past*, 11.

[22] Quoted in Perreault, Jeanne. (2010). "Memory alive": An inquiry into the uses of memory by Marilyn Dumont, Jeanette Armstrong, Louise Halfe, and Joy Jarjo. In Cheryl Suzack, Shari M. Huhundorf, Jeanne Perreault, and Jean Barman (Eds.), *Indigenous women and feminism: Politics, activism, culture* (pp. 199-217). Vancouver: Univ. of British Columbia Press, 200.

drawings, archival photographs, images of documents, interviews, newspaper accounts, and footage of multiple locations. Some scenes are particularly sharp and clear, while, at other times, images are blurred and shaky, notably when the filmmaker is dangerously close to the invasive actions of the military forces. Some footage is serene while other imagery presents disturbing violence. Mobilizing intense specificity and contextualization as methods, the filmmaker provides an overwhelming amount of detail about the region and its history of invasion and settlement, provincial and federal militarization, government legalities, historic and contemporary Indigenous resistance actions, community member responses, media reports, and the dilemmas and determinations of various individuals, from government agents to Indigenous spokespeople, Mohawk warriors, soldiers, and news reporters. In this sense, the film is "loud" in its protest: it unsettles the nation-state commemoration through a multitude of pressures on its claim to truth. The intensification and accumulation function to emphasize the gravity of what is at stake for Indigenous social justice struggles and to unsettle, seize, and implicate the viewer through what Mieke Bal calls an "indispensable" aspect of political art, its insistence on proximity or what she calls "contagion" or "complicity."[23] This idea recalls Simon's notion of an educative relationship to a cultural text, whereby attentive learning is essential and responsibility to others is an obligation.

Shelley Niro, a multidisciplinary artist who identifies as a member of the Turtle Clan, Bay of Quinte Mohawk, also counters commemorations and nation-state territorial claims in her work. Responding to the Quincentenary, but with a very different approach from Obomsawin, Niro collaborated with filmmaker Anna Gronau to write, direct, and produce the award-winning film *It Starts With a Whisper* (1993). Niro is recognized for her photography, painting, bead art, and film/video work and for the questions she raises about Indigenous community, the loss of language, and the challenges of contemporary Indigenous life. Through its title, *It Starts with a Whisper* proposes that reverberating protest can build from quiet articulation and that Indigenous solidarity develops from defiant speaking and hearing. The film was made in response to 500 years of colonialism and with the intent of screening it for the final hour of the

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[23] Bal, Mieke. (2010). *of what one cannot speak: Doris Salcado's political art.* Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 136.

Quincentenary: with New Year's Eve, 1993, at Niagara Falls in Canada, representing an end and a beginning. *It Starts with a Whisper* focuses on a young Iroquois woman, Shanna, who is struggling to understand her relationship to Indigenous history and her role as a contemporary Native woman. Three women, who are both her aunts and matriarchal spirits, advise her with humour and grace, and they take Shanna on a road trip to Niagara Falls so that she can experience a festive occasion entirely in counterpoint to the Quincentenary celebration. In this sense, there is an emphasis on pedagogy within the film's story itself, since the aunts/spirits provide Indigenous knowledge, and they encourage Shanna to develop a practice of remembering otherwise and remembering obligation regarding her Indigenous past and future. Thus, the relationship between these women mirrors the relationship of the film to the spectator: the film remembers otherwise to the nation-state commemoration, and it invites remembrance obligation for an audience. Although seemingly structured by narrative and characterization, the film is in fact designed to merge a range of artistic elements, including performance art, original songwriting, bead art creations, dramatic scenes, scripted interview, landscape imagery, and occasional voiceover. *It Starts With a Whisper* is an eclectic creative mix that coheres in two key ideas: Indigenous survival despite attempted genocide and communities of women who foster and sustain this recognition.

