Agency and Counter-Agency in Curriculum Studies

Teacher Work Against the Grain of Settler Futurities

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FOR ANYONE WHO HAS MET WITH OPPOSITION to teaching about Indigenous history, contemporary presence, and culture in k-12 schools, the stories to follow will likely feel familiar. Such curriculum often triggers resistance, not just in the form of reasoned debate about facts and age appropriateness of course content but also protean social and material resistance that is often entangled with national political discourses, widespread white fragility, settler culture inevitability and entitlement, institutionalized career insecurity, and individual habits of thought and feeling. Once activated, these shape-shifting assemblages[1] of material, discursive, and affective forces do not just make the work of teaching more difficult; they actively erase Indigenous truths, lives, and futurities from the curriculum. Through exploring narratives of how settler futurities reveal themselves as these assemblages, the hope is that this creates opportunities to imagine, deploy, and maintain a counter agency that challenges educators and curriculum theorists to engage with and navigate the complexities and possibilities of Indigenous futurities (Johnson & Jacob, 2022). Creating space for Indigenous futurities is not passive; it is not as simple as changing our mindset and motivations. It requires educators to participate and become a part of something larger than ourselves, to build complex networks and spaces of possibility, communities of support, for the work of moving towards Indigenous futurities.

What would be needed to prepare teachers to deliver curricula that resist the settler colonial erasure of Indigenous peoples, Indigenous claims to land, and Indigenous possibilities? Does such teaching involve telling the truth about local and national histories? Certainly, this is part of it. Does it involve including Indigenous epistemologies and cosmologies alongside Eurocentric epistemologies and scientific ontologies? Again, these are necessary inclusions.

Inclusion, however, is often a form of domestication and assimilation. It provides "a glimpse into an ethnic community, rather than a challenge to the mainstream values and goals of schooling" (Marker, 2006, p. 503). In the guise of pluralism, Indigenous culture, truths, and values become just one item in a long list of "diversity" achievements caught under an umbrella of settler-

colonial acquisitiveness. It is framed as an additive but is not transformative and serves to reinscribe a discourse of settler innocence (Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013). It does not acknowledge the transformation of settler-colonial ideologies, epistemologies, and conceptions of reality required by genuine inclusion of Indigenous presence and perspectives.

Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012) observe, "settler colonialism and its decolonization implicates and unsettles everyone" (p. 7). Once the "inclusion" of Indigenous experience becomes substantive—once the transformative philosophical, moral, and metaphysical implications of Indigenous history and survivance is understood, or even suspected—the reception of such curricula often changes. It moves from being embraced as a welcome addition to being resented and resisted as a burden and insult. More problematically, this resistance takes many forms, so it is difficult to anticipate.

This essay examines an episode of social studies teaching in which the inclusion of content about Indigenous history, contemporary presence, and culture triggered social and institutional resistance. The events take place in, arguably, an ideal setting for the enactment of a curriculum that challenged settler colonial ideologies. The lead author, an Indigenous teacher, was working in a school that served the community in which he was raised, whose enrollment was majority students from various Native backgrounds, and in a school led by an administrator who also identified as Indigenous. He expected this would be a place that would welcome the teaching of a heteroglossic narrative about U.S. and Oregon history that included perspectives of his Indigenous students' ancestors. Things, however, did not turn out that way. This leads to an inference that the curricula of settler colonialism cannot be thought of only in terms of textbooks, state standards, and lesson plans. It also includes agentic assemblages involving entire communities, settler ideologies, individual attitudes, career anxieties, and more.

Understanding curricula in this extended way implies that learning to teach against the grain of settler colonialism requires preparing teachers to engage with the whole of this dynamic, not just to include the ideas that are often left out of mandated school curricula. Drawing on the personal experiences of the lead author and a variety of conceptual resources, this essay offers both an illustration and a theorization of what substantively teaching in a manner that refuses to always and everywhere center settler futurities entails.

Settler Colonialism and Curricula

The work of resistance against curricular hegemony is often framed as educational "truth-telling." The teacher provides accurate information and counterstories about colonialism and racism, as well as multiple perspectives of history, and through the process, lessens the grip of these hegemonies on children's minds and on our shared society. Given the variety of deflections and resistances that often emerge in response to this kind of teaching, such an idealized view is oversimplified and, in some instances, counter-productive.

This is not a rejection of the necessity of "truth-telling." Certainly, some true stories about the past and present are currently excluded from our curricula, and those silences often need to be broken. However, more is required of teachers than to know that truth and to tell it to students. More is required, even, than designing a clever student-centered inquiry-based lesson where they encounter these social and historical truths themselves. Once this kind of curriculum is taught, it is not as if the disinformation dissipates like fog being burned off by the morning sun. The fog frequently fights back.

