

# Epistemic Colonialism

Is it Possible to Decolonize Archaeology?

TSIM D. SCHNEIDER AND KATHERINE HAYES

**Abstract:** In the fourteen years since the publication of Sonya Atalay’s groundbreaking special issue of *American Indian Quarterly*, “Decolonizing Archaeology” (2006)—and the call for a more equitable and ethical, or decolonized, archaeology—we raise the question: Is it possible to decolonize archaeology? Of late, archaeologies of colonialism seek to counteract Western views of the plight of Indigenous populations and the systematic erasure of peoples, sites, and cultures from the land, from public memory, and the conventional writing of history. For archaeologists, countering narratives of Indigenous loss or absence requires gathering evidence—excavation in the soil and archives—to demonstrate resiliency, even as many present-day Indigenous communities doubt the very premise of that loss and the idea that their histories and cultures are missing or obscured. In this article, we acknowledge the colonial nature of evidence (epistemology) in archaeology. Introducing this special issue, we consider how archaeology has performed as a structure of settler colonialism, and how a close engagement with critical Indigenous theory can reorient us. We argue that a more equitable form of practice is evolving, but that decolonizing archaeology will require a kind of “undisciplining,” changing larger institutional structures in universities and heritage protection law. We thus consider the potentials or impossibilities for decolonizing archaeology by centering our questions in the scholarship on settler colonial studies and critical Indigenous theory.

**Keywords:** Decolonization, epistemology, undisciplining, evidence, archaeology

It has been fourteen years since the publication of Sonya Atalay’s groundbreaking special issue of *American Indian Quarterly* (AIQ) on “decolonizing archaeology” and her call for a more equitable and ethical, or decolonized, archaeology.<sup>1</sup> To Atalay, Western cultures and worl-

views permeate archaeological practice, including the ways Indigenous places, materials, and cultures are studied and interpreted, protected or destroyed, and memorialized or erased from history. In her words, “Currently, one value system and standard is used—one that views Western science, theories, and methods as the standard and goal with the aim of producing knowledge truths.”<sup>2</sup> Reimagining the focus and direction of archaeological research pertaining to Indigenous societies the world over, she described core tenets of a decolonized archaeology: collaboration, the decentering of colonial histories and foregrounding of Indigenous knowledge production, teaching, and acknowledging the primacy of Indigenous interests and stewardship as well as the deeply colonial lenses through which past and present-day Indigenous societies are typically viewed.<sup>3</sup>

In the years following publication of the special issue, Atalay and many others<sup>4</sup> set to work pursuing a decolonial archaeology by transforming the practice of archaeology and encouraging the investigation of, among other things, Indigenous perspectives on the imposition of colonialism. As a result, we have seen archaeologies of colonialism that increasingly counteract Western views of the plight of Indigenous populations and the systematic erasure from public memory of peoples, sites, and cultures from the land, and the conventional writing of history. For archaeologists, countering narratives of Indigenous loss or absence requires gathering evidence—via excavation in the soil and in (typically) colonial archives—to demonstrate resilience. Yet many present-day Indigenous communities doubt the very premise of that loss and the idea that their histories and cultures are missing or obscured. Thus one could argue that the utilization of archaeology as *the* tool for such an investigation undermines the very tenets of a decolonized practice and instantiates the colonial narrative of loss; that this narrative may *only* be accessed via fragments, and that such knowledge is inaccessible until reassembled by the archaeologist. Imagine a community archive in which the contents are deemed incomprehensible until a professional archivist (who may or may not be a member of the community) disassembles and recatalogs it. Coming to such an understanding of the colonial nature of evidence and epistemology in archaeology, we raise the question: Is it possible to decolonize archaeology? Or is the practice of archaeology grounded in a form of “epistemicide,” in which *only* the tools, taxonomies, methods, and theories of Western science are held to have truth

value, while all other ways of knowing are labeled as epiphenomenal at best?<sup>5</sup> We suggest that an additional core tenet of a decolonized archaeology is thus to decenter archaeology itself.

“Improvement and change are often excruciatingly slow, and a great deal of work and struggle remains,” Atalay admitted in a preface to the 2006 *AIQ* issue.<sup>6</sup> In her framing, this work begins with the exposure of the Western, colonial “lens” and the power and access afforded in the name of Western science, but less certain is *how* epistemology, methods, and interpretation might need to change in order to decolonize in a meaningful way.<sup>7</sup> In an effort to keep the conversation moving, our intervention in this introduction and themed issue of *AIQ* is to use the lenses of settler colonial and critical Indigenous studies to reassess the potential for decolonizing archaeology. First, we address the logics of settler colonialism structuring and persisting in the practice and theory of archaeology, what we call “epistemic colonialism.” The collection of case studies that accompany this introduction seek to broaden our understanding of evidence in archaeology. What constitutes evidence, what does evidence count for, and how might evidence be colonial? Contributors to this issue explore the conceptualization, collection, study, and interpretation of evidence in American archaeology, particularly as it intersects with lived heritage and community, multiple ways of seeing, place and landscape, and new theoretical frames of reference. These considerations parallel a conversation in Indigenous studies exploring the question of whether a common set of theories, sources, and methods can be identified.<sup>8</sup> Certain aspects of the history of archaeological practice seem dauntingly incompatible with attempts to reconceptualize our evidentiary grounds, because archaeology has so thoroughly reproduced a “Vanishing Indian” narrative. Yet the nature of our work also forces professional acceptance of absence and uncertainty, and this may give us humility and an openness to decentering archaeological epistemology and seeking other ways of knowing.<sup>9</sup>