The film surfaces the discontinuities of past and present and the disruption between the excluded Indigenous stories of the past, which could enable Shanna to understand her identity, and those stories only available outside of herself, which position her as other, as Shanna says, in "books and history classes." A written text, which describes how the Tutelo people were destroyed by an epidemic brought by white settlement, is superimposed over a close-up image of the rippling waters of the Grand River, which leads into Niagara Falls in southern Ontario. The representation of locality, with images of calm waters disturbed and painful histories endured, produces a compelling visual memory for Shanna's conflicted position. Shanna expresses the tension of working in a contemporary urban environment, with its absence of Indigenous culture and its erasure of Indigenous territory, while remaining deeply attached to her peoples' history and to their land. For this woman, the present, past, and future are intricately intertwined. In the city, she attempts to survive under conditions that

continue "to deny the validity of indigenous peoples' claim to existence"[24] and that make her feel immobilized. However, she also affirms locations, communities, and individuals for a sense of survival and belonging and for the creation of new memories: her aunts, an elder with whom she consults, her tribe, the Iroquois Nation, and the waters of the falls and the riverbank. Niagara Falls represents a complex site. On one hand, it signifies a local space which calls up the unresolved pain of the past, as we see Shanna cringing from the bombardment of voices which detail the attempted genocide of those Indigenous tribes who used to inhabit the area. However, on the other hand, Shanna and her aunts also acclaim Indigenous survival when they gather in the final scenes in a counter-commemoration moment at this locale. *It Starts with a Whisper* makes evident how a commemorative event such as the Quincentenary obscures Indigenous memory and produces traumatic consequences, and the film also demonstrates how a counter-memorial project can recover Indigenous histories and engender remembrance learning.

Kent Monkman's *Mary* (2011), the third and final moving image work discussed in this section of the paper, responds to a different celebratory moment than that of the Quincentenary. Monkman, an artist of Cree ancestry, enjoys international recognition for his paintings, installations, films, videos, and performances, and produces counter-memorial work that re-configures the past by generating critical re-interpretations of colonizer history. He responds to settler commemorative practice in his video art piece *Mary*, generating "Cree anti-colonial memory"[25] and confronting the othering of Indigenous peoples. In 1860, Britain's H.R.H. the Prince of Wales (who later became Edward VII) visited Montréal, Québec, and inaugurated Commonwealth industrial achievements, particularly the Victoria Railway Bridge and the Crystal Palace, both markers of imperial progress and mastery. In using the royal visit, with its railway celebration, as the trope for his video, Monkman evokes the role of railways in Canadian nation building: rail lines enabled white settler inhabitation on a large scale and thereby caused the loss of Indigenous territories.

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[24] Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. (1999). *Decolonizing methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples.* New York: Zed Books, 1.

[25] Francis, Margot. (2011). *Creative subversions: Whiteness, indigeneity, and the national imaginary.* Vancouver: Univ. of British Columbia Press, 151.

Monkman's re-creation of national memory places the Prince in a homoerotic relationship with Miss Chief Eagle Testickle, Monkman's performance personna who appears in many of his artworks. The video begins with Miss Chief entering a room of white gauze panels, in her sequined red dress, red thigh-high boots, and a wig of long, black hair that blows in the wind. She approaches the Prince, who is garbed in his royal regalia and seated in a chair on a raised platform, and, kneeling below him, she removes a shoe and sock from one foot and caresses his skin with her face and hands. Tears, visualized as streaks of mascara, trace her cheeks, and she anoints the Prince's feet with these cosmetic marks. In scarring the white flesh of the Prince with the mascara stains, the video remembers otherwise to the national narrative about the inhabitation of territory: the image underlines the "stain" on Canadian history and memory, with regard to the treatment of Indigenous peoples, particularly the issue of treaty rights regarding land and resources. Furthermore, the tears of the Indigenous other produce a stain on whiteness itself, leaving a residue, blemish, or tattoo: an inescapable manifestation of the violences perpetrated by white Euro-Canadian colonialism. On Monkman's terms, nation-state memory is selective memory: practices of forgetting coupled with othering permit treaty rights to be ignored or dismissed. Two images of text appear at the very end of the video, describing how the signing of the first treaties in the 18th century were understood not as "surrender" but as the assurance of protection for the "sharing of resources." Interspersed in the video, three intertext statements superimposed on blurred images of the room appear as if Miss Chief is addressing the Prince about the history of their relationship, but they also refer to the betrayal of the nation regarding the treaties about Indigenous land rights: "We had an agreement," "I agreed to share not surrender," and "How could you break your promise." In addition to the image of Miss Chief caressing the Prince's foot, a number of other aesthetic devices queer the national memory and challenge the emphasis on heteronormative imagery in visual culture: gazing, close-ups, and music. Gazing is especially central to this video: the point of view of the camera is often behind the Prince, with Miss Chief looking up towards him and to the lens of the camera. This gaze is one of longing and desire. When the camera angle focuses on the Prince, the images are most often close ups of erotic yearning while he is being caressed: his hand gripping the chair, his mouth in a sigh or gasp, and his tongue licking his lips. In terms of the music, a melodramatic, operatic score characterized by soaring violins comprises