Having set aside an exclusive reliance on a truth-telling version of teaching, the question becomes: What understanding of the social studies curriculum would better enable teaching against the grain of the constantly shifting assemblages of Eurocentric narratives of national identity, individual comfort levels, real and perceived curricular mandates, and institutionalized settler-colonial power in schools?

Social studies curricula that decenter whiteness, settler colonialism, or capitalism receiving push-back is not a new or even uncommon phenomenon (Jackson, 2023; Sawchuk, 2021). Many scholars have provided critiques of the settler-colonial ideologies, as well as accounts of various strategies of resistance to the silences these ideologies enforce (Calderón, 2014; Kulago, 2019; Sabazalian, 2019; Shear & Krutka, 2019). Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz and Dina Gilio-Whitaker (2016), in their book, *"All the Real Indians Died Off": And 20 Other Myths About Native Americans*, documented a variety of myths about Native American history that enable people to ignore or dismiss its implications for understanding our contemporary society. For example, Indigenous people are often framed exclusively as existing in the distant past, which avoids addressing the implications of the fact that Indigenous persons and communities are a part of contemporary society. Genocide of Indigenous peoples is often presented as an accidental consequence of disease as opposed to as an explicit policy of the U.S. government. Both of these are examples of the way settler futurities are sustained through the erasure of Indigenous presence and the manufacture of settler innocence.

Engaging with Indigenous futurities means stepping away from existing structures and educator comfort zones and stepping into spaces of possibility. We can do this by adopting an agentic understanding of settler colonial influences over educational spaces. This enables us to see settler futurity as always in motion. It also makes clear the need for a focus on equally dynamic Indigenous futurities that can guide and sustain efforts to decolonize curricula; as Laura Harjo (2019) states "[Indigenous futurities are] an action; it's a practice … that invokes our ancestors' and relatives' unactivated possibilities in our present lived moment, and it imagines future possibilities" (p. 34).

The process by which Indigenous history and culture are marginalized and settler futurities are privileged is often nuanced, or as Linda Tuhiwai Smith says, "tricky" (Smith, 2005)—meaning efforts to share this history are frequently not received the way they are intended. Often, the very means by which we seek to resist settler colonialism serve, ultimately, to reinforce colonialist hierarchies. Glen Coulthard (2014) outlines the limits of a politics of recognition, in which the effort to achieve visibility and acknowledgment only serves to reinscribe the power of colonizer culture by locating the power of validation in the settler-colonial systems of governance. Gerald Vizenor (2008) cautioned against portraying Indigenous identity and culture as static. Vizenor argues, using careful analysis of archival documents, that distinctive Indigenous identities and practices have evolved over time, adapting to new circumstances without assimilating into settler-colonial culture, norms, and narratives—a process Vizenor calls survivance. Similarly, Eve Tuck (2009) has written about the danger of "Damage-centered" narratives about Indigenous people, which, in the process of recounting real damage that has been done by settler colonialism, serves to misrepresent Indigenous peoples as identified exclusively with that damage.

Dolores Calderón (2014) details the implicit grammar of settler colonialism in k-12 social studies curriculum. These "grammars" presume settler superiority, the inevitability of the nation-state, and the myth of the USA as a nation of immigrants, all of which serve to preserve narratives of settler futurity. These narratives are unsettled by the continuing presence of Indigenous peoples in North America. Scott Manning Stevens (2021), in his excellent essay "On Native American

Erasure In The Classroom," points out how seemingly progressive gestures like the removal of offensive statues can feed a liberal moral narcissism, a narrative of moral purity that erases progressive non-Indigenous persons' responsibility to address the more intractable forms of institutionalized oppression in which we all live. Leilani Sabzalian (2019) explains the tension between the idea of Indigenous sovereignty and the ideal of multiculturalism in public schools and the need for teachers to understand the complex manifestations of Indigenous erasure in schools.

The stories and analysis to follow demonstrate that settler-colonial narratives about past and present social relations are not passive, simply awaiting the arrival of teachers who can present challenging facts and alternative viewpoints—the curricular equivalent of a politics of recognition critiqued by Glen Coulthard (2014). Looking closely at this sort of work, whether looking at individual classrooms (Mitchell & Rosiek, 2006; Pratt, 2021) or at policy playing out at a district or statewide level (Alexander, 2010; Rosiek, 2019; Rosiek & Kinslow, 2016) suggests that colonial cultural and institutional systems that sustain oppression actively resist the circulation of alternative viewpoints; they writhe and rebel against efforts to change the stories we tell ourselves about history and social reality.

