ENHANCING THE CALL OF PLACE AND ENTANGLING IDENTITIES: A BRAIDING OF MATERIALS, MEDIA, AND INFRASTRUCTURES TO PLACE AND BEING

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ABSTRACT

Life is experienced in place. It is grounded, and we are connected through our experiences being grounded together in place. The call of place brings people (humans and more-than-humans) into a relational coexistence through sharing our interactions, and by being together in places. In exploring how meaningful cultural understanding between Indigenous land defenders and settler-descended activists can occur in these sites of coexistence, this paper examines how cultural entanglement that occurs through the shared experience in place can be enhanced through relationships to materials, media, and infrastructure. By evaluating if these different forms can enhance place's call beyond its physical location, materials, media, and "infrastructure" can each be understood as a braiding of multivocal meanings capable of supporting the alteration of European worldviews to be more relational in a meaningful way that supports Indigenous resurgence.

INTRODUCTION

"We're a part of something special,
We're a part of something special,
We're a part of something special,
It's a crack in time, a wrinkle"

-Nahko and Medicine for the People [MFTP], "Wash it Away," *Wash it Away* (2014).

Wandering where we wander, it is often easy to forget where we have been. As a settler of predominantly European descent, this is apparently our way of things: Lands are commodities and the people we find there, if they haven't used those lands in *our* ways, ought to be removed (Coulthard 2014:7). At least this is the case, it seems, if you aren't listening. The "Call of Place" is not something that is easily heard if you don't know what to listen for (Larsen and Johnson 2014: 2), particularly if you – like me – come from a people who long ago forgot how to live in relationship with the land (Green 2013: 72). The call of place is that which draws us into relationship with territory and with land through being in place with beings other than ourselves. Larsen and Johnson (2014) have further distinguished this call as something wholly unique and deeply relational, claiming, "it's not like a calling to a faith or a profession, but rather summons to encounter, dialogue, and relationship among the humans and nonhumans who share the landscape" (2). Authors such as Rodman (1992), Basso (1996), Elliott et al. (2009), de la Cadena (2010), Di Giminiani (2016), and Larsen and Johnson (2017) have described the importance of place and its call to the (re)formation of Indigenous and place-based identities. They illustrate how place itself is an active and affective agent within an exchange, and how it creates the basis for relational ways of knowing both the self (Williams 2012:94) and other members of your cosmological community (Larsen and Johnson 2017:2).

In this paper, my intention is to illustrate how the call of place can be enhanced and maintained even when an individual is no longer in that place, how that call is made constant, renewed, recalled, momentarily or constantly (re)experienced in memory, dream, vision, through

relationships with "things" that (re)call and (re)constitute that place despite distance, and how this supports a relational way of knowing that can lead to increased settler support for Indigenous Resurgence through (re)experiencing their time in Indigenous territory. Further, this paper suggests that in answering the call of place, by engaging with and being influenced or shaped by material, media, and infrastructure, we weave ourselves into those braids. While this paper describes how these material and media interactions reinforce or enhance the call of place among settler activists in the environmental movement, and how reinforcing the call of place can lead to entangled worldviews that are expressed through the ceremony of being in place with Indigenous cosmologies as tied to Indigenous-led, place-based movements,[v] this paper does not specifically address the function of this place-based process of transculturation (Ortiz 1995:102-103). Rather, aspects of the braidwork that make meaningful cultural exchange possible are examined once removed from a specific place. The term "braidwork" is employed as an alternative to "infrastructure," as the latter term is specifically industrial and therefore hegemonic in my experiencing of it. This is to examine how different materials, media, and "infrastructures" enhance the call of place once removed from place. To do this, my paper will explore and analyse my relationships to a lava rock (a material), a song (a media), and to ceremony. This is to understand the nature of the braid itself, the collective agency manifest through the weaving together of three "types" of actors that can draw others into a deeper relationship with place that lead towards meaningful transcultural exchange (Zamel 1997: 350) with Indigenous ways of being *through* connection to place. Seeing the strands of this braidwork as not only (re)connecting "things" to place, but place to "things," the kincentric and relational aspect of being in place becomes visible (Beckwith et al. 2017:424) – not as a thread within the braid, but as something produced by the braiding of all of these strands together.

