

MORE POWERFUL TOGETHER

CONVERSATIONS WITH CLIMATE ACTIVISTS
AND INDIGENOUS LAND DEFENDERS

JEN GOBBY

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CONTENTS

Acknowledgements / ix

1. Thinking Together About Changing Everything / 1
 - Global Climate and Inequality Crises / 6
 - This Research Project / 9
 - Working Towards Decolonial Research Practice / 13
 - This Book / 15
2. The Climate and Inequality Crises in Canada / 18
 - Climate Crisis and Oil and Gas Development in Canada / 18
 - Ongoing Impacts of Settler Colonialism in Canada / 20
 - Social Movements in Canada / 22
3. Understanding the Crises / 32
 - Uneven Impacts of Pipeline Development, Environmental Destruction and Climate Disruption / 34
 - Structures and Systems that Drive Climate Injustice and Inequality / 38
 - Worldviews that Justify and Reinforce Unjust Systems and Structures / 47
 - Why This Analysis Is So Important / 52
4. Envisioning the Alternatives / 54
 - Decarbonizing / 55
 - Decentralizing and Democratizing / 58
 - Decolonizing / 61
 - Reconnecting with Land and Each Other / 69
 - Possible Tensions / 71
 - Note / 72

5.	How We Get From Here to There / 73
	The Movements' Theories of Change / 75
	The Context / 76
	How We Understand and What We Value / 80
	How We Take Action / 95
	How We Relate / 111
	Thinking Across the Different Dimensions of Change / 117
6.	Taking Stock of Where We Are At and What Stands in Our Way / 122
	What's Working and What's Not Working in Our Movements / 122
	The Barriers to Decolonizing and Decarbonizing Canada / 125
	Note / 160
7.	Overcoming the Barriers and Building More Powerful Movements / 161
	Confronting and Overcoming the External Barriers / 162
	Confronting and Overcoming the Internal Barriers / 165
	Relational Theories of Change and Relational Approaches to Movement Building / 177
8.	"We Get There Together, or We Don't Get There at All" / 200
	Centring Justice in Our Relations / 200
	Decolonizing Relations / 204
	Climate Change as Catalyst for Decolonizing Relations / 207
	Note / 213
	Appendix / 214
	Table of Codes for All Sources of Data / 214
	References / 218
	Index / 232

*To the people, and the non-human ones, on the
front lines of climate change and extractivism
and to everyone fighting for a kinder world.*

EXCERPT

*Much of daily life tries to facilitate change,
but opportunities to think together about
how change happens are far rarer*

— E. Tuck and K.W. Yang,
Youth Resistance Research and Theories of Change

*Change can be an end result, measured
in discrete outcomes, and change can be a
relational process of continuous becoming*

— J. Ayala, in E. Tuck and K.W. Yang,
Youth Resistance Research and Theories of Change

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THINKING TOGETHER ABOUT CHANGING EVERYTHING

While the climate justice movement is working hard to address the legacy of white supremacy and colonialism within environmental and conservation movements, it is a work in progress.

— E. Deranger, *The New Green Deal in Canada*

On the morning of Friday, September 27, 2019, the day of the Global Climate Strike, I woke up smiling. The sun was shining down on Montreal, the streets of the city ready to be taken over by the people. The media was predicting hundreds of thousands of people would attend the march. This is the kind of day I live for — when daily routine is set aside and the most heartfelt and passionate expressions of the human spirit are on full display; when people come together, and the individual acts of showing up combines into a massive, vibrant demonstration of public will.

Placards in hand, my partner and I left our apartment that morning, stepped out into the unseasonably warm fall day and walked towards Mount Royal. In my mind's eye I was picturing streams of people flowing from all directions, from neighbourhoods all over the city, amassing into rivers rushing towards the march. As we turned onto Parc avenue, my heart leapt. We were arriving an hour early and already an endless sea of marchers had converged at the base of the mountain.

Over the next few hours, we were carried along in the singing, dancing, smiling crowds, chanting slogans for climate justice, yelling our love for people and for the planet. Along the way, we ran into new friends and old, exchanging embraces with fellow students and climate organizers. I

2 MORE POWERFUL TOGETHER

happily marched along, entertained by the endless stream of protest signs: “Systems Change, Not Climate Change,” “People and Planet Over Profit,” “Decarbonize and Decolonize,” “Wind Power: I’m a Big Fan.”

All afternoon I was filled with the feeling — the renewed belief — that we can do this. People are rising. People power is stronger than the entrenched interests of powerful companies. There is hope; look at us! What a force to be reckoned with!

That feeling lingered in me even as the march wound down, as the immense crowd slowly dispersed, as the sun went behind the mountain.

