

LIVING IN  
INDIGENOUS  
SOVEREIGNTY

Elizabeth Carlson-Manathara  
with Gladys Rowe

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# CONTENTS

- Foreword / 1  
*Aimée Craft, Leona Star, and Dawnis Kennedy*
- Acknowledgements / 4
- Contributors / 9
- 1 Introductions / 15  
*Elizabeth Carlson-Manathara and Gladys Rowe*  
Introducing Ourselves / 17  
Introducing the Book / 24
- 2 Settler Colonialism and Resistance / 28  
*Elizabeth Carlson-Manathara*  
Terminology and Colonial Location / 29  
Colonialism and Settler Colonialism / 38  
Anti-Colonialism and Decolonization / 42  
Indigenous and Indigenous-Led Resistance / 44  
Framing White Settler Decolonization and Anti-Colonialism / 48
- 3 Introducing the Narratives / 60  
*Elizabeth Carlson-Manathara with Aimée Craft,  
Dawnis Kennedy, Leona Star, and Chickadee Richard*
- 4 Monique Woroniak / 65  
*Monique Woroniak and Elizabeth Carlson-Manathara*  
Identity and Early Influences / 65  
Learning / 66  
Solidarity Work and Continued Learning / 66  
Postscript, 2019 / 76
- 5 Murray Angus / 77  
*Murray Angus and Elizabeth Carlson-Manathara*  
Identity and Early Influences / 77  
Learning and Early Activism / 80  
Decolonization Work and Continued Learning / 82
- 6 Steve Heinrichs / 88  
*Steve Heinrichs and Elizabeth Carlson-Manathara*  
Identity and Early Influences / 88  
Learning and Early Activism / 89  
Decolonization Work and Continued Learning / 91

- 7 Franklin Jones / 99  
*Elizabeth Carlson-Manathara and Anonymous*  
Identity and Early Influences / 99  
Learning and Early Activism / 100  
Anti-Colonial Work and Continued Learning / 101
- 8 Orienting Toward Indigenous Sovereignty / 110  
*Elizabeth Carlson-Manathara*  
Engagement with the Land / 113  
Engaging with Indigenous Peoples / 122  
Engaging with Indigenous Stories / 126  
Engaging with Indigenous Nationhood, Governance,  
Sovereignty, Resurgence, and Decolonization / 136
- 9 Joy Eidse / 142  
*Joy Eidse and Elizabeth Carlson-Manathara*  
Identity and Early Influences / 142  
Learning and Early Activism / 143  
Decolonization Work and Continued Learning / 145
- 10 Adam Barker / 152  
*Adam Barker and Elizabeth Carlson-Manathara*  
Identity and Early Influences / 152  
Learning / 152  
Decolonization Work and Continued Learning / 154
- 11 Susanne McCrea McGovern / 163  
*Susanne McCrea McGovern and Elizabeth Carlson-Manathara*  
Identity and Early Influences / 163  
Learning and Early Activism / 164  
Solidarity Work / 165
- 12 Kathi Avery Kinew / 176  
*Kathi Avery Kinew and Elizabeth Carlson-Manathara*  
Identity and Early Influences / 176  
Learning and Early Activism / 176  
Work and Continued Learning / 178
- 13 Rick Wallace / 186  
*Rick Wallace and Elizabeth Carlson-Manathara*  
Identity and Early Influences / 186  
Early Activism and Learning / 187  
Decolonization Work and Continued Learning / 188

