

Awakening to Elsewheres: Collectively Restorying Embodied Experiences of (Be)longing

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“Mainstream” spaces of movement cultures within settler colonial states invite bodies that are White, cis, able, thin, and heterosexual, just as “mainstream” academic space validates knowledge about the world produced by these very subjects. Such mainstream assemblages are embedded within the broader structure of settler colonialism, mutually buttressed by White supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and (neo)imperialism. In this article, a Collective of scholars who represent voices from the margins writes back to settler colonialism, ableism, anti-Black racism, and other exclusions and harms. We do this to both elucidate relationships between systems of oppression and craft spaces of embodied freedom and to show/demonstrate belonging within decolonial enactments of “elsewheres.” in the field of sociology of sport.

Audio, video, and visual versions of this project are available at <https://www.recreation-collective.com/elsewheres.html>.

Anaang/Star: A Galactic Love Story

This is a story,¹ a dream story, my vision for the resurgence research and writing I do and for the Collective I am committing to.

Tricia: I love and feel grateful that you’ve reached out to me through Ryan² (*Unknown Ancestor*, 2019)

My research is deeply connected to ancestors. They speak through many methods and modes. They wait for an invitation, only then they share.

Ancestor: I see you. I know who you are. I know you are different, and not like the others.

Tricia: Miigwetch for seeing me. For hearing me when I speak to you. Do you think about resurgence, Nokomis?

Ancestor: You are my resurgence, indaanikobijigaan³—the one I am eternally connected to. And I am here thinking of you. Seeing you.

Tricia: But who am I to do this resurgence work? Is my doubt the shame I carry on behalf of settler colonialism, still? Will I be chastised for doing this resurgence work? Will I be excluded, bullied, isolated?

Star thinking. Star mapping. Star gazing. Dibikgeezhigokwe. My name directs me, compels me, and leads me to think deeply about indaanikobijigaan: ancestral and future. I gaze into the night sky and feel the resurgence, the reconnection. We are stars in human form.

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Ancestor: I came from the stars to deliver a message to you. Your family, your ancestors, your future generations are all part of your research journey. A resurgence journey. Mishomis says it will be. It is. It was. Anishinaabekweg are resurging in institutions of learning. There is not only one way to be resurgent. There are many collective methods and modes.

As I look up to the stars, my roots are surging deep into akii. I embody indaanikobijigaan. I have spirit lines reaching into the galaxy and spirit lines reaching into myself and to akii.

Tricia: Chimiigwetch, Nokomis, for your visit and your message. May I never forget it.

Research, resistance, resurgence, relationality, reciprocity, reimagining, re-creation. Through collective disruption we resist and refuse erasure.

Ancestor offered Ryan a gift to give to me (*Unknown Ancestor*, 2019). It is a star. A brightly lit, immensely spectacular star that I can carry with me. It is my past, my present, and my future. It contains love, kindness, confidence, and community. It is a spirit line to the galaxy and beyond. It is a gift that will never die, that has been with us since time immemorial, and that will be passed into futurity.

It is no coincidence that this dream, this vision, was animated and reanimated through my visiting with our Re-Creation Collective; as an Anishinaabekwe, dreams, resurgence, and re-creation are braided within my research methodology (Shawanda, 2020; Simpson, 2011). Sport is a space where we are taught only to dream about one way of being. We are taught to dream of gold: fastest, highest, strongest, richest, and (survival of the) fittest. However, an ancestor visited to show me a different way of being to “challenge conventional Western knowledge” (Shawanda, 2020, p. 41). Dreaming and research are inextricably intertwined. I am awakened from this dream vision into the morning where

We began our days together.
Deep breath in. Hot tea or coffee.
Mouth full of warm steel-cut oatmeal and fruit.

Invitation: Put down the page or screen. Make yourself a cup of something warm and inviting. Hold the heat between your hands and take a deep breath before you read on.

Early-risers trickle into the wood-paneled kitchen.
Eyes feasting on the writings we shared with each other.
Whispered learnings, wonderings, and good mornings
creep into the quiet.
Awakenings.

I see you. I (want to) know who you are.

Spoons, cups, and questions rise to a cacophonous hum
pulling the rest of us from our beds.
The morning sun pours warmth through the giant kitchen
window making shadow puppets of the ferns and pines outside.
Late-risers nestle ourselves into
overflowing benches and conversations.
The collective shifts, mid-sentence, mid-slurp, to make space.
Somehow, there is more than enough room.
The days, and years, to follow fill themselves in much the
same way.
Tenderly bumping elbows and stories.

Miigwetch for seeing me. For hearing me when I speak to you.

Methodologies for Collective Restorying

Our dreams, stories, shared meals, and embodied experiences are the materials of a collective autoethnography about marginalized perspectives in sport and physical activity. We are taught to dream of, and value, all flavors of supremacy for the sake of “winning.” Yet, the members of this collective also had our dreams thwarted. We have been told in one way or another, “you don’t belong here.” The authors of this article are some of the members of the Re-Creation Collective, which is a group of Indigenous, racialized, Muslim, 2SLGBTQUIA scholars, and sport practitioners. We collectively work to develop thinking, frameworks, and learning tools intended to radically change the ways we think about and enact “inclusion” in sport, recreation, and other movement cultures.