the entirety of the sound of the video, and it evokes the emotional scores in Hollywood melodramas. These films typically depict the struggles of heterosexual couples, but, in *Mary*, the music queers the visual field as it eroticizes and romanticizes the relationship of Miss Chief and the Prince.

Miss Chief's action of caressing the Prince's foot in conjunction with the title of the video, *Mary*, reference Christian biblical symbolism, specifically, Mary Magdalene washing the feet of Jesus with her tears. Monkman alludes to artistic depictions of Mary Magdalene in paintings and popular culture representations that construct Mary as a lover of Jesus. Through these evocations, the video scrutinizes the history of "evangelization" of Indigenous peoples[26] and the church's role in erasing Indigenous practices of learning and diverse expressions of sexuality. Simultaneously, by infiltrating the religious history with the drag queen and homoerotic performance, Monkman produces a remembering otherwise that includes queer and two-spirit sexualities. Insisting on queer, anti-colonial memory, Monkman shows "that settler colonialism is the historical, institutional, and discursive root of heteronormative binary sex/gender systems on stolen land."[27] The loss of land, and the implications for cultural, spiritual, community, and environmental losses – not to mention the loss of entire Indigenous tribes – is powerfully expressed in Monkman's video and in Obomsawin and Niro's films. Adopting different aesthetic strategies, Claxon's video art work *Anwolek Regatta City* elaborates the contributions of her fellow artists, and I turn now to an examination of that work.

Dana Claxton's *Anwolek Regatta City*:
Indigenous Un-Celebratory Video Art

The artistic practice of counter-commemoration through the re-codification of colonial relations of power is a pressing one – social, political, and cultural

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[26] Francis, *Creative subversions,* 149.

[27] Driskill, Qwo-Li, Finley, Chris, Gilley, Brian Joseph and Morgensen, Scott Lauria. (2011). The revolution is for everyone: Imagining an emancipatory future through queer indigenous critical theories. In Qwo-Li, Chris Finley, Brian Joseph Gilley, and Scott Lauria Morgensen (Eds.), *Queer indigenous studies: Interventions in theory, politics, and literature* (pp. 211-221). Tuscon: Univ. of Arizona Press, 217.

domination continues in the present – and, certainly, there is urgency to the artists' works discussed above and to Claxton's video project, *Anwolek Regatta City* (2005). Such insurgent artwork makes evident the dominant enunciations through which oppressor histories are memoried and commemorated and "redirect[s] their flow"[28] in counter-memories of territorial struggle and nation building. As expressed in the catalogue for an exhibition about contemporary Indigenous art, *Remix: New Modernities in a Post-Indian World,*[29] Claxton's video art "represents an effort to move beyond the obsession with Native identity and authenticity" and "a self-limiting embrace of 'otherness'."[30] In this sense, the artist's approach is complex and critical: she does not simply claim an identity position of otherness, but instead provokes an interrogation of colonialism, its territorial consequences, and its intersection of past, present, and future effects. Moreover, rather than emerging from individualized recollections, Claxton's memory work in *Anwolek Regatta City* flows from a collective Indigenous consciousness about displacement and attempted genocide and intends a visual imaginary that contributes to a shared project of producing political Indigenous art. In this sense, the work is political in relation to Simon's notions of remembering otherwise and remembering obligation: it has pedagogical impact by unhinging Eurocentric knowledge dominance, it influences and transforms the social sphere, and it urges spectatorial responsibility to insurgent remembrance practice.