"Things" themselves occur in different forms: materials, objects, belongings, songs, dreams, dances, ceremonies, and so on. They go by many names, though one characteristic that is consistent is that they are often overlooked as affective beings in the lives of humans. "Things" come from place, they enter into a relationship with a person

the moment they meet, when that person takes that "thing" from place. If the relationship between person and material began in place, then my paper asks if place's relationship with a person might be "enhanced" (continued, strengthened, evoked, remembered, manifested) through the subsequent relationship between the person and the material coupled in place. My attempt here is to tease out a few strands from a braid or braidwork of interrelated ideas that is itself a metaphor for our connections to place (and place's connections to us, to "things," and between us all) before re-braiding these strands and again forming that interaction of place, of putting materials, media (songs, dreams), and "infrastructures" (ceremony) back into the braid that constitutes our interwoven being *in place*. The metaphor of a braid feels appropriate for understanding these forms of interconnection and relationality because it expands the concept of the node (Latour 1996: 369). The braid cannot exist without the strands being woven into it, nor do the strands themselves resemble the completed braid. Basically, a braidwork suggests that aspects of "things" (including people) have their own trajectory, though they are woven into the trajectories of other "things" where they each mutually impact each other. Braidworks are emergent, agentive points of interconnection and interinfluence that maintain the agency of the constituent threads while manifesting their own unique agency as a collection of threads. That items themselves can carry with them the call of place is something that interests me greatly because of personal experience. It is my recognition that materials are always-already tied to place, memory (Maracle 2015:49), and one's being in ways that can evoke those places, memories, and ways of being in individuals and groups (Cuerrier et al. 2015:428). Like place, materials have agency (agency being the ability for something to influence or affect
another) (Latour 2005:64-65).

Media – the plural form of "medium" and a means through which something is communicated – have similar agency in how they (re)constitute identity (Williams 2012:92), relationships (Durham Peters 2015:14-15), and histories (Solomon and Thorpe 2012:250-251). Both materials and media are subject to the social, cultural, and spiritual interactions that emerge through "infrastructure" (Proulx 2009:295), defined in this paper as the binding of materials and media

into structural forms that are more than their constituent parts. Infrastructures are capable of replicating the agency of those parts and of manifesting an agency of their own. They represent a braidwork in themselves as interwoven relationships capable of reconstituting relationships even while displaced, making them central to understanding the call of place.

"We felt like we were returning,
To our land rebels, and the shepherds to the sea,
Takers are taking what the leavers will leave.
So grieve me the black prince cicada,
Such a loud voice for a tiny creature,
Teach me to let go of all of my pain,
I do forgive, I don't forget these things,
I do forgive, I don't forget these things."
-Nahko and MFTP, "Wash it Away."

A POINT OF ARRIVAL

The majority of my lineage is European (*hwunitum*, in Coast Salish territories, "the hungry people"). But Europe was always the past – it was a point of departure, a place that members of my family were obliged to visit, but not a place of return. Growing up, Europe felt to me like a place we were all exiled from while at the same time it heavily defined who we were. During the 1988 Winter Olympics I asked my dad which country he was cheering for and was surprised when he replied "Switzerland." Switzerland is where he was born and where his paternal line has lived since the 16th century when they fled the Huguenot genocide in Normandy, but it was not where he lived in 1988. It was the same with my maternal grandfather, a man who watched golf and swore in German when his players missed puts. When asked how he had survived World War II, he said that he had stayed at the back. Otherwise, he rarely talked to me about Germany, or our ancestral town of Plattling. Even as a child this disconnection struck me as strange since my father was always proud of the hand-painted cow bells his mother sent us. The old furniture in my grandparent's place in "Ottawa"[vi] was similarly reminiscent, with framed photos and other belongings that spoke of my grandfather's

life in pre-war Bavaria. Clearly, even though they spoke rarely of it, they wanted to remain connected to where they were from in a material way.

To talk about the women in my family is to change subjects in a lot of ways. Because of Euro-North American patriarchy, the women were in many ways erased. This is unfortunate, as it is through the women that my lineage offers some hope to reconnect to my ancestors and the places in their lives. My father's mother's line was French and descended from the place-based Celts of pre-Roman Europe. My mother's mother was English from her father's line, and Québecois and Haudenosaunee on her mother's side (two obvious stains on an otherwise well-worn Anglo disguise for my German grandfather as he hoped to hide his own heritage in wartime "Montreal"). Little remained of either of my grandmothers in the imaginary of my grandparents' generation, and it is hard for me to speak to them now, despite my best efforts. Between the self-exiles of my father and maternal grandfather, and the erasure of my grandmothers, there was relatively little to be handed down to remind us of our lineage. A single Swiss cowbell painted by my grandmother that is beside me as I write this, and the desk my maternal grandfather restored that I am sitting at now are two of the only material items that have found their way through the years to me. Despite multiple attempts to erase our familial connections to place, materials that remind *me* of *them* remain, but not the places they were from. Born in the colony to parentage seeking something new in what is known as "Canada," my inherited imaginary has always been about moving away from European places and displacing Indigenous peoples in the places that we occupy.