Both for this article and for our Collective more broadly, our methods are emergent and relational. Our methodologies, relationships, stories, and selves continually emerge, by sharing our favorite thinkers, our own writing, and our time in visiting. This article draws significantly on a few days of our first in a series of extended research retreats, with tentacles of thought, connection, theory, friendship, and writing reaching forward through time as we became indelibly affected by each other’s research and experiences. To begin, we uploaded articles and dissertations in a digital repository that invited others into not only our research passions, but also glimpses of our styles of writing, personal histories, identities, politics, and praxis. From this introduction, our conversations flowed in an unstructured way about each other’s work and worlds. We shared teas, coffees, and our experiences of exclusion, inclusion, (be)longing, and “elsewheres,” generally in relation to sport or physical activity (or not, as you will see). We wove memory with feeling and theory to make sense of our worlds, transcribing our conversations, and revisiting these exchanges—working to make (non)sense of the transcripts from our shared stories. We are informed by Métis scholar Gaudet (2018) who described keeoukaywin or the visiting way as a methodology, which is informed by wahkohtowin, a Cree/Métis linguistic concept. As described by Gaudet in reflecting on her Elders teachings,

wahkohtowin enacts a deep reciprocity to one another and, as human beings, we each carry a “relational obligation” (p. 48) to one another. Keeoukaywin as a methodology creates, enhances, and unifies community, where “humour, silence, news, concerns, pain, knowledge, ideas, and arguments are disseminated” (p. 53). Through sharing research, writing, food, drink, and stories, by seeking out peer mentorship alongside laughter while listening to a variety of music along the way, we incrementally increase our shared vulnerability and got to know each other to begin the enactment of our relational obligations.

*There are many collective methods and modes.
Tenderly bumping elbows and stories.*

We continually relate to one another by cultivating growing intimacies and solidarities. Our gatherings also align with Ruth Stackhouse’s ideas about Mad theatre and Mad movement organizing: it is coming together; preparing and eating food, spreading ourselves out, playing with sensory toys, drawing our collective ideas, honoring what everybody can bring, which includes showing up late, taking a break, or canceling and being celebrated for canceling as caring for ourselves and each other (as cited in Eales, 2019). Our research process resonates with Ellis’ (2004; Ellis & Berger, 2001) assertion that the relationship among participant–researchers is a critical element of the coautoethnographic project. Many of us, 3 years into this collaboration, would recognize our relationships, our friendships, as integral to this work. Tillmann-Healy (2003) acknowledges that extending a relationship developed through fieldwork into a personal “friendship as method” can nurture the research process, enrich the generation of data, and unsettle traditional research relationships. We know that the friendships among the members of our research collective and our relationships with our families and ancestors are key to advancing our thinking, writing, and praxis, even (and especially) when our primary areas of inquiry are disparate or in dispute. We imagine and critically reflect on our own “elsewheres” and those of others, demonstrating how they fit together or not.

*There are many contradictions within friendships.
Tenderly bumping elbows and stories.*

*“Decorating our walls with the stories we want to tell.
finding home through dialogue
curating for memory and breaking-as-resilience”
(Eales, 2019, p. 110)*

In this article, we integrate some elements of performative writing; a form of writing that playfully performs, that is intent on doing something, that invites the reader to act, that is “an embodied practice that performs its own theory” (Mock, 2009, p. 14). We engage with performative writing by dialogue, poetic description, repetition, and the invitations offered throughout this text, because “performative writing evokes worlds that are other-wise intangible, unlocatable: worlds of memory, pleasure, sensation, imagination, affect and in-sight” (Pollock, 1998, p. 80). This is nonlinear writing, artful writing, sensorial writing, writing that, as Eales (2019) argues, can be mobilized to disrupt “dominant ways of writing in academia that are not only Eurocentric, heteronormative, and ableist, but also sanist” (p. 66). In the words of Soca performer Kerwin Du Bois (2019), this method of writing “may not be right for you, but [it’s] right for somebody.”

*Indeed, we may not be writing for you, but we are
writing for somebody.
Some bodies need to read this.*

*This is a love letter to them (Eales, 2019). To the Other.
To the marginalized.
Which is, To us*

*Ancestor: I see you. I know who you are. I know you are different,
and not like the others.*

Inspired by decolonial and postcolonial thinkers (Ashcroft et al. 2013; Simpson, 2011; Tuck & Yang, 2012) who “write back” to empire, throughout this article we “write back” to sociology of sport, sharing fragments of truths about who we are, our experiences in (and out of) sport and physical activity, and what they reveal about the possibilities of doing sport (and sociology of sport studies) differently. Our method of “writing back” together is collective autoethnography, described by Wężniewska et al. (2019) “as emotional, personal, and committed writing, circling between the individual and the social” (p. 340). They describe this collective approach to autoethnography as a process that intensifies becoming, community, and friendship in the face of academic neoliberal loneliness. For scholars and (non-)athletes on the margins, it seemed inevitable that our morning connections and discussions about our writing would transform into a collective writing approach because some of the stories we shared were difficult. However, writing with someone who has experienced similar difficulty “becomes something that protects from pitch darkness . . . [and] others give strength and trigger desires for change” (Wężniewska et al., 2019, p. 340). We drew from each others’ strengths in lived experience and critical theory.

When a coconstructed autoethnography becomes critical—that is, steeped in critical theory, critical pedagogy, and critical race theory—it provides space for the personal elements of formal research to emerge and for collaborating researchers to work across, and teach each other about, differences (Cann & DeMeulenaere, 2012). We adhere to the politics and ethics of Avner et al. (2014) who suggest, along with Denison (2010), that co-writing should reflect diverse, complex, entangled, and potentially contradictory experiences.