The Montreal march was, by most accounts, a huge success. As part of a week of actions across the world, spanning 185 countries, over six million people marched to demand action to cut emissions and stabilize the climate (Laville and Watts 2019). In Montreal alone, over 500,000 people showed up that day (Shingler 2019). This was an historical moment of global climate action.

But that evening, back at home, when I turned on my laptop and signed in to Facebook, my elation was deflated in a matter of seconds. Posts from Indigenous people who had attended the event reported on violent, racist behaviour that had been directed at them during the march. One tweet stated that the “Montreal climate strike was one of the most racist protest spaces I’ve ever been in.”

Jessica Bolduc, who is Anishinaabe-French from the Batchewana First Nation in Northern Ontario, had travelled to Montreal for the march with 4Rs Youth Movement and Indigenous Climate Action as part of the Indigenous youth delegation. She wrote that soon after the march began,

non-Indigenous people ... swarmed behind and to our right, shouting over and silencing the songs of the drummers ... all completely ignoring the safe space that we were trying to hold for the youth and our older relatives. It was at this point that the safety of community began to be challenged. We held hands, grabbed onto each other’s bags, called out to each other — strategies to try to stay together.... We were pushed, intentionally separated, provoked and mobbed — all for simply claiming space in this discourse, asking to have Indigenous voices heard and prioritized.

Bolduc reported that settlers yelled at the delegation “It’s the peoples march, not the Indigenous Peoples march” and that “others said worse;

Indigenous youth [were] confronted with language steeped in hatred and racism. It was from this point on that we would spend the rest of the march struggling simply to stay safe and stay together.”

I sat there that night, staring at my screen, struck by the stark contrast between the joyful day I had just spent, and the profoundly not-joyous experience of racial violence that the Indigenous people at the march had experienced.

Perhaps it was naïve of me in that moment to be surprised by how differently the march was experienced by different people. Like the march was, climate change is experienced very differently by different people. Jessica Bolduc’s post explained that

not all people feel the impacts of climate change the same ... Black, Indigenous and communities of Colour are disproportionately impacted by climate change and yet our stories continue to be forced out of the global narrative, despite our actions being truly at the front lines for Mother Earth. What does this march tell us about the values society is preaching vs. those we need desperately to be practicing? ... Despite coming up on 5 years of the Truth and Reconciliation’s final report and Calls to Action ... there are still many privileged Canadians who believe that their needs, their bodies, deserve to come first. Climate change should be a conversation about colonialism, power, privilege, wealth distribution and capitalism, but instead it is flattened into a more digestible conversation about plastic straw bans and “green” campaigns.

Indigenous Peoples, and other marginalized communities, are bearing the brunt of climate impact, and they are leading the fight for climate justice, for keeping fossil fuels in the ground. Yet their voices are continuing to be sidelined in mainstream climate organizing, international climate negotiations and domestic climate policy. And as if all that is not egregious enough, Indigenous people are also facing racist verbal and physical abuse from settler activists at climate marches.

Eriel Deranger, the executive director of Indigenous Climate Action, is a leading advocate in Canada for Indigenous approaches to confronting climate change. She is a Denesuline woman and member of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (ACFN), from Treaty 8 territory in Northern

4 MORE POWERFUL TOGETHER

Alberta. Earlier in 2019, she wrote that “While the climate justice movement is working hard to address the legacy of white supremacy and colonialism within environmental and conservation movements, it is a work in progress” (Deranger 2019: n.p.). Echoing that sentiment, Tayka Raymond, a Quebec-based grassroots advocate and water protector of Ojibwe and Scottish descent, posted on Facebook the day after the march that “despite all the awareness work being done around the country, there is still A LOT of work needing to be done. We have to review our game plan. Cause yesterday was horrible.”

The climate movement is growing and becoming more powerful. But there are many dynamics and factors limiting our power. Racism is one among other forms of oppression that continue to play out in movement spaces. These need to be meaningfully and actively addressed, for straight-out ethical reasons and in the interest of human decency. And we must do this work because the kind of internal violence that happened at the Montreal climate march deeply compromises the potential to build powerful, cohesive and effective movements that can generate that much needed “force to be reckoned with.”

As people concerned with building a better world, we need to be taking stock of where we are at, where we are strong and what is holding us back. This work is required if we are to be as powerful a force for change as we can be.

This process of taking stock, of deep reflection, of strategizing ways to combine efforts and build diverse, transformative movements that work towards both decarbonization *and* decolonization of our systems, this is the ongoing work to which this book aims to contribute. The overarching message of this book is that strong, just relations are the means and ends of building a better, climate safe world.