Second, we argue that the obstacles to genuine redress of epistemic colonialism extend beyond individual projects, methods, or collaborations into the structures of both academic and compliance-driven work. Most attention is given to the academic research domain, as it has historically framed most of the archaeological and biological anthropology work in the United States.<sup>10</sup> The critique should be extended to the entire university structure and environment as well, particularly as it fails

to support and recognize the merits of community collaborative work and interdisciplinarity.<sup>11</sup> In the past fifty years, however, the balance of archaeological work has shifted dramatically toward the compliance domain, triggered by historic preservation and environmental protection laws. Ostensibly, some of the cultural resource protection work is also related to laws that specifically protect Indigenous nations' patrimony, or contribute to recognition of sovereignty and land claims. Yet even in these cases, Indigenous scholars remind us that we are still fundamentally working with the same set of colonialist epistememes created by anthropologists and exploited by non-Native governments, leaving us with an irreconcilably inequitable relationship with the communities we work with.<sup>12</sup> Seeking alternatives, authors in this themed journal issue draw upon a close engagement with contemporary writings in critical Indigenous theory that highlight the struggle to work within these institutions. They consider the possibilities in rejecting or refusing those institutional frameworks, in part or wholly, in order to practice according to the "four Rs" of reciprocity, relationality, responsibility, and redistribution.<sup>13</sup> We thus consider the potentials (or impossibilities) for decolonizing archaeology by centering our questions in the scholarship on settler colonial studies and critical Indigenous theory rather than that of archaeological or anthropological theory. We argue that an archaeology that remains a discipline unto itself cannot be decolonized, and practitioners should seek ways to "undiscipline" it.

#### ARCHAEOLOGY AS A TOOL OF SETTLER COLONIALISM

For archaeologists, very often the drive to study and learn comes from the opportunity to reveal "hidden histories" or "absent narratives." This very framing, however, becomes a point of explicit critique by Indigenous scholars and communities in that, to most, these histories have never been absent. Absence or obscurity is the product of standpoint—particularly the occulting effect of epistemology. This tension marks the place where archaeology has seamlessly carried out the work and structure of settler colonialism through its "logics of elimination."<sup>14</sup> Settler colonialism depends upon the disappearance of the Native in the present, but maintains a very specific historical trace that reinforces exclusion from the present; it is with this "trace" that archaeology most concerns itself. The elimination of Native presence has

been a long-term, strategically shifting process of extinguishing Native claims to land in order that settlers could replace them. This might include physical removal or violence, treaty cessions and allotment, but it also includes prohibition of language and ceremonial practice, and the intergenerational trauma associated with boarding schools and severed kinship. The very premise of archaeology is to redeem evidence of what was lost, by first construing it *as* lost and in need of recovery by those who then claim this lost narrative through their own expertise.<sup>15</sup> The mechanisms of this disappearance operate in part through both historic and contemporary constructions of sources and narratives. More recent developments in Indigenous archaeology or collaborative archaeology aim to mitigate this problematic hierarchy in the hopes that archaeology may serve instead in a narrative of survivance for, by, and with Native peoples.<sup>16</sup>

We take as a given the premise that these disappearances or eliminations occur in multiple ways across time, from the very physical acts of genocide and removal to the cultural, administrative, or documentary elimination of peoples who were and are still present. Archaeologists have not, traditionally, done a great job at distinguishing between these processes. Genocide as a presumed *fait accompli* shapes contemporary popular memory of the Native American past, along with replacement by settlers on the landscape, while other processes of disappearance can lie hidden within the colonial archive. What are we to make of conceptual or epistemological disappearances, however? By this we mean the outcomes of administrative genocide, like the creation of racial categories introduced by law, which then become accepted as natural and thus “objective” differences subject to empirical observation by archaeologists and other researchers. Have we adequately recognized the infiltration of such concepts into the very categories and classifications of what constitutes *evidence*, despite the best hopes that an “objective” Western, scientific epistemology would eliminate such values? For example, as Amélie Allard describes in her case study, presumptions of colonial inevitability still color the classification of Midwestern United States fur-trade sites as colonial, based on the mere presence of European-manufactured goods, despite the overwhelmingly Native landscape with which they are contemporaneous. Such a narrative underwritten by the labeling of material culture girds the nostalgic settler notions that their own historical appearance triggered

an orderly replacement, rather than illustrating an intensely negotiated process or violent conflict. The example suggests that, more urgently, we need to ask: how are our epistemological aporias transmitted to multiple public audiences, some of whom may be in a position to reproduce or challenge the received narrative of Native elimination? And, recognizing these colonial epistemes, do the professional positions we occupy allow for the necessary work to decolonize them? As much as we hope our identifications of these erasures will unsettle the settler narrative, we are left with critique but no more decolonized or Indigenized a narrative.

#### LESSONS FROM CRITICAL INDIGENOUS THEORY

A major issue arises from how we characterize ourselves professionally, whether inside or outside of the university setting. Are we archaeologists, anthropologists, or something else—for which archaeological methods may be one set of tools among others? The question becomes particularly acute as we consider how to “undiscipline” our work a bit later in this overview; but prior to that we may begin to decenter archaeology, setting aside its core concepts, by taking on the concerns of critical Indigenous theory and studies.<sup>17</sup> This move immediately shifts our characterization of the goals of knowledge production. For while archaeology and anthropology produce knowledge for “universal good” (a fairly drastic misrecognition of the narrow slice of privileged individuals who have access to become researchers and compliance practitioners determining the research questions), Indigenous studies produces knowledge for the benefit of Indigenous people, communities, and sovereignty. This distinction was bluntly pointed out by Vine Deloria Jr.: “Compilation of useless knowledge ‘for knowledge’s sake’ should be utterly rejected by the Indian people. We should not be objects of observation for those who do nothing for us.”<sup>18</sup> Related to this is the notion that American Indian studies has a particular mission to decolonize, from individual minds to academic institutions to colonial nations.<sup>19</sup> These aims of critique and advocacy are a radical reorientation for archaeologists who have been trained to view their work as objective and generalizing.