Narratives of Personal Experience as Methodology

This study draws on multiple theories that endorse the use of personal stories as data, a practice of analysis, and as a mode of representation in research. Primary among these is Tribal Critical Race Theory (Brayboy, 2005), which speaks directly to the way personal narratives can be a part of a larger and longer cultural struggle against settler colonialism. Tribal Critical Race Theory respects personal experience as a source of insight that is more than just anecdote. Stories are the means by which we highlight things of lasting significance, draw attention to tensions that give structure to events, and build relations from the past, through the present, into the future. In his widely cited essay, "Toward a Tribal Critical Race Theory in Education," scholar Bryan Brayboy (2005) writes:

> TribalCrit honors stories and oral knowledge as real and legitimate forms of data and ways of being. Stories are not separate from theory; they make up theory. … stories serve as a way to orient oneself and others toward the world and life. (p. 439)

Insofar as the stories that follow are told from a particular perspective and include an evaluation of the events in the story, they constitute a form of theorizing about the experiences being recounted. This is done not just for the purposes of description but with an intent to advocate and intervene in what we regard as a relatively common colonialist dynamic.

The analysis in the stories is informed by and extends some of the tenets of Tribal Critical Race Theory. Most notably, it builds on the first tenet of critical race theory, that "colonization is endemic to society" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 429). The stories document the way endemic colonization manifests in curricular decisions in a school. It extends this tenet by highlighting the way colonialism is not just present throughout schooling processes but is actively moving and changing. It is protean and moves with purpose in the work of educators. By presenting this new view of curricula, these stories-as-theory enact the fifth tenet of Tribal Critical Race Theory by showing how Indigenous theories of non-human agency (e.g., Deloria, 1999; Garroutte & Westcott, 2013; Marker, 2006, 2018) transform familiar understandings of curriculum, power, and

knowledge and give them "new meaning when examined through an Indigenous lens" (Brayboy, 2005, p. 429).

The stories in this study take the form of what Sabzalian (2019) calls "survivance stories" (p. 3). In her book, *Indigenous Children's Survivance in Public Schools*, she explains how such stories reside at the intersection of settler colonialism, a structural form of oppression that transcends individual experience, and personal experiences of navigating those structures without being assimilated into them. She writes:

> Survivance stories are characterized by their attention to colonialism but also to varied practices of survivance within that experience. Survivance draws attention to "Indigenous peoples' "active sense of presence" (Vizenor, 1999, p. vii) and creative negotiations amidst colonial dispossession. (p. 4)

The stories that follow draw attention to the shifting nature of the work of attempting to teach against the grain of settler colonialism, particularly in the context of social studies teaching. The hegemonic stories about U.S. history that circulated through the school and community and put pressure on the teachers' pedagogical decision-making are framed not as passive but dynamic, even agential (Garroute & Westcott, 2013; Pratt, 2021; Rosiek & Kinslow, 2016). This required an equally dynamic response, constant adaptation, and vigilant tracking to ensure that the curriculum did not get pulled into an "undertow" that pervasive settler colonialism creates.

Stories About Teaching Indigenous History

My name is Sage Hatch, and I am a citizen of the Confederated Tribes of Siletz Indians in the State of Oregon. The stories that follow detail some challenges and frustrations I experienced as a first-year teacher. At some level, they may read like simple complaints or an inventory of professional grievances. This is not how they are intended. The purpose here is to reflect on the preparation to deliver Indigenizing and decolonial curricula that I received in my pre-service teacher education program and the part of that work for which I was not prepared. I was fortunate to have received my master's degree and teaching license from the Sapsik'ʷałá teacher education program at the University of Oregon, a program that recruits Indigenous teachers to work in schools that serve a significant number of Indigenous students.[2] This program was a part of a larger teacher education graduate degree program that emphasized the promotion of equity, inclusion, and justice in public schools. Despite receiving what I still think is excellent training, there were aspects of the work that simply were not addressed. In part, I believe this has less to do with my specific program than the way we think about curriculum itself.

My first teaching assignment started out auspiciously. I was offered and accepted the opportunity to return to my home community and work in a school with a large number of students who shared my cultural identity. I was invited to teach in a school in which the enrollment was ~ 50% Indigenous students. Most of the Indigenous students were from my own tribal community. The school had an Indigenous principal who was also the district superintendent (it was a very small district). This person recruited me by emphasizing the importance of Native educators working with Native students and modeling academic success to a new generation.

Story 1-Deflection

I was excited to have secured an assignment as a social studies instructor at a time when the State of Oregon had mandated teaching about the history and present lives of Oregon's Indigenous communities across the k-12 curriculum. *Oregon Senate Bill-13 (SB-13): Tribal History/Shared History* had just passed and directed the Oregon Department of Education to address Indigenous erasure in Oregon's k-12 curricula.[3]

I planned to take an intergenerational approach to a number of my lessons. If we were going to study the history and present lives of Oregon's Indigenous communities, my students would have direct access to those communities and people who knew about the local history and contemporary life in the Siletz nation. While doing this intergenerational work, I was also hoping to develop connections between my coursework and the coursework of my fellow high school teachers, specifically with the English Languages Arts (ELA) and science teachers. As I pursued these latter collaborations, I learned, to my surprise, that many of the teachers I was working alongside had not heard about the passage of SB-13 nor the implications it had for their subject areas. They were not opposed, simply uninformed.