This book is based on research I conducted in collaboration with climate activists and Indigenous land defenders as part of my doctoral degree at McGill University. The project was conceived in September 2014, while I was in New York City for another historic moment for global climate activism: the People’s Climate March. While there, I also attended the NYC Climate Convergence, which took place over the two days leading up to the march. It featured over one hundred events all around the East Village in community centres, parks, gardens and churches. While listening to the stories and seeing the faces of the people, from all across the globe,

who are on the front lines of this crisis, climate change came alive for me in a way it had not before.

That was also the month that Naomi Klein's book *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* was released. Both the convergence and the book opened my eyes to the fundamental links between the deepening environmental crisis and growing social inequality and injustice worldwide. They, as have others before them, named capitalism and colonialism as root causes of these intersecting crises. Both made clear to me that the solutions to the climate crisis must be deeply informed by the people most directly impacted and that the failure of governments to take action on climate change means that this massive transition that is urgently needed will have to be driven from the bottom up, from grassroots social movements, led by front-line communities.

That week in New York and Naomi Klein's book sparked in me a conviction to do research that is informed by, and of benefit to, front-line communities and others actively fighting for climate justice, but it was not clear then how that could be done. Pursuing a doctoral degree, spending years in the ivory tower immersed in stacks of books and journal articles, at this very urgent moment in human history didn't seem like the best use of my time. Could I not contribute to social change in much more useful ways? Rather than giving up on academia altogether, I sought out unconventional approaches to research, approaches that are action-oriented, that engage closely with communities and movements. I came across long traditions of activist-scholars that do not just sit back and observe and analyze what is going on in the world; rather they take action with communities and movements, co-creating new knowledge along the way.

So in 2014, feeling growing urgency about the climate crisis, deeply inspired by the work going on in climate justice movements around the world and now newly equipped with these unconventional research methodologies, I set out to do research that is not just *about* social change, but that seeks to *actively contribute* to the systems transformations that are so urgently needed to address climate and inequality crises that are mounting globally. There is a lot at stake and there is no time to lose.

GLOBAL CLIMATE AND INEQUALITY CRISES

In November 2017, an open letter entitled *Warning to Humanity* was published, signed by 160,000 scientists from 184 countries across the Earth. An update to an original warning sent twenty-five years earlier, it states that global biophysical systems have changed dramatically over these last twenty-five years, and almost entirely for the worse. The scientists who issued the letter state that “especially troubling is the current trajectory of potentially catastrophic climate change” (Ripple et al. 2017: 1). This echoes reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), which recognize that our globalized industrial activities are increasingly compromising the processes of the planet’s life support systems, thus threatening the viability of ecosystems and countless life forms including our own (Field et al. 2014). Climate change is being driven by greenhouse gases (GHGs), such as carbon dioxide, building up in the Earth’s atmosphere and trapping heat. GHGs are produced by human activity such as the combustion of fossil fuels (mainly coal, oil and natural gas) as well as deforestation, changes in land use, soil erosion and agriculture (Solomon et al. 2007). The 2018 report from the IPCC stated that limiting global warming to 1.5°C — the temperature increase limit necessary to avert the dangerous destabilization of ecological and social systems — will require “rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society.”

While people around the world suffer increasing ecological upheaval, growing social crises of economic, racial and gender inequality are also unfolding and demanding urgent collective response. In one overview of global social inequality, Kate Raworth identified twelve dimensions of social wellbeing including education, peace and justice, political voice, gender equality, health and food. Her work shows that many millions of people around the world are not able to meet their basic needs. She writes, “worldwide, one person in nine does not have enough food to eat. One in four lives on less than \$3 a day, and one in eight people cannot find (paid) work. One person in eleven has no source of safe drinking water” (Raworth, 2017: 43). She goes on to describe that almost 40% of people live in countries in which income is distributed highly unequally and more than half of the world’s population live in countries in which people have little political voice. A recent Oxfam report found global economic inequality to be growing rapidly:

The year 2017 saw the biggest increase in billionaires in history, one more every two days. This huge increase could have ended global extreme poverty seven times over. Eighty-two percent of all wealth created in the last year went to the top 1%, and nothing went to the bottom 50%. Dangerous, poorly paid work for the many is supporting extreme wealth for the few. Women are in the worst work, and almost all the super-rich are men. (Pimentel, Aymar, Lawson et al. 2000: 2)

Increasingly, masses of people suffer from poverty while a very few powerful people become obscenely rich. The accumulation of wealth of the very rich few is happening at the expense of poor people, women and children and at the expense of ecosystems and non-human life on Earth. Transformation scholar Ashish Kothari writes that “every day, we see new evidence that our current model of development is straining the resilience of the biosphere and producing glaring economic inequalities. Levels of poverty, deprivation, and exploitation remain unacceptable, while conflict over access to natural resources, food, and water grows more frequent” (2014: 2).