Epistemology in Indigenous studies might seem to be far less coherent and directed than its aims, given how widely interdisciplinary it is, with methods and disciplinary affiliations ranging from literary analy-

sis, historiography, and material culture studies to health and environmental studies. A recent volume, *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies*, illustrates the “methodological diversity” of the field, particularly in terms of the variety of sources, but a notable coherency in the set of analytical lenses scholars bring to bear, including engagements with communities, relational ontologies (especially with respect to land, kinship, and cultural patrimony), and the expressions and formations of sovereignty.<sup>20</sup> These lenses stand in opposition to the structures of settler colonialism, which erase contemporary Native presence, introduce irreconcilable ruptures between present and past, and are essential to a framework of archaeological objectivity in empirical observation. Instead, a relational ontology presupposes “the inter-connectedness and inter-substantiation between and among all living things and the earth. . . . It informs our epistemological and ethical premise that social research should begin with an awareness of our proper relationships with the world we inhabit.”<sup>21</sup> Feminist scholars have similarly emphasized this need to acknowledge our unavoidable standpoint as researchers (or any subjectivity), and preferably to embrace the personal and political<sup>22</sup>—not just as a point of relevance but because the research is strengthened by those relations which broaden our view of related knowledges. For non-Indigenous researchers, this means overcoming the abyssal perception that contemporary Indigenous experience is unrelated to our historical inquiries and, instead, adopting the humility to be untrained, by listening and learning.<sup>23</sup>

Perhaps one of the most thought-provoking lessons archaeologists can learn from these frameworks of connectedness, standpoint, and relationships is the recognition of when *not* to situate something as evidence without regard to audience and context, because to do so would be destructive of Native sovereignty. Such recognitions may be referred to as *refusals*: a rejection of the structures and rules of settler societies, including categories of citizenship or grounds for government-to-government relations.<sup>24</sup> In the consideration of epistemology, refusals to share knowledge may be assertions of sovereignty, and are most certainly a rejection of the colonial ideology of the “universal good” of knowledge. It is in such instances that the structures of our professional institutions become roadblocks to decolonization. In academic institutions, the bestowal of merit for publication (the broadcasting of

knowledge) and peer review may be incompatible with relationships with nonacademic collaborative partners, especially those who value the safeguarding of community and sovereign knowledge. In the cultural resources management world of archaeology, most work is done in conformity with federal and state laws with, at best, “consultation” by tribes. The laws themselves are structured by colonial taxonomies of site type, significance, integrity, and scope. Yet the standards of those laws are often rejected as inadequate and inappropriate by tribal stakeholders. Pipeline protests at Standing Rock and other places have demonstrated who the consultation standards actually favor.

#### VIEWS FROM THE FIELD

The organizers of this special issue of *AIQ*, both trained as archaeologists, have observed the workings and logic of settler colonialism in their independent research carried out in two regions of the United States: the Northeast and Midwest (Hayes) and California (Schneider). At the Atlantic coast, colonization is embedded in public consciousness with the Vanishing Indian narrative.<sup>25</sup> While population declines in Native communities were a reality, the complete disappearances heralded by colonists as God’s will and by contemporary Americans as a tragic inevitability were vastly overstated. In some instances, these disappearances were strategic colonial exclusions from documentary records, while in others they were undertaken defensively by Native communities themselves, like the Stockbridge and Brothertown Indians, who removed themselves from the dangerous company of colonists.<sup>26</sup> Archaeological evidence of Indian occupation was often demolished by European settlement. However, archaeologists have been complicit in reproducing settler narratives as well, by failing to recognize the sites and signs of Native persistence.<sup>27</sup> Early historic archaeologists in New England resorted to explanations of site disturbance to explain the presence of Native technologies and materials in colonial sites, rather than acknowledging the possibility of co-residence. Even in more recent interpretations, however, manufacturing origins of material culture have been uncritically read as evidence of acculturation or assimilation, causing Native people to culturally disappear rather than admit the possibility that they might adapt and change while still considering themselves to be Native.<sup>28</sup>



In Minnesota, sites as well as broader landscapes tend to be associated with the colonial fur-trade era, based on the availability of archival records and the claims of traders and explorers therein. Yet Indigenous scholars have pointed out that the claims themselves hardly constitute colonial control, and that in fact those sites and landscapes remained under Native control throughout this era of interaction.<sup>29</sup> Prioritizing these doubtful claims by colonists has retrospectively eliminated the Native from history, despite their undeniable contemporary presence. Such colonial narratives are embedded in public heritage sites like Fort Snelling, a military site with a long, complex, and diverse history, but which was reconstructed to a “frontier” appearance, rendering multivocality and especially Dakota claims difficult to interpret for visitors. Notably, the reconstruction of Fort Snelling relied upon a rather selective utilization of archaeological remains for historical information.<sup>30</sup> In both the northeast and Minnesota, recent scholarship shows that challenging the disappearance narratives depends upon a re-reading of the archaeological and archival evidence through a lens of Indigenous social network strategies.<sup>31</sup> This happens when we take seriously oral traditions and Indigenous historiographies that anthropologists and archaeologists once dismissed as subjective and illegitimate forms of evidence. Critically, it also arises from voices of Indigenous scholars in anthropology and history.

For California, conventional anthropological and historical narratives of colonialism provided little room for understanding how Native Americans persisted. Coast Miwok people of the Marin Peninsula, for instance, passed quietly from scholarly memory in the ethnographic writing of Isabel Kelly: “A number of persons today have some Coast Miwok blood, but apparently no knowledge of native culture and no interest in it. Effectively people and culture have disappeared.”<sup>32</sup> Costanoan/Ohlone peoples, who neighbor the Coast Miwok and claim lands surrounding approximately three-quarters of the San Francisco Bay, as well as Monterey Bay, met a more definitive ending. Alfred Kroeber, a student of Franz Boas, responsible for introducing a Boasian “declensionist” philosophy to California cultural anthropology,<sup>33</sup> concluded: “The Costanoan group is extinct . . . old habits of life have long since been abandoned . . . [the colonial era] sufficed to efface even traditional recollections of the forefathers’ habits, except for occasional fragments of knowledge.”<sup>34</sup> For anthropologists writing

about Costanoan/Ohlone, Coast Miwok, and many other Indigenous Californian communities, the advent of missionization in the late 1700s represented either death or change followed closely by disappearance.