Dana Claxton, a multidisciplinary artist of Hunkpapa Lakota Sioux ancestry and a professor at the University of British Columbia in the Department of Art History, Visual Art and Theory, is at the forefront of Indigenous media production and installation, certainly in the context of Canadian based cultural production but more broadly in terms of international recognition. Film, video, photography, and installation works by Claxton counter perspectives of the Lakota Sioux found in many mainstream images, for example, in the popular

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[28] Burlein, Ann. (1999). *Empathic vision: Affect, trauma, and contemporary art.* Stanford: Stanford UP, 217.

[29] Held at Heard Museum, Phoenix, Arizona; National Museum of the American Indian, New York; Art Gallery of Ontario, Toronto, Canada.

[30] Heartney, Eleanor. (2007). Native identity in an age of hybridity. In Joe Baker and Gerald McMaster (Eds.), *remix: New modernities in a post-Indian world* (pp. 37-53). Washington and New York: National Museum of the American Indian; Phoenix: Heard Museum, 38.

Hollywood feature film *Dances with Wolves* (1990) by Kevin Costner. Claxton's artistic practices fortify and expand Lakota beliefs, knowledges, and cultural references. The artist's personal background informs the focus of her work: the area of her family reserve in Saskatchewan was inhabited by the Lakota and her great-great grandmother came to that province with Sitting Bull to escape colonial oppression in the United States. Claxton explores the history of her family and that of the Lakota peoples in video artworks such as *I Want to Know Why* (1994) and *Buffalo Bone China* (1997).

The word "Anwolek," in the title of Claxton's video, is a reversal of the city name of "Kelowna," and through this device Claxton informs us that she is re-claiming and re-writing history. This re-appropriation strategy also points to extensive practices of imperial appropriation and assimilation of Indigenous knowledge and creation. Before becoming Kelowna, after missionary, fur trade, and ranching invasions, the site was inhabited by Interior Salish peoples. Promoted as "the Hawai'i of Canada" or "the Florida of the north," Kelowna, in the Okanagan Valley, British Columbia, is now a significant destination for international tourists. *Anwolek Regatta City* surfaces the city's colonial past and underscores the displacement of the Salish. Claxton's video was part of an exhibition project, "Temporal Transmissions," at the Alternator Gallery for Contemporary Art in Kelowna, and, with other artworks, it was commissioned by the city to celebrate its centenary in 2005. However, the city found Claxton's video and the exhibition to be "un-celebratory" and refused to show the art. Since then, *Anwolek Regatta City* has screened in numerous art festivals and galleries.

Claxton deploys 1950's archival footage of a regatta in Kelowna as the entire visual field of *Anwolek Regatta City*; no original images shot by Claxton are used in the video. She manipulates the footage in a number of ways: at first, images move backwards in rewind mode, and then, they return to forward play. The interruption of normative moving image presentation is also evident in the flow and timing of the images, since they are always in slow motion. This adjustment to the archive serves to not only dismantle the typical rush to grasp and cohere a cultural text, it also brings about reflection of time and history and a consideration of how Indigenous memory is absent from the contemporary moment and the local space. Certainly, the viewer is asked to consider whose

history is at stake in public memory. Two scenes intersect throughout the work: a parade of floats with white women as beauty queens and men and women diving from a high board into Lake Okanagan. The images depict people in showcase moments in the regatta events, the beauty queens and the athletes, as well as the many spectators of the parade who confirm its significance. The crowd of affirming and celebratory onlookers further secures the event as a memory of and for the colonizer culture and its practices of dislocation. However, the appropriation and alteration of the archive ruptures the celebratory narrative of the nation, questioning "the violence and exclusions that are so often the foundation of the nation-state,"[31] and, given that the athletes, the women on the float, and the watching crowd appear as an entirely white populace, the video highlights the significance of whiteness in legacies of colonization.