- 14 What Indigenous Peoples Have Asked of Us / 197  
*Elizabeth Carlson-Manathara*  
Truth Telling, Learning, Land Acknowledgement / 198  
Practising Humility and Listening / 199  
Taking Responsibility for Our Work / 200  
Working to Educate and Challenge Other White Settlers / 201  
Decolonizing Our Hearts and Minds / 202  
Deconstructing, Resisting, and Subverting  
Colonial Governments, Systems, and Institutions / 203  
Using Our Gifts / 204  
Being Discerning / 205  
Being Willing to Risk and Give / 207  
Engaging in Direct Action / 208  
Working Through Our Emotions / 209  
Using Our Privilege and Providing Practical/Logistical Support / 210  
Living by Indigenous Law / 211  
Remembering Who We Are / 211  
Engaging with Restitution, Reparation,  
Repatriation, and Land Return / 214  
Being Persistent / 216
- 15 John Doe / 217  
*Elizabeth Carlson-Manathara and Anonymous*  
Identity and Early Influences / 217  
Early Activism and Learning / 218  
Anti-Colonial Work and Continued Learning / 220
- 16 Silvia Straka / 228  
*Silvia Straka with Elizabeth Carlson-Manathara*  
Social Work Education and Activist Development / 230  
Implications for My Social Work Education Role / 235
- 17 Dave Bleakney / 237  
*Dave Bleakney with Elizabeth Carlson-Manathara*  
A Settler Walking With Ghosts / 237  
Savages in Need of Redemption / 238  
Oka / 239  
Ippeewash / 239  
Sun Peaks/Gustafson Lake / 240  
Six Nations of the Grand River / 241  
Barriere Lake / 242  
Idle No More / 243  
Some Reflections / 243  
The Erased Village / 244

- 18 Victoria Freeman / 246  
*Victoria Freeman and Elizabeth Carlson-Manathara*  
Learning and Early Activism / 247  
Decolonization Work and Continued Learning / 249  
Dimensions of the Journey / 254  
Postscript 2020 / 260
- 19 Honourings / 263  
*Gladys Rowe and Elizabeth Carlson-Manathara*
- 20 Conclusions / 266  
*Elizabeth Carlson-Manathara and Gladys Rowe*
- Afterword / 271  
*Gladys Rowe, Sherry Copenance, Yvonne Pompana,  
and Chickadee Richard*  
Gladys Rowe / 271  
Sherry Copenance / 272  
Yvonne Pompana / 274  
Chickadee Richard / 276  
Closing / 277
- References / 278
- Index / 289

*For those who have gone before, including  
Byron Matwewinin, Troy Fontaine, and  
Dr. Nicholas Cooper-Lewter,  
who contributed to my journey in immeas-  
urable ways, and who I miss dearly.*

*For the future generations — including our  
twenty-three nieces and nephews:  
Dwayne, Sammy, Travis, Michelle, Rosemary, Kiniw,  
Jesse, Dylana, Thomas, Maria, Roseanne, Willis,  
Wabun, Leif, Bryn, Annemary, Jaedyn, Soren,  
Joseph, Susanne, Lars, Kaleb, and Immanuel.*

# FOREWORD

*Aimée Craft, Leona Star, and Dawnis Kennedy*

As we write this, the world feels like it is burning around us. From the destruction of property and physical violence by non-Indigenous fishermen toward Mi'kmaw lobster fishermen in Mi'kma'ki (literally burning buildings to the ground), to the racist and violent death suffered by Atikamekw mother Joyce Echaquan in a Joliette, Québec, hospital, to the continued forcible removal of Indigenous people who occupy their territories and protect their lands and waters against industrial commodification and environmental degradation in the form of pipelines (Unist'ot'en), land development (Six Nations of the Grand River), fracking (Camp Morning Star at Hollow Water First Nation), hydroelectric dams (Tataskweyak Cree Nation and the Jenpeg Dam), forestry (Grassy Narrows Blockade) ... and the list goes on ...

The individual and systemic racism faced by Indigenous people in Canada is alarming. And it does not appear to be getting better, even in an era of reconciliation and the “real systemic change” called for by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada (TRC). We repeatedly hear the call for radical change in Indigenous relations in Canada echoed; from almost a decade ago by the Idle No More movement to more recently, when Indigenous people in Canada were marching in the streets for Tina Fontaine, Colten Boushie, and Cindy Gladue. Hearts continue to break with recent events. Dreams of nation-to-nation politics in Canada continue to fade.

At the heart of this is the denial of basic human rights, the violations of sacred treaty relationships and the disregard for constitutionally protected rights, all marked by institutionally accepted violence. This is an assault on the stated values of Canada as an international human rights defender. Outrage has been met with inaction, which in turn, sparks further indignation. Who amongst Canadians is prepared to sacrifice to protect human

rights to the point of being arrested, criminalized, or ostracized for their stances against the violence done to the land and the people?