Through our collective dialogues, we note that physical activity systems are similarly but also differentially exclusionary and welcoming, based on our various (in)experiences of settler colonialism, anti-Black racism, classism, ableism, sanism, homophobia, transphobia, islamophobia, fatphobia, and other systems of oppression. Tuck (2009) thinks through the complexities of being against such systems, where one can be “critical of corporate capitalism and globalization” while at the same time, carrying desires to purchase new clothing, for instance. Tuck gives a nuanced approach for thinking about the contradictions of being human in this world. A world where settler colonialism, capitalism, and White supremacy exist, but so too do people who resist such a world—people who wish to dream a new world. These contradictions, according to Tuck, emphasize the complex personhood in people. She states, “Within collectivity, recognizing complex personhood involves making room for the contradictions, for the mis/re/cognitions (. . .) it is our work to afford the multiplicity of life’s choices for one another” (Tuck, 2009, p. 421). Simpson’s (2011) articulation of refusal as method for “doing things differently” (p. 29) is similarly useful to contextualize these contradictions: while we are refusing the logics of erasure within oppressive systems that are not meant for us, we are also seeking to transform them to be inclusive of us. Thus, the exclusionary and welcoming sentiment shared among the Re-Creation Collective in this article touches on this human experience, contradictions, refusals, and all. Just as in our conversations with one another, here we weave personal examples, theoretical frameworks, and invitations to

sensorial and experiential opportunities. We do this to elucidate both relationships between systems of oppression, its complexities, and reflect upon spaces of embodied freedom.

Decolonization is “not an and. It is an elsewhere” (Tuck and Yang, 2012, p. 36).

Add and Stir: The Limits of “Including” One Identity at a Time

Invitation: Stop. Start. Skip a section. Chew your lip. Play with your hair. Pet a critter. Seek companionship in reading. We invite this because we cannot know all the ways that distress may arise for you, reader. For your information, we write below about our own experiences of being

excluded, bullied, isolated

We share about illness, systemic discrimination and (inter)personal-political harms. We also share about (be) longing, crafting, and dreaming. We trust you to use your brilliantly developed coping skills to care for yourself and others, and to show up for the important work of being with discomfort as you can (for more on offering content information as a disability access and care practice, see Clare, 2017; Eales, 2019; Kafer, 2016).

William: I learned to skate when I was four, entered my first competition at seven. Me on the ice by myself, in front of an audience, being judged, the only boy in the club. I didn’t love the judgement, but I LOVED skating. It was absolutely an escape for me—an escape from the bullying I experienced because I participated in a so-called girl’s sport. Skating allowed me to move my body in ways I couldn’t do anywhere else, perform to music that captured my spirit, and wear reasonably sparkly costumes. It was a place where I was free from limited ideas about being a boy, being a man. Or so I thought . . .

Bethan: That freedom. It’s essential. When I played football for the first time, it felt like, “This is it!” This is the freedom from limited ideas I’ve been looking for. Growing up in the UK, I played field hockey and netball and didn’t feel good in any of those spaces. I felt like I couldn’t be who I am in my body. There was just a level of disconnect. But finally in football, it felt like this was my space and I could be gay. But at the same time there were explicit comments about players on other teams being dykes or lesbians. I felt I could be gay there, but at the same time it was clear that being a lesbian is not okay. So, it was a weird contradiction.

William: I felt that too, the contradiction. Reasonably sparkly spandex costumes, but they must be dark colours. Dress a certain way, perform a certain way, enter categories designated only to boys, lose weight (thanks public weigh-ins and pig faces beside my name on the chart!), be gay but certainly not too gay. So, I was included, but not all of me was welcomed.

Bethan: Exactly. Sport was such a safe/not safe space. When I started football, for the first time in my life there was a visible presence of people I assumed were gay. I went from feeling that I was the “only one” in a rural town in North Wales to realizing there were other people like me. Now I think about it and, probably 80% of us were gay in that space. Yet still there was this distancing in the declaration that “we are not the gay team.” It was competitive, but my love for it wasn’t really about the football. Mostly I loved it

because we could move together and be together just because. Whereas in Canada, the focus on competition really ruins that.

William: *I don't know that I can confidently say that I've ever moved "just because." Skating was almost always about the "because." Because there are tests to pass. Because you need to win competitions. Because you need to be perceived as masculine. Because "fat don't fly." Because money will be given to you for this ice show. Because Canadian boys need to be "manly" on the international stage. Because:*

results,

results,

results.

*Twisting, turning, turning, twisting
I taught myself these things before I mastered linearity,
stopping, starting*

*Twisting—joy
Turning—freedom*

*Twisting, turning, turning, twisting
On ice, off ice, in the playground*

*Twisting—freedom
Turning—joy*

*Twisting, turning, turning, twisting
Away from words and fists and spit and probing,
violating fingers*

*Twisting turning, turning twisting
To abide by, to adhere to a professor profession
I profess to love*

*Twisting turning, turning twisting
Hoops and ladders, blocks, and barriers*

*Disrupt, dismantle, dissent
Twisting—publish
Turning—perish*

*Twisting turning turning twisting
Away from here, toward somewhere . . . maybe elsewhere*

The stories of sport exclusion we are used to reading about (e.g., Avner et al., 2014; Jiwani & Rail, 2010) show athletes having to hide or diminish (one) part of themselves to try to fit in the sporting cultures they love, or being excluded from physical activity altogether because the space is not safe. Stories of movement, passion, and belonging are bittersweet against the traumatic taste of harm, bullying, and (un)intentional othering. Safe/unsafe. Be/longing. Important stories such as these sparked numerous anti-homophobia in sport campaigns (e.g., Canadian Women & Sport's [2012] position paper on homophobia in sport): tweaking one axis of harm at a time; reforming dominant sporting cultures to be incrementally more inclusive.

