

Co-Creating Indigenous Futurities with/in Academic Worlds

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I dream again of Babok the toad, the deliverer of fire to humans and bringer of rain to Earth. Babok, an excellent storyteller, holds my hand and shows me the way to the river and to myself—a reminder of responsibilities and possibilities. The dream ignites a vision: in the place of flowers, where their power far surpasses their beauty, all beings are regarded as having purpose(s)—with bodies and lives worthy of living and thriving to fulfill those purposes. Here, our community acknowledges each other's roles and accepts our own as meaningful contributions. In this community, one seeks out the Hu'upa (Mesquite) and Cho'i (Palo Verde) trees to ask for guidance because trees have revealed many truths to our Yoemem ancestors from long ago and continue to teach us still. The vision becomes reality, a way of being and moving among worlds where many persons, such as insect beings, plant beings, soil bodies, elder stones, caretaker plants, and water beings, for example, are relegated to "natural resources"—objects of exploitation who are often taken up in servitude or generally mistreated.

Doing academic work that listens to and thinks with more-than-human beings as having bodies and lives worthy of living through to their fullest meaning is indeed a challenge in arenas where settler futurities take precedence over all else. Place/land and all beings tied up with them, despite having much to teach, are

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rarely treated and centered as living beings in academic analysis (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015). In other words, taking up this sort of work has proven to be such a challenge that it is often skipped over by academics, and quite possibly for good reason. Engulfment in worlds largely filled with settler logics creates seemingly insurmountable barriers to those who may otherwise wish to co-create Indigenous futurities with/in academic, and in particular, with Indigenous Land.

Scholars who work to co-create bridges that link the gaps between human-centered worlds and the many more-than-humans already living among them/us are of particular guidance to me in the challenge of co-creating Indigenous futurities with/in academic worlds. I am grateful to geographer Sarah Whatmore (2006) for gifting communities in/beyond the academy with “more-than” terminology, where, in English, one is provided with language that shifts landscape as a plane to land—a living actor. I look to Tonawanda Band of Seneca scholar on literature, race, and ethnic theory Mishuana Goeman (2013) when considering the necessary decolonizing work that is to (re)claim, (re)name, and (re)vitalize—where “(re)” creates Indigenous futurities that are simultaneously past and present but made anew. Sisseton Wahpeton Oyate anthropologist Kim TallBear’s (2013, 2014) work illuminates the ways in which worlds and beings are co-constituted in relation with others, where collaborations are sites for new knowledge formations, thus creating space for academe that *is* more-than research. I often think with the work of Kanaka Maoli political scientist Noelani Goodyear-Ka’ōpua (2016), who reminds one that Indigenous Peoples forge their relationships with place/land and land-bodied beings, and, therefore, researchers are obligated to such land beings far beyond the scope of a research project. Political scientist Audra Mitchell (2018), a settler of Ukrainian, Polish, Scottish, and English ancestry who lives on the Ancestral and Treaty Lands of the Attawandaron (Neutral), Haudenosaunee, and Mississaugas of the New Credit, demonstrates ways in which non-Indigenous scholars might honor the efforts of Indigenous resurgents who seek to repair protocols and relations between particular peoples, plants, animals, and many land and water beings. Drawing on these lineages of thought and scholarship, my work strives to co-create Indigenous futurities with more-than-human beings, an effort that simultaneously envisions Indigenous futurities as it takes up and works against settler colonial modes of being and separation. I find an academic home in the emerging discipline of Indigenous Science, Technology, and Society (I-STIS), a community of scholars who contribute to the interplay of emerging worlds, realities becoming. Together, this community honors land-bodied beings seen, unseen, and felt, while co-creating Indigenous futurities through scholarship.

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