This book takes up one of the most challenging questions that Canadian society faces today: how to navigate the ongoing relationship between Indigenous people and settler Canada, and particularly the role of non-Indigenous settlers in redefining that relationship. There is no singular answer to this question and while the challenge remains daunting, this book beautifully weaves theory and scholarship with first-person narrative to provide an embodied response towards Indigenous sovereignty.

Too often the burden of decolonization is taken up by Indigenous people, or in effect placed on Indigenous people's shoulders. Turning the gaze not away from, but rather in support of Indigenous Peoples, this book engages with what it is to be a settler-ally in all forms and based on the lived experience of a variety of non-Indigenous people. This book provides a range of illustrations of the multiple paths that orient toward Indigenous sovereignty and tackles directly "what Indigenous people have asked of us."

The purpose of this book is to critically engage with how to not only think differently but to also *be* and *do* things differently. Elizabeth (Liz) Carlson-Manathara's work is immensely valuable; her research and depth of scholarship, blended with her ability to ask difficult questions while listening honestly and gently engaging is exactly the type of approach required to get to the heart of the matter. All three of us have met Liz through her participation in ceremonies and other community activities and we have first-hand exposure to her kindness, reciprocity, and attentiveness to being a good relative. These same qualities are reflected in the substance and form of this book, including the shared authorship of chapters, the attention to narrative and authenticity, and the assurance that relationships remained good and that people were listened to throughout the research and publication process.

In this time of an international pandemic many of us are contemplating how we continue to advance reconciliation, to develop and maintain mutually respectful relationships (TRC 2015), and to create the space to reset the relationships. One key element of this redefinition is proposed as a return: a return to awareness that Indigenous Lands have their own stories, relationships, responsibilities, and laws, all of which have been practised by Indigenous people since time immemorial. For Liz and her

collaborators, the focus has narrowed to understanding what “land back” could and should look like.

Each of us is called upon regularly to answer these questions: what is it going to take to reach into spaces of reconciliation? How can non-Indigenous or settler-allies do more or do better? We’re grateful to this book as a resource for them to be able to begin or further their journeys into their support of Indigenous Peoples and sovereignties.

EXCERPT

## CONTRIBUTORS

A rather large community has contributed to this book and to the research upon which it is based. Truth be told, all should be listed as co-authors. Please know how grateful I am for your generosity. In this list, however, I include those who were authors and co-authors of chapters.

*Aimée Craft* is an associate professor at the Faculty of Common Law, University of Ottawa and an Indigenous (Anishinaabe-Métis) lawyer from Manitoba. Craft is an internationally recognized leader in the area of Indigenous laws, Treaties, and water. She prioritizes Indigenous-lead and interdisciplinary research, including visual arts and film, co-leads a series of major research grants on decolonizing water governance and works with many Indigenous nations and communities on Indigenous relationships with and responsibilities to *nibi* (water). She plays an active role in international collaborations relating to transformative memory in colonial contexts and relating to the reclamation of Indigenous birthing practices as expressions of territorial sovereignty.

*Leona Star* is a Cree woman from Thunderchild First Nation, Saskatchewan, within the Treaty 6 Territory. She works as the director of research for the First Nations Health and Social Secretariat of Manitoba (FNHSSM) and currently sits as a Manitoba representative and the chair of the First Nations Information Governance Committee (FNIGC). Leona is a strong advocate of First Nations self-determination in research grounded in the First Nations principles of ownership, control, access, and possession (OCAP). She has worked collaboratively locally, regionally, and nationally to ensure research and information is governed according to Protocols defined by First Nations and has contributed to many research projects as a principal applicant, principal knowledge user, co-applicant, decision maker, knowledge user, and collaborator. Most importantly, she is a helper for First Nations people, communities, and organizations when it comes to respectful relationships and self-determination in research and data sovereignty.

*Minnawaanigogizhigok* is a second-degree Midewiwin (Way of the Heart) person and was raised as Ogijidaakwe (Warrior woman/Woman of a Big Heart) by the Ogijidaa Society and Elders of her home community Bagwaanishkoziibing (Roseau River Anishinaabe First Nation).

Also known as *Dawnis Kennedy*, Minnawaanigogizhigok is a scholar of Western and Anishinaabe law and a community educator at the Manitoba Indigenous Cultural Education Centre. She is of both European and Ojibwe Anishinaabe lineage and is dedicated to reclaiming and revitalizing both traditions in her life and in her work. At the Centre she is able to work with people across age groups, sectors, and communities. She also works in her community through her participation in ceremony, non-profit organizations, and community groups. However, her primary commitment is learning to live a good life amidst continuing colonization.

