Grounded Constellations: Networks of Nourishment and Support Amongst Indigenous Resurgent Movements

Bryce Lewis-Smith

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Committee:

P. Joshua Griffin

Charlotte Coté

Dian Million

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Abstract

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Bryce Lewis-Smith

Chair of Supervisory Committee:

P. Joshua Griffin

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Weaving together the Anishinaabeodziiwin gathered through the stories of my ancestors, the teachings of the night sky, my own journey in each of the four directions, lessons learned from my diasporic and Native Californian relatives, and theorizing via dreaming, I explore grounded constellations and the Indigenous ethos of land as a means of resurging from a state of ethical loneliness to Native survivance. Through my writing I hope to map my own steps to share with those similarly tasked with walking the path of the Seventh Fire. This essay examines ways my kinship with other Indigenous peoples and lands has helped me refuse colonial isolation and has nourished my own Potawatomi identity. I carry the resurgent lessons of survivance learned from my relations back to my community. I write in the memory of my ancestors and dream in anticipation of my descendants. Together we can light the flame of the eighth fire. Our map home lies in the constellations of stars in the night sky–our ancestors watching us from the sky world above.

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This thesis is dedicated to my diasporic kin walking the path of the Seventh Fire from homelands that are not their own but uphold and maintain their responsibility to the lands they walk by dreaming of a future which nourishes our descendants. This thesis wouldn't have been possible without the constellated support of my friends, family, and mentors who have sustained me throughout this process.

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Chi migwetch nokmes, for your strength and perseverance in holding onto what you could. Though you are no longer with us I can feel your warmth deep within me, hear you in my father's laugh, and see your bright light shining through the stars.

The sun begins to set and the trickle of running water grows louder as the songs of day quiet down. I wander through the woods behind my parents house where my brother and I once played. These are the gishkey-zhgobis (cedar trees) who've watched over us and our coyote, owl, raccoon, deer, frog, and salmon relatives as we crossed paths climbing over and under roots during warm summer days. When we were younger, we would come to this place to watch the salmon fry dart in the shadows of the creek and to pick black and salmon berries. These woods know our laughter and we know their care.

Tall silhouettes draw my eyes skyward as light gives way to shadow. Above the bodies of the trees the faint light of the stars grows brighter as they populate the night sky. Clear as day, I can see the limbs of the gishkey reaching to the constellations above. Longing for the stars, they gather the gifts of the Earth skyward. But they are not alone in their efforts - each gishkey is connected through a constellation of nodules, roots and rhizomes. From above, the trees appear to stand as individuals but below we can see the glowing transfer of energy, nutrients, and information which enter the trees into community with one another.

I sit down at the edge of the creek with my feet in the water and watch as the tips of the trees intermingle with the celestial bodies above. In my heart I know we will one day reach the stars.

Introduction:

Image One: Seven Fires Prophecies by Joshua Mangeshig Pawis-Steckley (Anishinaabe and Wasauksing) depicts the history, resiliency, strength, and resurgence of the Anishinaabeg. Each of the seven fires represent an era in Anishinaabe history, foretelling westward migration and coming of European settlers to Turtle Island (Pawis-Steckley 2019).

Within Anishinaabeodziiwin, Anishinaabe ways of knowing and being, our knowledge keepers carry flames of the Sacred Fire which was gifted to our people by Creator at the beginning of time. These flames give us the sacred teachings of what it means to be Anishinaabe (Odawa, Ojibwe, and Potawatomi) and hold our cultural teachings, ceremonies, and ancestral languages. Through the Sacred Fire, my people, the Potawatomi, learn how to walk in a good way as Nanabozho once did upon their arrival to Earth after being birthed from the universe herself. In this way, our traditional stories document our people's past, present and map our future in sacred relation with the Earth. My writing grounds my own lived experiences within Potawatomi traditional stories as a means to understand the teachings gifted to me as I remember our people's Anishinaabeodziiwin in the aftermath of colonialism. Therefore, I share with you my journey and movement as a mixed race Anishinaabe living in diaspora on the ancestral homelands of the Tongva and Coast Salish peoples. I look to the celestial skyworld of my ancestors and the underground networks of my fungal kin as a means to understand what it means to be grounded within community in these spaces and the methods in which Indigenous

peoples sustain and nourish ourselves. I draw connections between interpersonal support networks and intertribal resurgence movements as a means of empowerment in our collective struggle against colonialism. To begin, I would like to situate the current colonial moment we are in by retelling a story passed on to me by my elders and shared widely by Anishinaabe cultural leaders Potawatomi author Robin Wall Kimmerer and the late Ojibwe elder Eddie Benton-Banai.

The story of the Seventh Fire prophecy documents Anishinaabe movement westward and foretells the current moment in which our people exist. Therefore, this story is a convergence of our peoples' history and the realization of prophecies. Within this story our people are visited by prophets who bring with them the knowledge of times to come. The coming of each prophet and their fire marked the beginning of a new period in our people's history. The first three fires of the prophecy tell of the migration of the Anishinaabe to our homelands in the Great Lakes region. The time of the first fire came to our ancestors on the easterly shore of Turtle Island where they lived in communion with our Wabanaki relatives. The fire of the first prophet urged our ancestors to move westward to protect the Sacred Fire. So the Anishinaabe moved west until they came to the Great Lakes where food grew on the water. For years, our peoples gathered manoomin, our traditional wild rice, which nourished and sustained our ancestors. The fourth, fifth, and sixth fires foretold the coming of the Western colonization of Turtle Island (Image One). European settlers carried their religions, guns, and diseases with them to our lands. Deception and betrayal led to many broken treaties and the removal of my ancestors from our ancestral homelands. Justified by the Indian Removal Act, the 1833 Treaty of Chicago between the United States government and the the Anishinaabe Council of Three Fires (the Ojibwe, Odawa, and Potawatomi) led to the removal of my ancestors from the shores of the Great Lakes to grassland prairies of Indian Country. While this journey marked a physical separation from the

lands we once called home, it also marked the beginning of the Potawatomi diaspora and the fragmentation of our band's Anishinaabeodziiwin. A settler militia shackled and held our ancestors at gunpoint, forcing them to leave our wigwam homes for the foreign lands of the great plains. Our people remember this forced migration from the Great Lakes region as the 1838 Potawatomi Trail of Death (Murphy 1988). Throughout our colonial history, our ancestors were made to leave behind aspects of our culture, language, and Potawatomi identity in order to survive colonialism. When I think of these times I remember my grandmothers Keep-Kuit-Qua and Lorine "Bee" Smith and their strength and perseverance in holding onto the bits of Anishinaabeodziiwin they could in the face of genocide, residential school, and the continuous erasure Indigenous peoples across Turtle Island continue to experience to this day.

The prophet of the Seventh Fire came to our people with a strange light in his eyes. His prophecy spoke of a time when a new people would emerge from the flame to retrace the footsteps of their ancestors to find what they were forced to leave behind. "The journey of the Seventh Fire will take these new people to their elders for them to sit and listen, to gather their knowledge" (Benton-Banai 2010). The Seventh Fire prophesied that if the new peoples remain strong in their quest for our ancestral knowledge that there will be a rebirth of the Anishinaabe peoples and a rekindling of our relationships with the sky, spirit, plant, and animal worlds. Kimmerer positions the people of the Seventh Fire as standing at a fork in the road with one path leading towards renewed relationships of reciprocity and healing with our more than human kin while the other continues the path of loss of connection, suffering, and death to Earth's people (Kimmerer 2013). Before we are able to follow the healing path of reconnection and renewal, the people of the Seventh Fire must first retrace the steps of our ancestors to gather what they were forced to leave behind in the wake of colonization (Benton-Banai 2010). The Anishinaabe

believe now is the time of the Seventh Fire as we sit on the edge of environmental collapse and our elders begin to walk on. The Seventh Fire Prophecy gifts us the choice to rekindle Anishinaabeodziiwin and to remember how to be Potawatomi.

I begin down the path of the Seventh Fire on the homelands of the Coast Salish and Tongva peoples of the western shore of Turtle Island. While these lands and waters are not traditional Anishinaabe territory, their inherent constellations of relationships have sustained and nourished my Indigeneity. Here I seek to map nourishing networks of connectivity by drawing from lessons and traditional Anishinaabe knowledge. The following collection of thoughts, stories, and essays is my account of navigating colonialism in the time of the Seventh Fire, finding community within the Potawatomi diaspora, and learning how to walk as if every step is a greeting to the Earth and her peoples.