Add and stir.

Problem (dis)solved.

Into the melting pot.

*And onto the next excluded identity,
and the next, and the next, and, and, and . . .*

Some organizations *seize* such opportunities to *appropriate* these new "inclusion" causes—and by extension appropriating only "appropriate" Others for marketing *campaigns* (see Ahmed, 2012): L(esbian), G(ay), B(isexual) but rarely T(rans), Q(ueer), or 2S(pirit) athletes. Their sponsors brand themselves *pioneers* of (sporting) inclusion. Sport reform sold by reformed queers. That is, (not too)

gay, gender-conforming athletes, in *reasonably sparkly* red and white costumes, their shiny *white* teeth and round muscles selling cars, sporting equality, and *national pride* for "our" *superior* tolerance and humility (Sykes, 2017); a public relations antidote to the sport-related frothing, hazing, racism, and sexual assaults of the previous news cycle . . . and the one before that, and, and, and . . .

Twisting, turning.

Turning, twisting.

Reform,

Re-formed,

(Re)form.

But reforms are never shaped to fit everyone. Many cannot be adequately reformed to fit the (slightly adapted) mold. Sport (and academia), after all, is made for only the *fittest*. The *reformation* prides itself on its *work ethic*.

Twisting—publish

Turning—perish

results

results

results

Danielle: *When I was 28 years old, I won a gold medal at the world wheelchair basketball championship. Nine months later—as though this athletic pinnacle had consummated my life's devotion to sport—I was on the doctor's table under the wand of an ultrasound machine, a heartbeat filling the room. Sonic echoes of blue and red painted the velocity of my blood, some of which—like salmon or queercrip desire—were swimming distinctly against the tide. "To crip," Fritsch (2013) has offered, is to "open up desire for what disability disrupts" (para 2). It was the ultimate cardiac crippling: my atrial septum opening itself up to hematic disruption.*

My heart had been figuratively broken many times in and through sport. I have cut so many pieces out of it, in hopes that I could fit. It took a literal hole in my heart to compel me to leave my beloved sport, and the normative compulsion to keep holding it together while pulling myself apart.

Jewish-Canadian songwriter, Leonard Cohen (1999), writes, "there is a crack in everything, that is how the light gets in."

dystrophied muscles

dysphoric gender

deviant desires

and now defective heart.

It has been very illuminating.

But I am pulled more by the sentiment of queer Cree poet Billy-Ray Belcourt (2020): "Wherever light rushes in is an exit route" (p. 10).

When one lives at the intersection of multiple axes of oppression (as many, many of us do), reforming oneself looks and feels a lot like tearing one's selves apart. An inclusion model of "add and stir" stops working and does not allow for our contradictory sporting experiences. Or at least, it makes us question whether it ever worked, and if so, for whom? Is there an alternative to the and, and, and?

Sport, Colonial Sedimentation, and Settling: Engaging Sporting Exclusions Through an Anticolonial Lens

What does the harm and exclusion experienced by three queer White, settler athletes (and coauthors) have to do with decolonial

desires? Nothing, we are taught. Nothing other than the queer alphabet sharing textual space alongside Indigeneity and race in the laundry lists of sports inclusion statements. We are taught that colonialism is a “BIPOC issue.” But let us revisit the paragraphs above: White settlers claiming (sporting) space. White settler organizations variously excluding, incorporating, subsuming, and selling the Other. In review:

Melting pots
Pioneers
Campaigns to
Seize and
Appropriate

White . . . National Pride

Reforms instead of revolution
Settling for incremental reforms
Good enough
We are never (good) enough
The Reformation and its colonial thirst
Survival of the pioneers
Survival of the fittest.
Add and stir.
Turning, twisting, twist and (re)turn.

Do you think about resurgence, Nokomis?

We are all treaty people.⁴ But only some of us have the luxury and convenience of forgetting this when it suits us. Far from being a “BIPOC issue,” colonialism is one of the whitest issues because it is related to supremacy. More recently, colonialism has also come in many homonational shades of pink (Puar, 2007). Only some of us receive the luxury, convenience, and privilege to bend (sporting/university/capitalist/neoliberal) reforms to fit us . . . and even so . . . only if we bend and twist in return (McRuer, 2006). Only if the bending and twisting do not break us.