Indigenous Peoples are particularly impacted by climate change. Because many Indigenous communities live close to the land and thus rely directly on natural resources and ecosystems, Indigenous Peoples are especially vulnerable to, and disproportionately affected by, climate change. Around the world, they are being forced to leave their lands due to deforestation, sea-level rise, major infrastructure projects and conflict arising from resource scarcity and other climate impacts (Salick and Byg 2007). Impacts of climate change are made worse by the pressure from commercial and extractive interests on their land and resources (Tupaz 2015). Because they are already disproportionately suffering from poverty and other legacies of colonialism, they are disadvantaged in terms of resources to help adapt to climate change and in some cases do not have the ability to reject unwanted extractive projects on their territories. Yet despite this poverty and disadvantage, Indigenous communities bearing the brunt of extractivism and climate change are leading the climate justice and environmental justice movements. The UN’s *Global Assessment Report on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services*, released in 2019, finds that, while biodiversity is declining in all areas across the globe, it is declining

much less rapidly in those lands still managed by Indigenous Peoples (IPBES 2019). In countless places around the world, Indigenous Peoples are actively blocking the expansion of extractive industries (Gedicks 1994, 2001; Temper and Bliss 2015).

These converging climate and inequality crises speak to deeply troubled *human-Earth* and *human-human* relationships. Both these sets of relationships are in urgent need of healing and transformation. The interconnection between environmental and equality crises is not just functional (i.e., poor people reliant on land hardest hit by climate change) but are symptoms of a deeper pattern of dysfunctional relationship based on domination. Some scientists, policy makers and activists discuss the environmental crises as separate, or of a different nature, from social crises. Though some may prefer, for simplicity's sake, to create policies and solutions addressing *social* crises and *ecological* crises separately, Raworth reminds us that “that simply won't work: their interconnectedness demands that they be understood as part of a complex socio-ecological system and hence be addressed within a greater whole” (Raworth 2017: 47; see also Folke, Jansson et al. 2011).

In the spirit of seeing and responding to the depth, breadth and interconnection of the social and ecological crises unfolding currently, climate justice activists and organizers around the globe are calling for *systems change* (Klein 2014). Scientists too are acknowledging that in order to address the crises being faced, there needs to be a profound transformation in the economic, political and thought systems that are driving the crises (Moore et al. 2014; Beddoe et al. 2009; IPCC 2018). Some scientists too are recognizing that a transformation towards sustainability will require radical systemic shifts in deeply held values and beliefs, patterns of social behaviour and governance (Westley et al. 2011). Indeed “the roots of these crises lie in structural problems within the economy, society, and humanity's relationship with nature. All of this calls for a fundamental rethinking of the human project in the twenty-first century” (Kothari 2014: 2).

The need for massive systemic transformation is clear. Small adjustments in our economic and social systems are not enough. Adapting to the changes already occurring, that is not enough. We require a “fundamental restructuring of the way modern societies operate” (Scheidel et al. 2017: 11). We need transformative change. By transformation I mean intentional change that confronts not just the symptoms but the root causes of social

injustice and environmental unsustainability, including unequal power relations, and rather than merely improving an existing system, alters the overall composition and behaviour of the system in ways that drive desirable change across temporal and spatial scales, towards increased social wellbeing, equality and ecological sustainability.

Governments across the world have been failing to lead the transformations necessary for addressing the climate and inequality crises. As such we need to be seeking out other avenues for social change.

Given that many people in decision-making positions of power benefit from the systems remaining as they are, and given that individual people do not, alone, constitute the kind of force required, many scholars argue that *social movements* — ordinary people coming together, engaging in collective action to push for change — are crucial for bringing about transformative change (Carroll and Sarker 2016; Solnit 2016; Scheidel et al. 2017; Kothari et al. 2014; Temper and Del Bene 2016; Choudry 2015).

Social movements are one of the “social forms through which collectives give voice to their grievances and concerns about the rights, welfare, and wellbeing of themselves and others” (Snow, Soule and Kriesi 2008: 3). Though there are other ways by which social change is driven — such as through legislation and court proceedings, through educational systems and through electoral outcomes etc. — social movements provide regular people a means by which to combine forces to influence change without needing to hold certain specialized or elite roles in society (Glasberg and Shannon 2010). Movements drive social change from the bottom up by empowering regular folks and oppressed people to effectively challenge and resist the decisions and actions of those with more power and advantage in a society (Glasberg and Shannon 2010).