We see this thinking—anthropology “working in concert with a settler state that sought to disappear Indian life and land in order to possess that land and absorb that difference into a normative sociopolitical order”<sup>35</sup>—extend into archaeological practice. Rehabilitation efforts and romantic views of California missions channeled funding—and archaeological field research—onto a built landscape consisting of highly visible crumbling adobe walls, chapels, and other features associated with missions. Excavations in and around the architectural remains of colonial mission sites seem to have underscored essentialist ideas of Indigenous cultural destruction, village displacement and abandonment, and disappearance espoused by Kroeber and others. Operating under the false assumption that Native people cut ties with their communities and homeland or became hopelessly imprisoned at missions as the engines of religious conversion accelerated,<sup>36</sup> scholars have effectively reduced far-reaching, diverse, and dynamic Indigenous histories down into those experiences most recognizable in the archaeological record or in the records produced by colonizers. Romantic imagery, tourism, building rehabilitation and reconstruction, and archaeology cemented the idea of a resilient colonial presence and an absent Indigenous history.<sup>37</sup>

Similar to New England, archaeological evidence collected over the years to assess the conditions and lives of Indigenous people at California missions—for example, bone and stone tools, shell ornaments, and the circular depressions of former Native-style houses—was examined within the context of places known ultimately for extinguishing Indigenous cultures. Glass, metal, and ceramic artifacts—technology, in other words, introduced to Native people at the missions and often found within Native residences and activity areas—represented another form of incremental loss informed by archaeological applications of acculturation theory.<sup>38</sup> As counterpoints, several recent archaeological studies endeavor instead to reevaluate the many practices and identities Indigenous people kept or cultivated irrespective of the materials they wielded, and recenter the focus of research and interpretations of evidence to consider life beyond the walls of colonial sites.<sup>39</sup>

Even after the 1830s when missions were replaced by Mexican,

Russian, and American mercantile projects, or extractive economies focused on California's natural and mineral wealth, Native peoples continued to be viewed as helpless victims.<sup>40</sup> Without minimizing the very real impacts of violence, epidemic diseases, abduction, and loss of land that characterized much of late-nineteenth-century California, still more consideration is needed to identify and foreground Indigenous efforts to combat loss, oftentimes creatively and without forfeiting their identities and connections to places. Put simply, "Place always matters, and for Indigenous peoples—and for the forces of imperialism and settler colonialism—it matters profoundly."<sup>41</sup> Catastrophic loss of life attributed to intentional, financed killing, or genocide, bookends the Native experience in colonial California.<sup>42</sup> Throughout this one-hundred-year time span, from the first mission to California's Gold Rush and beyond, scholars deploy categorical absolutes (e.g., "prehistoric" and "historic" time periods, sites, and artifacts) to define Native people, including when they lived, where they lived, how they lived, and the "killing fields" where Indigenous cultures supposedly vanished.<sup>43</sup> As Peter Nelson argues in his article examining community-based research and responsive justice at Tolay Lake, California, when viewed from the perspective of an archaeologist and member of the living community of Coast Miwok people erased from the historical memory of Tolay Lake, the archaeological and historical archives expose the many ways Coast Miwok people in fact refused colonialism.

Increasingly, collaborative projects are showing the ways in which a far more nuanced portrait of colonialism, survivances long known by Native communities as challenging the settler colonial erasures and narratives of inevitability, is emerging to broader awareness. In this volume, Lindsay Montgomery and Severin Fowles not only reject the canonical archaeological assumption that Comanche nomads left no material trace on the New Mexico landscape, they draw upon contemporary Comanche ideas about storytelling to interpret the extensive eighteenth-century rock art examples they identified, which relate to engagements with the Spanish military. Russell Townsend, Johi D. Griffin, and Kathryn Sampeck also illustrate how archaeology has been used as a tool of colonial rupture in the past, but that if undertaken in accordance with tribal values, as their project within the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indians community demonstrates, historical rupture may be identified or even repaired. They assert that archaeology

is not always the best approach, but that in its attentiveness to place and material, the practice may allow for a reconnection or retracing of networks with an occluded colonial past. These and other case studies in this special issue highlight strategies created by Indigenous peoples to refuse colonial control: selectively keeping elements of a former life, hiding out, marrying into another community, moving small or great distances throughout the year, and applying traditional technological skills to introduced and unconventional materials. But these self-fashioning practices of “historical” Native Americans often do not easily fit the evidentiary absolutes that archaeologists continue to deploy in their work throughout the United States.

#### HOPE FOR A DECOLONIZED ARCHAEOLOGY?

Essentialist thinking and narrative structures—including everyday assumptions about what counts as evidence, the types of places where pre-contact and colonial-era Indigenous communities can be studied, and an assumed association between Indigenous communities and the past—continue to pervade archaeological practice. The pervasiveness of these narrative essentialisms, which migrate between “*the poles of debt and threat*”<sup>44</sup> within and beyond the subfield, raise questions about continuing efforts to decolonize archaeology. On the debt hand, non-Native archaeologists may paternalistically see themselves as the champions of an impoverished Native people who are unable to provide the scientific evidence demanded by the colonial state. On the threat hand, decolonization in real terms should address land return and repatriation, circumstances that many older archaeologists have regarded as the death of archaeology. The enduring trope of Western science (e.g., archaeology) versus spiritualism associated closely with Indigenous communities continues to guide archaeological and public imaginings about how Indigenous communities associate and, more often, “interfere” with the places, people, and things that archaeologists presume to study. Beyond the world of archaeology, this obstructionist stereotype of Indigenous communities reaches even broader audiences with media coverage and commercialization of DNA analysis, ongoing debates centering on the destructive analysis of human remains, and the “deep chill” attributed to some Indigenous groups who vehemently oppose—

quite understandably—the persistent colonization of ancestral remains and histories.<sup>45</sup>

