

Relations, not resources:
Dena K'éh as anti-colonial force against Yukon wildlife
management

by

Joshua Barichello

B.A., University of Alaska Fairbanks, 2012

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE

REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS

in

The Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

(Geography)

THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

(Vancouver)

July 2024

© Joshua Barichello, 2024

The following individuals certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies for acceptance, the thesis entitled:

Relations, not resources: Dena K'éh as anti-colonial force against Yukon wildlife management

submitted by Joshua Barichello in partial fulfilment of the requirements for

the degree of Master of Arts

in Geography

Examining Committee:

Glen Coulthard, Professor, Geography, UBC

Supervisor

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, Independent Scholar

Supervisory Committee Member

Michelle Daigle, Assistant Professor, Geography and Planning, University of Toronto

Supervisory Committee Member

Abstract

Dena K'éh, the Kaska Dena language, guides brilliant and complex relations with caribou and other non-human Dena; relations that collide with foundational principles of Yukon wildlife management. Through exploring important governance articulations of Kaska Dena language and the conceptual undertones encoded within them, as well as exploring deeper meanings (re)produced in the language of dominant Yukon wildlife management, I illustrate these ideological collisions, and demonstrate how language colonization is used in the Yukon settler colonial project to facilitate its goals. To me, anti-colonialism in Dena Kēyeh, or Kaska Dena territory, is about dismantling colonial structures of oppression, while also supporting the regeneration of relational responsibilities within Dena ethics. As I will attempt to demonstrate in the following story, resurgence of Dena language is critical and meaningful to that process.

Lay Summary

With this MA Thesis my goal is to demonstrate the incompatibilities between Yukon settler colonial wildlife management that is imposed in Kaska Dena territory and Kaska Dena relations with non-humans. Through exploring language ideology of both Kaska and English governance articulations, I draw attention to these incompatibilities.

Throughout the Thesis, I use story told in the first-person and through my own experiences, in order to build my argument and make for something that is enjoyable and accessible to read. I hope this Thesis can be useful to future Kaska Dena students and other community members invested in cultural and language resurgence and self-determination. I also hope this Thesis may be of use to the more general Yukon public, including law and policy makers, so that we can move away from the imposition of ongoing settler colonial wildlife management and language colonization practices in unceded Kaska Dena territory. I hope this Thesis may also be of support and value to other anti-colonial projects happening in the north and throughout Turtle Island.

Preface

This thesis is original, unpublished, independent work by the author, J. Barichello.

Table of Contents

Abstract	iii
Lay Summary	iv
Preface	v
Table of Contents	vi
List of Figures	vii
Acknowledgments	viii
Chapter 1: Introduction	1
1.1 Travelling Dena Kēyeh with Charlie	1
1.2 Background and Methodology	3
Chapter 2: Kaska Dena Refusal	7
2.1 Relations, not Resources	7
2.2 Collars of Control, Caribou as Capital	17
2.3 Kēyeh, not Wilderness	23
Chapter 3: Dena Language Brilliance	36
3.1 Language as Worldview, Language as Reality	36
3.2 Language Colonization	41
Chapter 4: Responsibility to Kēyeh	50
4.1 Code of Ethics, not the Wildlife Act	50
4.2 Inherent Responsibilities, not Aboriginal Rights	58
Chapter 5: Conclusion	70
5.1 Spaces of Generative Refusal	70
Bibliography	76

List of Figures

Figure 1	Map of Kaska Nation	4
Figure 2	Map of Yukon Outfitting Concessions	21
Figure 3	Map of Yukon Traplines	33

Acknowledgements

I am first and foremost grateful to the many Elders and teachers of Tū Łídlīni, who make the world a better place through sharing the brilliance and wisdom of their way. Teachings around deep relations with land and respect for all spirits resonate through these Elders. Teachings of being present and in the moment and not dwelling on material things resonate through these Elders. Teachings around the medicine shared through laughter resonate through these Elders.

For this project, I am specifically grateful to two Elder mentors that have deeply informed and impacted this work. Late Charlie Dick shows me that the land is braided with Dena meaning and that a fierce love for Dena land and Dena ways is naturally tied to a fierce resistance to colonialism. Also, through Norman Sterriah's enduring dedication and the way he shares his beautiful, collective, long-term vision, he has greatly contributed to instilling within me a deeply felt sense of responsibility to live with Dena ethics and to commit to the struggle.

I am also grateful to writer friends and mentors that dedicated time and knowledge to assisting with me for this project. I am grateful to my committee member Leanne Simpson for all the energy she put into helping me, for her teachings of thinking and feeling together and the importance of sharing your story, and for all the conversations we have around Dena and Anishinaabe brilliance that inspire me. I am grateful to my supervisor Glen Coulthard for the thought-provoking critiques and discussions, and for directing me to so much fascinating anti-colonial literature. I am grateful for to my other committee member Michelle Daigle for helping me navigate the UBC experience and assisting me with my research and writing. I thank other writer mentors and friends who have read parts of this and offered their support and guidance, including Elder

Mary Maje, Elder Testloa Smith, Gillian Staveley, Lianne Charlie, Kelsey Wrightson, and the Late Deborah Simmons. Each of you has helped me so much through reading parts of this and offer-ing your important feedback and encouragement.

And I am so grateful to my partner, Marissa Mills, and to my parents Norman Barichello and Barbara Gale, for always being there to listen to readings, for sharing their heartfelt insights, and for their continual rock solid love and support.

Chapter 1 - Introduction

1.1 Travelling Dena Kēyeh with Charlie

I used to travel with an Elder named Charlie Dick. We would sometimes go out trapping during the winter months on a trail that he and his family used, moving through country on a pair of old Yamaha Bravos - a northern favourite. The forest we travelled through was beautiful. Snow muffled sound and embodied calmness in gently decorating the still and sleeping spruce trees. In the beginnings of winter, early formations of ice formed crystal bridges across creeks, blanketing them from the advancing cold. Signatures of the land told stories - the heavy tracks of Moose weaving through a stand of willows at the creeks edge made earlier the same day, Wolf prints from a few days before that trotted along our skidoo trail, small footprints becoming smooth drag marks showing us where Otter playfully loped down a hill into a belly slide, and symmetrical lines in the snow carved by Ptarmigan wing feathers made while landing. During these trips with Charlie, my appreciation of the world around us shifted.