Since the 1800s sport has been an immensely flexible colonial force (Forsyth, 2013; Majumdar, 2013). For example, in the nineteenth century, in Francophone and Anglophone Caribbean islands, men of color were prohibited from speaking the settlers’ languages or participating in their “sports, but in time it became clear that not only would the slaves learn the language [and sports], but that in doing so they would inevitably absorb the morals, culture, and values of the dominant group” (Tiffin, 1998, p. 357). It is frequently noted that cricket absorbed rising nationalism sentiments in Asia and the Caribbean under British imperialism, providing a template for “gentlemanly” behavior, and inculcated the belief that class and caste hierarchies were natural and deserved (James, 1963). Another example of sport that serves a settler colonial desire or usurpation is what the Hodinöhsö:ni people refer to as the “Creator’s Game,” Tewaá:rathon, or lacrosse (Downey, 2018). European settlers first learned from the Hodinöhsö:ni peoples to play Tewaá:rathon, then decisively, and violently, banned the Hodinöhsö:ni or any Indigenous person in Canada from playing the game by the threat of incarceration, while claiming it as Canada’s “national sport” and symbol of uniqueness, distinct from the colonial metropole⁵ (Downey, 2018). As Wolfe (2006) declared, “settler colonialism destroys to replace” (p. 388). Sport makes space for those it must incorporate to claim more space. It is the supreme example of celebrated supremacy. A eugenicist’s wet dream. Fastest, highest, strongest, fittest, Whitest. Is sociology of sport studies much different? Within the study of sport in Western/North American academia, the Eurocentric, White

settler framing of knowledge production continues to “reproduce homogenizing and false narratives In the process, obscuring coalescing sites of empowerment and resistance” (Ratna, 2018, p. 197). The calls for sport research that prioritizes intersectional analyses have been ongoing since at least 1989 when Susan Birell (1989) insisted that we listen to the autobiographies of women of color. Since then, many scholars (e.g., Joseph, 2017; McGuire-Adams, 2020; Peers, 2015; Ratna, 2018; Sykes, 2017), many of whom are working from the margins in Western institutions, prioritized voices from the margins that write back to imperialist capitalism, settler colonialism, ableism, racism, and other structures underlying mainstream sport organized within Western capitalist societies. “Mainstream” spaces of movement cultures within settler colonial states naturalize, exalt, and invite into positions of power bodies that pass as White, cis, able, thin, and heterosexual. Meanwhile, “mainstream” academic spaces mirror these in/exclusions, validating knowledge about the world produced through an epistemologies and methodologies that favors these very subjects, even when the research object(ive)s include marginalization or marginalized people. Such mainstream assemblages are embedded within the broader structure of settler colonialism, mutually buttressed by White supremacy, heteropatriarchy, and (neo)imperialism.

Accordingly, our Re-Creation Collective started thinking through the tools of intersectionality and decolonization, thinking against the add and stir approach of both sport and sport sociology. Understanding what the harm and exclusion experienced by three queer White settler athletes (and coauthors) have to do with decolonial desires required becoming each other’s allies in each of our battles. Over time, we moved from being allies to what activist Feminista Jones refers to as, “co-conspirators . . . conspiring to shut down entire systems of oppression” (Chattopadhyay, 2018, p. 53). Janelle shared medical doctor, activist, musician, and scholar Marya’s (2018) talk from the Bioneers conference. In her keynote speech, Marya shared a model that clarified how our struggles are intersectional and how each of the supremacies we fight against is implicated in the others. She provides a flowchart that describes colonization and capitalism as buttressed by White, male, and human supremacies, which is an exploitation of people and environmental resources. Marya draws connections between these and dispossession of land, genocide, ecocide, slavery, and exploitative labor. The expansive idea that colonialism is simultaneously dependent on land dispossession and many other oppressions appealed to us in our search for the links between our personal sporting experiences and the colonial matrix (Mignolo, 2012).

Some of us had some conceptual additions to the model. Danielle and Lindsay noted how disability shows up in Marya’s model only as a negative impact of colonization’s trauma, but that it is also helpful to think about ableism as a form of supremacy that is deeply entwined with (and coconstitutive of) White, male, and human supremacies (see Erevelles, 2011; Snyder, & Mitchell, 2006; Taylor, 2017), as well as global capitalism (Erevelles, 2011; McRuer, 2006;). Furthermore, it is instructive to think about how homophobia, transphobia, and male supremacy have historically been deeply entwined with White supremacy and ableism through, for example, eugenics (McWhorter, 2009) and through sport (Peers, 2015).

Tricia reminded us about the importance of paying attention to the workings and particularities of settler colonialism within the Turtle Island (North American) context. Settler colonialism is the ever-present structure maintaining settler futurity, which seeks to continually erase Indigenous presence and sovereignties on Turtle Island to ensure settler permanence on stolen lands (see Tuck & Gaztambide-Fernández, 2013 for a robust discussion on settler

futurity). Indeed, settler colonialism is a structure that erases any Othered bodies from the settler colonial normative body and society.

Erasing to replace.

What our engagement with this model made clear was how each of these seemingly distinct “additive oppressions” were interconnected and served to buttress each other. For instance, in contemporary sport systems in Canada, whereby so-called inclusion policies are created for specific groups of people (e.g., gender equity policies that focus exclusively on girls and women) with often actionable items and measurable outcomes attached solely based on binary notions of gender. Contrarily, there are no policies with actionable items in the Canadian national sport system currently that address inclusion of Black and other racialized persons or that even within gender equity policies acknowledge girls and women beyond universalistic categories (Peers et al. in press; Re-Creation Collective, 2021). We realized that add and stir approaches of any kind necessarily could only serve those who enjoyed the relative privilege of single-identity exclusion. After all, only some of us possess the luxury and convenience of forgetting the breadth of who we are when it suits us. Furthermore, we became aware that each add-and-stir reform incorporated those who could pass into the system, undermining critique, revolution, and resurgence. We come to be included as part of the problem. We need to think about gay and White sport stories differently if we aim to do anticolonial sports work. The system is fundamentally “broken” precisely because it is working exactly as it was initially intended: to naturalize the greater life (and sporting) chances (Spade, 2011) of certain people at the exclusion and expense of others; the system then leaves the Others to compete against each other for the dregs. Inclusion as consolation prize. Deep intersectional, collective work, however, reveals that the weakness of any structure is always at the joint. This is where it is least flexible. This is where the cracks begin to show.