THIS RESEARCH PROJECT

It is in social movements that I place my hope for transforming our systems towards climate justice. For the past five years, I have been working closely with people in the Indigenous land defence, environmental/climate justice and anti-pipeline movements in Canada. Together we’ve been discussing what we can do to increase our power to bring about transformation in Canada towards both decolonization and decarbonization. We have been

thinking hard about how large-scale systems change happens and how social movements can work together to bring this change about.

Since the fall of 2014, I have spent time at Indigenous anti-pipeline blockades, washing dishes, hauling wood and learning decolonization practices and theory. I've worked with grassroots organizations to organize protests and marches, helped plan training events and panel discussions and fundraised legal fees for activists criminalized for direct action. I have also conducted a series of interviews, surveys and think tank sessions to work together to analyze the crises, envision the future we want, theorize about how change happens, reflect on what is working and what is not, and strategize together about how to strengthen the movements' power to transform Canada. This has been a process of theorizing from the ground up.

I developed this approach in response to the critiques of conventional forms of social movement research which can be done in ways that are extractive, disconnected from and of little use to movements (Choudry 2015). These critiques are not unique to research with social movements. Social science, especially Euro-Western research, has been extensively critiqued as “extractive, insofar as universities and governments send their ‘experts’ to a community, extract information from ‘subjects,’ and take away the data to write their papers, reports and theses with no reciprocity or feedback to the community” (Santos 2008: 321). Indeed, this has been the endemic approach in the social sciences more generally, and particularly in anthropology and the study of Indigenous Peoples (Smith 1999).

The work of Chris Dixon, Aziz Choudry, Harsha Walia, Eric Shragge, Sandy Grande, Dip Kapoor, Alex Khasnabish, Anne Harley, Jonathan Langdon and others offer new and promising approaches to research involving social movements. These more engaged forms of research tend to centre around several principles: reducing the disconnect between scholars and activists, valuing the intellectual work of movements, doing research that is relevant to movements, and doing research that helps bring about social change.

Rather than *learning about social movements*, I have, from the start, approached my research as being about *learning with movements*. I've been working to convene conversations that can contribute to our shared understandings of how we can effectively address climate crisis and mounting

social inequality, to *think together* how we can bring about transformation towards more just and ecologically viable systems.

Early on in the project I engaged in several research collaborations that helped me refine my research questions and approaches. One collaboration was with the people at Unist'ot'en camp in north-central BC, who have been actively blocking multiple oil and gas pipelines by re-inhabiting their traditional territory, which is on the pipeline route between the Alberta oil sands and the BC coast. In 2016, I worked with them to research how social marketing can be used as a tool for social change. This project was prompted by their own research interests and culminated in the preparation and delivery of a day-long workshop at the annual Unist'ot'en Action Camp in 2016, training activists and community members in using social marketing tools for social change.

A second research collaboration was with Vanessa Gray, an Anishinaabe kwe land defender from Aamjiwnaang First Nation, located in Canada's Chemical Valley. Vanessa and her sibling Beze have been raising awareness about the rampant environmental racism and the devastating health impacts on her community caused by the oil and gas refineries around her reserve near Sarnia, Ontario. In 2015, Vanessa was facing criminal charges for shutting off Enbridge's much contested Line 9 pipeline. Facing the possibility of many years in prison for this act of protest that she considered "community self-defence," Vanessa and I convened and facilitated a think tank of scholars and other experts in Canadian and Indigenous law to brainstorm about Vanessa's defence. The transcription from this session was sent to her lawyer, who used it in the court case.

A third research collaboration was with the team from The Leap Manifesto. This manifesto sets out a vision for a justice-based energy transition in Canada centred on "Caring for the Earth and One Another." In 2017, the team that launched the manifesto formed a new organization, called The Leap, to work towards implementing the manifesto's vision. I collaborated with the team by helping them conduct and analyze over a hundred phone interviews with representatives of the organizations that had signed on to the manifesto. In these phone calls we asked for feedback and input on how The Leap could be most useful to the movements in Canada.

Bolstered with important learnings from these collaborations and from my ongoing involvement with these movements, during the summer and

fall of 2017, I conducted forty in-depth interviews with people active in Indigenous land defence, anti-pipeline and environmental/climate justice movements in Canada. This sample of forty people represents an incredible wealth of experience in working to make change in Canada. The range of people, from youth to elders, included twenty women, twenty men, seven people of colour, eight Indigenous people and twenty-five white settlers. It included twenty-six anglophones and five francophones, mostly people residing in Quebec and British Columbia, but with a few from other provinces, including Saskatchewan, Ontario and Nova Scotia. It included twenty-one activists in grassroots organizations, twelve people who worked in NGOs, five community organizers and eight who were involved in other ways (e.g., First Nations governance, education, policy). Most interviews involved myself and one interviewee, though I did conduct a few group interviews, which I refer to as think tank discussions, in order to think together with several people at a time about specific questions.