I would think of the Dena Elder traveling in front of me. As we moved through the forest to the steady hum of two-stroke engines and the smells of the bush, I would try to imagine what he was seeing. He grew up in the world that I was moving through. But it wasn't a world represented in maps that name these rivers and mountains after foreign white men who passed through here during the last few generations. It wasn't labelled as the boreal forest because of a set of standards defined by western scientists. It wasn't the world of wildlife populations that need to be managed as if they were part of a giant farm, and not the world of renewable resources waiting to become part of global markets through capitalist initiatives of extraction or preservation. He grew up in this Dena world, a world made safe through agreements with Giant Eagles and Wolverine People. He grew up in a world governed by a set of Dena ethics that guide respectful and peaceful relations amongst all relations here. He grew up in a world of greater self-determination; closer to a time when his people traveled as they pleased and weren't displaced through colonial towns, roads, mines, and big-game hunting outfits. Charlie is deeply connected to this world; he knows

of burial sites around the big lake ahead of us, and sites where important events have taken place and continue to take place. He knows where the moose concentrate, where the fish spawn, and where the geese land in the spring. He shows me that the entire world around us is rich with Dena history and meaning. His teachings help me understand, in a limited but significant way, that Dena meaning is braided into the rock cliffs, the willow meadows, and the mountain springs of this land.

Charlie speaks of the ancestral trails that lead to the mountain range to the south of us where his people hunted caribou and sheep in ingenious ways; the same mountains in which Government of Yukon Ministers recently issued an English mining company permits to run an open-pit lead-zinc mine.¹ Ministers, none of whom come from his nation, that are elected by the Yukon public and that actively insist that they have the ultimate authority to approve this mine within un-ceded Dena country, despite the emphatic opposition to the mine from both Charlie and his descendants. Charlie speaks of the lake to the north of us that saved his people during a famously challenging time in their history, and how today on the shores of that lake a man from far away runs a high-end lodge and makes big money through disrespecting Dena ethics by selling catch-and-release fishing expeditions in what he advertises as the “pristine wilderness of the Yukon.”² We travel to a lake named for a celebrated Dena hunt in which caribou were chased into snares, and to a mountain named for an event that took place at a time when Charlies’ ancestors were walking amongst Mammoths, both of which colonial maps have replaced with English names of men.

It was through travel and conversations with Charlie that I truly began to appreciate the depth of the lie that forms the settler colonial project here. Conversations with Charlie, sitting around his kitchen table eating pilot biscuits or drinking tea under spruce trees on the trapline trail, coupled with my language learning journey, has helped me understand a tiny

¹ <https://kudzzekayah.com/>

² <https://inconnulodge.com/>

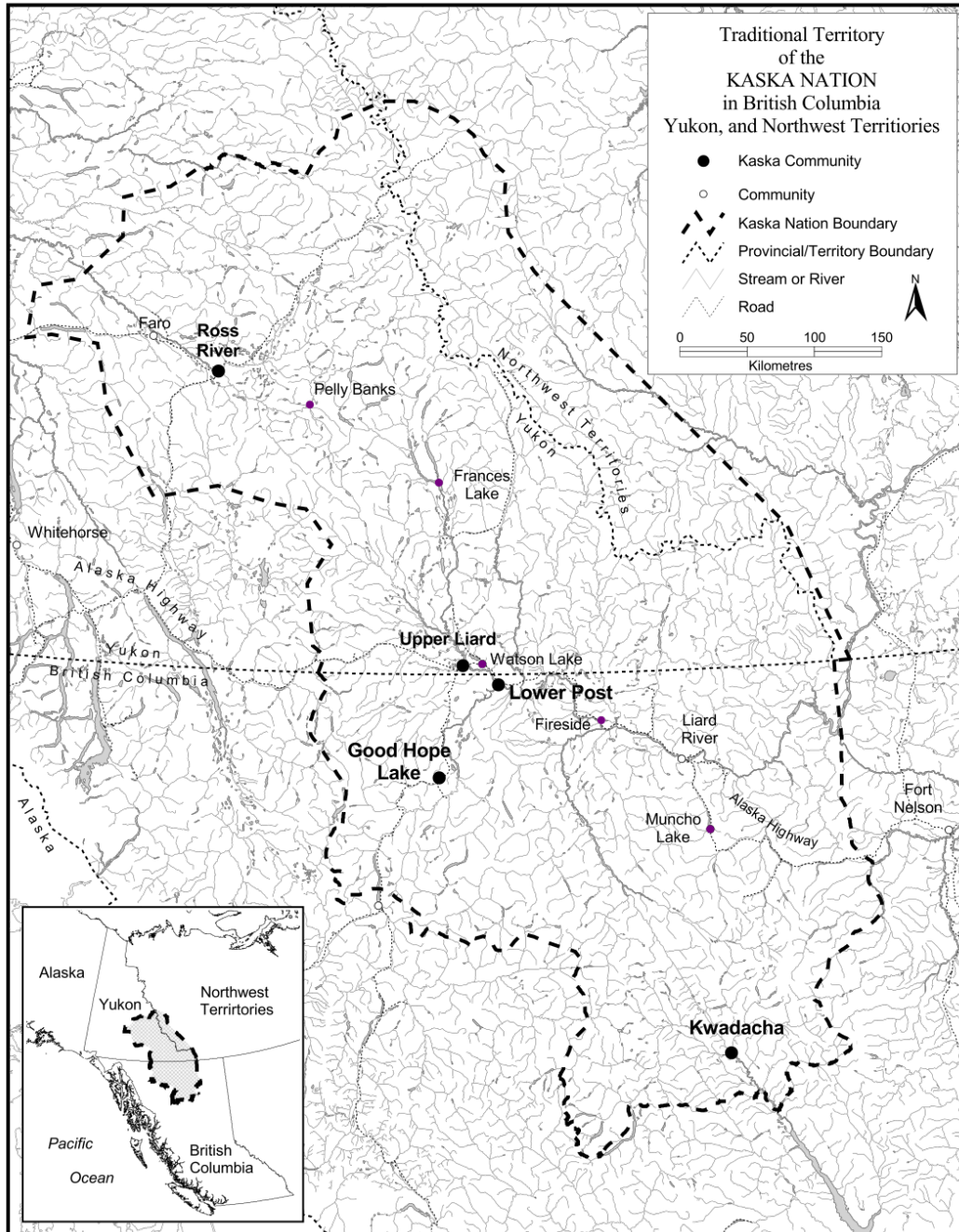
bit of the deep Dena brilliance that continues to inform the Kaska refusal of Yukon settler colonialism.