Take the example of an archaeological excavation that took place from 2013 to 2014 at the former site of Niven Nursery in Larkspur, California. Construction associated with a \$55 million, seventeen-acre development project ripped into the remnants of a five-thousand-year-old shellmound and the final resting place of nearly six hundred Coast Miwok people. The original mounded site had been leveled long ago to make space for the nursery, leaving a large portion of the site undisturbed and hidden from view below ground. Inadequate planning transformed the eventual discovery of the cemetery into a hasty recovery excavation and reburial effort that caught the attention of the media who, not surprisingly, positioned the caretakers of those human remains, the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, on the defensive. The tribe's sovereign power to request the reburial of human remains and artifacts and to prevent destructive analysis, including DNA testing, was seen as a loss to science, to archaeology, and humanity: "Lost forever was a carbon-dated record in the soil layers of Indigenous life going back approximately to the time the Great Pyramid of Giza was built in Egypt."<sup>46</sup> The Indigenous view is consistently portrayed as one of obstructionism and defiance: "The notion that these cultural artifacts belong to the public is a colonial view," commented Graton Rancheria elder Nick Tipon.<sup>47</sup>

As one facet of epistemic colonialism, this example of the science versus spiritualism trope deployed by the media to a broader audience does three things. First, this lingering perspective turns a blind eye to Indigenous authority and sovereignty. Native and non-Native scientists and Native communities continue to find common ground in the protection and interpretation of Native human remains, places, and materials; yet, examples such as this attempt to situate "evidence" above and beyond the sovereign rights of Indigenous peoples to prevent or approve excavation and other forms of destructive analysis. Second, the trope overlooks forms of science (building and testing models of how the world works based on empirical observations or experience) practiced within Indigenous communities since time immemorial (e.g., traditional ecological knowledge, the intellect and ingenuity required to build a pot or weave a basket, moving seasonally across regions,

etc.) and it segregates particular forms of knowing as secondary to western interests. The contribution of Michelle Lelièvre, Cynthia Martin, Alyssa Abram, and Mallory Morran to this thematic issue, for instance, represents a collaborative attempt to bring together Mi'kmaw and Western ways of observing and understanding the world, dubbed "Two-Eyed Seeing." Third, it ignores the growing number of Indigenous archaeologists who work with skill and nuance to merge Indigenous and Western epistemologies in their research and writing. In this sense, the trope also minimizes the many positive working relationships between Indigenous and archaeological communities to work productively on the excavation, study, and interpretation of cultural heritage. Mr. Tipon's work with archaeologists to assess the impacts of global climate change and sea level rise on ancestral sites and burials along the California coast was featured in the spring 2014 issue of *American Archaeology* magazine;<sup>48</sup> the next issue of the magazine bemoaned Graton's "secretive" efforts to protect ancestors exhumed from the Larkspur site.<sup>49</sup>

As examples like this reveal, the logic of settler colonialism is as much bound up in the thinking and routine techniques of archaeology as it is simultaneously saturated in spaces beyond the boundaries of most field and laboratory archaeological work. While a growing number of Native and non-Native archaeologists continue to strive for a decolonized archaeology, we can also point to a few compelling examples of structural changes that may ultimately help decenter archaeology's colonial episteme. In 2019 Canada enacted the Impact Assessment Act, designed in part to reinforce government commitments to Canada's First Nations by mandating project planners to consider Indigenous traditional knowledge alongside Western science.<sup>50</sup> *Scientific American* editors decried shortcomings in the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA), specifically the practice of destructive analysis on culturally unidentifiable human remains, not just because many Indigenous communities deeply object to such inhumane treatment of ancestral remains but "because collaboration might have enriched the study."<sup>51</sup> In a third example, California Governor Gavin Newsom ushered in a new era of reconciliation by publically apologizing "for the many instances of violence, mistreatment and neglect inflicted upon California Native Americans throughout the state's history" and establishing a Truth and Healing Council to help "clarify the record . . . on the troubled relationship between tribes and the state."<sup>52</sup> These

and other examples bring such themes as epistemic colonialism and structural change into public dialogue.

Of course, much must still be done to advance “change from the inside.”<sup>53</sup> As a core component of Atalay’s original call for a decolonized archaeology, we believe that pedagogical work is still needed, specifically teaching “indigenous archaeology” courses and training students in decolonizing field, laboratory, and collections-based research. Atalay’s model for community-based participatory research takes inspiration from the Anishinaabe concept of *gikinawaabi* (passing/sharing of knowledge from elders to youth) and Paolo Friere’s popular education approach to empower oppressed communities by conducting research cooperatively and producing knowledge that is relevant to those communities.<sup>54</sup> Quite successfully, Atalay peers beyond the tools and concepts of archaeology to develop a methodology that foregrounds the questions, ideals, and methods of Indigenous communities. How can we continue this project of undisciplining for the betterment of communities and practitioners engaged in archaeology?

We believe undisciplining and broad exposure to Indigenous and Western epistemologies by reading archaeology through critical Indigenous studies may be the best ways to continue the goal of decolonizing archaeological practice. Articles collected in this special issue of *AIQ* are examples of recent efforts in decolonial archaeology. Even as we highlight and encourage these positive examples and models, however, discussion with our colleagues returns our focus to those broader structures in need of undisciplining for it is not only archaeology in need of change. In academic settings, scholars committed to decolonial work feel the resistance of departments and promotion and tenure committees to accept the balance that is required to support equitable community collaboration, despite universities publicly claiming to support it. This is particularly difficult for untenured faculty who have few if any mentors who can help them navigate this conflict. Academic merit assessments remain intolerant of scholars’ respect for the refusals of community partners, only viewing academic peer-reviewed publications as adequate indicators of scholarly productivity, or seeing community collaborative projects as somehow less academically rigorous research. Many academic institutions champion interdisciplinary work but only in superficial ways, while in practice departments and disciplines are made to compete against one

another for shrinking resources in neoliberal universities. And in the nonacademic realm of cultural resource management, conditions are even more constrained. Although many government agency heritage professionals have a clear sense of how they could make their work more equitable, they remain at the mercies of declining fiscal support and laws that only seem to change in favor of industry and private interests. While the case studies collected in this themed issue and the examples we have sought to highlight in this introduction are signs of progress, we must acknowledge that the work to decolonize and decenter archaeology is still in the very early stages.