I knew the State provided professional development resources to address such knowledge gaps. However, after asking around, I saw no indication that the district and the educators in my school building would be taking steps to meet the new state requirements, even though we had a large Native youth population.

I took this concern to the principal/superintendent and asked if the school would be preparing for the roll-out of Tribal History/Shared History mandate and how I might help. I did not think this would be a cause for strain, and so was surprised when the principal/superintendent told me the SB-13 policy was not currently a priority within the district. Instead, the superintendent asserted that teaching about Indigenous communities, history, and culture was the sole work of the Social Studies Department (me) and not that of the whole faculty. I pointed out that this was not what the new legislation mandated; it explicitly directed administration to support teachers of all subject matters to develop a curriculum that included Indigenous perspectives and ways of knowing. It would not be difficult, I added, to include Indigenous perspectives in a unit or two in science and English classes. I knew people who could offer professional development that would support this work. I said I would be willing to do it if necessary.

Ignoring the offer, the principal expressed doubts about the possibility of including an Indigenous lens within other subject areas, such as science.[4] Naively perhaps, or maybe a bit willfully, I pressed on. I cited current work being done within the Indigenous Traditional Ecological Knowledge (ITEK) movement (Whyte, 2013, 2018). Still dubious and probably frustrated that I was not taking the hint, the principal said he had not heard about such things and asked me to provide examples of how this could be included within the high school curriculum. This did not feel like a genuine invitation but rather like an effort to table the proposal. I left the conversation disappointed.

What is worth noticing, for the purposes of this paper, is that hundreds of people lobbied the State to get SB-13 (Tribal History/Shared History) passed so as to break a pernicious curricular silence. That was good work, but the curricular silence about Indigenous history and lives did not just dissipate as a result of that work. It interrupted the policy silence on this matter, inspired the development of curricular materials about Indigenous history and presence, and perhaps emboldened some teachers to try more Indigenized curricula. However, 100 miles away from the

state capitol, the silence persisted and proved it was capable of swallowing up the advocacy behind SB-13.

Often too stubborn for my own good, I did as I was asked. I approached the superintendent a couple of weeks later with several examples of ITEK curriculum that had been developed by the nine federally recognized tribes of Oregon for high school and middle school science teachers. I also provided a list of Indigenous authors whose works would represent Native voices in ELA classes while still upholding common core state standards for ELA coursework within our state. The principal responded first with confusion (possibly because he had forgotten he asked for these things) and then annoyance. He said he would look at the materials. I had no confidence that he would.

Notice that complying with a State mandate to include lessons about Indigenous history and culture involved work that had little to do with developing lessons. I had the lessons and curricular materials. The bigger challenge was navigating an inchoate disinterest and deflection of such inclusion. This resistance kept changing form.

Story 2: Surveillance

Later in the year, I encountered a more active and insidious form of resistance in response to a 3-week long unit on the American Indian Civil Rights movement. The objective of the unit was to modernize depictions of Native American culture and to emphasize the fluid nature of Native identity. I did this, in part, by introducing Gerald Vizenor's (2008) concept of "survivance" and examples of modern Indigenous art. During the third week, in the middle of one of the lessons, I received a phone call patched directly to my classroom. We had been told this would only happen during class in the event of an emergency and/or matters affecting students' health or safety. The students also understood this was exceptional and potentially urgent. So, I stopped what I was doing and took the call.

Rather than a concern for students' well-being, it was a request for a meeting with the principal. When I asked what the meeting would be about, the district office manager replied, "You'll see when you get here." I assented and told her I would come during the upcoming preparation period. She said I should come immediately and that they would be sending a stand-in who would watch my class.

I learned that there had been community complaints about my American Indian Civil Rights lessons. Consequently, the principal informed me that going forward, he wanted me to submit detailed, structured lesson plans for administrative approval and that I would change the curriculum, which members of the community had voiced concerns about or which the administration believed would create strife within the larger community. I offered assurance that there was nothing within the content of my coursework which I could not justify, whether for its accuracy, alignment with state standards, age appropriateness, the role it filled within the greater unit, or how the lesson developed usable skills for the students. But there was no provision for recourse, justification, or counter-proposals.

I requested examples of the curricular content community members had found objectionable. It turns out that the previous week, one of my students mentioned our discussion of the 1973 occupation of Wounded Knee by the American Indian Movement (AIM)[5] activists to his parents. That lesson made reference to the work of Leonard Peltier, an imprisoned Ojibwe activist and AIM leader who was later convicted of killing two FBI agents.[6] The student's guardian had

called the principal with a complaint that my curriculum had a political agenda and referred to it as "anti-American." This accusation functioned as what Calderón (2014) refers to as a colonial palimpsest,[7] an action which reinforces the notion that, because education has always been delivered in a specific way, it must continue to be performed in that manner.