1.2 Background and Methodology

I am kuskāni, a white person. Today I spend my time between Tū Łídīini, or Ross River, in the unceded and ancestral homeland of the Kaska Dena (see Figure 1), and with my partner and family in their territory at Lhù'ààn Mân, or Kluane Lake. I grew up between two places: at a lake south of Kwanlinn, or Whitehorse, in the territory of the Kwanlinn Dun, and in the mountains of Dechin la', in the shared territory of the Kaska Dena and Shútah Dene. As a young boy at Dechin la' I came to know Charlie and many other Dena elders who would come there in the summer and fall months for Kaska Nation land claims negotiations, as well as to harvest caribou, moose, gofers, and medicines. This upbringing on the land, and at times immersed in Kaska Dena culture and politics, has greatly shaped my values and ethics. In 2007, as a 19 year old, I began working with the Ross River Dena Traditional Knowledge Program, under the guidance of Norman Sterriah, and the Elders of Tū Łídlīni.

It is with this background that I come to this work. It is work that I am passionate about, work that I love. But completing this MA Thesis has been a complicated journey for me. I completed my classes at UBC in 2018 and I have been writing this MA thesis for nearly five years. The writing itself isn't the complicated part. The writing has generally been a fascinating, calming, and creative process. Some days I have felt uplifted. But I have also felt conflicted about sharing this writing. As a kuskāni, knowledge of Kaska Dena culture and language is not my knowledge. Some western academics have abused Kaska Dena through theft and appropriation of their culture and language.

Figure 1 - Map of Kaska Nation



Kaska Dena knowledge has been misinterpreted or shared by outsiders with limited relations in Kaska Dena country and in ways that are not respectful of Kaska Dena ethics. At times I have struggled with the idea of publishing this writing at all. I have thought and felt through questions around this writing such as: “who am I publishing this for?”, “is it good for me to tell this story?”, and “who will benefit from this being published?”

After much internal thought and some important conversations with people that I trust and respect, I have decided to publish. This is because, while I fully acknowledge and hold the feelings I describe above, I also feel that sharing this writing is important. I hope this writing will be useful to younger generations of Kaska Dena writers and researchers in the future, or that it may help educate Yukon law and policy makers in much needed ways, and therefore be of service to the long-standing and ongoing Kaska Dena struggles for self-determination. I hope this writing can add to the many anti-colonial voices that strive to inspire Indigenous resistance and resurgence, and advocate for real change needed in mainstream society. I am also mindful of the Dena teaching to share what you know, or share your truth. Some of my most influential mentors, like Norman Sterriah and Leanne Simpson, have reminded me of this teaching throughout this project. So much of the knowledge shared here is not mine, I take no ownership over it. But I have been gifted with teachings and experiences that shape my understanding of the world, and I feel that sharing some of this both honours the spirits that passed knowledge to me, and may impact others who read this in good ways. Leanne Simpson (2017) speaks of the need to “create a generation of land-based, community-based intellectuals and cultural producers who are accountable to our nations and whose life work is concerned with the regeneration of these systems” (159). To me, anti-colonialism in Dena Kēyeh is about dismantling colonial structures of oppression, while also supporting the regeneration of relational responsibilities within

Dena ethics. As I will attempt to demonstrate in the following story, resurgence of Dena language is critical and meaningful to that process.

My methodology for this research is built around the Kaska Dena concept of Dena Á' Nézés. While I discuss the meaning of this more in Chapter 2, here I will say that Dena Á' Nézés is a Kaska Dena ethical articulation that brings individual and collective “thinking” and “feeling” together with Dena principles of respect. I understand the embodying of Dena Á' Nézés as walking with your mind and heart together towards respect for Dena ways. My ethical considerations for this project didn't start when I decided to write an MA thesis and they don't stop with this being published. As a kuskāni who is being adopted into the community of Tū Łídlīni and with deep relations amongst the larger Kaska Dena nation, I carry a responsibility that is significant to me not because of ethical standards set out by any post-secondary institution, but because of ethical standards instilled in me from Dena Elders who have trusted me with their brilliance, and because of my deep and longstanding relations with the community of Tū Łídlīni and my Dena family who are from there. As someone who has been connected to Kaska Dena political struggles since a young age, this responsibility is not something that I take lightly. For this project I strive to be guided by the Dena principle of Dena Á' Nézés- to follow my instinct, to centre important Dena teachings that have been passed to me around respect for all beings and commitment to the struggle for Kaska Dena self-determination and cultural resurgence, and to search for that energy where my mind and heart come together. This responsibility goes much further than an MA thesis; it is a responsibility that I carry with me throughout my life.

Chapter 2 - Kaska Dena Refusal

2.1 Relations, not Resources

“Indigenous bodies don’t relate to land by possessing or owning it or having control over it. We relate to land through connection- generative, affirmative, complex, overlapping, and nonlinear relationship.”

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, 2017

We bump along the old road across boulders and creeks as it weaves through mountains known in their Shútahot’íne language as Níó Nę P’énę- the backbone of the animals that travel here, the backbone of the world. This is a special place for me, where I take comfort. I grew up in the summer months in these mountains- in and around camp Dechin la’, the edge of the sticks. We have been travelling for close to three hours and at this point we are immersed in conversation. I wish I could stretch this out. I feel inspired.

Travelling with me is my friend and mentor, Leanne Simpson. We are talking about language and writing, community and academia, ethics and responsibility. I am feeling a lot better about this project. I am feeling less bound by the walls of the academy. Much of what Leanne shares affirms things for me. Our conversation re-energizes my excitement to research and to write. We speak of story; of how it is both Anishinabe and Dena ethic to share story. She talks about why she so often chooses to write in the first-person: because she can only really know the world through her own experience, and doesn’t assume to have access to universal truths. This teaching reminds me of the way the Elders back at camp walk through the world, but through conversation with Leanne I feel like I can more readily formulate that thought. A gyrfalcon dives in front of us, scattering a small group of ptarmigan into the willows.