The reversal device, expressed in the video's title, the motion of the footage, and the movement reversal of the archive images themselves, echoes the strategy of another Canadian based Indigenous artist, Robert Houle (Objibwa), who reversed lettering of words such as "sovereign" and "landclaim" in one of his installation works.[32] Art historian Ruth B. Phillips' description of Houle's approach in *Mohawk Summer 1990* applies to Claxton's method: "dissonant, oppositional and expressive of an almost perversely inverted reality."[33] In Claxton's oppositional video, the exclusive use of footage generated by the settler nation signals the overwhelming challenge in producing a visual record from the perspective of the "other," and it reflects the absence of that other and the erasure of any historiography that attests to the memories of a subjugated people. As Pamela McCallum observes about the use of archival material in the work of another Indigenous artist, Jane Ash Poitras, this device "not only suggests the European drive for power and domination over the Americas, it also underscores the monopoly of images, the colonial archive of [imagery] ... that has helped to construct non-Indigenous understandings of Indigenous peoples."[34] The

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[31] Cvetkovich, Ann. (2003). *An archive of feelings: Trauma, sexuality, and lesbian public cultures.* Durham: Duke UP, 119.

[32] Phillips, *Museum Pieces*, 130.

[33] Ibid.

[34] McCallum, Pamela. (2010). Painting the archive: The art of Jane Ash Poitras. In Cheryl Suzack, Shari M. Huhndorf, Jeanne Perreault, and Jean Barman (Eds.), *Indigenous women and*

Indigenous past, specifically the extermination of the Salish peoples at Kelowna, is a memory, Claxton proposes, by way of her archive emphasis, "that no image can represent"[35]: the "unrepresentable" quality, as Rancière puts it, of histories of suffering and genocide. Yet, with her perverse appropriative memoration, Claxton produces what Rancière calls an "anti-representative demand"[36]: viewers of *Anwolek Regatta City* are summoned to encounter an insistence on counter-commemorative art and its re-configurations. It could be argued that in mobilizing and then re-constituting the memories of the colonizers, the video disturbs if not erases the visual presence and effect of those memories. A new archive overwrites the old, and this intervention into the city's archival apparatus contests its authority and continuity.

In a final point about the reversal device, it is important to note how the video genders the historical memory through the emphasis on the beauty queens as they move backwards and then forwards in time on their floats. Except for the movement of their hands as they wave to the crowd, eerily reminiscent of the royal wave of Queen Elizabeth to her British subjects, the women are motionless in their pastel-hued gowns and with their frozen smiles. The representation of the beauty queens not only raises questions about the constitution of femininity in normalizing constructs of whiteness, heteronormativity, and able-bodiedness, but, with the emphasis on their royal-like gesture, it also recalls the historical roots of the role of the British monarchy in claiming Canadian territory. Furthermore, "showing gender as a key signifier and instrument of colonial power,"[37] *Anwolek Regatta City* brings to the fore the memories of conquest violences perpetrated against Indigenous women. Commemorations, such as the parade through the streets of Kelowna, "accompany the silencing, trivialization, and erasure of Indigenous women and obscure their complicated historical roles."[38]

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feminism: Politics, activism, culture* (pp. 238-257). Vancouver: Univ. of British Columbia Press, 248.

[35] Van Alphen, *Art in mind,* 179.

[36] Rancière, *Dissensus,* 195.

[37] Huhndorf, Shari M. (2010). Indigenous feminism, performance, and the politics of memory in the plays of Monique Mojica. In Cheryl Suzack, Shari M. Huhndorf, Jeanne Perreault, and Jean Barman (Eds.), *Indigenous women and feminism: Politics, activism, culture* (pp. 238-257). Vancouver: Univ. of British Columbia Press, 181.