Upon hearing this concern, the administrator made reducing the guardian's distress his highest priority. It is possible he did this because he had his own career concerns. Principals do not have a labor union and are dependent on the School Board's goodwill to retain their position. In a small town like this one, the majority white School Board is composed of local citizens who talk to community members on a regular basis. Complaints like this can circulate quickly and mobilize much broader resentments. Whatever his reasons, rather than supporting a curriculum that at times centered local Indigenous community priorities and perspectives, thereby unsettling taken-for-granted settler futurities, the principal attempted to compel a return to habituated avoidance of discussion of Indigenous perspectives on local and U.S. history, thus insulating settler futurities from displacement or change.

The challenge I faced in this situation was not that I needed knowledge and lesson plans, nor was I only dealing with vague deflections from a single administrator. These deflections were themselves part of a more distributed social phenomenon, one entangled with local personalities and politics, institutionalized career ladders, pervasive white fragility,[8] and probably national social media campaigns seeking to paint inclusive k-12 curricula as a threat to the nation.

Story 3-Supports

The third and final story took place late in the year and focused on a lesson about Two-Spirit[9] persons. An articulation of the term that allows for the fluidity that such a dynamic term requires, while still offering a shared sense of community to allow support across that diversity is offered by Marie Laing (2021):

> Two-Spirit is rooted in the fact that there are common experiences that we have as Indigenous people whose genders and sexualities are deemed "other" by cis-heteropatriarchy; thus, having a word to describe those commonalities while also leaving room for our differences helps us communicate and build community. (pp. 22–23)

A few students in my junior-level social studies class identified as Two-Spirit and had been receiving questions from other students and faculty about what this meant. So rather than leave them alone to do that educational work, it felt important to bring this topic into the curriculum. The unit I developed for this purpose provided examples from multiple cultures where we see various forms of this third gender role emerge or gender fluidity occurs—the Tenino term Waxlha, the Takelma Xa'wisa, and the Assiniboine Winktan, to name a few (Indian Health Services [IHS], 2022). The unit also enabled me to introduce students to the more general concept of intersectionality and to have everyone reflect on the multiple intersections of identity in which they lived.

By this time, although I still submitted my lessons to the principal, he had ceased to review them as far as I could tell.[10] Nonetheless, I knew this topic was fraught with potential missteps. The distinctly Indigenous conception of "Two-Spirit" can easily be trivialized or subsumed in more Eurocentric conceptions of sexuality and gender identity. Also, having already experienced

pushback for teaching about Indigenous perspectives on U.S. history, adding the possibility of pushback against teaching in ways that also challenge heteronormative futurities caused me some concern.

To prepare for this, I crafted a carefully worded lesson plan, aligned my work with several state standards for social studies, and contacted my union representative to inform her that there may be a conflict between myself and administration in the near future. After hearing the details, she confidently assured me that this was the curriculum they were striving for at a state level and comforted me by saying that there should not be any strife brought about by the subject matter of this particular unit.

Feeling comforted but still trepidatious, I moved forward with the unit. There was no student push-back. The students who identified as Two-Spirit approached me excitedly after the first class in which I introduced the subject and shared their appreciation for making space for the discussion of the topic. They took some of the curricular materials and shared them with other students and faculty whom they knew to be receptive. In the following days, I received meaningful questions from my teacher-peers, as well as from students in other classes about the material. It felt constructive, and I felt hopeful about the growth of knowledge and understanding of this subject among the school community.

The week I taught the unit passed without incident, and I had begun to relax. Then I received a call in the middle of a morning class. Expecting the office manager or the principal, I was surprised to hear a voice I did not recognize. The person on the other end of the line launched without preamble into a slew of questions about what I teach in my classes, including accusations I was pushing a "gay agenda." It took a moment to discern that I was speaking with a parent of one of my students; the office manager at the front desk had forwarded a call to my classroom during my lesson. I informed the parent that I would be happy to speak with them, but I was teaching a class and said they needed to go through the proper channels. When they failed to acknowledge this redirection and kept interrogating me, I hung up the phone. Shortly after, I received a call from the principal to come to the office at my earliest convenience. During the next break, I called my union representative, printed out my lesson plans, and made my way to the office.

At the office, the principal greeted me warmly; he proceeded to ask how I felt lessons were going and how the students were responding to my content and style of teaching. I told him, honestly, that I felt they were responding well on both fronts and that the background I shared with many of my students enhanced the rapport we enjoyed. He nodded, then leaned forward and asked, "Do you know who I just got off the phone with?" I responded, "I believe so, as the Office Manager forwarded the call to my classroom while I was in a lesson."