*Our conversation flows to language. We talk about Anishinabe and Dena brilliance. Brilliance encoded in language. The many ways brilliance is intimately woven into the intimacies of language. We talk about translation: how challenging it is to convey meaning from languages like Kaska Dena with languages like English. Leanne shares with me something that she writes about in an earlier book and that she finds useful in conveying Anishinaabe meaning in English. She talks about exploring words on their own and searching for the smaller words within them. Through breaking concepts down and identifying the smaller words inside them that come together to form the concept, we can learn about the deeper meaning of the idea. Meaning that evades traditional western translation. As I listen to her share examples from within her language, I again feel hopeful. Mainstream translation tends to force equivalence, even where equivalence cannot exist. Today in Canada, the settler colonial project wants Indigenous translations. In the context of this research, the settler colonial project wants translations for concepts like “traditional law,” “wildlife management,” and “renewable resource.” The demand for translation is part of reconciliation, part of Indigenization. With translations like these, it is easier to incorporate, easier to integrate. As the late Sto:Loh poet, author, and academic Lee Maracle (1996) says in her book, *I am Woman*, “adding a sprinkling of our culture to European parasitic culture is offensive, particularly in the absence of an understanding of our laws and the philosophy that underlies them” (89). Sprinkling English-dominated and Eurocentric laws and policies with Indigenous terms chosen as translations to concepts like “renewable resource” epitomizes settler colonial integration, in masking colonial replacement behind “Indigenization,” or “co-management.”*

On the contrary, the practice Leanne is sharing attempts to centre Indigenous concepts themselves. While there is still a goal to articulate them and share their brilliance in English, the methodology is centred around hearing Indigenous concepts on their own terms. It is slower, more thoughtful. The first objective is to understand, rather than to translate. It feels respectful. As we approach camp we stop to watch a few caribou dancing over the uneven tundra in the distance. I am happy. I want to follow this thought stream more and see where it goes. I want to write.

Kaska Dena articulations of human-caribou relations do not represent caribou as resources. In fact, there is not a word in the Kaska Dena language for “resource.” Instead, governance that guides human relations with non-humans like caribou is articulated in ways such as Dena Á’ Nézén and Dena K’éh Gūs’ān. These articulations represent complex conceptions of a relational system of ethics that guides an individual’s interactions with their surroundings. In exploring the role of language in shaping our realities and values, Leanne Simpson says (2011), “breaking down words into the ‘little words’ they are composed of often reveals a deeper conceptual - yet widely held - meaning” (49). I like this process. It opens up possibilities of meaning not captured through standard translation; meanings that are closer to a concept’s essence. When thinking between languages as structurally and ideologically different from one another as English and Kaska Dena, where many words or terms are not conceived of in the other language, breaking Kaska Dena words down into their “little words” can open windows into meaning for which English cannot represent easily, if at all. While not a flawless means of representation, this process provides space to better hear and understand the brilliance of Kaska Dena.

Looking at one of the governance articulations referenced above, Dena Á’ Nézén, supports a fundamentally different relation than relations set out through such ideas as “resource management.” Dena (Dene, Diné, or Dän in other related languages), typically translated as “person,” reflects the close tie Dena have to land. It is a word that encompasses many beings. Mesgâ Dena (Raven Person), Gēs Dena (Salmon People), and Sōn Dena (Star People) all have their own characteristics and personalities and they bring their own lessons and morals to society. They play important roles in the history

of how the world came to be the way it is today. There are many stories of Dena changing form. Some Dena are even commonly referred to as family members, like Essū (Grandmother) Mouse. As Leroy Little Bear (2000) comments of the animate nature of Indigenous languages generally, "If everything is animate, then everything has a spirit and knowledge. If everything has a spirit and knowledge, then all are like me. If all are like me, then all are my relations" (2). From my understanding, the concept of Dena encompasses "all my relations," but more than this idea alone, encoded in the word is a deep sense of thinking and feeling alongside relations. The relations set out in Kaska Dena language, or Dena K'éh, between different Dena are incompatible with relations based on knowing caribou as "resources," or even as "wildlife."

The word Á' comes from Á'íi, a term embedded with power and a special level of respect. The teachings of Á'íi are embodied on a daily basis by the Elders of Tū Łídlíni, as they walk through the world. Some beings or places can be Á'íi. Special places on the land like mineral licks and historic battle sites have unique codes associated with them prohibiting people from camping too close to them or making loud noises there because of the Á'íi that surrounds them. Human actions that will result in negative consequences can be Á'íi. When people are too greedy over what they have and don't embody the Dena principle of sharing they might get bad luck because it is Á'íi to behave in this way. Similarly, it is Á'íi to step over important tools like guns and fish nets and if done, the hunters and fishers using them might get bad luck in their harvest pursuits. Animals that have special powers and therefore must be treated extra carefully can be Á'íi. Because of the Á'íi around them, animals like Tēzūne (River Otters) must be skinned and cleaned in the bush away from villages or camps. Witnessing certain phenomena that are considered omens can be Á'íi.

I acknowledge the impossibility of accurately describing the essence of the concept with the words available to us in the language I am using on this page, and through my Anglo-dominant mind. But I believe it is fair to say that Á'ii is about respect. Here I am describing respect in a deeper sense than the way we understand the word in English, inspired by northern Indigenous world views and explored in Nicole Wilson's (2018) work. Here, I am using the word respect in a way that encompasses principles of relationality, responsibility, and reciprocity. Living according to Á'ii instills people with a profound sense of respect for themselves, for one another, and for the world around them. Á'ii is a constant reminder of the implications that your actions will have; it emphasizes the need to think about how your actions will impact others; to be conscious of the collective; to walk with empathy.

Finally, the word Nézén is used in many contexts. Nézén is a third-person conjugation of the verbs "to think", and "to feel." I see the use of this word in a core governance articulation, such as Dena Á' Nézén, as brilliant and meaningful. Nézén is not gendered. It is neither "he thinks" nor "she thinks." The word, like all other verbs in Dena languages, does not distinguish between the two genders that are present in English. As Oscar Dennis (2000) says of Tāhtān, a language closely related to Kaska Dena, "from a Tāhtān perspective, we do not see others in terms of their gender. Rather, we simply see them as another person- a major difference in worldview, in comparison to English, and the grammar reflects this difference" (51). The gender-less nature of Dena languages forces us to think critically about the gender binary that English constantly represents and (re)produces. Nézén is also more than any one of the English verbs "thinking" or "feeling" on their own. Rather, it is thinking and feeling at once, or blending them together. Kaska Dena Elders will often say that when speaking in English you are speaking through your head, but when speaking in Kaska Dena you are speaking

through your heart. Perhaps the Nézén concept reflects this. When used in such a core governing principle as Dena Á' Nézén, it brings the intimate and collective spheres together. Soren Larsen and Jay Johnson (2017) write that "affect is impersonal: individual bodies are its effect rather than its source" (87). Like their argument that the call of place is affective through bringing bodies to its defence, I see the governing principle of Dena Á' Nézén as affective in its representation and creation of a relational and ethical responsibility, intimate and collective at once, that blurs English-language ideological divisions between thinking and feeling. Dena Á' Nézén łā dāchō. It's big.