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#### NOTES

1. Sonya Atalay, “Guest Editor’s Remarks: Decolonizing Archaeology,” *American Indian Quarterly* 30, nos. 3–4 (Summer and Fall 2006): 269–79; Sonya Atalay, “Indigenous Archaeology as Decolonizing Practice,” *American Indian Quarterly* 30, nos. 3–4 (Summer and Fall 2006): 280–310.
2. Atalay, “Indigenous Archaeology,” 300.
3. Atalay, “Indigenous Archaeology,” 293–99.



4. Joe Watkins, *Indigenous Archaeology: American Indian Values and Scientific Practice* (Walnut Creek, CA: Alta Mira Press, 2000); Joseph R. Aguilar and Robert W. Preucel, "Sacred Mesas: Pueblo Time, Space, and History in the Aftermath of the Pueblo Revolt of 1680," in *The Death of Prehistory*, ed. P. R. Schmidt and S. A. Mrozowski (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 267–89; Sonya Atalay, *Community-Based Archaeology: Research with, by, and for Indigenous and Local Communities* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Chip Colwell-Chanthaphonh, T. J. Ferguson, Dorothy Lippert, Randall McGuire, G. P. Nicholas, J. E. Watkins, and L. J. Zimmerman, "The Premise and the Promise of Indigenous Archaeology," *American Antiquity* 75, no. 2 (2010): 228–38; Craig N. Cipolla, "Taming the Ontological Wolves: Learning from Iroquoian Effigy Objects," *American Anthropologist* 121, no. 3 (2019): 613–27; Jon Daehnke and Amy Lonetree, "Repatriation in the United States: The Current State of the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 35, no. 1 (2011): 87–97; T. J. Ferguson, Stewart B. Koyiyumptewa, and Maren P. Hopkins, "Co-Creation of Knowledge by the Hopi Tribe and Archaeologists," *Advances in Archaeological Practice* 3, no. 3 (2015): 249–62; Matthew Liebmann and Uzma Z. Rizvi, eds., *Archaeology and the Postcolonial Critique* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2008); Maxine Oland, Siobhan M. Hart, and Liam Frink, eds., *Decolonizing Indigenous Histories: Exploring Prehistoric/Colonial Transitions in Archaeology* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2012); Ian J. McNiven, "Theoretical Challenges of Indigenous Archaeology: Setting an Agenda," *American Antiquity* 81, no. 1 (2015): 27–41; Elizabeth Reetz and William Quackenbush, "Creating Collaborative Learning Opportunities for Indigenous Youth with Archaeology-Based Environmental Education," *Advances in Archaeological Practice* 4, no. 4 (2016): 492–502.

5. Bonaventura de Sousa Santos, *Epistemologies of the South: Justice Against Epistemicide* (London: Routledge, 2014).

6. Atalay, "Guest Editor's Remarks," 277.

7. Atalay, "Indigenous Archaeology."

8. Chris Anderson and Jean M. O'Brien, eds., *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies* (London: Routledge, 2017); Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith, eds., *Theorizing Native Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); Aileen Moreton-Robinson, ed., *Critical Indigenous Studies* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2016).

9. Santos, *Epistemologies*, 140–54, discusses the limits of archaeology and other social sciences, in that they perform as colonialist "knowledge as regulation" rather than "knowledge as emancipation." Daniel Heath Justice, "A Better World Becoming: Placing Critical Indigenous Studies," in *Critical Indigenous Studies*, ed. Aileen Moreton-Robinson (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2016), 23–24, comments on humility in understanding and research rather than "an extractive exercise of epistemic privilege." See also Tsim D. Schneider, "Dancing on the Brink of the

World: Seeing Indigenous Dance and Resilience in the Archaeology of Colonial California,” *American Anthropologist*, in press (2020).

10. David Hurst Thomas, *Skull Wars: Kennewick Man, Archaeology, and the Battle for Native American Identity* (New York: Basic Books, 2000); Chip Colwell, *Plundered Skulls and Stolen Spirits: Inside the Fight to Reclaim Native America’s Culture* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2016).

11. Chris Anderson, “Critical Indigenous Studies: Intellectual Predilections and Institutional Realities,” in *Critical Indigenous Studies*, ed. Aileen Moreton-Robinson (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2016), 49–66.

12. For example, Glen Sean Coulthard, *Red Skin White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014). See also Siobhan M. Hart, *Colonialism, Community, and Heritage in Native New England* (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2019), for a critical examination of cases where archaeology and heritage projects undertaken in collaboration with Native communities still fall quite short of equity.

13. La Donna Harris and Jacqueline Wasilewski, “Indigeneity, an Alternative Worldview: Four R’s (Relationship, Responsibility, Reciprocity, Redistribution) vs. Two P’s (Power and Profit). Sharing the Journey Towards Conscious Evolution,” *Systems Research and Behavioral Science* 21 (2004): 489–503.

14. Patrick Wolfe, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* 8 no. 4 (2006): 387–409; Robert Nichols, “Indigeneity and the Settler Contract Today,” *Philosophy and Social Criticism* 39, no. 2 (2013): 165–86; Manu Vimalassery, Juliana Hu Pegues, and Alyosha Goldstein, “Introduction: On Colonial Unknowing,” *Theory & Event* 19, no. 4 (2016), <https://muse.jhu.edu/> (accessed April 6, 2017), for a cogent critique of the limits of settler colonial frameworks; Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*.