“There is a crack in everything, that is where the light gets in”
(Cohen, 1999)

“Wherever light rushes in is an exit route” (Belcourt, 2020)
“To crip is to open up desire for . . . disrupt{ion}”
(Fritsch, 2013, para 2)

“Refusal is a symptom, a practice, a possibility for doing things differently” (Simpson, 2017)

Collective critique and pressure at the intersections can spark fundamental kinds of change (e.g., deformation) leading us to reimagine and rebuild something else, somewhere else, altogether (e.g., transformation) to further highlight the contradictory experiences often encountered in sport, and in decolonization.

*Your family, your ancestors, your future generations are
all part of your research journey.
A resurgence journey.*

Stirring Up Elsewheres: Dancing With Decolonial Desires

Invitation: Google [Kerwin Du Bois—Use It] and listen.

Janelle: *Scarborough, a neighborhood in east Toronto, is a place that ranges from multimillion dollar homes to impoverished areas. In the media, however, Scarborough is portrayed as a place of violence, a place of Black and Brown bodies. For me, it is a place to regenerate, to come together, a place of love. I did not grow up in*

Caribbean neighborhoods, but every year, I travel to Scarborough for the annual Soca Fêtes along with Black and Brown visitors from New York, Miami, England, and many Caribbean islands. The community swells with Caribbeanness around the August long weekend. Because of the negative stereotype that Scarborough is violent, some people often caution me about going to a Soca Fete with concern that it is not safe. But it is the safest I have ever felt.

No longer “dissected under white eyes” as Fanon (1986) writes, I am free.

I finally feel whole again, enveloped in a cocoon of fast paced Caribbean music and dancing—a soca fete in Scarborough is my elsewhere. It’s a place where I am on the dance floor, and I’m sweaty and tired and I’m feeling the energy of my people, the power of our moving bodies. When I’m on the dance floor, nothing can bother me. There is a song, by Kerwin Du Bois (2015), where he says:

nothin’ can bother me! Not today. Not today

No way

watch meh behavior now

gettin’ on like nobody own me. I make me own way. Don’t care what people say

So if the boss wan’ fire me, I will just leave immediately, ’cause I plan on doing me. Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah

If I have to get divorced, I’ll sign the papers of course, because this moment, I want more.

If I don’t use it, I feel I gon’ lose it

So I’ll take this opportunity just to make me happy.

. . . I can’t stay in one spot. My feet deh keep on movin’

I can really identify with the theme of the chorus of the song. It is about the happiness that comes from embodied freedom. Du Bois contrasts the idea of a workspace and even a domestic space with a freedom-of-movement space. I spend so much time of my day in white neighborhoods, White workspaces, within corporeal constraints and under watchful eyes. Puwar (2004) tells us that the looks Black women receive, that say “what is she doing here?” are based on imperial understandings of who belongs, what is legitimate language and acceptable behaviour in white dominated workspaces. The structures of settler colonialism limit what is possible at work, but for me, dancing to soca music always makes me feel I belong. Through my embodied presence, I give everyone an invitation to “watch my behavior” as Du Bois says. I’m putting my body on display, circling my hips and rubbing up against others—sometimes strangers. I can make meaningful ephemeral and long-lasting connections with my Caribbean communities. The soca fête is the place where I can envision and enact alternative ways of being. In every part of my body, I feel freedom

Tuck and Yang (2012) offered a challenge to those who commit to a decolonial praxis, to envision elsewherees that disrupt the normality of settler colonialism, emphatically stating that decolonization is “not an and, it is an elsewhere.” As Waziyatawin and Yellow Bird (2005) explained “first and foremost, decolonization must occur in our own minds” (p. 2), which necessarily,

advocate[s] [for] peaceful, intelligent, courageous challenges to the existing institutions of colonialism as well as questioning our own complicity in those institutions. But make no mistake: decolonization ultimately requires the overturning of the colonial structure. It is not about tweaking the existing colonial system to make it more Indigenous-friendly or a little less oppressive. The existing system is fundamentally and irreparably flawed (p. 4).

As settler colonialism is ongoing and is implicated in sport and other forms of marginalizations, our conversations about elsewhere helped us to imagine something different, to envision alternative ways of being and doing. We felt discomfort about the use of elsewhere, as we did not want to use it as a metaphor for other practices that were not centering on decolonization. Yet, whereas decolonization requires resisting multiple supremacies, elsewhere helped us to recognize *ways of resisting and flourishing that are already in existence*, and to embody counter narratives of movement, and thus we chose to be inspired by the concept to help us through our autoethnographic journey.

There is not only one way to be resurgent. There are many collective methods and modes.