The incompatibility between the resource relationship produced by settler colonialism and Kaska Dena governance is common throughout Indigenous nations. Many Indigenous scholars have spoken to fundamental differences between their own governance practices and the resource relationship. Cree geographer Michelle Daigle (2016) explains that according to her Cree law (Awawanenitakik), land is "an animate being, a relative, a food provider, and a teacher of law and governance to whom [her people] are accountable" (266). Similarly, Anishinaabe scholar Vanessa Watts (2013), in describing what she calls "place-thought," says that "habitats and ecosystems are better understood as societies from an Indigenous point of view; meaning that they have ethical structures, inter-species treaties and agreements, and further their ability to interpret, understand, and implement" (23). Humans, like rocks, trees, and caribou, belong to this society, but contrary to European ideology and its Christian influence, humans do not preside over the other beings in these societies. According to this logic, caribou are not resources within the domain of humans. As Glen Coulthard (2014) describes of his Dene governance, "Ethically, this meant that humans held certain obligations to the land, animals, plants, and lakes in much the same way that we have obligations to other people. And if these obligations were met, then the land, animals, plants, and

lakes would reciprocate and meet their obligations to humans, thus ensuring the survival and well being of all over time" (70). Coulthard calls this ethical system grounded normativity and he illustrates how this ethic has informed Dene resistance to settler colonialism in the Northwest Territories.

Defining caribou as a resource implies a relationship between humans and caribou that is based not on the accountability that Daigle and Coulthard describe, but on human management and control of caribou. According to Tanana poet and scholar Dian Million, this ideology is counter to Indigenous ways of being. As she suggests (2013), "Indigenism as a philosophy argues that humans are embedded in a web of larger relationships that is life. Life cannot be reduced to the property relationship implied by resource" (173). From this perspective, capitalism itself, which necessarily defines caribou as resources and calls for their exploitation, is inherently counter to Indigenous ways of life. Shiri Pasternak (2017) shows that in the Algonquin language of Barriere Lake, the word used to translate the idea of "ownership" is virtually the same as the word used to translate the idea of "belonging" (105). This is interesting, given the stark ideological distinction between the respective English words. In the big-game hunting industry on Kaska Dena land, the outfitter's ownership of the hunting concession grants him the exclusive right to sell hunts there. This ownership really has nothing to do with belonging; what is implied is a right to control, exploit, and benefit, without the sense of accountability embedded in Dene grounded normativity described by Coulthard, or in the similar Algonquin translations of "to own" and "to belong." As Simpson (2017) describes of her Nishnaabeg philosophy, "the opposite of dispossession is not possession, it is deep, reciprocal, consensual attachment" (43) and that Indigenous ways do not relate to land through ownership or control, but through connection. I believe that

this idea is also central to Kaska Dena resistance to Canadian land claims and to the incompatibility between Dena Á' Nézén and the land claim process applied in the Yukon, under the Umbrella Final Agreement (UFA). Ethics of Dena Á' Nézén instil the value that land cannot be possessed, bought, sold, or traded by human beings. And the Dena that were making political decisions for their people during the time of land claims negotiations could likely not reconcile their ethical responsibilities to land and to their future generations with the language of ownership and control set up in the final agreement framework.

The dominant settler colonial Yukon society governs human relations with caribou according to the Yukon Fish and Wildlife Management Act, legislation that is based on Chapter 16 of the UFA, called "Fish and Wildlife," of which a central objective is "to renew and enhance the renewable resource economy" (Council of Yukon First Nations, Umbrella Final Agreement, 169). Consider that this is one of the principle objectives in a chapter that outlines society's governance of our relation to what is classified as "fish and wildlife." The conceptual undertones in this language say a lot; the objective exemplifies capitalist logics around human relations with animal-Dena. While I predominantly focus on caribou in this thesis, I am mindful that there are countless other so-called "renewable resources" that this discussion could be built around, from salmon, to spruce.

The language used in the objective represents caribou as a resource, a term defined by the Oxford English dictionary as "a stock or supply of money, materials, staff, and other assets, that can be drawn on by a person or organization when necessary" (Oxford English Dictionary). When defined as such, caribou exist for human use. In the part of

the world where I write this, the un-ceded country of the Kaska Dena, Gudzh is this animal's name. How is it that Gudzh can be understood and treated as an asset that exists in order to be used and managed by humans- especially by those of us not even from here? How is it that an ideology so distinct from Kaska Dena relational governance described above has become so dominant in how we govern human relations with Gudzh on Kaska Dena land?

The framing of Gudzh as a resource can be easily tied to its colonial European roots. It is dependent not only on the separation of humans from non-humans, but also on the hierarchical ordering of humans above non-humans. This is an idea that Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2002) traces back to classical Greek philosophy, with the separation of people from the world around them and the placing of humanity on a "higher plane (than animals and plants) because of such characteristics as language and reason" (101). This intense stratification has been fundamental to European colonial projects. As Tuscarora/Iroquois scholar Vera Palmer explains, in her territory Christian missionaries heavily advocated for people's abandonment of their affiliation with a Haudenosaunee clan (such as Beaver, Eel, or Wolf), because of the heathen significance of symbolizing one's identity with an animal of the sinful earth (2014). All over the world, colonizers have utilized binary separations and hierarchical orderings such as humans above nature (but also men above women, and white bodies above non-white bodies) in facilitating colonial projects. According to this logic, humans are separate from 'nature,' and they preside over 'nature.' In Paul Nadasdy's (2017) critique of the UFA, based on his work with the Lhù'ààn Mân Dän of the Kluane First Nation, he describes how the very European concept of sovereignty includes not only the humans living within the territory claimed by the sovereign, but also the land itself and the non-human beings, or "resources," that live there. According to this view, Gudzh that make

their home within the political borders of the Yukon, a defined territory of the sovereign state of Canada, are conceptually transformed into resources for the common Yukon good, to be managed and controlled by Yukon authorities within the settler colonial system, according to principles of western wildlife management.