Within diaspora, kinship networks are a means to sustain Indigenous lifeways, resurgence, and resistance within the time of the Seventh Fire. Similar to the networks of mycorrhizae weaving together a community of *gishkey-zhgobis* in my dreams, so too do our relationships to one another nourish and sustain our collective growth skyward. Being in relation informs my movement and reminds me of my obligations to my Indigenous kin. Athabascan scholar, poet, and dreamer Dian Million describes these responsibilities in the presence of Indigenous beings and lands as generative, transforming, and healing. She writes "[o]ur Indigenous spirits are an ethos that can transform… capitalist ways of being by refusing to be enclosed in concrete in the form of disconnect" (Million 2023). When we consider the expansive nature of Indigeneity and connectivity formed by the multiplicity of relationships we hold with one another, we enter clusters of grounded constellations which sustain us as we journey home.

Thus, I argue the importance of tapping into these intertribal networks as a means to sustain Indigenous lifeways, resurgence, and resistance within the time of the Seventh Fire. Similar to the guiding constellations of our ancestors above in the sky world, grounded constellations of mycorrhizal connections root us in place and connect us in reciprocal relationships with those walking similar paths. Recognizing the importance and potentiality of these relationships is key in our continued struggle against colonialism but it also works to expand Indigenous lands, ontologies, and stories into both the sky world and embedded below the soil of Mother Earth. Connecting with the expansive power innate within Indigenous peoples allows us to collectively dream of another world - one which flips colonialism on its head and returns to the lifeways of our ancestors for our descendents.

Throughout this journey I hold tight to the teachings of these lands as I gather the knowledge of my ancestors and the teachings of my elders as I walk in the footsteps of Keep-Kuit-Qua and Nokmes Bee to remember our fragmented Potawatomi language, ceremonies, culture, lands and relations. Weaving together the Anishinaabeodziiwin gathered through the stories of my ancestors, my own journey in each of the four directions, and the lessons learned from my diasporic and Native Californian relatives, I explore grounded constellations as a means of Indigenous survivance and taking responsibility for being a guest on another peoples' homelands. Through my writing I hope to map my own steps to share with those similarly tasked with walking the path of the Seventh Fire. This essay examines ways my kinship with other Indigenous peoples has helped me refuse colonial isolation and has nourished my own Potawatomi identity through an Indigenous ethos. This nourishment then acts as a catalyst for Potawatomi flight out of colonialism as I carry the resurgent lessons of survivance learned from my relations back to my community. I write in the memory of my ancestors and dream in

anticipation of my descendants. Together we can light the flame of the eighth fire. Our map home lies in the constellations of stars in the night sky–our ancestors watching us from the sky world above.

Diasporic Beginnings:

> *To be an urban Indian is to live under diasporic conditions… It is a state of disconnection from land and the culture and lifeways that emanate from land, such as language, ceremonial or religious practices, and traditional food and medicine knowledge.*
>
> Dina Gilio-Whitaker 2019

For a long time I thought I stood alone. Growing up on Coast Salish and Tongva lands I felt physically distanced from our traditional Anishinaabe territories and communities in the Great Lakes region and felt no connection to our reservation lands in Oklahoma. In my head and in my spirit, I had cut myself off from my Anishinaabe ancestors and from my living relatives. This is a common occurrence for Indigenous youth growing up in urban areas away from their communities and away from their ancestral homelands (Martinez 2016, Latimer 2018). The United States has a long history of forcibly restricting and dictating Indigenous lands, bodies, and movement as a means to assert colonial dominance over Indigenous peoples. As a means to assimilate our communities, the United States government enacted a handful of federal policies which dispossessed the Potawatomi of our lands and sought to separate us from our tribal communities.

Three years after the United States federal government ratified the Indian Removal Act of 1830, the 1883 Treaty of Chicago between the US and the Council of Three Fires authorized the removal of my ancestors from our traditional homelands in the Wabash River Valley of Indiana to reservation lands in Kansas, physically separating our peoples from our Anishinaabe relatives,

our traditional foods, and our more than human kin (Drexler 2019). Refusing to leave their wigwams, our peoples were forcefully marched by an armed militia of settlers more than 660 miles to a small reserve in present-day Kansas during the 1838 Potawatomi Trail of Death. Upon arrival our ancestors found the rolling hills of the prairies starkly different from the woodlands of the Great Lakes. Food was scarce, there were no trees to build our traditional wigwam homes, and Catholic missionaries strategically and forcefully began converting our people away from our traditional ways as foretold by the Seven Fires prophecy (Potawatomi Cultural Center), McKee 1939). As the federal government sought to dissolve reservations in Indian Territory my ancestors were once again removed from the reservation to present-day Oklahoma in exchange for United States citizenship leading to a separation between the Prairie Band and Citizen Band of the Potawatomi. The Dawes Act of 1887 allowed the United States government to break up reservation lands held in common by tribal citizens into small allotments to be parceled out to individuals, such as my grandmother Mary Pappan. This fragmentation of tribal lands further exacerbated the power imbalance in favor of the United States by targeting individual land owners with limited legal rights rather than lands held by Tribal Nations and protected by Treaty Rights. By uprooting our community and dissecting our constellated relationships, the colonial government worked to flatten our ability to protect and nurture each other and the Earth as taught to us in our Anishinaabedzwiin.

Within half a century, allotment reduced treaty lands by two thirds as settlers bought, stole, and tricked Indigenous peoples out of their property (Gilio-Whitaker 2019). In an effort to solve the United States "Indian Problem" and relieve the United State's of its treaty-based responsibilities to Native peoples, the federal government passed House Concurrent Resolution 108 and Public Law 280, known today as termination policies. "Termination included a plan to

relocate reservation Indians to cities under the guise of a jobs program… Relocation amounted to a wholesale population transfer away from reservations to urban environments and as a result, today most American Indians live away from their reservation communities" (Gilio-Whitaker 2019). These termination, relocation, and assimilation policies ended the federal recognition status of 109 Tribes resulting in the loss of 1,369,000 acres of Indigenous lands and a widespread diaspora of Native Americans with many Potawatomi being relocated to urban centers in Los Angeles, Milwaukee, and the San Francisco Bay Area (Fixico 1986).

Perpetuating the historic and intergenerational trauma Indigenous communities face, many of the job opportunities promised through relocation proved empty. Newly relocated Urban Natives experienced high rates of poverty and homelessness as they were dispossessed from their lands and their communities. Negative stereotypes worsened treatment towards our urban populations and increased discrimination made being Indigenous increasingly difficult. Assimilation efforts were successful in planting internalized racism, intergenerational trauma, and health and economic disparities in our communities. As Gilio-Whitaker writes:

> *While many urban Native people today maintain connection to their homelands, their lives and identities are mediated and shaped by these histories of dispossession and displacement. To be an urban Indian is to live under diasporic conditions… It is a state of disconnection from land and the culture and lifeways that emanate from land, such as language, ceremonial or religious practices, and traditional food and medicine knowledge. Even considering the remarkable resiliency Indigenous peoples have shown since European colonization, this legacy of loss has still come to be a defining characteristic of Indigenous identity. In both urban and reservation settings, Native identities are formed against a backdrop of historical tragedy and ongoing injustice, which often involves the continued struggle to defend what remains of ancestral lands, territories, resources, and cultures.*

The struggle against colonialism is energy consuming, labor intensive, and fraught with historical and intergenerational trauma. There are certain pathways of survival Indigenous peoples have had to undergo in order to protect ourselves from genocide and colonialism. My ancestors had to let go of parts of Anishinaabeodziiwin to survive assimilation, cope with the

traumas of colonialism, and mitigate racial discrimination. This assimilation stems from decades of colonial policies of genocide and termination prophesized in the Fourth, Fifth, and Sixth Fires. Our Potawatomi kin have been dispersed and isolated from our lands and relatives. Today, 60.6% of our enrolled tribal members live outside of Oklahoma (CPN 2017). As represented by our legislative district map, Citizen Potawatomi tribal members are spread across Turtle Island with each of the thirteen districts holding about 2,500 people (Image Two).