I also conducted an in-depth online survey, which was completed by a total of thirty-six people: thirteen women, sixteen men (the rest didn't specify), three people of colour, three Indigenous people and nineteen white settlers (again, the rest didn't specify).

Through the interviews and surveys, I asked activists and land defenders many questions about how they understand the climate and inequality crises, how they think large-scale social change happens, what they see as the most significant barriers to the change they want to see, and what they think can be done to build more powerful, transformative movements in Canada. Through a process of coding-based data analysis, guided by grounded theory, I've been able to bring these into dialogue with each other. This book presents the rich insights and ideas that emerged from this process of *thinking together*.

Though it was not my intention, a majority of the people I interviewed and surveyed were white settlers. To try to ensure Indigenous voices remain central to this work, despite the failure to engage as many Indigenous people as I would have liked, I raise up and disproportionately report on the views and theories of the Indigenous people that I spoke with. The voices of Indigenous people and people of colour have been given more weight in the data analysis and presentation. In an effort to further bolster the contribution of Indigenous voices to my research, I also attended public events where land defenders and water protectors were

speaking. I took notes and incorporated the insights and ideas presented there into my data analysis.

Quotes from various sources of data are represented in the chapters of this book in the following ways:

- Quotes from interviews — (Int#),
- Quotes from surveys — (S#)
- Quotes from think tank sessions — (TT#)
- Quotes from public event — (E#).

A table of codes is presented in the Appendix, providing basic information about each interview, survey, think tank and event interlocutor.

WORKING TOWARDS DECOLONIAL RESEARCH PRACTICE

In her influential book *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith makes clear that research is a site of ongoing colonial relations (1999). Academic research is an institution that is “embedded in a global system of imperialism and power” and with it has come “new waves of exploration, discovery, exploitation and appropriation” (Smith 1999: 24). This is so to such an extent that “research,” is “probably one of the dirtiest words in the indigenous world’s vocabulary” (Smith 1999: 1). “We need an understanding of the complex ways in which the pursuit of knowledge is deeply embedded in the multiple layers of imperial and colonial practices” (Smith 1999: 2). And we need to work hard at undoing these.

Settler researchers, such as myself, need to be vigilantly alert to the ways their research may be replicating colonial dynamics.

I am a settler living on stolen Indigenous land. My family arrived on Turtle Island, from various countries in eastern and western Europe, in the late 1800s and early 1900s. They were working-class people seeking employment, homes of their own and better lives for their kids. These better lives that my great-grandparents sought and found in Canada were available and accessible to them because of the European colonization of North America — the lands and resources taken from Indigenous Peoples without their consent and the systematic destruction of their cultures and lifeways in order to facilitate this land and resource dispossession. My ancestors directly benefited from the colonial process of land

dispossession and the oppression of Indigenous Peoples here on Turtle Island. As Mi'kmaw warrior and decolonial thinker Sakej Ward said to a room of settlers at an event I attended in Vancouver in 2017: "As settlers, your ancestors were the architects of my people's apocalypse."

What this means to me is that the position I hold in Canadian society — as an able-bodied, cis-gendered, white woman born to middle-class parents with access to higher education and financial ease — was afforded to me based on colonial relations and the ongoing dispossession of Indigenous Peoples from their lands. My material wellbeing is based on, and my worldview has been shaped by, these ongoing relations of colonial domination. I continue to benefit from the ongoing injustice in Canada. This understanding demands that I think hard about how self-interest may be clouding and distorting my understandings and visions for change, and about how this has shaped my research project.

In responding to this growing understanding, I commit my research and activist work to helping bring about radical transformation in Canada and to unlearning the racist, dualistic, hierarchical and oppressive worldview that I was born and raised in. I commit this work and my future work to help dismantle the structures of capitalism and colonialism. I have been seeking to learn as much as I can about the systems of domination that undergird the current status quo in Canada, which continues to drive ecological devastation and social injustice. I have been seeking to respectfully learn from and raise up Indigenous voices and worldviews, which offer radically more just and sustainable ways of knowing, living and working for change.

Realizing early on in this research project that settler-led research involving Indigenous Peoples and communities can be highly problematic, I spent a lot of time reading about decolonizing research methods. In reflecting on the learnings from these readings, I developed a set of principles to help guide me through the whole research process.

1. Engage in critical self-reflexivity (Fortier 2015), continually working to "critically reflect on and understand the underlying assumptions, motivations and values which inform my research practices" (Smith 1999: 20). To ask myself: who is benefiting from this research and who is not?
2. Acknowledge, learn about and promote an understanding of

Canada's colonial history and present and to ensure that my framings of current political struggles and efforts for change in Canada are situated "within the structures of settler colonialism, white supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and the capitalist world system" (Fortier 2015: 19).