Wildlife management itself is an interesting concept. In Spanish, one meaning of the verb “manejar” is to “rule the horse” (Real Academia Española). The word management, like manejar, comes from the idea of human hands (“manus” in latin) manipulating and controlling their surroundings. Definitions of management consistently refer to controlling people, or other resources (ex. Cambridge Dictionary). Wildlife management exemplifies paternalism. It is a practice that assumes humans should control caribou and other wildlife for their own benefit, and other societal benefits. As a model “based on an agricultural metaphor” (Nadasdy 2017, 129), control is central to wildlife management. Personal ownership of land and the ability to influence one’s surroundings through intense manipulation of variables (such as where and how crops are planted, when animals get fed, and predation control), are tenets of agriculture. In Dena Kēyeh, a shining example of YG’s agricultural metaphor approach to wildlife management can be seen through it’s “wolf-control” project conducted in the 1990’s. This was an expensive and controversial project in which wolves were shot and killed from helicopters in an attempt to reduce their numbers and thereby increase moose and caribou populations. While the project failed to meet it’s goals of creating a consistently reduced wolf population in the area, as demonstrated by former YG Wolf Biologist Bob Hayes (2016), the practice has also frequently been critiqued for the intense, control-based ethics that it is based upon.

Caribou are not livestock and their vast homelands are not farms. Norman Sterriah is a well-respected Kaska Dena Elder and an important mentor of mine. In his words, “they [settlers] brought a management system from the old country that doesn't work here; it’s not from here” (Charlie and Barichello, 2022). Throughout the territorial north, Indigenous Knowledge Holders and wildlife biologists agree that, with a few exceptions, almost every caribou herd is in danger today. Despite the last 50-80 years of calculated approaches to caribou conservation, the federal government’s Species At Risk Act currently classifies boreal caribou as “threatened” and many other mountain caribou herds as “of special concern” or “at risk” (Charlie and Barichello, 2022). In light of this, Norman’s comment rings true; the dominant western wildlife management approach to governing human relations with caribou is not working.

2.2 Collars of Control, Caribou as Capital

“The idea of wildlife management, rooted as it is in the political and economic context of capitalist resource extraction and based on an agricultural metaphor, sits uneasily alongside Yukon Indian people’s ideas about proper human-human and human-animal relations”

Paul Nadasdy, 2017

In 2004, my dad, Norman Barichello, and his friend and co-worker Testloa Smith, went to visit Testloa’s parents at their camp in the bush. Tom and Tillie Smith were well respected Kaska Dena Elders. They had spent much of their lives in the heart of caribou range. As part of the Ross River Dena Traditional Knowledge Program, Testloa and my dad were working on a project to document caribou movements. They brought along a set of blank maps and proceeded to ask Tom and Tillie about the movements of the caribou herd. Over the course of a couple pots of red rose tea and a frying pan of bannock, Tom and Til-

lie spoke about caribou in the area. They pointed on the maps to the mountains cow caribou like to give birth, and where the cows and young calves go to gather in big groups in early summer. Tom and Tillie showed where the bulls hang out during the summer, and where they gather during the rut. They showed which way different groups of caribou go after the rut and which valleys and forests the caribou like to spend most time in the winter. They spoke of the different groups of caribou, groupings more specific and informative than Yukon government's classification of herds based on core winter ranges. Tom and Tillie spoke of the many different kinds of caribou in their language, sharing unique names for a young bull, a cow without a calf, or a big bull, and they spoke of different relational Dena codes associated with these different kinds of caribou. They spoke about the changes in caribou movements they had witnessed during their lives or had been taught from generations before them, and they spoke of what they understood to be the most significant threats to caribou today, based on their wealth of knowledge and experience living amongst caribou.

At the end of the interview, Testloa showed his parents another map: YG's knowledge on the herd's movements, obtained through some forty years of radio collar data. The map produced through a short conversation with these two Elders showed everything that YG's map did, only with greater detail around certain times and areas. Instead of simply classifying the winter range as one polygon, for example, the map produced by the Tom and Tillie detailed caribou movements throughout the winter range, from when the snow is shallow in November to when it is deep in March. When Tom saw YG's map, he wasn't surprised at all. "Yeah...same thing," he said, embodying respect and generosity to the western knowledge. While unsurprising to us as well, the visit with Tom and Tillie and the map they produced through memory and oral history demonstrates that YG's practice of radio collaring, aside from being unethical and counter to Kaska Dena principles, is also unnecessary.

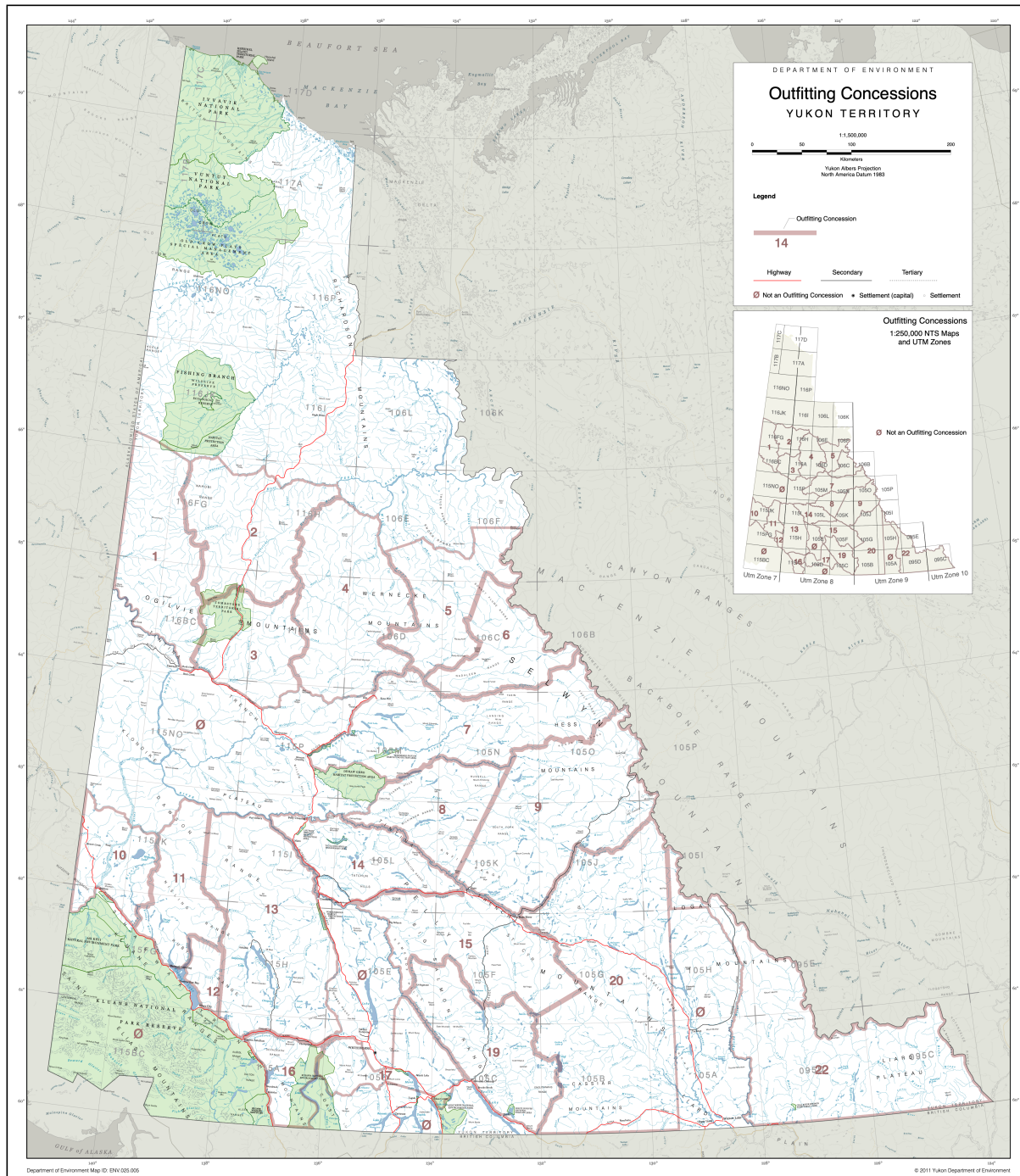
Part of the YG's management of caribou has involved using radio telemetry collars on them to record their movements. For many years, YG has practiced this in Kaska Dena country despite the repeated and emphatic opposition from Kaska Dena leaders and Elders. The practice involves tranquilizing caribou with a dart shot from a plane or helicopter, and then strapping a collar around their neck and monitoring their movements remotely from an office, usually in Whitehorse. Over the years, I have witnessed countless events in which Kaska Dena Elders and leaders have voiced their disapproval and frustration around this practice to YG authorities. My impression is that typically the concerns centre around the idea of control; it is not ethical for humans to play with animal-Dena and force them to wear a collar so that we can remotely track them. As Nadasdy (2017) says of radio collaring, "through such practices, wildlife biologists impose upon animals their own time schedules, budgets, and research agendas." He describes it as "an attempt to wrest knowledge from them by force" (292). If caribou were treated as a relative, and not as a resource, the practice of radio collaring wouldn't take place; it exemplifies wildlife management's hierarchal ordering of humans above caribou spoken to above.