Born in the traditional unceded territory of the Algonquin Anishnaabeg people ("Ottawa"), my childhood and youth were spent in the Upper Canada Treaty territories of the Anishnabek, Huron-Wendat, and Haudenosaunee peoples (so-called Lanark County) before moving to Kanien'kehá:ka territory ("Montreal") at the age of 10. The so-called Canadian Shield and the "St. Laurence" lowlands were merely backdrops to my experiences then. It was not until more recently that I considered these places as actors that informed my experiences and future relationships with these territories. What *were*

actors (in terms of the agency at work on my lived experience) were the bus routes that allowed teenage me to explore downtown "Montreal," to connect with other musicians, and to get into trouble. When the internet arrived in the late 1990s, it changed my reality in ways my ancestors would probably have understood on their own levels. These – the busses, the music, and the internet – had the agency to impact my youthful life, and these were the actors that played a role in my life.

If there is a moment that changed these aspects of my life, it came later. After submitting my master's thesis at the age of 33, I left so-called Montreal and my path eventually led me to Aotearoa. Stepping off the plane it was still "New Zealand" to me then, but as the fresh air found me, and my naked toes touched the soil, the land itself began speaking to me as *Aotearoa*. Like Nahko Bear sings in his song "Wash it Away" (see below), being there felt more like a return than a first encounter. For whatever reason – be it that "New Zealand" is a settler colonial state very much like "Canada," or that Māori activists were quicker to speak to me because of my outsider status (not being a settler Kiwi, I was not *their* colonizer), or the very call of place itself – Aotearoa became a place of transformation through self-reflection, acceptance, accountability, and responsibility. It was where a Māori land-defender named T, after a day both of us had spent protesting deep sea drilling off the coast of Kaikōura, pressed his forehead to mine in a hongi and told me "now, you are a defender of this land, just like me" (journey notes,[vii] 1 December 2013). Since that time, my path brought me once again through Kanien'kehá:ka territory, and then to the unceded and un-surrendered Coast Salish, Nuu-chah-nulth, and Kwakwaka'wakw territories that make up so-called Vancouver Island (The Island). My decision to come to The Island was itself the result of a call that is impossible for me to explain. Since returning from Aotearoa, it has become drastically important to me that I participate in place-based land defence in the places I colonize.

"We danced the ghost dance in two separate countries
To this old song
So familiar to memory

The road will teach you how to love and let go
It can be lonely but it's the only thing that we've ever known
It can be lonely but it's the only thing that we've ever known”
-Nahko and MFTP, “Wash it Away.”

EXPERIENCING THE CALL OF PLACE IN MAKAPU’U

My understanding about how materials can carry with them the call of place began at Makapu’u Beach Park, a small stretch of coast wedged between highway 72 and the Pukakukui Channel that separates O’ahu from Rabbit Island and the island that now serves as Kāohikaipu Island State Seabird Sanctuary. It found us just before the winter solstice in 2019 when my partner and I were cruising around O’ahu in a rented campervan. Having just left Hawaii Kai, we were making our way up the east coast of the island to the North Shore. We promised to stop anywhere that caught either of our attention. My then-partner saw a sign for the Makapu’u Lighthouse trail with a long line of cars parked near the entrance. The way the highway was laid forced us to continue for a mile before we found parking for Makapu’u beach. When we pulled into the lot, we saw several stone circles and cairns which we recognized as a heiau or “traditional Hawaiian temple” (Becket and Singer 1999:175). The path the afternoon had been taking was altered in a very significant way.

> “As soon as me and [my partner] figured out what it was we both became pretty reserved, and quiet. For me, stumbling on a Heiau was humbling…being at a sacred site, my first thought was about praying and being respectful and trying to understand the depth of the place…not knowing the protocols outside of Kapu Aloha I thanked the ancestors of the heiau (it felt and looked like an active community temple) and the gods. It felt very important to me to be humble, and calm” (journey notes, 11 December 2019).