3. Endeavour to practise decolonization "not only in my research but as a life praxis" (Fortier 2015: 19).
4. Develop and practise a research approach that is radically participatory (Smith 1999) and aimed at social transformation.
5. Support and enhance an Indigenous agenda for transformation (Smith 1999) in my research and in my activism.
6. Commit to developing reciprocal relationships with the people with whom I work, such that the collaborations and alliances are of benefit to them at every stage (Riddell et al. 2017).
7. Ground my theoretical work in multiple ontological realities and worldviews and to work towards raising up and learning about relational worldviews drawn from Indigenous ontologies (Fortier 2015; Kovach 2010).
8. Rather than uncritically apply social movement theories to Indigenous change agency, seek to emphasize insights and theories from diverse Indigenous perspectives (Coburn and Atleo 2016).
9. Use my dissertation and position as scholar and researcher to create space for Indigenous voices, theories and agency in the academy (Kovach 2010) and in social movements in Canada.
10. Take any financial gain from this work and redirect it towards Indigenous front-line communities.

THIS BOOK

This book tells a story about distinct but overlapping movements in Canada, a powerful convergence of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, impacted communities, grassroots groups and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). These have come together in the common cause of opposing the criss-crossing network of proposed and existing oil and gas pipelines in Canada. While grappling with very real inter- and intra-movement tensions and differences in worldviews, strategies and long-term goals, the environmental/climate justice, anti-pipeline and

Indigenous land defence movements are directly challenging the status quo of the Canadian extractive economy.

As I will argue, these movements are contesting the story Canada tells itself about being a peaceful, nature-loving, human-rights-abiding nation. These movements are helping expose the contradictions and injustices at the heart of Canada — that its economy is based on the destruction of natural systems, theft of Indigenous land and violation of Indigenous rights, that Canada is a country guided predominantly by the logics and relations of capitalist accumulation and settler colonialism.

Though the Liberal government purports to care about forging better relationships with First Nations, it continues to pressure them to extinguish their rights at land claims negotiations tables (Manuel 2017). While Prime Minister Trudeau continues with his simplistic rhetoric about climate action that balances the “environment” and the “economy,” these movements are offering a different story. It’s a story that doesn’t pit the economy against the environment but conceives of the economy, and the wellbeing of people, as fundamentally dependent on clean water, clean air and a stable climate.

Meanwhile, collaborations with social justice groups and Indigenous communities are expanding mainstream environmental movements’ narrow understanding of “environment,” as they learn about solidarity across diverse movements, rendering the movements less “siloed.” These movements are working to coordinate efforts across vast geographies and diverse ideologies and coming to see themselves as part of a movement ecosystem — a larger whole in which different groups play differentiated and interdependent roles, contributing in ways that are necessary but insufficient on their own. Conceiving of “movements as ecosystems” and learning to see diversity as a strength holds promise for better collaborating and coordinating movement efforts.

Indigenous Peoples engaged in these struggles are defending their lands and rights and reinvigorating traditional practices and livelihoods. They are directly and indirectly teaching non-Indigenous activists about reciprocal relationships: relationships of responsibility to land and to each other. These teachings are ultimately the promise of stronger, more effective social movements. They offer new ways of relating that can help overcome the relational and ideological tensions and divisions currently weakening and fracturing the movements. However, to realize this

promise of a “movement of movements” powerful enough to transform Canada, there is much work to be done to undo the power imbalances — the ongoing racism, classism, sexism and other forms of “power-over” that still exist within and across movements.

This book presents the diverse voices in these movements. While struggling with divergent worldviews, sometimes-competing interests and deeply wounded relationships, activists, organizers and land defenders are working together and apart to forge paths forward — paths that work simultaneously towards decarbonizing and decolonizing Canada.

I am more hopeful about the state of the world now than I was when I began this project. Spending these five years talking and working closely with so many people who care so deeply and work so hard to fight against injustice and build a just and thriving world has provided me a much-needed antidote to the despair and anxiety that this moment in history can generate.

THE CLIMATE AND INEQUALITY CRISES IN CANADA

CLIMATE CRISIS AND OIL AND GAS DEVELOPMENT IN CANADA

Like many places around the globe, Canada has been facing more and more occurrences of climate change–induced extreme weather, such as wildfires, floods and storms (Environment and Climate Change Canada 2019). A report released in April 2019 by Environment and Climate Change Canada, shows Canada warming at twice the global rate and confirms that the majority of warming is the result of burning fossil fuels. To have any chance of warding off the worst of the impending climate impacts, much of the remaining fossil fuel reserves must stay in the ground, and other forms of energy and revenue must be developed (McGlade and Ekins 2015).