Another important related aspect of the conceptual understanding of caribou as a resource is that ideologically, this representation changes caribou into a material that exists for human use. When coupled with hierarchal separation, caribou become exploitable. It incorporates their lives into an economy that is built upon principles of free-market capitalism. Coulthard's work (2014) shows that capitalism in settler colonial situations has centred on the dispossession of Indigenous peoples from their lands and ways of life in order to create dependency on the capitalist market and then exploit Indigenous communities inside that economy. Importantly, this process is ongoing and not simply a stage of settler colonialism.

This is clearly demonstrated through a look at the big-game hunting industry in Kaska Dena territory. After Canada's many policies of removing Kaska Dena from the land, both forcefully- through such practices as residential schools and relocations- and coercively- through the collapse of the fur trade and other "bush economies" and the establishment of resource-extractive wage labour in their place (ex. Asch, 1977)- Yukon created massive Outfitting Concessions in Kaska Dena territory and sold these concessions to men who have gone on to sell the lives of caribou and other 'wildlife' through sport-hunting tourism. People from anywhere in the world come into Dena territory and pay an Outfitting company big money for the experience of shooting animal-Dena and bringing their heads back home, without any form of Kaska Dena consent required. Today, seven different businesses own concessions that operate fully or partly within the Ross River Dena Area (see Figure 2). All of these companies are owned and operated by white men; none of whom reside in Ross River. The industry targets the elite: tourist hunters pay tens of thousands of dollars for the experience. Hunters are not required to obtain an invitation from the Dena to come and hunt in their homeland; they don't even have to notify them. Yukon Outfitting companies have little to no formal responsibility to the Dena. Unlike even mining or forestry companies, Outfitters do not negotiate Social Economic Participation Agreements (SEPA's) with the Indigenous nation where they run their business. While in this industry southerners are venturing north in search of horns and antlers instead of rocks, it remains an archaic settler colonial practice based on Yukon wild-west, frontier culture, akin to the days of the Gold Rush.

In the Yukon and NWT, most Outfitting Concessions were established in the mid 20th century. In the early days, many local Dena men were employed as guides to work for the Outfitters. Commonly, Dena were hired as guides when the Outfitters were new to

Figure 2 - Map of Yukon Outfitting Concessions



the territory, only to be replaced with white guides once the newcomers had learned of Dena trails and important hunting locations. In this case, the industry has exploited and commodified not only the land, wildlife, and people, but also- and critically- Dena knowledge. Historic trails and lookouts, locations of mineral licks, seasonal movements of moose, caribou and sheep, as well as places where they congregate, and other important Dena knowledge was, and remains, crucial to the success of big-game outfitting. Brilliance of Dena knowledge that has come to be through thousands of years in this country, and that is deeply connected to Dena ethics, was violently brought into settler colonial Yukon's capitalist economy, in order to enhance an economic endeavour that relies on the understanding of caribou as a resource. Still today the outfitting industry in Kaska Dena territory is reliant on this stolen knowledge and there has yet to be any form of compensation offered from the industry, despite the deep and layered exploitation that has occurred.

Ongoing representations of caribou as a resource and the subsequent objective of "enhanc[ing] the renewable resource economy" create and uphold relationships of domination that are incompatible with Kaska Dena relational obligations to caribou. While not Dena myself, I have learned that Kaska Dena ethical systems should guide all our relations with this land and the others, like Gudzh, that live here. Elders have taught me that any of us visitors here, whether here for one week or for multiple generations, should relate to this world according to Dena ethics. This is Dena country, after all. Given the deep conceptual understandings encoded in Dena language, and the colliding worldview fostered by use of English, resurgence of Kaska Dena as the language of individual and collective governance here is an important part of anti-colonialism.

2.3 Kēyeh, not Wilderness

“Before the settlers came here, our Dena tracks were all over the place, you know.”