Heiau were (and in some cases still are) a central part of pre-contact Hawaiian culture and serve similar functions to the marae in other parts of Polynesia (Kirch and Ruggles 2019: 3). Part of my reason for wanting to visit Hawai’i in 2019 was to visit a heiau. This desire was

tied to another place we were planning on visiting on that journey, and while both our planned destination and being called to the Makapu'u heiau sounded like different experiences, they were very much linked. Our trip included a two-week stop on the Island of Hawai'i where we planned to spend three nights at the Mauna Kea "protest" camp where Kānaka Maoli land-defenders had then been holding space against the construction of a thirty-meter telescope on Mauna Kea for (then) nearly 200 days. My partner and I had participated in similar de-occupations or decolonial movements in 'Namgis territory during the "Fish Farms Out" actions. Having the chance to show our support – as settlers – for such a powerful and connecting action bordered on spiritual for me. Chancing into contact with an active heiau on O'ahu grounded the experience of being there. But that wasn't the only reason I was excited about this chance.

Polynesians were some of the most skilled mariners the world has ever seen, and their relationship with the ocean was not one of fear the way it was with European "explorers" of the so-called "age of discovery" (Manke 1999:228). Rather, the ocean was a well-travelled *place* of meaning, connection, and identity (Hau'ofa 1994:7) and a bridge that linked Polynesian cultures together. For the ancestors of the people who became the Hawaiians and the Māori of Aotearoa, connection to the Ocean was as important as the new islands that they sailed to (61). Like the Hawaiian heiau, the Polynesian marae are points of spiritual, ceremonial, and communal importance that continue to (re)constitute Polynesian identity (Kirch and Ruggles 2019: xxix). Each heiau/marae contains a piece of their own ancestors: stones from "celebrated marae" were often carried with Polynesian voyagers as they sailed towards a new home where that stone became the foundation for a new heiau/marae, creating a lineage between the people, the places from where they had come and the places where they made their new homes (Hīroa 1949:481).

Stepping outside of the larger stone circle that formed the outer limit of the heiau, my feet brought me closer to the beach where a small lava stone caught my eye. It was the idea that Polynesians since time immemorial had participated in this tradition that called me to take that stone, to offer thanksgiving and place a similar stone that had

travelled with me from Diitiida ("Jordan River," "British Columbia") on Makapu'u beach, and return to L'kwungen territory with the lava stone—to carry the Polynesian tradition, and that place, with me. The stone now sits in a very special place in my apartment. It connects me to that coastline and the heiau overlooking the Pacific, to those that still live around Makapu'u heiau, and to their ancestors going back to the beginning. It also constitutes my relationship with the ancestors of the territories that I occupy, for it is impossible for me to see my relationship to place without acknowledging the impact of my life on the people where I call "home." That stone passed with me over the waters separating O'ahu and Hawai'i and was close to my heart the entire time we were holding space on Maunakea. It has become a part of those experiences, and each time its rough, brittle, comforting edges touch my fingers it brings me back to that sunny point overlooking the waves. The stone itself has become my connection to Makapu'u, and to the Hawaiian archipelago in general. Even though the stone does not come from the heiau itself (I am not Polynesian, and the ancestors that are held within and honoured are not mine, in my heart this would have constituted a theft, and obvious appropriation of Polynesian culture), my intention was not to cause harm but to build a relationship between myself and that place. There is agency in that stone in how, now removed and dis-placed, it evokes a very specific place and (re)constitutes my attachment to being in and sitting with the agency of *that* place (Larsen and Johnson 2017:18-19). It reconstitutes my outsider connection to the moment I was there and allows me to honour a people and a place who will forever have my respect. It also challenges me to be a better member of *this* community of settler supporters on Coast Salish territory, as an activist and academic, to be aware of the bonds that I form and the bonds I break – between people, places, and materials.

"Then sister crow came with the murder that day,
So we tattooed the bird nation onto our faces.
She said, "we sing to let go of all of our pain,
We dance the story
To remember when things changed."
Remember when things changed,
Remember when things changed."

-Nahko and MFTP, “Wash it Away.”

CEREMONY, AND HOW “THE SONG OF OUR STRUGGLES CAME STRAIGHT FROM THE FIRE” [viii]

Beyond the individual experiencing of place, its call, and those materials that enhance that call, there are collective ways that a place’s call is enhanced and even taken up. Materials are not the only “things” that can carry the call of place. They are also not the only “things” involved in the constitution of a “spatially experienced body of knowledge” (Wildcat 2009: 15). Songs, like the lava stone, contain within them aspects of the places where they originate. The hairs on the back of my neck still tingle when listening to the song “Wash it Away,” reminding me of several places, several experiences, people and peoples, and of journeys and returns. My first-time hearing “Wash it Away” by Nahko and Medicine for the People was in 2017. It was during a time in my life where I was getting more involved in activism and being drawn into new relationships and new ways of being in relationship. Listening to the song now, preparing to write about it, is as powerful an experience as those times and places where I have sung it. Listening to a song can be a powerful experience, but it can also be a banal act as well: there is something that we bring to the listening that changes the impact of the music, and sometimes the song, time, and place of its listening or playing dictates our reaction. This is because listening, like *playing* music, is a conversation—once you have entered into conversation with a song, something more can happen (Racy 2003:41). Nahko Bear, the singer and principle writer for Nahko and Medicine for the People, is an Indigenous artist whose lyrics (and the guiding notion for his band) are each acts of resurgence performed in an intercultural and contemporary way that brings the ceremony of song into a slightly new format without altering the agency of the medium (Mamo 2020). His songs, like the songs of his Apache heritage, are *stories* and his stories are *ceremonies* that share teachings to audiences that normally would not have access to them (Ball 2000:271; Bear Fluence).