Tricia: *I experienced my elsewhere through my research with Wiisokotaatiwin, which in the Anishinaabe language means “gathering together for a purpose” (McGuire-Adams, 2020). It is an Anishinaabe research methodology that brought together urban Indigenous women to create dialogue about settler colonialism, decolonization, health, and wellbeing. The dialogue was coupled with physical activity, in this case it was participating in a kettle bell workout. It was through this visiting that we shared our personal perspectives about “How has settler colonialism affected me, my family, my community? How does this relate to my regeneration?” And through co-creating this space there was incredible dialogue that happened. The space created an embodied presence for us where we came together and shared this loving Indigenous-women space, and time and time again, myself as well as the co-creators would say how good we felt being in this space.*

*The place where I can envision and enact
alternative ways of being.
In every part of my body
I feel freedom.*

And I remember one conversation we had. One of the co-creators of the circle shared, “this is what we need for our community praxis.” Because of her work in Indigenous health, she sees the discrepancy in how we need to position ourselves as lacking or within a deficit frame to obtain funding we need to show disparity, funding, results.⁶ And while there is a need for this type of funding approach because of our ongoing health disparities, there also is a need for a parallel space where we shift our thinking to capture how regenerated we feel when we come together in a Wiisokotaatiwin way, where we feel wellness by coming together. I really believe gathering together for a purpose through Wiisokotaatiwin guided our process of critical thinking where we thought deeply about the broad structures of settler colonialism and how it continues to impact our bodies; and through dialogue, we co-created the regenerative space. And I do not think this space could have been created without bringing a critical lens about the structures of settler colonialism; I do not think this space could have been created in a mainstream fitness gym, for instance. No, there must be a specific connection to community and drive to understand our shared history of colonization coupled with a decolonial desire

One of Tuck and Yang (2012) main points regarding decolonization is that repatriation of land is central, and therefore “decolonization is necessarily unsettling, especially across lines of solidarity” (p. 7). We sat with the uncomfortability of thinking through our own unsettling, and we contended with three thoughts. The first is while decolonization is undoubtedly about the return of stolen lands, this should not be a full stop moment where people may choose not to engage in decolonization until the colonial state

or its citizens returns stolen lands. The second is that decolonization, whether it be personal or in working toward reciprocity to the land and Indigenous peoples, must still occur. It can occur in our minds and in our actions, in a daily cycle of mindfulness about, and uncomfortableness within, contextualizing decolonization in our everyday lives. Similarly, Mignolo (2012) demanded decolonial thinking as “the unveiling of epistemic silences of Western epistemology and affirming the epistemic rights of the racially devalued” (p. 162). Which brings us to our third unsettling thought, colonization involves not only stolen lands of centuries past, but also

*The stealing of children from their parents and lands
Unmarked graves, eternally grieving
Both here and across the oceans*

*Attempts at stealing languages, cultures, and lands
Ways of moving, relating and knowing
All this stealing ongoing
Both here and across the oceans*

*Stealing to erase and replace with
Interwoven nets of supremacies (Marya, 2018)
That reduce value to currency
That serve to subjugate
ecologies,
“unproductive” abilities,
queer proclivities.*

*revolutionary affinities,
“racial impurities”
cultural resiliencies
and sacred vulnerability*

If colonization involves all these ongoing harms, then decolonization *must* intervene at each of these intersections. It calls for our sharpest teeth and softest underbellies. It must be a reckoning, a realization of, and direct action toward the ways such systems led us to harm each other and ourselves in pursuit of individual “liberation.”

Evelyn: *It can be hard to have those conversations, those moments of reckoning across communities who have been harmed, in the context of ongoing colonial violence, but it is worth trying. Some of the hardest work I’ve ever done was with the Arab/Jewish Women’s Peace Coalition (AJWPC). We were part of women’s action for peace in the Gulf starting in 1991 at the time of the First Gulf War. We were all radical feminists, anti-war and anti-racism activists. We all had very complex relationships to Palestine/ Israel/ Judaism/ Islam/ Christianity/ Canada/ Sexuality. We were very active for a decade, meeting every week to dialogue about the Arab/Jewish binary, those profound identity polarizations, and to explore backlashes at large, to interrogate our own deeply held biases and fears. It was for sure the most important work I’ve ever done because of the relationships. The relationships I formed with the other members of AJWPC are some of the most profound relationships I have ever formed with any other human beings. We held ourselves to such loving standards of honesty, but with such compassion. There were times when we had to stop and just hold each other. There were times we had to leave and go rage in our own spaces. There are times, like Tricia and Janelle described, that I need the smells and sounds of my people. I need to be surrounded by Arabic. So I think “elsewheres” isn’t necessarily easy, It isn’t always comforting and comfortable. We had to work so hard to just stay in that space together, to just listen, and open heartedly hear really hard things with love. It was so hard and so beautiful. This was embodiment. This was elsewhere.*

Indigenous Stories, Dreaming, and Other Counterproductive Practices of Re-Creation

Through our work with the Re-Creation Collective, we seek to reimagine, to recreate, new ways of thinking and being: ways that do not fundamentally reproduce racist, ableist, and colonial assumptions upon which contemporary systems are built. Here, we found great insight within Simpson (2011) theorization of re-creation.

In Anishinaabeg thought, re-creation is interwoven into our stories (Creation stories, aadizookaan, or sacred stories, and dibaajimowinan, or personal stories), whereby individuals may enact their own regeneration and re-creation. Simpson writes, “we all carry responsibilities in terms of resurgence . . . and are also responsible for re-creating the good life in whatever forms we imagine, vision, and live in contemporary times” (p. 68). Simpson shared that Anishinaabeg stories that centre re-creation are imbued with dreaming, in efforts to “create and voice our truths, to strategize our response, and ultimately to act in creating new and better realities” (p. 93), all to disrupt colonial systems. As individual scholars (the first author is Anishinaabe), and a Collective, Anishinaabeg concepts regarding re-creation with an intent to regenerate and transform our realities (Simpson, 2011) deeply informed how we seek to dream our elsewheres into being and our sharing with each other.