He raised an eyebrow and asked a few probing questions about my unit covering Two-Spirit people and intersectionality. I did not sense a personal hostility to the topic, but he clearly did not like getting calls from angry parents. Rather than attempt to describe the unit, I reached into my bag, removed the lesson plans, laid them on his desk, and informed him that I had contacted the union prior to teaching this lesson and that I would be willing to answer any questions from community members at a more appropriate time than during the school day. I informed him that I had to go as I did not want to be late for my next class. I said I thought the lesson provided an important service, not just to the students in our school who identify as Two-Spirit, but to almost everyone else who wants to be supportive of them but does not know how. He did not reply but seemed weary.

This final episode illustrates another level at which curriculum formation was taking place in my experience that year. It was not just knowledge about topics like Two-Spirit identities that was informing my development of curriculum. Nor was it only the assemblage of community members threatened by this curricular content, a principal vulnerable to community discontent, the politics of a white majority rural school board, and global and local settler colonial and heternormative discourses operating in a manner that sought to suppress curricula that centered Indigenous history, lives, and values. There were also supportive institutional structures—like the Teachers Union, Indigenous activists changing State curriculum standards and policy, and widespread queer-positive political movements—that worked in ways that supported the curriculum I was teaching. My knowledge of how to access, cite, and feel supported by these organizations and movements amplified their constructive influence on the curriculum in my classroom.

Also, there were the students themselves who demonstrated their support for this curriculum by their engagement in discussions, materials, and assignments. They were a significant part of the material and affective reality of my teaching, arguably the most important part. The students were connected to their families, community networks, online communities that supported their development of personal and political identities, and to each other. Through my interactions with them, all of these connections were influencing the curriculum in my classroom. If I had not been listening to my students' discussions of their personal experiences, if they had not shared their Two-Spirit identification with me, and if I had not considered that seriously, I would likely not have taught the unit on Two-Spirit gender. So, in a very real way, the students and their network of relations authored part of that week's curriculum.

Conclusions and Implications

In their article, "Curriculum, Replacement, and Settler Futurity," Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) introduce the concept of settler futurities to the field of curriculum studies. They point out how, from the earliest stages of the European colonization of this continent, settler society has been characterized by a doubled and contradictory desire to both absorb Indigenous knowledge and ensure the future of settler society through the erasure of and replacement of Indigenous lives, community, and reality. This pattern is reproduced in curricular politics when schools want the representation of Indigenous people in textbooks and teaching positions, but not in a way that challenges the inevitability of settler presence and claims to land.

The stories presented here corroborate their insights. The setting for the stories should have been ideal for the enactment of a curriculum that centered Indigenous knowledge, perspectives, and histories. A newly certified Indigenous teacher, graduate of a teacher education program that provided preparation to serve Indigenous students, had been hired by a school that served his tribal community, a school with an enrollment of approximately 50% Indigenous students. What followed was a pattern of contradictory settler desires. The district wanted Indigenous representation on their staff and maybe even access to the knowledge that came with that, but the limit of that enthusiasm was reached quickly once the curriculum began to decenter narratives of settler futurity and inevitability.

The curricula taught, it should be noted, was not exceptionally radical nor confrontational. It was not as ambitious as the rematriated curricula Tuck and Gaztambide-Fernández (2013) recommend. Nonetheless, the resistance to it was immediate, relatively shrill, and distressing in its

scope. It was more than student discomfort, which was minimal. The resistance to teaching critically about settler colonialism in this high school manifested as an assemblage of parent affect, administrator anxiety, popular political discourse, and institutional power relations. This assemblage, although a collection of disparate elements whose form shifted over time, nonetheless had coherence and consistency of effect. It sought to silence teaching that centered Indigenous experience and knowledge.

The analysis embedded in the stories was crafted to build upon and extend Tuck's and Gaztambide-Fernández's (2013) critique of the way settler futurities are privileged in curricular practice and scholarship by looking closely at a first-year teacher's encounter with pushback against curricula that refused the hegemony of settler futurities. They highlight the protean and distributed nature of that resistance, the way it was embedded in material context and in local social and political discourses, and the way countervailing supportive material and social influences on the teacher's curricular decisions were also fluid and distributed. Rather than think of the presence of settler colonialism in curricula as a single thing, such as a misconception, misrepresentation, or even the absence of representation or specific concepts, the stories presented suggest it is something more resilient—a complex mix of social and institutional processes through which settler futurities continually reassert themselves.