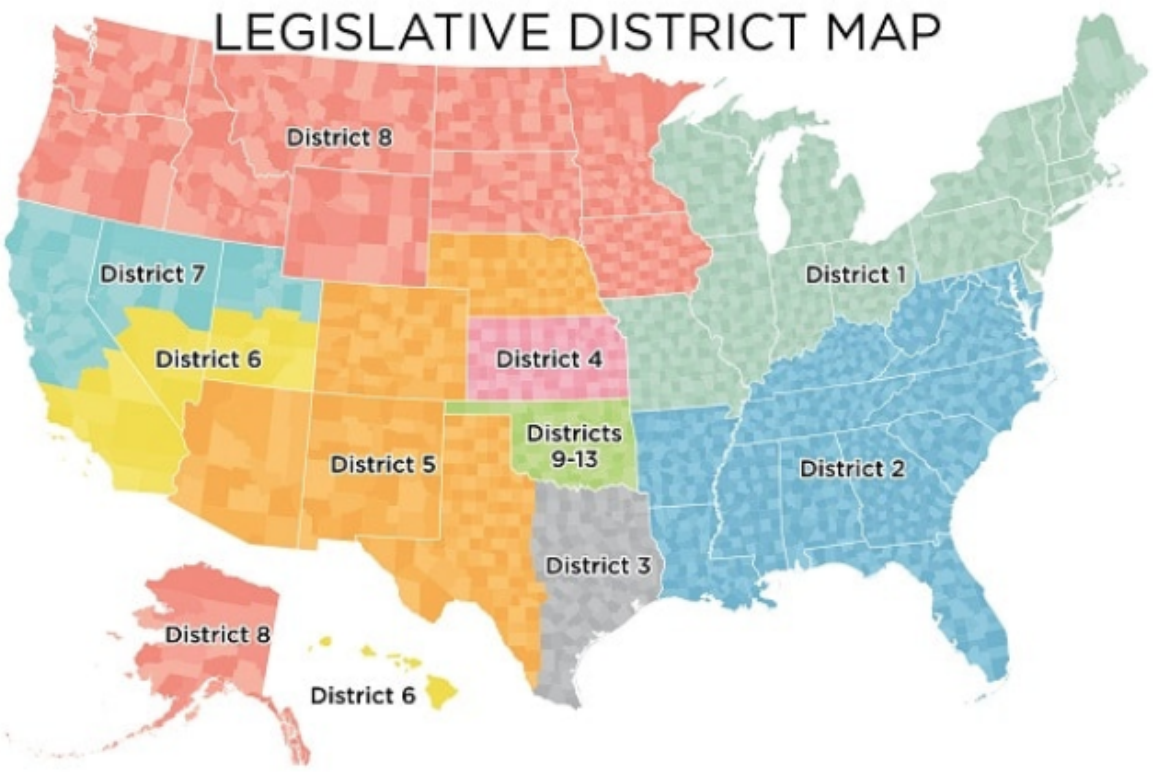

Image Two: Citizen Potawatomi Legislative District Map. Districts 1-8 are each estimated to hold about 2,500 tribal members. In total the Citizen Potawatomi Nation has 33,000 enrolled members meaning about 60.6% of the population lives outside of Oklahoma and only 7.6% of members live in District 1 which holds our ancestral homelands. (Source: Citizen Potawatomi Nation)

To survive assimilation policies and racial discrimination, many Indigenous peoples, including my father's family, distanced themselves from their Indigeneity. Therefore, I was raised outside of the Potawatomi community and away from our Anishinaabe culture. Being

mixed race, my whiteness afforded me the opportunity to navigate my complicated identity on my own terms which often meant I hid myself. Whiteness and our proximity to the settler state is a dilemma faced by many Citizen Potawatomi tribal members because of our policies of lineal descendancy, history of assimilation, and early U.S. citizenship (Lamirand 1995). While this whiteness affords us privileges in the colonial eyes of the state it also exacerbates our complicated understanding of our Indigeneity within the context of diaspora and in relation to our Indigenous relatives. During Citizen Band Potawatomi gatherings that I have attended, I have overheard many members of my Tribe express feeling uncomfortable occupying Indigenous spaces in part of their whiteness and distance from Indigeneity because of diaspora. While I do not have space to offer a critical analysis of whiteness within our Potawatomi community [for that see: Lamirand 1995], I think it is important to state my own positionality and privileges as a white and Indigenous person with both Anishinaabe and settler descendancy.

The ultimate goal of the settler state is an erasure of Indigenous peoples as accomplished by an all consuming assimilation which alienates us from our Indigeneity. Jill Stauffer defines this isolation as ethical loneliness: a form of isolation that is not merely the subjective feeling of being alone, but rather a structural condition of being severed from a community of shared values and lived experiences (Stauffer 2015). Ethical loneliness is a symptom of settler colonialism and the continued genocide of Indigenous peoples through assimilation-era policies. Driftpile Cree poet and author Billy-Ray Belcourt dives into the current state of Indigenous youth being situated within this ethical loneliness in their 2020 collection of essays “A History of My Brief Body” which names the loneliness as endemic to the affective lives of Natives living under settler colonialism. Belcourt describes this position of loneliness as the blind precarity of surviving “in a world always against us, against what we signify and make imaginable” and that

it is unjust for Indigenous peoples to have "to make do in a world we neither wanted nor built ourselves" (Belcourt 2019). As a means to escape and survive in the current moment, Belcourt calls on Indigenous youth to undergo the dream of worldmaking through radical love, care, and joy to bring Indigenous peoples back from the non-spaces of colonialism. To birth these co-created worldmaking dreams into reality we must first flip the colonial world on its head by refusing ethical loneliness and engaging in a community of care with our Indigenous relations to generate an Indigenous ethos. Anishinaabeodziiwin and the story of Nanabozho invites us to rebuild this ethos through relearning our Potawatomi traditions and walking as Nanabozho once did, as if every step is a greeting to the land and her Indigenous beings. Through walking in a good way and grounding where we stand, we learn how to hold our diasporic identities and uphold our relational responsibilities to the land.

Relations in Place

> *An Indigenous ethos rises when we take responsibility for where we are, in the power and depth of our relations and responsibility to the Indigenous peoples of the places we are - to know and honour their ancient relations in that place. We have a responsibility to know the languages of these places and recognize them in the land, in their names for food and kinship. We need to honour and uphold these relations first, and to know that our Indigenous spirit reconnects any lands we are on, even - and especially when - these lands appear to be encased in concrete… we already (re)Indigenize these places by pointing out their considerable and continuing relations to spirits and Indigenous presence prior to any settler.*
>
> \- Dian Million 2023

With the Indian Relocation Act of 1956 my paternal grandmother, Nokmes Bee, moved from allotment lands in Oklahoma to Oakland, California under the false promise of economic opportunities. In luring Nokmes Bee and many other Indigenous peoples to urban centers like Los Angeles and Oakland, the settler state wished to suffocate and encase our people into concrete landscapes. One might imagine the continuation of federal removal policies would

reinforce the legacy of termination and assimilation by severing Indigenous connections to land and isolating our ancestors from their Anishinaabeg relatives back on the reservation, though this isn't necessarily the case. There remains a spiritual connection which situates Indigenous peoples in relation with both our ancestral homelands as well as the lands we find ourselves on. Million reminds us that the colonial desire to sever Indigenous peoples from the land can never be accomplished unless we accept colonialism and relinquish our spiritual connections to place and our kin. Through claiming responsibility for where we walk we recognize that "we are spirit and the land is spirit and whether it is covered by concrete or not it remains spirit so we can be in relations in any place" (Million 2023). Being accountable to the inherent spiritual ethos and nourishing relationships in place restores inhospitable spaces into Indigenous homelands and grounds us in community.

Indigenous peoples have deep histories of movement and navigation via traditional trade routes and international relationships which have expanded and connected Indigenous territories since time immemorial (Reid 2018, Diaz 2015). Carolinian and Filipino scholar Vincent Diaz discusses movement as the expansive nature of Indigenous peoples and places through the traditional Carolinian navigational epistemology of Pookof. "Pookof is the inventory of creatures Indigenous to a given island as well as their travel habits and behavior… [and] part of a larger system of land finding by way of expanding an island" (Diaz 2015). These connections and relations recognize the life and spirit of Indigenous lands, peoples, and relations and their ability to expand and contract. From this perspective, Indigenous lands cannot be seen as reducible to isolated islands, remote reservations, or concrete cities "regardless of how they have been defined, and thus marginalized, in Western historical and cultural and natural cartography" (Diaz 2015). This expansion and interconnectivity of Indigeneity arises "by claiming our relations as

responsibilities to act beyond disconnection to ask what it is that must be done in establishing the care that makes us more than individuals" (Diaz 2023).