15. See, for example, Gavin Lucas, “Forgetting the Past,” *Anthropology Today* 13 no. 1 (February 1997): 8–14. In some cases, the claiming of this lost past extends to making that past into a *white* past, as deftly argued by Zimmerman with regards to the Ancient One and the myths of the Moundbuilders. Larry J. Zimmerman, “Public Heritage, a Desire for a ‘White’ History for America, and Some Impacts of the Kennewick Man/Ancient One Decision,” *International Journal of Cultural Property* 12 (2005): 265–74.

16. See Sonya Atalay, *Community-Based Archaeology*; Gerald Vizenor, “Aesthetics of Survivance: Literary Theory and Practice,” in *Survivance: Narratives of Native Presence*, ed. Gerald Vizenor (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), 1–23.

17. Oddly enough, we see parallel concerns in archaeology and indigenous studies: both are widely interdisciplinary, both are troubled by conflicts in their scholarly home, both generally benefit from a kind of “theoretical promiscuity” per

Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith, "Introduction," in *Theorizing Native Studies*, ed. Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 1–30. The central aims, or perhaps constituencies, of archaeology and indigenous studies are radically different, however.

18. Vine Deloria Jr., *Custer Died for Your Sins: An Indian Manifesto* (New York: Macmillan, 1969), 94.

19. Elizabeth Cook-Lynn, "American Indian Studies: an overview," *Wicazo Sa Review* 14, no. 2 (1999): 9–28; also Chris Anderson and Jean M. O'Brien, "Indigenous Studies: An Appeal for Methodological Promiscuity," in *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies*, ed. Chris Anderson and Jean M. O'Brien (London: Routledge, 2017): 2–3; Aileen Moreton-Robinson, "Introduction: Locations of Engagement in the First World," in *Critical Indigenous Studies: Engagements in First World Locations*, ed. Aileen Moreton-Robinson (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2016), 6–8.

20. Anderson and O'Brien, *Sources and Methods*.

21. Aileen Moreton-Robinson, "Relationality: A Key Presupposition of an Indigenous Social Research Paradigm," in *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies*, ed. Chris Anderson and Jean M. O'Brien (London: Routledge, 2017), 71.

22. Kim TallBear, "Standing with and Speaking as Faith: A Feminist-Indigenous Approach to Inquiry," in *Sources and Methods in Indigenous Studies*, ed. Chris Anderson and Jean M. O'Brien (London: Routledge, 2017): 69–82. Alison Wylie, "Doing Archaeology as a Feminist: Introduction," *Journal of Archaeological Method and Theory* 14 (2007): 209–16. See also Christa Craven and Dana-Ain Davis, eds., *Feminist Activist Ethnography: Counterpoints to Neoliberalism in North America* (Plymouth, UK: Lexington Books, 2013).

23. Santos, *Epistemologies*.

24. Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus*; Coulthard, *Red Skin White Masks*.

25. Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

26. Ruth Wallis Herndon and Ella Wilcox Sekatau, "The Right to a Name: The Narragansett People and Rhode Island Officials in the Revolutionary Era," *Ethnohistory* 44, no. 3 (Summer 1997): 433–62; David J. Silverman, *Red Brethren: The Brothertown and Stockbridge Indians and the Problem of Race in Early America* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2010); Craig N. Cipolla, *Becoming Brothertown: Native American Ethnogenesis and Endurance in the Modern World* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2013); Katherine Howlett Hayes, *Slavery Before Race: Europeans, Africans, and Indians at Long Island's Sylvester Manor Plantation, 1651–1884* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

27. Russell G. Handsman and Trudie Lamb Richmond, "Confronting Colonialism: The Mahican and Schaghticoke Peoples and Us," in *Making Alternative Histories: The Practice of Archaeology and History in Non-Western Settings*, ed. Peter R. Schmidt and Thomas C. Patterson, (Santa Fe: School of American Research Press,

1995), 87–117; Stephen W. Silliman, “Culture Contact or Colonialism? Challenges in the Archaeology of Native North America,” *American Antiquity* 70, no. 1 (January 2005): 55–74.

28. This perception has been explicitly challenged by some archaeologists, for example: Siobhan M. Hart, “Mixed Assemblages and Indigenous Agents: Decolonizing Pine Hill,” *Northeast Anthropology* 68 (Fall 2004): 57–71; Stephen W. Silliman, “Change and Continuity, Practice and Memory: Native American Persistence in Colonial New England,” *American Antiquity* 74 no. 2 (April 2009): 211–30.

29. Michael Witgen, *An Infinity of Nations: How the Native New World Shaped Early North America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012).

30. See Waziyatawin, *What Does Justice Look Like? The Struggle for Liberation in Dakota Homeland* (St. Paul: Living Justice Press, 2008); Katherine Hayes, “Conflicts in Memory and Heritage: Dakota Perspectives on Historic Fort Snelling, Minnesota,” in *The Sound of Silence: Indigenous Perspectives on Historical Archaeology of Colonialism*, ed. Tiina Äikäs and Anna-Kaisa Salmi (New York: Berghahn, 2019), 162–81.

31. Heidi Bohaker, “Nindoodemag’: The Significance of Algonquian Kinship Networks in the Eastern Great Lakes Region, 1600–1701,” *William and Mary Quarterly*, 3<sup>rd</sup> Series, 63, no. 1 (2006): 23–52; Katherine H. Hayes, “Indigeneity and Diaspora: Colonialism and the Classification of Displacement,” in *Rethinking Colonialism: Comparative Archaeological Approaches*, ed. Craig N. Cipolla and Katherine Howlett Hayes (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 2015), 54–75.

32. Isabel Kelly, “Coast Miwok,” in *California*, ed. Robert F. Heizer, Handbook of North American Indians, vol. 8, William C. Sturtevant, general editor (Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC: 1978), 415.

33. Audra Simpson, “Why White People Love Franz Boas; or, The Grammar of Indigenous Dispossession,” in *Indigenous Visions: Rediscovering the World of Franz Boas*, ed. Ned Blackhawk and Isaiah Lorado Wilne (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2018), 167.