Dreaming is not a particularly valued activity in the Western settler colonial contexts of academia, sport, or even activism. Some who read this may have met the first author’s opening dreamscape, and our articulation of this as methodologically insightful, if not crucial, with some doubt. Our epistemological and methodological claim about dreaming undermines the heart of Western Enlightenment Knowledge and all of the supremacist hierarchies it justifies (Hirt, 2012). This is one of the many reasons it is so often frowned upon, perceived as threatening, and potentially so important.

Daydreaming, dissociating, and letting our minds drift (to) elsewhere(s) are similarly frowned upon. Such leisurely pursuits lack focus, drive, and a commitment to progress. Faster, higher, stronger, and no longer. Daydreaming is a direct threat to (hyper-) productivity: the building of empires, the building of bodies, the building of winning streaks, the building of CVs, the making of money, and the makings of a winner. Activist “work” can itself be swept up in this (hyper-) productive imperative. Activists keep busy by making sense, that is, rendering themselves intelligible within dominant logics and making change, rendering their interventions legible within oppressive politics of progress. Antiproductivity, however, is not necessarily unproductive. Indeed, we have found daydreaming to be immensely generative, although it does refuse the urgency to turn ourselves and our ideas into products that can be easily consumed.

Thus, if we begin with dreaming and end with daydreaming it is because we believe these may hold similar promise for resisting colonial values, threatening supremacists’ status quos, and opening space to imagine other ways to be.

Final Invitation: We offer a gentle caution to the reader that this article is about to end. While we are closing with a final invitation, we sincerely hope you may continue to open your minds, hearts, and spirits to the ongoing collective work of personal decolonization.

As positioned in our first invitation, we trust you to use your brilliantly developed coping skills to close with an action— a writing activity, a physical movement— that has resonance and meaning for your decolonizing journey.

Janelle: I grew up playing baseball with my brother. He went on to become a professional baseball player, but when I played, I played. Putting me in the outfield was un-productive. With no idea who was at bat or where the ball was, I spent most of my time picking medicinal dandelions and blowing on them only to watch the seeds float away like twinkling stars in the sunlight. The outfield was a space of wonder for me.

*My head is in the clouds,
My glove is . . .
where is my glove?
I sing out loud
I dance around
Twisting and turning
just to make me happy.
Nothing can bother me,
not today, not today.
I love playing at the margins,
in the outfield . . .*

To disrupt settler colonialism takes a significant amount of time and effort, which is continuous, but this approach is a demonstration of how our Re-Creation Collective is creating pathways to imagine elsewheres; this work is one small part of the overall strategies of systemic change. We recognize this invitation may be captured by those who may wish to simplify decolonization to make it equivalent to anti-racism work, queer activism, or artistic writings. This is not our intention. To speak about lasting changes to the multifaceted ways settler colonialism seeks to “erase and replace,” to paraphrase Wolfe (2006), we first needed to do the work that disrupting systems entails within ourselves, and to become mindful of the often contradictory nature of being human beings struggling within and against oppressive, colonial structures. To borrow the words of dales laing (in Eales, 2019), this journey began, for us, with a personal and collective commitment to ways of being, doing, knowing, and playing that enabled each of us to *bring more of ourselves more of the time* (p. 94).

Notes

1. In the spirit of radical accessibility readers can engage this article in multiple ways (e.g., an audio recording of the authors reading the article and through an Anishinaabe artist’s rendering) at the following link: (<https://www.recreation-collective.com/elsewheres.html>).
2. Tricia’s partner, Ryan, initially dreamt of Tricia’s ancestor. This Anishinaabekwe ancestor visited with him in order to give Tricia a gift. This dream then became a bridge for Tricia to envision Anaang/Star: A Galactic Love Story.
3. Tricia learned this Anishinaabeg concept from Anishinaabe linguistic theorist, James Vukelich during one of his online lectures titled “Ojibwe word of the day: Niin,” January 25, 2018. This concept also resonates with Daniel Heath Justice’s (2018) important comment and question that “we are the ancestors of future generations” (p. 114) so “how do we become good ancestors?”
4. Treaties are legal agreements made between two (or more) sovereign Nations. From Indigenous perspectives, treaties are laws that uphold

Indigenous governance, create lasting alliances, and mutually beneficial relationships informed by Indigenous worldviews. And from a settler colonial perspective, the treaties are only thought of as land surrender agreements. please see Bohaker (2020) and the following resource: <https://www.oise.utoronto.ca/abed101/we-are-all-treaty-people/>.

5. While Tewaá:rathon was at one time banned among the Hodinöhsö:ni, as an act of profound resurgence, the Iroquois Nationals assert Tewaá:rathon as an enactment of Hodinöhsö:ni sovereignty. For more details on lacrosse and sovereignty, please read Downey's (2018) insightful scholarship presented in *The Creator's Game: Lacrosse, Identity, and Indigenous Nationhood*.

6. Tuck (2009) describes a desire-based research framework as an antidote to the proliferation of "damaged-centered research" used on Indigenous and other marginalized peoples. Desire-based research, as Tuck argued, acknowledges the harms that continue because of colonialism and White supremacy, but pivots to include an 'epistemological shift' towards amplifying "the hope, the visions, the wisdom of lived lives and communities" (p. 417).

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