Like ceremony, song transmits ideas about how to be in place and ways of understanding them. Song *is* ceremony (Pedri-Spade 2016),

as it is also grounded and grounding in and of ceremony (Bell 2018: 179). Ceremony, like song and materials, are specific to place (Goeman 2013: 143). Verran (2002) refers to "micro-worlds" as places of generalizations that appear universal, though they are generalizations only insofar as they explain the microworld in which they are facilitating (731-752). The following paragraph builds a set of generalizations that may read like universals though they are generalizations that support the microworld of the experiences with song, ceremony, and place in my life, informed by the (mostly Indigenous) ideas and scholarship that inform this project. Much like the ceremonies of research (Wilson 2008:8) and activism (Larsen and Johnson 2017:78) that (re)constitute themselves as ceremony as they reconstitute relationships through participation, song-as-ceremony can be (re)constituted through listening, provided there is an active understanding and acknowledgement of the relational nature of those activities, one that the listener is aware of and participates in cultivating (Fellner 2018:38). In other ways, my suggestion here is that song is a medium through which ceremony can be accessed in ways that have the potential to challenge the dis-placed generalizations of Western textuality as experienced by individuals. In my experience of them, writing, film, speaking, and even language are all examples of media as vehicles of ideas, and in many ways, any can serve (analytically) in a similar means for transmitting and reconstituting ceremony. Within this microworld, an acceptable generalization might avoid a textual analysis of texts *as ceremony,* stepping away from what the colony itself deploys as a means of securing and validating its hegemony (Jeyaraj 2009:469) through the textual "ceremonies" of the law, the police state, racial superiority, etc. (Said 1994 [1978]). Language is also problematic in my analysis as the colony works to reduce the number of Indigenous and place-based languages, replacing them with a colonial language (like English) (Phillipson 1992:116, 131). Given my personal context as a settler, and my mother tongue being English (also due to (re)colonialization), a linguistic discussion would feel hypocritical to me. Song feels to me something older than both written texts and the English language, something recognizable among us all within the microworlds of place-based connection (Verran 2002: 749) as a medium for expressing, exchanging, and transmitting a great deal in a great many ways with a

depth of nuance. As a medium for transmission of culture, song existed in pre-occupation Turtle Island (Walker 2005: 12), as well as pre-colonial Europe (Kunej and Turk 2000:235-6). Song allows for participation in a special way where even someone who does not know the words or the melody can take part in the ceremony of the song rhythmically or through dance (Walker 2005: 4-5). Music as art is very much a connecting piece, particularly in being shared and taken up as the materials, media, and artists are all “remade by the process of making,” and in participating with this process “you become a different person” (Hayalthkin'geme 2020). Like many other cultural practices, song can (re)connect an individual or group to a longer tradition, to a braidwork of interactions that are understood as ceremony (Pedri-Spade 2016:388). And it is in this way, this manifestation of a (re)connective apparatus, that “Wash it Away” interacts with me almost every time I hear it.

Ceremony often includes song, and song often supports, reinforces, and legitimizes ceremony. When the Kwakwaka’wakw carver, artist, scholar, and activist Hayalthkin'geme (Carey Newman) installed the Earth Drums near the Cedar Hill Golf Course in so-called Victoria, “British Columbia,” song was a focal part of the ceremony. The drums themselves were designed to make “music of and for the earth,” and their purpose was “to engage people in reconciliation by asking them to change their relationship with the land” (Saanich 2019). In essence, music is the drums’ reason for existing, yet music was also a part of their introduction to the community. Before installing the drums in their permanent home, Hayalthkin'geme asked Bradley Dick, a Walas Kwagul, L’kwungen, and Ditidaht First Nations’ artist to compose a song to be gifted to the drums (Songhees Nation 2012). “The drums have their own song and identity,” they have their own agency. A central aspect of the drums’ installation was the “sharing of ceremony to place the song onto [the drums]” (Hayalthkin'geme 2020). This is an example of how song-as-ceremony can be central in reciprocally connecting community, material, and place.