[38] Huhndorf, Indigenous feminisms, 181-182.

In moving images backwards and forwards in time and in changing the normative speed of the historical record to slow motion, Claxton insists on a deeper perusal of memory and history, problematizing and theorizing concepts of time and its association with Western globalization discourses of mastery, progress, and prosperity. The alteration strategies, which are simultaneously aesthetic duration devices, pedagogical methods of remembrance learning, and interrogations of visuality as transparency, make evident the assumptions through which memories are storied, circulated, and understood. Claxton's method "deprives us of our continuities,"[39] interrupting the seamless imagery of commemoration, emphasizing the devastating colonialist legacies of enlightenment, and constituting time through Indigenous rather than imperial concepts. Time, as Smith points out,[40] is hinged to space and land for Indigenous peoples, and this crucial understanding challenges Eurocentric notions of lineal, systematic records of historical events and their role within a discursive formation of progress, which is attached to the occupation and mastery of land. The city's archival material proposes an eternal time of stability: a flourishing of industry, environment, recreation, and sociality. With her alteration techniques, Claxton insists that an aggressive record of violence lurks behind the representation of a benevolent prosperity and a benign social order.

In both the parade and water scenes, a number of signs depict examples of global corporate interests, tourism, and economic policies that relate to displacement from the land: "Canadian National" (a railroad), "PNE" (the Pacific National Exhibition), "Canadian Pacific Air Lines," and "We welcome visitors." The signs link colonialism and capitalism, and Claxton reminds us how "the Canadian nation-state has systematically severed the connections Indigenous communities have had with land in the interests of capital gains."[41] The reference to a rail line, "Canadian National," in the archival footage is especially important. In the early 1900s, reserves were designated for Native peoples, and the development of the

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[39] Foucault, Michel. (2006). The historical *a priori* and the archive. In Charles Merewether (Ed.), *The archive: Documents of contemporary art* (pp. 26-30). London: The MIT Press, 30.
[40] Smith, *Decolonizing methodologies.*
[41] Simpson, Jennifer S., James, Carl E. and Mack, Johnny. (2011). Multiculturalism, colonialism, and racialization: Conceptual starting points. *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, & Cultural Studies,* 33(4), 294.

railway supported the white settler transportation to, and inhabitation of, Indigenous territories. In examining the obscured and un-named histories of rail development, Margot Francis also remarks on the impact of the railway on the Canadian imaginary and the symbolic position of rail lines in producing "national purpose."[42] The representation of Kelowna embeds discourses of industrial achievement, social security, recreational development, and community harmony, and these discourses shape memories about the history of white settler inhabitation. *Anwolek Regatta City* indicates that a counter-memorial project recognizes how the railway served "to enable the preservation of Euro-Canadian control."[43] The tourism signs bring to the fore the relationship of market forces, capitalism, and globalization agendas and the history of invasion and occupation that made possible the development of a tourist economy. Kelowna is nestled onto the side of Lake Okanagan, which is one of the key tourist features of the town and for the province of British Columbia. Claxton's use of the archival footage recognizes the importance of the lake for the tourism industry: images showing men and women diving into the water celebrate recreational activities in relation to the site. A legendary "monster" of Lake Okanagan, known to the Salish as "N'ha-a-itk" and to the white inhabitants as "Ogopogo," appears on one of the floats in the parade. While, for the Salish, the snake-like creature represented the life force of the lake and the spiritual relationship of the Salish to the source of their survival, for the white settler nation, the animal functions as a source of fantasy and fascination to support the tourist trade. On colonialist terms, animality becomes monstrous, a freakish opposition to the human, and thus Ogopogo is promoted to simultaneously attract and horrify, and it is imagined as a beast to commercialize, in the way of many use-value approaches to nature and non-human life. Kelowna's regatta images represent tourism and transportation industries as benign and enterprising endeavours, but in Claxton's counter-commemorative project, the images symbolize the consumption of the land, the appropriation of spiritual and cultural knowledge, the ruthless taming of the wilderness, and a national agenda of racially organized marginalization.