Thought of in this way, the curricula of settler colonialism can be understood as having an agential character, an agency that is both discursive and material and that extends well beyond the classroom or even school building. Support for such an agential view of ideas and things can be found in the Indigenous studies literature (e.g., Deloria, 1999; Garroutte & Westcott, 2013; Marker, 2018, etc.). For example, Dr. Vanessa Watts (2013) writes "Non-human beings are active members of society. Not only are they active, they also directly influence how humans organize themselves into that society" (p. 23). Contemporary philosophers of science have also written about non-human agency (Barad, 2007; Braidotti, 2019; Latour, 2014; Rosiek et al., 2020; etc.).

This view of curricula also dovetails in important ways with several tenets of Tribal Critical Race Theory (Brayboy, 2005). For example, as colonization is endemic to society, the necessity to understand colonization and, by extension, settler colonialism as a shifting assemblage begins to allow the endemic nature of colonialism to take on a coherency. As Indigenous people occupy a liminal space, the stories above articulate a response to what happens within a settler colonial society when educators attempt to center Indigenous knowledge and experience.

Storytelling as a practice of theory is also essential in tracking the agential nature of curricula and settler colonialism's influence on our curricular practices beyond discrete lesson planning. Embedded within the work we ask teachers to do to challenge settler grammars (Calderón, 2014), which presume settler superiority, and preserve narratives of settler futurity that are unsettled by the continuing presence of Indigenous peoples in North America, counter-storytelling allows us to articulate how educators engage with systems of settler colonialism and challenge the presumption of the inevitability of settler futurities.

Rather than thinking of the curriculum as a set of facts, concepts, or integrated understandings, separate from the dynamic social and political processes that endorse or support certain kinds of learning, it seems more empirically accurate to think of the curriculum as the whole of this dynamic, resilient, agentic assemblage of ideas, institutional structures, and ideological processes. Trying to interrupt the hold settler futurities have on public school curricula, therefore, will not just be a matter of including new content. It will require developing counter-agency by connecting to a relational network of different institutional structures, social connections, place connections, and ideas that is sustainable long term. This could be as simple as

connecting with a teachers union or listening closely to students, or it might involve the forms of rematriation Tuck (2011) proposes, such as listening to ideas in a community, connecting to generational elders, or infusing Indigenous cosmologies and relationships to the land in one's curriculum.

This view of the curricular manifestations of settler colonialism has significant implications for the way we think about preparing teachers. The complex agential forces of settler colonialism are constantly at work in the academic spaces teachers inhabit. Teachers should be made aware of this. It is not enough that teachers know the truth about Indigenous history and tell that truth to their students when schools are spaces in which those truths are not always welcomed. Future educators also need to be prepared to navigate the social and institutional pushback that will likely emerge when settler futurities defend themselves. This requires building relationships with alternative Indigenous futurities, futurities which actively promote Indigenous epistemologies, metaphysics, and culture. Not a practice that is additive but rather transformative. The possibility of an agency that runs counter to that of settler colonialism makes possible a complex network not simply waiting to respond but one that is always in place and operates with the alacrity and fluidity of settler colonialism itself.

We see two affirming ways this could and should take place. First, the agential view of curriculum presented in this paper counsels against compartmentalization of our understanding of curricula itself. The complicated practical politics of teaching against the grain of settler colonialism should be acknowledged and addressed in teacher education programs. Doing so should not, however, be reduced to providing teachers with strategies for dealing with the political blowback that can come from refusing settler futurities, as if the inclusion of specific curriculum content is one thing and the material and affective work of navigating school politics is a separate thing. Instead, the kind of experiences related in this article suggest the need for an expansion of our understanding of curriculum itself, beyond the classroom, beyond discreet content knowledge, beyond individual student experience, and beyond even hidden curricula. Teachers would be better prepared for the work of refusing settler colonialism in schools if they understood curriculum as a complex mix of material, political, and affective relations of which particular knowledge claims and learning objectives are a small part.

This leads to a second useful affirmation that refusing settler colonialism in schools requires developing counter-agency through building relational connections beyond ourselves. The image of a single teacher arriving at a school with curricula that will transform students' lives is naive and unrealistic. Frankly, this image shares too many features with settler colonial missionary fantasies of progress and uplift. Unfortunately, that is still the image around which many of our teacher education programs seem to be built. The curricular face of settler colonialism is just that, a face, a part of something larger, part of a constantly evolving assemblage of material and institutional arrangements, individual attitudes, and dreams of settler futurity that are not dispelled or displaced easily. It evolves and actively resists the introduction of other visions of living and learning in our schools. Preparing teachers to refuse settler colonialism in our teaching, therefore, will require more than individual acts of critical consciousness and political will. It also needs to involve helping teachers learn how to become a part of something much larger than ourselves, practically building a network of institutional and social relations, locating sources of material support and security, and establishing personal connections in the communities that can help us sustain a practice of refusal that is as relentless and adaptive as settler colonialism itself. This may seem like asking a lot to enable what looks like a relatively simple inclusion of Indigenous histories, contemporary lives, and hopes for the future in k-12 curriculum. This

inclusion, however, is not simple at all. It is a necessary component of transformation. Settler colonialism is right to be afraid of it, but we should not be afraid to do this work.