As Pedri-Spade (2016) and Bell (2018) point out, song has long been an aspect of Indigenous traditions and ceremony; song is grounding, and often contains teachings and instructions on protocol. Song has

been one of the central aspects of certain ceremonial collections encountered in my experiences as a member of a Blackfoot Buffalo Lodge that is held in W̱SÁNEĆ territory. Song in those contexts brings the participants together, while at the same time connects the singers, drummers/musicians, and listeners to the ancestors that first birthed those songs, and the descendants that will sing the song in the future. Even more, these songs connect people to the places those songs came from, and to aspects of the world that generated them. Like in the ceremony of the Earth Drums, song is the (re)constitution of worldview that is indicative of a braidwork of interwoven relationships that are renewed through the singing of it.

Experiencing song in this way ought not be reserved for Indigenous artists alone, particularly as many of us have also felt this powerful connection to a piece of non-Indigenous music. Nahko's intention to use music as medicine and to infuse Indigenous ways of being and teachings into his songs allows for this reading to be more than inference or projection on my part. Intention on the side of the author can be accessed by the listener, for the agency of the song places artist, listener, and song into a relationship that was created ceremonially – the connection of conscious intent. My intention in learning to sing and play "Wash it Away" was also to experience music as medicine, and I have brought it with me to various moments of my life where ceremony, place, and relationships were all manifesting in very potent ways.

Since learning it, the song itself called to me several times, asking that it be shared in particular moments and places. One example came in 2018 during my first visit to Kax:iks, the so-called Central Walbran, on The Island (Nuu-chah-nulth territory). My journey to Kax:iks was not then as an activist, but as a guest. A storied place, Kax:iks is a portion of old growth that was not "protected" when the province of British Columbia created Carmanah Walbran Provincial Park. The valley has yet to be completely logged, though many of us are dreading the time when it will be, so having the chance to visit that spectacular place in a time of relative peace was a true blessing. A place that speaks to those who visit it, my singing "Wash it Away" in that valley came from a desire to honour the message of the song in building a

relationship between myself and the valley. It was an offering of thanksgiving to the forest and a hope to be brought into relationship in a very particular way while at the same time deepening the relationships between myself and the friends who were there with me. Simply listening to the song can transport me to Kax:iks' riverbanks, to the Marble Canyon and the golden, sun-washed waters that flow under towering red cedar beneath a rarely clear sky. My relationship with each of these places and beings is different, yet they are now held in a ceremonial relationship with me through that song. Just as the lava rock from near the Makapu'u heiau *is* that place, complete with its call, so does "Wash it Away" (re)create the spirit of those places where I have sung it (Larsen and Johnson 2017:18). In answering their call with my own, I am drawn into a closer relationship with the places I have been, even if my feet do not touch those territories as often as I would like. With its personal references, non-specific metaphors that make the song recognizable to many listeners of many different backgrounds, and ritualistic repetition of particular parts, "Wash It Away" itself is about being connected, sharing experience, and being in place and ceremony. In my playing it, a circle is formed, and the ceremony itself is repeated, reproduced, and expanded beyond the bounds of the song itself. It becomes multivocal (Rodman 1992:649), and it becomes recallable in that vocality. The song has made the place a part of me. The song is the point of connection between us that can be evoked through the act of playing it.

"My bullets are my words
And my words are my weapons
Chain me to the pipeline
For our rivers and mountains, we scream
Today's a good day for my ego to die
Today's a good day for my ego to die"
-Nahko and MFTP, "Wash it Away."

OUR FINGERS, WORKING OVER A BRAIDING, TOGETHER

Gathering with shared intention in what is often called "activism" within the colonial context paradoxically entangles the ceremony of settler democracy (where citizens can assemble to publicly voice their