Minnawaanigogizhigok is dedicated to the pursuit of Minobimaadiziwin (Good Life). She seeks and creates opportunities to live life from her heart. She builds on the good choices her family, mentors, and friends made in their lives: their choices to work hard, raise their families, put down alcohol, help their relatives, support the people, and reconnect to Midewiwin — living the ways of life, languages, and traditions that our ancestors sent forward to us. In the footsteps of all her ancestors, Minnawaanigogizhigok continues to learn and to grow, taking joy in this good life and doing what she can to support others who seek to do the same.

*Gladys Rowe*, she/her, is a Swampy Cree scholar and a member of Fox Lake Cree Nation in northern Manitoba, Canada. Gladys supports possibilities and transformations through her use of Indigenist research, arts-based and participatory methodologies, and Indigenous innovation and evaluation. Her doctoral research used storytelling and poetry as a mechanism to learn more about Indigenous birth workers and their experiences reclaiming traditional birthing practices. Gladys is passionate about fostering meaningful connection and deep understanding through the sharing of stories.

Grandmother *Sherry Copenace, Niizhosake, Saagimaakwe*, Atik n'dodem (Elk Clan), Midewewin, was born and raised on the community of Ojibways of Onigaming, which is located in northwestern Ontario and on the east side of Lake of the Woods. Sherry is firm in her ways of knowing

and being Anishinaabe. Sherry speaks her original language — Ojibway — and has a great love for the land and waters. Since 2011, Sherry has led a renewal of Makooskewin-Anishinaabe young women coming of age teachings and ceremonies. Sherry helps at Anishinaabe Teaching and Sacred Lodges. Sherry has her MSW degree and is associated with several institutions and organizations who continually engage her for her knowledge and lived experience.

*Benais Quimiwin Ikwe — Thunder Rain Woman, or Chickadee Richard,* is a member of the Sandy Bay First Nation, raised alongside the west side of Lake Manitoba. She is a mother of three biological children and two adopted sons, a Grandmother of seven children, and an aunt or grandmother to many in the Indigenous communities across Turtle Island. She has worked alongside many great grassroots leaders of the Indigenous communities in making safe places for our peoples. She is a proud Anishinaabekwe who has dedicated her life for the betterment of the life of our land, our water, and our Indigenous communities. She has been a believer and educator for change and for justice for many years, regionally and nationally, by creating awareness and sharing the strength and beauty of our Indigenous culture. She has worked with peoples who are open and willing to change the current ways that still harm our land, waters, and our people's ways of life.

*Dr. Yvonne Pompana,* associate professor in the Faculty of Social Work, University of Manitoba, is Dakota from Sioux Valley First Nation (Manitoba). She completed her PhD in Indigenous Studies from Trent University. Yvonne has twenty-eight years of experience working within the Inner-City Social Work Program (ICSWP), Faculty of Social Work. She has served in many capacities within the ICSWP and from 2015 to 2019, she served as the program's director. Yvonne's areas of academic specialization include colonization/decolonization, with particular emphasis on the devolution of social services to First Nations and the implications of this policy on First Nations in areas such as child welfare, criminal justice, and education. Yvonne also has an interest in issues related to First Nations women, Indigenous knowledges, research, and research methodologies. Yvonne is a co-founder and long-standing member of the Indigenous Helpers Society Incorporated and is co-founder of the Indigenous Caucus, Faculty of Social Work.

*Elizabeth Carlson-Manathara's* Swedish, Sámi, German, Scots-Irish, and English ancestors settled on lands of the Anishinaabe and Omaha Nations, which were unethically obtained by the U.S. government. Her scholarship is focused on the anti-colonial and decolonial work of settlers, anti-colonial social work practice and research methodologies, and anti-colonial public education through film. Liz is currently learning to live in Indigenous sovereignty as a Treaty relative of the Robinson-Huron Treaty of 1850 while working as an assistant professor in the School of Social Work at Laurentian University.