The audio design of the video coheres with its visual aesthetics. As with all of Claxton's films and videos, sound is a significant feature, and the video artist

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[42] Francis, *Creative subversions,* 158.

[43] Ibid.

often works with contemporary ambient and computerized music. Claxton has collaborated with the composer, Russell Wallace, for many years, and he creates the video soundtracks according to the aural quality Claxton requires for a particular piece. In *Anwolek Regatta City*, an electronic sound is repeated throughout. This rhythmic drum and bass pattern, a low double beat, is edgy and eerie, and it creates a sense of foreboding and an evocation of the violent historical background of the city celebrations. The sound itself, as well as the tension it produces, is particularly evocative of the repetitive electronic sounds used to disturbing effect in the iconic Hollywood horror films *The Thing* (1982) and *The Shining* (1980). Yet, the rhythmic beat also sounds like Native drumming. Wallace often fuses traditional Indigenous music with Western electronic forms, and, in the case of *Anwolek Regatta City*, he creates an electronic sound that suggests a cultural imbrication, such that the video's music offers another form of reflection on the appropriation of Indigenous culture by dominant forces, but the musical design also reinforces Claxton's visual method of re-appropriation.

Conclusion

I have explored how works by four Canadian-based, Indigenous film and video art practitioners produce new consciousness of colonialist discourses as these appear in Canadian events of commemoration and historical memory regarding settler inhabitation. Sherene Razack argues: "white settler society finds many ways to deny that it requires an ongoing violence against Aboriginal peoples to maintain settler ownership of the land."[44] The memory work of the artists discussed in this paper repudiates the denial, exploring how the effects of colonialism fuse past to present to future. In countering occasions of nation-state celebrations with new remembrance learning, Claxton, Monkman, Niro, and Obomsawin produce revisionist art that positions them, rather than the settler nation, as the informed historians of the colonial past and the creators of memories for future generations. Producing powerful symbolic imaginaries in

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[44] Hubbard, Tasha and Razack, Sherene. (2011). Reframing two worlds colliding: A conversation between Tasha Hubbard and Sherene Razack. *The Review of Education, Pedagogy, & Cultural Studies*, 33(4), 329.

their counter-commemorative work, the artists resist and reconfigure dominant narratives while making visible those that have been erased. For obligation to emerge as a consequence of engaging with counter-memorial cultural work means taking the step, Simon argues, to listen to the ways that Indigenous peoples reframe their histories[45] and then to "hear in a way that what is heard becomes a part of one's living memory."[46] This view is reiterated in Bal's question "What can art do?" and her answer "It can *know*," meaning, Bal suggests, "to leave one's imprint on the body of another whose subjectivity changes forever through the encounter."[47] The final scene in *Anwolek Regatta City* shows one of the beauty queens perching on the back seat of a car and waving to the crowd behind the camera. Consequently, she appears to be waving directly to the viewer, who can see the crowd on the other side of the street waving back. Claxton freezes the image of the crowd and their returning waves. The wave gestures from the woman and the onlookers bond the two in mutual recognition and well-being, and it appears as if the viewer is being invited to join the waving, the celebration, to be implicated in the moment of commemoration. The beauty queen's unnerving gaze to the camera/viewer, the slow motion alteration that demands attentiveness from the viewer, and the freeze-frame image of the crowd disrupt a smooth encounter with the official record. The video art work troubles harmonious nation-state memory and the timeless quality the city's archival footage wants to promote. Indigenous counter-memorial art urges the viewer to stop waving, to cease participating in receiving Euro-Canadian commemorations as celebrations, and instead, to pay heed to Indigenous acts of memory that expose the devastating consequences of colonialism at the heart of the commemorations. Following Simon and Bal, the viewer is summoned to hear in a new way – to remembering otherwise – and to receive the imprint of a resistant memory – to remembering obligation.

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[45] Simon, *Touch of the past*, 17.
[46] Ibid, 18.
[47] Bal, *of what one cannot speak*, 225.

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