At the opening of the 21st Conference of the Parties (COP21) meeting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) in 2015 in Paris, the newly elected Canadian prime minister, Justin Trudeau, promised real action on climate change, claiming “it’s the right thing to do, for our environment, economy, and as part of the global community” (Morin 2015: n.p.). Despite these seeming commitments to climate change mitigation, the Trudeau Liberals continue to expand Canada’s oil and gas industry to the detriment of ecosystems, local communities, long-term economic sustainability and a stable climate.

Canada is the fifth largest producer globally of both petroleum and gas (Natural Resources Canada 2018). The 2016 report about Canadian GHG

(greenhouse gas) emissions from Ivey Business School at University of Western Ontario states that

Canada emits about 1.6 percent of the world's GHG emissions. Despite this relatively low share, Canada is among the top 10 global emitters on an absolute basis and stands firmly in the top 3 for emissions per capita. By way of comparison, Canada's population makes up about 0.5 percent of the world total so that our emissions' share is about 3 times our population share. (Boothe and Boudreault 2016: 4)

The centre of Canada's oil extraction is in the Alberta tar sands, which holds 170.2 billion barrels and is the third largest known oil reserve in the world after Saudi Arabia and Venezuela (Nimana, Canter and Kumar 2015). NASA scientist James Hansen has calculated that the tar sands contain twice the amount of CO₂ than has been emitted by global oil use in human history. He said that if we were to burn all the oil in Alberta at once, the atmospheric concentration of CO₂ would go from the present level of 400 ppm to 540 ppm, and this has led him to conclude that continuing exploitation of the tar sands is "game over" for the climate. The tar sands are thus a key front in the fight against climate change (Hansen 2012).

Resistance to oil and gas pipelines has been a primary manifestation and catalyst for the growing environmental/climate justice movement in Canada. To get Canada's land-locked fossil fuel resources to refineries and to domestic and international markets, and to continue to expand the industries, transport infrastructure is needed. "Pipelines are the vital arteries of the industry, bringing bitumen to refineries and ultimately to market, and they already stretch over thousands of kilometers across North America" (Black, D'Arcy and Weis 2014: 4).

The ongoing effort to propose, approve and build new oil and gas pipelines is currently a critical point of tension in Canada and has sparked unprecedented resistance to Canada's oil and gas industry (Lukacs in Black, D'Arcy and Weis 2014). As extractivism and climate change exacerbate existing social injustice and inequality in Canada, communities and social movements have been mobilizing to resist new fossil fuel infrastructure and to push for more just and ecologically viable energy and economic systems. These movements are being led by Indigenous Peoples on the front lines of both the climate and the inequality crises. Like the

uneven and unjust distribution of climate impacts, the impacts of fossil fuel extraction and transportation are felt by some people in Canada more than others, reflecting more general patterns of environmental injustice (Martinez-Alier et al. 2016). Whether at the points of extraction, transport, processing or combustion, Indigenous communities are bearing an unfair brunt of Canada's ongoing dependence on the oil and gas industry.

Indeed, the expansion of the oil and gas industry in Canada is directly related to Canada's colonial history and to the very real neo-colonial forces still at play in this country. This includes but is not limited to struggles over land, water and resources. Resource extraction in Canada has been, from the start and continuing today, closely linked with colonization and the dispossession of Indigenous Peoples from their lands.

Despite recent attention to reconciliation and increasing international pressure to respect Indigenous rights, the Canadian government continues to infringe on Indigenous rights through the development of oil and gas pipelines, expansion of the tar sands, mining and other extraction projects. Canada's economic base is dependent on the land stolen from Indigenous Nations, lands that are still contested. This places Canada and Canadians at odds with Indigenous Peoples, who have prior and competing claims to land (Barker and Lowman 2015). Thus, Canada's ongoing extractive economic development is not only driving the climate crisis, it is dependent on the ongoing theft of Indigenous land and violation of Indigenous Peoples' rights. The late Arthur Manuel, influential thinker and political leader from the Secwepemc Nation, put it clearly: "The forces of cultural genocide that you launched against us were not because you are wantonly cruel people ... it was because only by destroying us could you have uncontested ownership of the land" (2017: 88). Canada's wealth has been created on the backs of Indigenous Peoples and through the extraction and destruction of lands that are the basis of Indigenous cultures and economies.

ONGOING IMPACTS OF SETTLER COLONIALISM IN CANADA

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Report, released in 2015, starkly exposes the huge suffering that has come directly from historical and ongoing colonial relations between the Canadian state and Indigenous Peoples, naming the historical treatment of First Nations by the Canadian