Our Anishinaabeodziiwin also teaches the Potawatomi to carry ourselves in responsibility to our kin as demonstrated with Anishinaabemowin, our ancestral language and our traditional stories. Anishinaabemowin reminds us of the inherent spirituality of Anishinaabe lands and, more broadly, all Indigenous lands by being a language of animacy interwoven with rich narratives of knowledge, action, and accountability. Additionally, our traditional stories ground us in responsibility to place, as demonstrated to us by Nanabozho's Original Instructions. Having been lowered down from Bagone Giizhig (*The Hole in the Sky* also known as the Pleiades constellation) to an Earth already populated by our plant, animal and spirit relatives, Nanabozho's task was to listen and learn from our relatives who had already established a balanced ecosystem of reciprocity on Earth. Nanabozho walked the Earth "to understand their place in it… to create face-to-face relationships with other nations and beings" because the Anishinaabeg were to be linked in a global community of Indigenous kin (Simpson 2017). Nanabozho and their kin shared and generated stories, songs, ceremonies, actions, and teachings as they journeyed across Turtle Island. Through walking in kind with our more than human relatives, Nanabozho established an Anishinaabe protocol of how to walk in a good way and engage the world beyond our immediate Anishinaabeg communities and territories. Nishnaabeg author Leanne Simpson describes Nanabozho's protocol as "Nishnaabeg internationalism" in her 2017 book "As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom through Radical Resurgence." Rooted in the understanding that the Anishnaabeg have always had complex relationships with other Indigenous nations and non-Indigenous peoples, Nishnaabeg internationalism and

Anishinaabemowin establishes a means for us to honor our responsibilities to our kin as we travel across space and time.

The memory and the expansive nature of Indigenous lands can reconnect us to spaces which remember our ancestors wherever we travel, as long as we uphold our responsibility to the lands we walk. Nishnaabeg internationalism reminds us that we must honor these relationships when traveling outside of our traditional territories and communities. This means we must take responsibility "to honour and uphold these relations first, and to know that our Indigenous spirit reconnects to any lands we are on" (Million 2023). After marrying my grandfather Hershal Smith, Nokmes moved from Oakland to central Oregon just off the Warm Springs reservation where my father was raised and where my father's sisters continue to live in community with the Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs. I imagine the land embracing Nokmes Bee the same way the Paiute, Wasco, and Warm Springs peoples have welcomed my family into theirs. I imagine these relations as a homecoming in which the spirit of the land and her peoples remembered Nokmes as Potawatomi kin and helped ease her feelings of displacement from our ancestral home.

Like my ancestors, I have also experienced intertribal friendship as synaptic relations which sustain and nourish diasporic Indigenous people wherever we walk. Friendship offers us a means of survival but it also allows us to dream of other worlds which recenter the lifeways of our ancestors so that our descendants can walk in a good way (Belcourt 2020, Simpson and Strong 2019). These relationships extend us beyond the human world, entering us into communion with the spirit, sky, plant, and animal worlds as well. Simpson compares these connections to the constellations in the stars, connecting us in our resurgence movements (Simpson 2017). Simpson continues speaking of this concept of stars as doorways into other

worlds by incorporating Anishinaabe ontology about time and space. I really enjoyed this concept of looking to the stars as a way of seeing our ancestors. In this way, the stars orient Indigenous peoples and inform how we travel.

This description of relations speaks to my experience, especially with the connotation that the stars are like doorways into another world. When we see their light we are seeing the light of the past due to the distance it takes for the energy to reach our Earth. In this way we are looking at the light of our ancestors, even when far from our own homelands. As a descendant of Nokmes Bee, born on the western shore of Turtle Island, I have inherited relations with Potawatomi homelands and diasporic relations along the west coast. Split between Coast Salish and Tongva lands, I have sought to connect with the abundant Indigenous ethos of these lands. This is the homeland of great nations of fire and salmon people who have spanned across the Pacific Coast since time immemorial. Despite diasporic conditions, embracing the Indigenous ethos of the land has reminded me of the interconnectivity and interrelatedness of Indigenous bodies: land, water, human and more than human kin. Even when we are far from our ancestral wigwams on the shores of the Great Lakes, the land of our ancestors and those of the Pacific Coast are connected via networks of mycorrhizal roots, riverways, shared winds, and migrating kin. The land remembers us and we must honor these connections through sustaining place based relationships with the land and our Indigenous kin.

Reaching for the Stars:

> *Just as birds and other animals look to stars as guides in migration, the Nishnaabeg looked to the skyworld for knowledge and flight paths out of settler colonialism.*
>
> \- Leanne Simpson 2017

Similar to the *gishkey-zhgobis* of my dream, we too can stretch out our own arms to embrace the knowledge of our ancestors manifested in the constellations of the skyworld above.

These are our doorways into the worlds of care which nourish our Indigenous futures. Embrace them as their light guides us on our journey back home. Stars hold significant meaning in Anishinaabeodziiwin, as they represent portals into different worlds and our ancestors who have passed on through the skyworld. Within Anishinaabe creation, stars are the manifestation of Creator's thoughts spread throughout time and space from which our world and our peoples came to be. In Benton-Banai's telling of the Anishinaabe creation story, Nanabozho descended from the skyworld via the Pleiades constellation to walk the Earth. Their journeys and knowledge gave birth to the Anishinaabe people. From these stories, we have come to see the stars as the physical manifestation of the spirit world from where our ancestors who have walked on watch over and care for us. Knowing the stars hold us in relation with our ancestors and connect us to other worlds expands our Indigeneity beyond the confines of reservations and Western geographies of our traditional territories. This expansion connects me with my homelands, my more than human kin, and bonds me with my ancestors despite living in diaspora. Guided by the constellations in the night sky, my journey back to Anishinaabeodziiwin has been regenerative in connecting me with our cultural teachings, our community, and teaching me what it means to be a good relative. These teachings inform my movement within the Seventh Fire and ground me in my responsibility to my kin. This engagement in Anishinaabeodziiwin actively opposes colonialism by sustaining our knowledge systems and nourishing our peoples in ways in which the settler state has sought to destroy.

Anishinaabeodziiwin teaches us life began as Creators' thoughts scattered throughout the universe and manifested within the stars. These thoughts gave birth to Earth, sun, moon and our ancestors. Nanabozho descended from the sky and spirit worlds through Bagone Giizhig which bridges together our worlds and reminds us where we came from (Lee 2014). As Simpson notes,

"the skyworld, in the peopled cosmos of the Nishnaabeg, holds the present because it carries the events and beings of the past, and the events and beings of the future" (Simpson 2017). She continues by comparing the lights of constellations in the night sky to doorways into other worlds and a means to guide Indigenous resurgence and revitalization movements. The power in looking to Bagone Giizhig as a guiding notion for Anishinaabeg is the intergenerational connection the stars braid between the past, present, and the future. When we look to the stars, we are seeing the light of our ancestors and the creation of our own light which will guide our descendants. The constellations braid together generations of Anishinaabeg thought and enter us into community with those who have already walked onto the spirit worlds and those who have yet joined us. Returning back to Simpson's connection between constellations and revitalization movements, I would like to highlight the importance of the stars in guiding Indigenous movement. "Just as birds and other animals look to stars as guides in migration," she writes, "the Nishnaabeg looked to the skyworld for knowledge and flight paths out of settler colonialism" (Simpson 2017). Our Anishinaabe stories, spirituality, and epistemology tell us that the stars are a place of cosmological strength and offer us teachings of what it means to transcend time, place, and space and a means of sustaining Anishinaabeodziiwin. Despite diasporic conditions, the celestial light of our ancestors light the path of the Seventh Fire and guide us as we travel homeward.

Grounded Constellations:

My maternal grandmother, Patricia Lewis, has always loved trees. She taught me to recognize their individual personalities by seeing the way their branches embrace us as we walk under them, the way their trunks contort, and how sunlight filters through their leaves. To this day, speckled sunshine and fluorescent green leaves remind me of the summers of my childhood

in the foothills of the Cascade Mountains under Big Leaf Maples with my grandmother. As an artist, she would give thanks to the trees by painting them with watercolors - reds, blues, greens, purples, and yellows swirling together with the water and the paper to form trunks, leaves, and branches. I remember her excitement when she learned of the networks of roots and fungi woven together and entering a collective of trees into nourishing relations with one another. Similar to most plants, trees tend to form mutualistic relationships with a group of soil fungi known as mycorrhizae (Mosse 1981).