discontent) with a decolonial ceremony, challenging the hegemony of the dominant settler state. This is the “infrastructure” mentioned in my introduction – a material collection that also serves as medium, becoming a structure, as it were, that is able to express the agency of its aspects, and a new agency that would not have existed without the binding of materials and media together. What do lava rocks, beaches, forest valleys, and folk-rock songs have to do with this collection? For lack of a better way to phrase it, my answer would have to be: *everything*. Place is primary, it is the beginning of the various relationships described above – place and person, person and song, place and song, etc – for without knowing ourselves in place, then we know ourselves in a semiotic and spatial vacuum that simply does not exist (Larsen and Johnson 2017:19). In many ways, everything written above has been about the same thing, ceremony of and in place, and ceremony as (re)constituting that place. But why has this been important? Because place itself can be contested, and through the various cosmopolitics (the politics of differing worldviews) (de la Cadena 2010:346) that occur in place (336), it is important to my personal journey (aka “research”) to see how these multilocalities (Rodman 1992:642) might be capable of entangling settler worldviews (Thom 2017:141) and of de-colonizing aspects of settler ways of knowing to better the conditions for Indigenous resurgence within and counter to the occupation of Indigenous territory that is the settler colony. It is in this hazy horizon where place and ceremony cease to be distinct, where points of intervention (be they places, moments, of materials) that subvert the banality of colonial hegemony might be identified, and where emergent identities are (re)constituted by those ceremonies that happen in place.

Standing at the British Columbia Legislature, surrounded by a couple hundred people, we share the silence of the cool, grey, late-winter morning. We have gathered here for a very specific purpose, one that in many ways publicly shames the provincial government. Over the course of January and into March of 2020, a group of Indigenous youth from various nations across Turtle Island began a series of “occupations”[ix] around “Victoria” (Johal 2020). Between the 23rd of February and the closing of many public spaces due to the COVID-19 pandemic in mid-March 2020, the group calling themselves

"Indigenous Youth For Wet'suwet'en" (IY4W) occupied the Legislature of so-called British Columbia several times (the longest period being about two weeks) (Hunter 2020). These ceremonies coalesced at a cosmopolitical intersection, "a new pluriversal political configuration" (de la Cadena 2010:361) where the meaningful and not performative or appropriative transmission of a kincentric, relational worldview to settler colonists might become possible (journey notes, 11 February 2020). Central to the occupation of the Legislature was a ceremonial or sacred fire that burned throughout the IY4W occupation (CTV News 2020). This fire was re-lit each time the IY4W returned to the Legislature after their arrests and releases. In that crowd of mostly European-descended settlers like myself, we listened quietly to the Indigenous Youth as they led us in prayer, as they drummed and sang, as we collectively changed the very nature of the political and what constitutes "ceremony"[x] in this heavily colonized and actively colonial space (please see figure 1 below) (de la Cadena 2010:361; journey notes, 7, 11, and 14 February 2020).

In many ways the act of holding Indigenous ceremony in this space challenged the nature of coloniality in British Columbia, creating "an indigenous counter public sphere" (de la Cadena 2010:341) that publicly and visibly critiqued the dominant narrative. As mentioned above, ceremony in this context is *of* place, yet can simultaneously *constitute* place (Larsen and Johnson 2017:78). Place is constituted through relationships while at the same time it reconstitutes those relationships, reinforcing a relational way of being (Wilson 2008:13). Ceremony is a braid that can – and often does – exist within other braidworks. Ceremony itself is a collection of strands that are then woven together, where those strands pass into the braid, interacting with and being influenced by those other strands, remaining cohesive so long as they are actively woven together. Being in ceremony in that space, with the collection of people(s) that were present, created the context for what came next for me: the agency of the ceremony itself cultivated the shared meaning that was created through participation in that ceremony (Proulx 2009:295).

Figure 1 Indigenous Youth For Wet'suwet'en and Settler Allies decolonizing the Legislature (Feb 7 2020)

> "I honestly believe we breathed life into that dead stone building. A building from the sand in my territories [Kwakwaka'wakw], built on the soil of another ppls territory [L'kwungen], that dictates how territories all over BC are handled, or rather mishandled…Anyways, I love this contrast, of culture + city, of spirituality + colonial structures…we may have not been 'on the land' but we didn't let that stop us from practicing culture, engaging in ceremony, or in being true human beings." (@MrBranches_ 2020)

Constituting and cultivating this multivocality (the hearing of multiple voices or narratives) could not have been done without ceremony, for the agency of ceremony itself allowed the multilocality of the space (the crossroads of all of those many places – the worlds of Indigenous, settler, visitor, and even the deer that wander the city that all compose that geographic location) that the Legislature occupies to become visible (Proulx 2009:295-6). Ceremony allowed distant lands to be called into being where they ought not to have been, and places