Notes

1. We use the word assemblage to refer to complex relational phenomena involving divergent ontological elements (e.g., ideas, affects, discourses, economics, etc.) that cohere in some self-replicating manner and that often demonstrate agentic qualities (Bennet, 2010; Mazzei & Jackson, 2017). The contemporary usage of this term in the social sciences can be traced to the work of Deleuze and Guattari (2009), though not without some controversy (Buchanan, 2015; Nail, 2017; Weheliye, 2014). The first concern is that the term is often used too loosely, to refer to any collection of materials and processes. Here our usage of the term is consistent with Ian Buchanan's (2015) more precise view that "the assemblage is a 'living' arrangement … the assemblage is purposeful, it is not simply a happenstance collocation of people, materials and actions, but the deliberate realization of a distinctive plan (abstract machine)" (p. 385). The second concern is that the philosophies associated with the term have been used in a manner that reinscribes settler colonialism and Indigenous cultural genocide either by uncritically celebrating colonialist expansion, extraction, and abstraction (Byrd, 2011; King, 2017; Todd, 2016), by ignoring the way Indigenous thinkers have long presumed the existence and significance of a variety of forms of non-human agency (Rosiek et al., 2020; Watts, 2013), or by insisting on the ideal of subjectless social analysis that disallows arguments grounded in the experience of identity-based oppression (King, 2017; Weheliye, 2014). We are aware of these critiques and find them valid yet, like many, still find the term useful (Honeyford & Watts, 2020; Nxumalo, 2021; Weheliye, 2014) and explicitly use it in a manner that critiques colonialism, acknowledges Indigenous theories of non-human agency, and explicitly grounds our analysis in an Indigenous teacher's experience of systemic silencing.
2. Sapsik'ʷałá program began in 2002 to address the need for American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) teachers. The program collaborates with all Nine Federally Recognized Sovereign Indian Nations of Oregon and the UOTeach master's program to deliver a pathway for Indigenous people to become teachers within their communities. (https://education.uoregon.edu/sapsikwala)
3. SB-13 was endorsed by the Oregon Department of Education (ODE). Once passed, they were provided funds to assemble a team of experts to develop k-12 Native American Curriculum for inclusion in Oregon public schools and to provide professional development to educators on how to use and extend the curriculum within their classrooms. This was understood to apply to all k-12 curricula, not just social studies curricula.
4. This discussion had already happened at the state level, among the advocates for the Bill. Legislative subcommittees and state level education boards had acknowledged the necessity for Indigenous education outside of a social studies lens.
5. It needs to be noted here that recent scholarship on the AIM movement and tribal nationalism movements generally, have been critiqued meaningfully for their lack of engagement with historical and contemporary sexism (Ramirez, 2007). Mentioning these critiques is important because failing to do so risks naturalizing these patterns of heteropatriarchy. Related, examples of Indigenous women who have been leaders in decolonizing politics over the last century were provided later in the unit, so AIM was not the only example of this kind of organizing presented to the students. The students also worked with course materials regarding the "Idle No More" Movement founded in 2012 by Jessica Gordon, Sylvia McAdam, Nina Wilson, and Sheelah McLean.
6. The evidence of Peltier's guilt was weak, and for this reason, many organizations have called for his release including Amnesty International, the Southern Christian Leadership Conference, The Robert Kennedy Memorial Foundation for Human Rights, and others.
7. A manuscript or piece of writing material on which the original writing has been effaced to make room for later writing but of which traces remain.
8. Referring here to both the white fragility as it manifested in specific white parent responses to reports of the curricula about history told from an Indigenous perspective and to general specter of possibility of broader white backlash that seemed to concern the principal.
9. Indigenous gender identity has been more complex than the familiar western gender binary since pre-contact. It is relatively recently that this difference has been given a name by Indigenous activists. At the 1990 Native American Gay and Lesbian conference in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada Fisher River Cree Elder Myra

Laramie introduced the term Two-Spirit. Since its introduction (Wilson, 2010), Two-Spirit has become an identity category that many Indigenous LGBTQIA2S+ people have begun to identify with as a way to signal and identify simultaneously with both their Indigeneity and their queerness (Wesley, 2015). Indigenous articulations of gender are complex and multilayered. They cannot be reduced to most contemporary whitestream conceptions of gender and sexual diversity that may have a surface overlap (Wilson, 2010). Hundreds of Indigenous identities are coming together across geopolitical regions to develop and negotiate Two Spirit identities; the definition and understanding of this term must remain fluid.

10. Given his multiple duties as principal and district superintendent, he likely did not have the time for managing curriculum at such a fine grained level.

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