34. Alfred L. Kroeber, *Handbook of the Indians of California* (Washington, DC: Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 78, 1925), 464.

35. Simpson, “Why White People Love Franz Boas,” 167.

36. Beyond the work of Kroeber and his contemporaries, more recent writings apply a “carceral lens” to argue that Native baptisms at California missions resembled prison sentences and that a form of penal servitude enacted at California missions was the precursor to the modern mass incarceration system. Benjamin Madley, “California’s First Mass Incarceration System: Franciscan Missions, California Indians, and Penal Servitude, 1769–1836,” *Pacific Historical Review* 88, no. 1 (2019): 14–47.

37. Elizabeth Kryder-Reid, *California Mission Landscapes: Race, Memory, and the Politics of Heritage* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2016).

38. Paul Farnsworth, “Missions, Indians, and Cultural Continuity,” *Historical Ar-*

*chaecology* 26 no. 1 (1992): 22–36; J. Daniel Rogers, “The Social and Material Implications of Culture Contact on the Northern Plains,” in *Ethnohistory and Archaeology: Approaches to Postcontact Change in the Americas*, ed. J. Daniel Rogers and Samuel M. Wilson (New York: Plenum Press, 1993), 73–88.

39. See, for example, Lee M. Panich and Tsim D. Schneider, eds., *Indigenous Landscapes and Spanish Missions: New Perspectives from Archaeology and Ethnohistory* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014).

40. Tsim D. Schneider and Lee M. Panich, “Native Agency at the Margins of Empire: A California Perspective on the Role of Spanish Missions in the Indigenous Landscape,” in *Indigenous Landscapes and Spanish Missions: New Perspectives from Archaeology and Ethnohistory*, ed. Lee M. Panich and Tsim D. Schneider (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2014), 10.

41. Justice, “A Better World,” 21.

42. Benjamin Madley, *An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016).

43. Tony Platt, *Grave Matters: Excavating California’s Buried Past* (Berkeley: Heyday, 2011), 4. See also Lee M. Panich and Tsim D. Schneider, “Categorical Denial: Evaluating Post-1492 Indigenous Erasure in the Paper Trail of American Archaeology,” *American Antiquity* 84, no. 4 (2019): 651–68.

44. Orin Starn, “Here Come the Anthros (Again): The Strange Marriage of Anthropology and Native America,” *Cultural Anthropology* 26 no. 2 (2011): 187, emphasis in original.

45. One prevalent mode of instantiating this oppositional framing is for scientists to position themselves as victims whose demands are entirely reasonable, as in this recent publication: “we need to try to make progress beyond the situation we are facing right now, in which many researchers are reluctant to undertake any studies of Native American genetic variation for fear of criticism, and because of the extraordinary time commitment that would be required in order to accomplish all the consultations that some tribal representatives and scholars have recommended. This has had the effect of putting research into genetic variation among Native Americans into a deep chill—with far less research in this area going on than anyone but the people most hostile to scientific research would like.” In David Reich, *Who We Are and How We Got Here: Ancient DNA and the New Science of the Human Past*, (New York: Pantheon Books, 2018), 165. Such arguments have been anticipated and addressed by many scholars, for example, James Riding, “Our Dead Are Never Forgotten: American Indian Struggles for Burial Rights and Protections,” in *They Made Us Many Promises”: The American Indian Experience 1524 to the Present*, 2nd ed., ed. Philip Weeks. (Wheeling, IL: Harlan Davidson, Inc., 2002), 291–323; and Clayton W. Dumont Jr., “Contesting Scientists’ Narrations of NAGPRA’s Legislative History: Rule 10.11 and the Recovery of “Culturally Unidentifiable” Ancestors,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 26 no. 1 (Spring 2011): 5–41; Joanne Barker, “The Recognition of NAGPRA: A Human Rights Promise Deferred,” in *Recognition, Sovereignty Struggles, and Indig-*

*enous Rights in the United States, A Sourcebook*, ed. Amy E. Den Ouden and Jean M. O'Brien (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2013), 95–114; Dorothy Lippert, "Remembering Humanity: How to Include Human Values in a Scientific Endeavor," *International Journal of Cultural Property* 12 (2005): 275–80.

46. Peter Fimrite, "Indian Artifact Treasure Trove Paved Over for Marin County Homes: Archaeologists Crushed That Tribe Declined to Protect Burial Site," *San Francisco Chronicle*, April 22, 2014, <https://www.sfgate.com/bayarea/article/Indian-artifact-treasure-trove-paved-over-for-5422603.php>.

47. Fimrite, "Indian Artifact Treasure Trove."

48. Mike Toner, "The Threat of Climate Change: Persistent Drought, Intense Wild Fires, and Rising Sea Levels Are Endangering Myriad Archaeological Sites," *American Archaeology* 18 no. 1 (2014): 13–19.

49. Paula Neely, "Ancient Site's Cultural Resources Secretly Reburied: No Artifacts Were Recovered for Future Study," *American Archaeology* 18 no. 2 (2014): 10.

50. J. J. McCullough, "How Justin Trudeau Is Sacrificing Science in the Name of Aboriginal Peace," *The Washington Post*, April 13, 2018, <https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/global-opinions/wp/2018/04/13/how-trudeau-is-sacrificing-science-in-the-name-of-aboriginal-peace/>.

51. Editors, "Indigenous Remains Do Not Belong to Science." *Scientific American*, April 25, 2018, <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/indigenous-remains-do-not-belong-to-science/>.

52. State of California, "Governor Newsom Issues Apology to Native Americans for State's Historical Wrongdoings, Establishes Truth and Healing Council." Office of the Governor Gavin Newsom, June 18, 2019, <https://www.gov.ca.gov/2019/06/18/governor-newsom-issues-apology-to-native-americans-for-states-historical-wrongdoings-establishes-truth-and-healing-council/>

53. Atalay, "Guest Editor's Remarks," 270.

54. Atalay, "Indigenous Archaeology."

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