covered and erased through the act of colonial dis-placement were manifested again. The ceremony evokes and (re)constitutes connection with the land and situates the land as an anchor within intercultural engagement (Larsen and Johnson 2017:48). Here, the territory where the Wet'suwet'en people have lived since time immemorial was called into being on the grounds of the Legislature at the same time that this calling revealed the L'kwungen territory that had been dis-placed by the construction of – and laws passed through – the Legislature. The ceremony discussed here points to the problematic cosmopolitics (de la Cadena 2010:361) of place inherent in the multilocality of colonized lands. Ceremony here de-problematizes them in grounding participants in ceremony in order to understand how to return to that anchor, to hear the call of place through the din of coloniality, and to remain in relationship with it while reconstituting it. My path has never taken me to the *Yintah*, the territory of the Wet'suwet'en, yet in those moments of prayer, of participating in the ceremony of holding space, the *Yintah* was foremost in my heart. It transcended a location, a physical and geographical site which could not have occupied the same geographical location that the Legislature was assembled on. Rather, the aspects that make the *Yintah* what de la Cadena (2010) describes as an "earth-being" (those "geographic" features that express an agency on local communities and cultures) (336) were brought into life at the Legislature – the agency of the *Yintah*, its sacred interactions with those place-based people who have been in relationship with it since time immemorial were manifested, and my understanding grew to include an awareness of the nature of that relationship. Yet at the same time, my comprehension of those relationships and the cosmological foundations of place-based identity allowed me to see the bent, broken, and colonized L'kwungen territory under my feet as more than a site of protest, for it too is an agent, and like the *Yintah* so far away, my ears now hear the call to join it
in relation.

"Uncle Mana taught us like an elder
Took us under, older brother
He said:
This is powerful country

This is powerful country"
-Nahko and MFTP, "Wash it Away"

ARRIVING AT A POINT

The Māori have an expression, "*ka mura, ka muri*," which means "we walk backwards into the future," (Rangiwai 2018:604) which is a fitting beginning (and ending) to my paper: now that we can see which road brought us here, we can understand where we are going. The land and our/its relationship with it/us calls to us in many ways, in many voices. The voice we need to hear becomes audible inside of each of us when it is ours to hear. It was my intent to describe how the call of place can be enhanced through our relationships with materials, media, and "infrastructure."[xi] Now that we are back at that point of departure, maybe it is easier to understand the call of place as having been the anchor that brings all of these aspects together from the beginning. The call of place *is* material, media, and ceremonial in how it is interwoven with the stones that come from that land, or the songs sung about it, on it, in community. This is my reason for moving away from the idea of an "infrastructure" (a modern, technical, colonial term) and coming towards the braidwork – for each of these strands (material, media, ceremony, relationship, the land, being, the reader, you, the writer, me, etc.) are always and already plaited into this weaving. These threads are mutually affected by and affect the other strands, though their path and their length causes them to leave the braid once our paths draws us beyond, yet perpetually connected to those points to each other, drawing inspiration from these relationships that have perhaps even altered the directions of our paths in subtle or substantial ways. Each strand is an agent, one whose agency is formed within an ecological web where interconnections form each strand. We are actors, moving through existence, tied to place (for without place, on Earth, what is there?). We are our songs, and our songs are us *in place*. We are those materials, those items we carry, for they are us, and we are together *in place*. Ceremony tightens the braid, for ceremony – perhaps – is the word we use to describe the braid itself, not its constituent parts, and woven within that *is place*.

"Fallen from the nest, young eagle

I will pull my feathers out
Stay humble
Stay humble
Stay humble
Stay humble
Stay humble."
-Nahko and MFTP, "Wash it Away."[xii]

ENDNOTES

[v] This is the focus of my doctoral research.
[vi] The term "so-called" and quotation marks ("") around a placename are used interchangeably throughout this paper. Both connote the problem caused by the colonial practice of renaming Indigenous places.
[vii] My decision to use the term "journey notes" rather than "field" notes is because of my discomfort for referring to active places where humans have lived since time immemorial as "the field." This form suggests that these notes are related to my personal experiences (my journey) and not as deriving universals from the process of Othering.
[viii] Nahko and Medicine for the People 2014.
[ix] Can Indigenous people "occupy" the colonial buildings that are occupying and dis-placing Indigenous peoples?
[x] In her opinion piece on the longest period of "occupation," Justine Hunter specifically notes that the entry that the IY4W were "occupying" was the "ceremonial front entrance" of the Legislature. While she does mention that the fire was also "ceremonial," she undercuts this by speaking to the invasive aspect of the smoke from the fire without acknowledging the contrast of these notions of the ceremonial, and the imbalance of power that informs her undervaluing.
[xi] Hopefully, at this point in my paper, it is clear why the word "infrastructure" is problematic.
[xii] Since writing this paper, Nahko Bear has been accused of sexual assault. Through discussions between the author and the editors, we have agreed to publish this paper because it remains a credible piece of original scholarly work.

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