Named as the linkage between fungus and plants, mycorrhizal fungi increase the plants uptake of important nutrients, such as phosphorus and nitrogen, by establishing an internal network of fungal structures within the root's cell. In exchange, the plants give thanks to the mycorrhizae by gifting them sugars and nutrients processed through photosynthesis which help the fungus grow a network of fine filaments called mycelium which cover up to seven hundred times more soil area than the plants' own roots (Bolan 1991). This expansion of underground roots, rhizomes, and mycorrhizae connections facilitates nutrient sharing beyond a one to one mycorrhizae-plant relationship. Instead, the mycorrhizal mycelium creates a network of interconnected trees braided together through their fungal relatives. Continued research by botanists and ecologists into these underground networks has revealed that plants gift bundles of nutrients to one another through these connections and that they can effectively engage in sophisticated chemical communication through the mycelium networks (Simard 2011). Therefore, trees connected into this multispecies relationship are able to send warning signals to one another in the presence of potential harm and have been found to send nutrients to plants which need them the most (Simard 2011). Being a part of this community significantly increases

a seedling's likelihood of surviving to maturity and adult plants who are connected are generally healthier (Teste 2009; Song 2010).

In ways similar to the community of mycorrhizae within a forest, I have experienced my interpersonal relationships with Indigenous kin as giving similar reciprocal gifts of nourishment for our communities in diaspora. Up and down the West Coast, I have found belonging by building relationships with the Indigenous relatives I share space with. Los Angeles and Seattle are both large hubs for Urban Natives, meaning I have been able to braid a community of global Indigenous peoples of Freedman Cherokee, Tlingit, CHamoru, Lenca, Diné, Sami, and Odawa descent who have gifted me with their companionship. Many of these relations are also navigating how to ground themselves in Indigeneity within the context of diaspora, settler colonialism, and responsibility to place. By being in relationship with each other, we challenge the notion that displacement and removal places us in isolation. This mechanism of making relations everywhere we journey across Turtle Island gifts us “an active sense of presence over absence, deracination, and oblivion” (Vizenor 2008).

My journey back to Anishinaabeodziiwin began in relation with my good friend Kelsey Sablan Martin: a CHamoru woman who grew up in Portland, Oregon before moving to Los Angeles where we met in 2017 through mutual friends while attending the same college. Similar to the disconnect of my own upbringing, Kelsey grew up away from her ancestral homelands and peoples in Guåhan (Guam) and has been on a journey of reconnection and cultural growth. As two diasporic Natives we have come together to build a world which colonialism wished to make nonexistent. In the evenings of long summer days, Kelsey and I would walk under the arms of Coast Live Oaks as golden light filtered through their leaves and their cool shade sheltered us from the lingering warmth of the day as we shared stories of our childhoods. Heat radiated from

the cement as we would walk up and over the rolling hills on our journey to go grocery shopping at our local Trader Joes or to grab street tacos after hectic days of research. Evening walks became ritual for us as a means to unwind from the day, run errands together, and to check in on one another as two of the only Indigenous peoples on campus.

At the time, Kelsey was working with the United American Indian Involvement (UAII), a Los Angeles based urban Indian community center, to help them curate a community photo archive. The archive consisted of personal and communal photographs which document the experiences of Indigenous peoples in Los Angeles following the Relocation Act of 1956. Kelsey's community based research helped connect her in community as she spent time with elders who breathed life into the photo archive through sharing their stories and lived experiences with her. Being connected and working with UAII helped build Kelsey's confidence and comfortability with being in Indigenous spaces. Organizations such as UAII create spaces for diasporic Indigenous peoples to gather, heal, and support each other as a medicine to treat ethical loneliness and colonial isolation. Kelsey's research and relations gifted her the seeds to plant and nourish her own network of support which has radiated the medicinal power of reconnection and kinship. I met Kelsey during a time in which I struggled with identifying with my Indigeneity and felt the consequences of being isolated from my ancestors and my living relatives. Kelsey and I helped sustain each other in the face of erasure by recognizing and uplifting the inherent Indigenous spirits within each other and through sharing similar lived experiences within our people's respective diasporas. Being away from home, our evening walks worked to ground us in relation to place and helped me realize the importance of refusing assimilation and colonialism for the continuance of my community.

I now walk the path of the Seventh Fire with the support of my diasporic Indigenous relations who also walk their own paths of reconnection. Being in community allows us to create proper ways to hold and nourish our fragmented identities. This community and understanding of self within the broader context of colonialism helps us as we begin the necessary steps of understanding the specificities of our identities, our languages, our cultures, and our relations. There is an inherent importance to the sovereignty of the specificities of our beings which makes us who we are and which informs our movement back home to our ancestors and to our lands. For Kelsey this journey home may be setting her sails using the guidance of the stars as she crosses the Pacific while for me this looks like following the path of my ancestors to gather the teachings of the Sacred Fire. We walk similar yet different paths and support each other along the way.

Carrying the nourishing gift of Kelsey's warmth and wisdom, I began working for the University of Washington's Center for American Indian and Indigenous Studies (CAIIS) as a community liaison. Working with CAIIS grounded me in a constellation of amazing Indigenous faculty, staff, students, and community members who come together from across campus to carve out an Indigenous space within the institution. Within this role, I have had the opportunity to foster friendships with a global Indigenous community and have worked to establish a community of care for our Indigenous students. In this network, we have come together to support each other's research, invite each other to community events, share food, tell stories, bead and sew together and simply share space. Reclaiming Indigenous space on campus has grown a safety network for our Indigenous students to support and nourish each other, sharing both academic and Indigenous knowledge and kinship with one another. I have grown my own

network of support in these spaces and have shared the seeds of renewal, resurgence, and belonging Kelsey had originally gifted to me.

Similar to the stars in the night sky, which hold our Anishinaabeodziiwin and enter us into relations with our ancestors, our relationships within diasporic Indigenous communities ground us within a nourishing Indigenous ethos. We are connected to our homelands, our cultures, human and more than human kin no matter where we reside through a constellation of responsibilities to our relations. Returning to my dream of the gishkey reaching for the stars, the trees did not stand alone in their efforts. While they may appear to be individuals above the surface of the Earth, the mycorrhizal sharing of knowledge and care enter them into community with one another. The flow of information and nutrients amongst each tree creates a network of nourishment which sustains the community on their efforts skyward. Even in diaspora, our relationships within Indigenous communities can act as networks of nourishment which ground diasporic individuals in place and help us on our journey homewards within the time of the Seventh Fire. Indigenous peoples can learn from and support each other's specific resurgent, revitalization and reconnection movements. As with the trees, the information shared between us sustains our survivance and inspires our flight out of colonialism. Anishinaabe writer Gerald Vizenor describes Native survivance as a means to continue Indigenous stories, cultures, and peoples beyond the colonial narratives of absence, loss, and powerlessness. Survivance then is not just about surviving but also about thriving and nourishing vibrant Indigenous communities. Vizenor argues that survivance is achieved through generative acts of resistance, such as storytelling, humor, and subversive satire which challenge the dominant narratives of colonialism while simultaneously healing and empowering native communities (Vizenor 2008). I believe survivance in the time of the Seventh Fire relies on rebuilding intertribal relations within

the global Indigenous community. This means grounding ourselves where we are growing relations with whom we share space with.

PART TWO

Sustaining Nutrients and Giving Thanks:

Nanabozho began their search for Nokomis and came to a vast expanse of water. Try as they might, they could not figure out how to get to the far shore. They tried walking first in one direction and then the other so as to walk around the water, but there seemed to be no end to how far it extended.

Finally, Nanabozho was so tired that they just sat down. Pnéshiyek (birds) began to swoop about their head. "Fly! Fly across," the pnéshiyek sang. "It's easy!" But Nanabozho looked at their own arms and shook their head. They were not made for flying. Gigo (fish) began to jump out of the water and tease Nanabozho. "Swim! Swim across," they said. "It's fun!" But Nanabozho looked at their arms and legs. No, they were not made for swimming long distances either.

Nanabozho asked gigo "Please swim across the water for me and see if my Grandmother does indeed live on the other side."

Gigo swam away and was gone a long time. Just about when Nanabozho was going to give up waiting, gigo returned.

"Your grandmother does live across the water," she said. "She waits for you to come."

Nanabozho thought and thought about how they could get across the water. An idea came to them: they could float across the water. They looked about and saw mek (beaver) working on a gbengen (beaver dam). They noticed how mek cut the trees with their sharp teeth. Nanabozho found themselves a good rock and chipped it until it had a sharp edge. They tied it to a wooden handle with tgwebjegnatek (basswood). With this new tool he cut down a tree and made a huge log from the tree.