*Monique Woroniak*, a settler woman of Ukrainian and French heritage, was born and raised in Winnipeg on Treaty 1 Territory and the heart of the Métis Nation homeland, where she still lives.

*Murray Angus* spent thirty-five years as a researcher, policy analyst, media advisor, and educator for Inuit and other Indigenous organizations. He received the Order of Canada in 2015 “for his varied contributions to building awareness and respect for Canada’s Native people and their traditions, and for the role he has played in empowering Inuit youth as co-founder of Nunavut Sivuniksavut.”

*Steve Heinrichs* is a settler Christian from Winnipeg, Manitoba — Treaty 1 Territory and the homeland of the Métis Nation. The director of Indigenous-Settler Relations for Mennonite Church Canada, Steve is a student of activism who loves to march with his partner, Ann, and their children, Izzy, Aiden, and Abby. Steve has been blessed to edit a number of books on reconciliation and Indigenous justice, the latest being *Unsettling the Word: Biblical Experiments in Decolonization* (Orbis, 2019).

*Franklin Jones* is a pseudonym for a wonderful person whose story appears in this book.

*Adam Joseph Barker* is a white settler Canadian from the overlapping territories of the Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples, near what is currently called Hamilton, Ontario. He is an academic with specializations in the human geography of settler colonialism, Indigenous resurgence and decolonization, and analyses of social movements and social change. He largely works in collaboration with his partner, Emma Battell Lowman, and currently lives in the United Kingdom.

**Susanne McCrea McGovern** has been involved in land and water defence her entire adult life. She uses her media training and experience to work on Indigenous led campaigns across Turtle Island. She is the executive director and co-founder of the Boreal Action Project and former executive director and communications director of the Boreal Forest Network. Prior to that, she was director of the Manitoba Greenpeace office for ten years. Over the years, she's worked on many issues, including pulp and paper, toxics, uranium mining, nuclear testing, PVC plastics, mining, fracking, and pipeline campaigns. She co-produced and directed the documentary film series *Voices of the Land*, working with Garry Raven of Hollow Water. She is a writer, painter, and performance artist.

**Joy Eidse** is a cis-hetero woman of Dutch and English heritage, living in Winnipeg, Manitoba, on Treaty 1 Territory. Joy works as a counsellor in her private practice.

**Dr. Kathi Avery Kinew**, a creative and energetic person, has worked for five decades with and for First Nations and First Nations organizations. Her professional and academic experience has been dedicated to strengthening First Nations Treaty and inherent rights, protecting and strengthening settlement of land issues (and ending hegemonic use of "claims" terminology), and to better the quality of life of First Nations. She is a researcher specializing in participatory action research and Indigenous methodologies and has been a University of Manitoba sessional instructor in Native Studies since 1998.

**Rick Wallace** lives on a small fishing island in Atlantic Canada, where he does local community work, gardens, hikes, and hangs out. He's a former academic, researcher, international humanitarian worker, mediator, writer, and educator.

**John Doe** is a pseudonym for a wonderful person whose story appears in this book.

**Silvia Straka** (PhD), is an assistant professor, School of Social Work and Human Services, at Thompson Rivers University. Dr. Straka is a social change agent, educator, capacity builder, and researcher. Her research focuses on anti-oppressive perspectives on aging, with projects involving diverse older rural men, older women living with intimate partner violence, and Indigenous aging. Dr. Straka also has expertise in northern,

rural, and remote social work practice. She highlights the importance of a participatory community development approach involving a wide range of stakeholders, with a special concern for under-represented and marginalized voices.

*Dave Bleakney* is a postal worker and labour activist. With the Canadian Union of Postal Workers and in the international labour movement, he advocates on issues such as climate change, Indigenous sovereignty and decolonization, and education for solidarity building. Dave has worked at the CUPW National Office for twenty-four years. He's currently second national vice-president, responsible for union education, the environment, and human rights, among other areas.

*Victoria Freeman* is an independent scholar, public historian, writer, scriptwriter, and educator. For more than thirty years, she has collaborated with Indigenous scholars, artists, community members, and organizations on community-based research, conferences, workshops, public education projects, and artistic creation. She has taught at York University and the University of Toronto. She is the author of *Distant Relations: How My Ancestors Colonized North America* and *A World Without Martha: A Memoir of Sisters, Disability, and Difference*.