Nanabozho dragged the log to the shore of the great water, shoved it in and jumped on top. It was difficult to balance on the log and it rolled over, dunking Nanabozho and getting them all wet. Nanabozho managed to swim back to shore pushing the log in front of themselves.

Nanabozho thought about what they could do to make the log float better. They remembered meeting mshinmégwe (whale) on one of their journeys around the Earth. As big as mshinmégwe was, she had no problem swimming and could easily hold herself upright in the water. With their axe, Nanabozho shaped the bottom of the log to be shaped just like the stomach of mshinmégwe: broad and flat.

Nanabozho shoved their newly carved mtegwjiman (dugout canoe) into the water. This time they had no problem staying upright, but soon found themself just floating out in the water and not going anywhere. Soon, wishkanmet (a strong wind) came up and tore at Nanabozho and their mtegwjiman. The winds blew Nanabozho far away from their starting place, but they blew Nanabozho further down the shore and not any closer to Nokomis.

Nanabozho knew they had to figure out something that would keep the mtegwjiman moving in the same direction. They remembered what a good swimmer mek was with his wide, webbed feet and flat tail. It took Nanabozho a long time to figure out what kind of wood would work best to use for the tool they had in mind. Finally, they selected a piece of hickory wood and with their axe they shaped a bwe (an or) much like mek wzewanek (beaver's tail).

Once again, Nanabozho set out on their journey across the water. They made good speed with their mtegwjiman and bwe. But they forgot to bring food and water. Pretty soon Nanabozho started getting really hungry and really thirsty. They were about to turn around and go back for some food and water when they realized they hadn't made it very far despite having been paddling all day. You see, Nanabozho didn't understand how to paddle their dugout in a straight line. Their whole day of paddling had taken them in a huge circle.

Once Nanabozho got back on the shore and rested and thought about all the mistakes they had made. When they felt strong enough to set out on their fourth attempt to cross the great water, Nanabozho put Sema (Tobacco) in the water and asked Creator for a safe and successful journey. The birds got together and sang ngamwen (a song) to give them strength. Some of the animals cried for they were sad to see Nanabozho leave on such a long and dangerous journey. When they left, many pnéshiyek flew along with them as they paddled along. Many gigo swam alongside Nanabozho to keep them company.

Nanabozho had learned from their mistakes before, and this time brought along a supply of food and water. This time, they kept sight of Giizis (the sun), Dibik-Giizis (the moon) and Giiwedin Anang (the returning home star) to help them travel in a straight line.

Nanabozho had learned from all of this that they must use their environment to teach them things. Creator had placed many lessons around Nanabozho to teach them how to live in harmony with all of the Creation.

Nanabozho paddled many days until, at last, they caught sight of the distant shore. When they came to shore Nanabozho found Nokomis in front of her lodge waiting for them.[1]

Paths of Indigenous Resurgence:

[1] Story adapted from Eddie Benton Banai 2010

Whether walking or paddling, Nanabozho's journey throughout Mother Earth brought them into relations with each and every relative of the human, spirit, plant and animal worlds. The celestial light of Giiwedin Anang lit the path homeward for Nanabozho and helped ground them in relation to the Four Sacred Directions so that they may know where they traveled. These relations formed a network of kinship and learning which gifted Nanabozho the knowledge of how to walk in a good way. I have come to realize through my diasporic relations that my current situation is not much different from Nanabozho's original instructions. Displaced from my homelands and away from our Potawatomi community, I must uphold our protocols of Nishnaabeg internationalism and follow in the footsteps of Nanabozho in order to connect with the Indigenous ethos of the land on my journey back to Anishinaabeodziiwin. I often return to our creation stories as I am relearning how to walk the Earth in a good way as our ancestors once did. Similar to Nanabozho, I have found myself situated on the lands of peoples who have lived and governed here since time immemorial.

Growing up in the Pacific Northwest and living in Southern California, much of my knowledge stems from my relationships with both the land and the peoples of the Salish Sea and Tongva lands. I have had to learn to be a good listener and am still learning how best to give thanks. This is the iterative process Nanabozho experienced on their journey to Nokmes. This story reminds me to be present where I am and that I do not walk the path of the Seventh Fire alone nor are our people the only ones returning to their ancestors. Indigenous resurgence and revitalization movements such as the Zapatistas (Speed 2015), the American Indian Movement (Champagne 2008), Idle No More (Barker 2015; Lannon 2013), Standing Rock (Whyte 2017), The Kanaka Maoli Sovereignty Movement (Goodyear-Kaopua 2011), language revitalization (Jacob 2013; Kovach 2010), and food sovereignty (Coté 2022; Whyte 2018) have and continue

to pursue Indigenous self governance, sovereignty, and the rematriation of Indigenous lands, lifeways, and cultures around the world. These movements are filled with strategic knowledge and offer examples for both Potawatomi resurgency and other diasporic Indigenous peoples seeking to journey the path of the Seventh Fire.

Indigenous communities around the world share a common effort to sustain and nourish our cultures, languages, ceremonies, and peoples against and beyond the structures of settler colonialism. This commonality means each of our communities are working against and in opposition to settler colonialism. Similar to how Nanabozho carved their paddles in the likeliness of *mek wzewanek*, Indigenous peoples can learn from each other's movements as a means of nourishing our own survivance, resurgence, and sovereignty. Growing networks of relationships with peoples sharing in our struggles is one of the vital ways we can work to sustain ourselves and our peoples even while away from our homelands. Before I dive into resurgence and revitalization efforts learned along my own journey, I want to ground this section with a reminder of my own positionality as a guest on someone else's homelands. Through emulating Nishnaabeg internationalism, I am grounded by my responsibilities to my Anishinaabe community to represent our people in a good way and I also have a responsibility to the peoples whose homelands I reside. While I am sharing stories and lessons learned from my outside Anishinaabe relations I must also make sure I am maintaining and sustaining my Indigenous kin. This is an essential part of Nanabozho's journey because only after giving thanks to mek and journeying in the company of gigo and pnéshiyek relatives was Nanabozho able to successfully paddle across to find Nokmes waiting on the shore for them.

Through my work in the environmental sector as an urban forester for the City of Los Angeles, I had the opportunity to meet with some amazing Indigenous Californians sustaining

their people's connection to their ancestral homelands. The Indigenous peoples of California have a uniquely complicated history of survival having endured many waves of Spanish, Mexican, and American colonialism (Résendez 2016). Despite the federal and state governments continuous attempts to erase many Californian Tribes, including the Tongva and bands of the Chumash, these people are still actively pushing back and refusing colonialism. The Tongva in particular have sought to maintain their cultural heritage and connection to the land, despite lacking federal recognition, as demonstrated by the Tongva's 2022 Land Back success of rematriating land in Los Angeles County (Valdez 2022). In reference to this success Tongva tribal member Kimberly Morales Johnson explained "'We're working towards one common goal, and that is to have a place of safety, security, where we can have ceremonies and where we can exercise our self-determination'" (Valdez 2022). Their strength and perseverance is empowering and I am honored to be in relation with the Tongva as they continue in their respective struggles.

Just as Kelsey encouraged me to build community amongst other Indigenous peoples in diaspora, my Southern California relatives have been grounded constellations to me, supporting me to navigate my own Indigeneity. Through conversations reflecting on our common work, my Southern Californian relatives taught me how to carry myself in opposition to settler colonialism and connect with the spirit of the land in heavily urbanized spaces. Remembering Nishnaabeg internationalism, I must support my Native Californian relatives' sovereignty movements, respect their homelands and ancestral knowledges as their own, follow their protocol when and where required, and respect boundaries. As such, I strive to take up space appropriately by amplifying their voices while ensuring not to speak for my relatives. As Million states: "we need all of us to claim the places where we are as part of our relations and part of our responsibility" (Million

2023). While I cannot possibly give back more than I have taken by being a guest, I must walk in a way which honors the spirits of my ancestors, my relatives, the land, and the peoples whose land I am on. Taking on these responsibilities as a Potawatomi traveler means entering into grounded constellations which uphold the Indigenous ethos of the land and her peoples.

Reclaiming Environmentalism

> *Environmental sustainability is incredibly whitewashed. There's a lot of work that needs to be done, and we're not where we need to be for our communities yet. In this position I have the opportunity to verbalize and address the concerns of my community through projects, how* [redacted organization name] *runs as an organization, and vocalizing perspectives that I learned through my upbringing - through my family.*
>
> - Roland Pacheco

I have always loved and found belonging in the land. Growing up in Coast Salish territory, I spent my childhood in the misty foothills of the Cascades playing in creek beds and gathering salmon berries. In college, I wanted to study the intricacies of our more than human kin and determine ways to ensure my descendents would share in the joys of the abundant kinship. As an environmental scholar trained in Western methodologies, messages of urgency related to climate change and environmental protection were central to my education. This urgency-framed approach to environmental action perpetuates environmental injustices against Indigenous communities. Potawatomi environmental justice scholar Kyle Whyte describes this urgency for climate action as a relational tipping point which undermines Indigenous qualities of consent, trust, accountability, and reciprocity which precede the ecological tipping point of climate change (Whyte 2019). Informed by this urgency with a degree in biology**,** I entered the field of environmental science where I worked as a field ecologist studying Native plants and pollination ecology in Southern California and then in Arizona. Despite my initial enthusiasm to be working with my plant relatives, I realized while working for the National Park Service in

Tucson that I was participating in the colonial separation between peoples and lands. Historically conservation science has been used as a tool of colonialism to dispossess Indigenous peoples from our lands and to perpetuate Western ideologies of "wilderness" as exemplified through the creation of National Parks Service (Gilio-Whitaker 2019, Spence 1999).

At the time, I was working as a field biologist in the Sonoran Desert and had been surveying plant communities in Tohono O'odham, Hia-Ced O'odham, and Akimel O'odham traditional territories while the federal government terraformed the land to erect Donald Trump's border wall between the United States and Mexico. Being a National Parks employee, I was tasked with surveying plants in cultural landscapes set for demolition that the O'odham were no longer permitted to enter. O'odham elders and water protectors began protesting as demolition neared Quitobaquito Springs, a site sacred to the O'odham and a rare source of freshwater in the desert. In response Border Patrol and Park Service Law Enforcement Officers began arresting O'odham tribal citizens (Reznick 2020). The politics of access, and the lack thereof, juxtaposed to federal employees arresting O'odham elders exemplified the history of colonial violence done by the National Parks Service. Having witnessed the violence against my O'odham relatives, I began critically reevaluating how I could uphold my responsibilities to the land and my Indigenous relatives while working within environmental spaces which uphold the power structures of colonialism. Feeling powerless within the federal bureaucracy of a government agency built on stolen lands, I quit and moved back to Los Angeles.

Upon my return to Los Angeles, I began working on an equitable urban greening initiative and began to build relations with Native Californians, such as Ajachemen and Tongva descendant Roland Pacheco. I first met Roland during an online seminar hosted by the Sacred Places Institute on Indigenous perspectives on sacred waters in hopes to learn more about

partnering with local Indigenous peoples and finding community within Los Angeles (SPI 2022). Roland helped facilitate the seminar and I later discovered he worked as the Tribal Engagement Coordinator of an environmental organization I had frequently partnered with. In this position, Roland worked to bring the perspective and voices of his community and neighboring Tribes into an environmental organization which has taken on a leadership role in the region's restoration and urban forestry management. In seeing how Roland worked and operated I learned the importance of taking up space within environmental organizations as an Indigenous person advocating for Indigenous land access and use.

As I began to assemble this project and reflect on what I had learned from my Southern California relatives, I reached out to Roland and arranged a virtual conversation. I wanted to discuss the work he is doing on his ancestral homelands and the strategies he uses to reserve traditional land access and use for his community. During this conversation, Roland spoke of his ability *"*to voice opinions, where other employees in the organization might not have the context for tribal Indigenous communities*."* Through his position, Roland brings his community and his relatives to the metaphorical table to ensure their voices are heard and their needs are met. For example, Roland has used his position as Tribal Engagement Coordinator to advocate for Indigenous land management practices and access to traditional harvesting sites by communicating the needs of his community. Through this intervention, Roland secured reserved access to restoration sites for his community to practice traditional harvesting techniques of medicinal, ceremonial, and nutritional plants. Without reserved access, conservation sites are governed in a way which perpetuates colonial concepts of wilderness and exclude Indigenous peoples. This practice of reserved access for Indigenous peoples in restoration sites works towards flipping the colonial policy of conservation which depopulates cultural landscapes of

reciprocal care. This type of work also has the potential to flip colonial narratives of empty landscapes of 'untouched wilderness' and create wider opportunities for Indigenous led land management and restoration. Access to and use of restoration sites in the United States still operates under colonial power structures as access is restricted. However, use and access are inherent in the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples and is required for our communities to maintain reciprocal relations with our more than human kin. Through infiltrating non-Indigenous organizations, governments, and institutions, as Roland does, it is possible to carve out spaces for our communities in places which weren't built for us. Having Indigenous leaders step up into these positions is a powerful way to provide the economic and political power for Indigenous peoples to uphold their responsibilities to their communities while making established hegemonic power structures work in our favor while also planting seeds to destabilize these structures in the long run. This work can be challenging and risky, as many environmental organizations would rather be performative in their allyship rather than cede real power to Indigenous peoples and communities. Despite these challenges, Roland does this work in a beautiful way by asserting the needs of his community into his organization's restoration work.

As I transition from graduate school in Seattle and seek again to take up within the environmental sector in Southern California, Roland reminds me of the importance of infiltrating non-Indigenous spaces to assert our Indigenous presence and make space for our communities. Occupying spaces and steering organizations to work for our communities rather than against them may often be an uphill battle, yet these are the tasks presented to us within the time of the Seventh Fire as a means to uphold our responsibilities to the land as Indigenous guests. This teaching has gifted me the confidence to take up space and advocate for our Indigenous communities and lands wherever I walk. I plan on giving thanks by honoring this teaching and

regifting its lessons to those who I share space with. Together we can Indigenize organizations by redirecting them in sight with the stars above and grounded in our obligations to our communities.

Remembrance: A Map to the Stars

> *The cement is tired in Los Angeles. The ground underneath is all smothered but it's okay because all the other stuff will give way eventually.*
>
> \- L Frank

When I think of Indigenous resurgence, I am reminded of plants growing through cracks in the root-lifted sidewalks that Kelsey and I would step over during our evening walks. Despite being covered in concrete and forgotten by those who refuse to look, the land pushes back and reclaims the spaces onced deemed inhospitable to life, now crawling with insect, fungi, and plant relatives. These tiny yet resilient ecosystems remind me of the impermanence of concrete landscapes and remind me the Earth below remains teeming with the lives of our ancestors and the possibility to start anew. My relations and conversations with Southern California relatives remind me of the power of resurgence – while they have faced policies intended to erase and encase them, like concrete, they still exist, are growing, creating and flourishing.

Several of my conversations with Southern Californian relatives, returned to the theme of Federal termination policies, as an effort to undermine self-determination. This was most clear in my conversations with Tongva and Ajachemen elder L Frank, who is an artist, activist, and knowledge-holder and is viewed by many as a leading voice in the Indigenous community of Southern California. As with my own family coping with relocation, many relatives I spoke to in California, having experienced termination, distanced themselves from their Indigeneity as a means to lessen racial discrimination. Beginning in 1850, California's state government passed a series of laws which legalized and incentivized the persecution, enslavement, and murder of

Indigenous men, women, and children (Lindsay 2012; Johnston-Dodds 2002). Nearly one hundred years later as the United States government began forcefully terminating tribal governments, California passed the Rancheria Act of 1956 which stripped forty four Tribes, including the Tongva, of their federal recognition (Public Law 85-671). With the violent history of California's genocide and the termination politics surrounding her nations, L often experienced the impacts of settler institutions wrongfully perceiving her peoples to be extinct. "Being deemed extinct is probably [similar to] the wall that Trump wanted to build," she told me when we spoke over the phone for a virtual interview. It's like "something no one could get over and nobody could get around. Extinction is pretty brutal." Despite a colonial history of separation from her people, L found community in her plant and animal relatives. She heard the voices of her ancestors in the very land where she lived. "I saw my ancestors all the time growing up. I heard them talk to me. So I had a very deep relationship with them." As Indigenous peoples, we recognize the inherent value and connection to our more than human relatives and our ancestors who have passed on. This is an innate feeling that emerges from deep within ourselves and which grounds us in our responsibilities to the land and all of our relations.

L felt these responsibilities to return to the land and the culture throughout her life as she continued building relationships with her ancestors and began reconnecting with her living relatives. One aspect that helped her remember the lessons of her ancestors was spending time in museums and visiting with the regalia, basketry, and ancestors who were stolen from her peoples. Part of the colonial project to "preserve" Indigenous cultures involved the theft and classification of Indigenous artifacts to be displayed in museums, archives, and libraries (O'Neal 2015). While I haven't personally navigated rematriation efforts or worked within the context of Western museums, I have experienced the violence of these spaces as the spirits of diverse

Indigenous ancestors remain stolen and locked behind glass doors for strangers to gaze upon. This is a violence I feel when I walk through the halls of natural history museums, such as the Washington State History Museum, where I see our ancestors' spirits splayed out on display as complements to the fossilized skeletons of dinosaurs.

Amid this ongoing violence and erasure, L understands her work as involving the process of remembering which necessitates the process of relearning, relistening, and revisiting. "Somebody once said that we have been dismembered and it is time to remember," she reflects. "The ones that listen to the elders seem to be the ones who do the remembering." She expresses this remembrance in creative production through a range of artistic mediums such as writing and painting. L's words and artwork act as mediums for her and her community to remember their ancestors' lifeways and their connection to the land. L's art and writing has appeared in various publications such as the quarterly newsletter *News from Native California* and has won several awards for her language preservation and revival work. This remembrance is an active refusal of colonialism's stamp of extinction which has worked so hard against L's communities. "Everything I do is for them because how can I have a Tribe if there isn't one to have; if there is no relationship, not just between me and them but between all of us? We have to have pride in our peoples." Through her art, L creates a conduit for her peoples to remember and take pride in their culture and history.

Image Two: “Coyote Sells Maps to the Stars” by L Frank (Tongva)

During our conversation, L shared one of her paintings with me titled “Coyote Sells Maps to the Stars (Image Two). Her painting depicts a Coyote wearing a red dress selling celestial maps on the side of the road next to a sewage drain clogged with litter. The Hollywood Sign in Griffith Park looms in the background as constellations of stars shine in the night sky above. “Extinct but still here… us socal ndns,” As I notice the juxtaposition between the the terraformed landscape of the Hollywood Hills foreground by the littered sewage drain and Coyote’s red dress, my eyes fixate on the clusters of constellations transcribed both in the night sky and on Coyote’s maps. This simple statement of contradictions replays and replays in my head. *Extinct but still here*. Her statement of refusal to disappear into the nonspace reserved for our communities by colonialism, by the settler state, exemplifies the inherent sovereignty grounding Indigenous resurgence and our return to the stars.

I find L's art beautiful and meaningful in this moment of resurgence as the Coyote's maps seem to share a similar lesson as the prophecy of the Seventh Fire. There is a play in words in relation to the stars of Hollywood and the celestial bodies of our ancestors. With Coyote being known as a trickster it would make sense that he is proposing a choice one must be mindful about. The maps may guide you back to the constellations of your ancestor and community or you may continue to get lost in the concrete mess, deception, and individualism and colonialism characterized by the 'stars' of Hollywood and celebrity. Tread carefully on your journey and set your sights skyward as you travel. Remember where you are and where you are going. "I just want my Tribe" states L. "The bottom line is how can we fulfill our mandates from Creator to care for creation if we aren't here to fulfill it?" In our conversation, L speaks to the responsibility of her people in holding relations with the natural world, such as their reciprocal responsibility to care for the traditional medicine of white sage. "If we have to rebuild this Tribe after extinction and all that decimation and colonization then OK." As Indigenous peoples, we have struggled the genocide and erasure of colonialism since their ships came to Turtle Island. We have been in relation with the land since time immemorial and we will continue to be here after colonialism. As L explains "The cement is tired in Los Angeles. The ground underneath is all smothered but it's okay because all the other stuff will give way eventually." The resurgence has already begun and the flame of the Seventh Fire burns bright.

As Nanabozho's surroundings gave knowledge needed for their journey across the water, I have also been inspired by the Tongva reclaiming their ancestral homelands and ways of being. Roland's story teaches me to infiltrate systems and gear them to work for my community's resurgence and L reminds me to remember our people's strength and refuse dismemberment and 'extinction.' These ways of reclaiming and connecting with the Indigenous ethos of the land

inspire my own movement and growth during the time of the Seventh Fire. Through constellated relationships with my Southern California Relatives I have learned of their efforts which can also help my own people's resurgence and remembrance. This sharing of information and gifts of knowledge are the nutrients passed between collective mycorrhizal networks which pull the gishkey in my dreams skyward. By coming together we make it possible to remember and regenerate our Indigenous ways of being, reestablish the contours of our collective lives and practices, and to push back against colonialism.

Gishkey Growing Skyward

> *We can't always go home. The reality is that because of fractured relationships, displacement,forced and unforced migrations, we may not know where home is. My friends who are part of the Black diaspora have talked about the heartbreak of not knowing the places their ancestors called home. Colonialism has disconnected us from land, severed us from that first relationship, often through violence. We need to restore our relationship with the land around us. That means going outside, as my son is prone to remind me. It means noticing and listening.*
>
> - Patty Krawec 2022

Weaving together the Anishinaabeodziiwin gathered through the stories of my ancestors, my own journey in each of the four directions, and the lessons learned from my diasporic and Native Californian relatives, I explore grounded constellations as a means of Indigenous survivance and taking responsibility for being a guest on another peoples' homelands. Through my writing I hope to map my own steps to share with those similarly tasked with walking the path of the Seventh Fire. Here I examine ways in which being in diasporic relations nourishes my Potawatomi identity in opposition to colonial policies of erasure. This nourishment then acts as a catalyst for Potawatomi flight out of colonialism movements as I carry the resurgent lessons of survivance learned from my relations back to my community. I write in the memory of my ancestors and dream in anticipation of my descendants.

Throughout this journey, I hold tight to the teachings of our elders as I walk in the footsteps of Keep-Kuit-Qua and Nokmes Bee to remember our fragmented Potawatomi language, ceremonies, culture, lands, and relations. Having lived on Coast Salish and Tongva lands, I have begun my journey down the trail of the Seventh Fire while walking on two homelands which are not my own but whose Indigenous ethos sustain and nourish my Indigeneity. I carry the teachings of these lands and their peoples with me as I gather the knowledge of my ancestors. Weaving together the Anishinaabeodziiwin gathered through the stories of my ancestors, my own journey of remembrance, and the lessons learned from my diasporic and native Californian relatives, I have planted a community of care which grounds me in constellation to all my relations. Similar to the networks of mycorrhizae weaving together a community of gishkey-zhgobis in my dreams, so too do our relationships to one another nourish and sustain our collective growth skyward. Being in relation informs my movement and reminds me of my obligations to my Indigenous kin who have supported me as I make my journey home.

Colonial policies such as, termination and relocation sought to separate Indigenous peoples from our traditional homelands and communities, a form of dismembering that interrupts and limits our abilities to sustain and nourish our kin and uphold our responsibilities to the land. These legacies of displacement along with ongoing practices of dispossession have created a diasporic condition that is a defining experience for many of Indigenous peoples today. However, amidst the struggle against colonialism, we have an opportunity to foster a community of care to nourish us as we reclaim ancestral knowledges. There is a certain refusal in finding place and community within state-manufactured diaspora. By coming together, we collectively push back and assert our Indigenous ontologies, such as Anishinaabeodziiwin, which challenge the rampant individualism of colonial logics. Our ontologies enter into reciprocal relations with

one another and inspire us to remember where and who we come from as well as fulfill our obligations to our relations. Through mutual care and support of one another's struggle against colonialism we can collectively map our path to the stars.

In my own life, Indigenous friendships have become the synaptic relations, nourishing me in diaspora and gathering to collectively dream of alternative worlds that center the lifeways of our ancestors. These relationships extend beyond the human realm, connecting us with the Indigenous ethos of the lands we walk. Embracing this ethos requires us to take responsibility for the places we visit and honor the deep connections and responsibilities we have to our relatives and more than human kin, as Nanabozho once did on their journeys across Turtle Island. Recognizing and respecting the deep relations and wisdom of Indigenous communities in these places, we can help breathe life into even seemingly concrete-bound environments. Just as Nanabozho embarked on a journey to understand their place on Earth and establish face-to-face relationships with other nations and beings, we too can learn from those who have made the land their home before us. Guided by the constellations in the night sky and the grounded constellations of our kin, our journey back to Anishinaabeodziiwin is regenerative, reestablishing connections with our cultural teachings, community, and the essence of being a good relative. Standing in community and looking skyward, I am reminded of the worldmaking potentiality of our relationships in supporting our individual and collective growth. Together we can light the flame of the Eighth Fire. Our map home lies in the constellations of stars in the night sky–our ancestors watching us from the sky world above.

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