Mary Maje, 2022

Throughout 2012 the Ross River Dena Traditional Knowledge Program was tasked with making a Land-Use Plan (LUP) for the Ross River Area of Kaska territory. The LUP fell out of a precedent-setting court case that the RRDC had won related to the staking of mineral claims in its territory. Effectively, the BC Court of Appeal ruled that YG couldn't continue allowing for its free-entry mineral staking regime in the Ross River Area without: a) consulting and accommodating RRDC around which parts of its territory would be open for mineral exploration, and b) notifying and accommodating RRDC before allowing for mineral exploration in its territory.³

While YG didn't collaborate with us on a LUP as they had previously committed to, we set out to work with the Ross River Dena community to determine which parts of Dena Kēyeh, if any, people would want to open to mineral exploration, given acceptable benefits. We gathered with the Elders Council and documented stories, and Dena land-use rhythms. We printed maps and drew lines all over them. We delineated family use areas, important hunting and fishing areas, grave sites and battle sites, places of legend, historic trails, people's cabin sites, and on and on.

It was a complicated exercise. It was challenging. We were discussing the value of land, and in a way, we were asking people to assign different values to different parts of land. A lot of emotion came up around this practice. Some folks advocated for the need to do it this way. They argued that there was no chance of YG adopting any of what we produced unless some areas were left open to mining; unless it in part resembled western land-use planning. Some folks felt that the mining industry does offer some employment for Kaska

³ https://www.yukoncourts.ca/sites/default/files/documents/en/2012_ykca_14_rrdc_v_yukon.pdf

and so we should not close the entirety of the territory to mining. They argued that we needed to identify which areas are most important, culturally and ecologically, and protect these places, but also leave some less-valued areas open to mining. They argued that the alternative may well be continuing with the disturbing reality in which no land is protected.

But some did not agree with this approach. Maybe it reminded them of land claims negotiations, in which the demand was for land to be understood as property, divided up like a puzzle, and assigned different values. I clearly remember listening to Elder Mary Maje speak. Mary is someone that I deeply respect. She is a strong Kaska Dena woman who embodies Dena ethics. She was against the process by which we were undertaking the LUP. She spoke passionately and at length and we listened to her. Mary's arguments centred around her refusal to legitimize a process based on assigning different values to different parts of Dena Kēyeh. She insisted that this way of doing things was counter to her Dena teachings. She explained that every creek and crevice and corner of Dena Kēyeh holds its own intrinsic value, that the caribou, or the grayling, or the tamarack might not agree with our classifications. Mary spoke of the ones who were not yet born; that they too may not agree with the differing values we assign, that some values change over time. That the land itself will change, as it always has.

Despite our attempts to sway her, to "get her on board" with this process, in the hope of at least having colonial governments recognize a good portion of her territory as off-limits to mineral exploration, Mary did not budge. She stayed in the workshops and she shared her deep knowledge of the land. We had fierce debates and we had belly laughs. But she maintained her stance that she could not endorse a process that placed differing hierarchal values to different parts of Dena Kēyeh. In the end, the LUP was approved by the Ross River Dena Council. But as time has gone on, I often think about Mary's message. I have come to appreciate that her message is guided by the depth of what is in fact Dena Kēyeh.

Her words during those meetings teach us that Kēyeh is so much more than its English translations “country” or “land.”

Another important objective of the UFA is defined in Chapter 12 as “to recognize and enhance, to the extent practicable, the traditional economy of Yukon Indian People and their special relationship with the wilderness Environment” (Council of Yukon First Nations, Umbrella Final Agreement, 101). Here I will explore two concepts that are core to this objective: *wilderness* and *Yukon Indian People*. Firstly, the concept of “the wild” has flourished in Canadian settler colonial narratives. It is based on European notions of vast masses of land as untouched by humans and in so-called pristine states. Settler colonialism has depended on the representation of Indigenous territories as wilderness; as terra nullius; as empty, an ideology that supports the perception of land as available for settlement.

In Dena Kéh, the most common way of referring to Kaska Dena country is Dena Kēyeh. Kē means “feet” and yéh means “with.” Dena Kēyeh therefore might be comparable to something like, “that with Dena feet.” Senses of belonging and connectedness to land are actually woven into the concept. Rather than understood as empty and removed from human influence, Dena Kēyeh is in fact where people walk. Dependent on the presence of Dena feet, Kēyeh is inseparable from relationship with Dena. It does not exist without being in relation with Dena feet, or kē. As Norman Sterriah says, “wherever you go on this land, you are walking in somebody’s tracks. Somebody walked there before you” (2010). Larsen and Johnson (2017) write of the related Cheslatta word for land (kayah), “The literal translation is ‘the area in which one walks’”

and, "Land was walked into being through places- lakes, rivers, mountains, villages, sacred sites, and numerable other storied locales" (26). Feet move through and with land to produce and reproduce Kēyeh. Kēyeh is the sacred meeting of feet and land as relations.

In contrast, wilderness invokes an idea that people don't belong; or as it is defined in the Oxford English Dictionary, "a wild or uncultivated region or tract of land, uninhabited, or inhabited only by wild animals." The idea of wilderness clashes with Kēyeh; feet are not part of wilderness; in some cases feet are not even welcome in wilderness. But there are no places in Dena Kēyeh that people do not take care of or have not inhabited. Here there is no wilderness. Wilderness cannot exist in the continual meeting of Dena feet and land that is Dena Kēyeh. Settler colonial representations of land as empty wilderness are an insult to longstanding Dena history here, and these representations ideologically collide with a Dena worldview.

Leslie Main Johnson is an ethnoecologist whose work centres around Indigenous classifications of landscapes. After working with some Kaska Dena Elders, Johnson (2010) reflected that, "[she] could not draw a landscape block diagram on the basis of [her] experience with the Kaska Dena," something she attributed to the fact that "key aspects of human interaction with land could not be fixed in space, drawn definitively, and labelled" (106). Dena understanding of land is very much relational. As relations with Kēyeh are not static, neither is Kēyeh itself; it does not lend itself to the containment and classification intrinsic to land designations described inside English language ideology.

For any Indigenous homeland to be understood by the settler as empty space, Indigenous peoples and their signs on the land (histories, trails, and place names) must be replaced. As Patrick Wolfe (2006) says, "settler colonialism destroys to replace," and,

“the primary motive for elimination is not race (or religion, ethnicity, grade of civilization, etc) but access to territory” (388). Access to territory in settler colonial projects has required the representation of empty land, or terra nullius, a violent technique used against Indigenous peoples with the central mission of erasing Indigenous presence and justifying settlement. Maps have been one tool used in this process of erasure. Aside from being crucial to producing and maintaining the sovereignties, divisions and hierarchies discussed more in other parts of this story, maps also play an important role in conceptualizing space in terms familiar to a European worldview; in incorporating land into a grid that facilitates its measurement and management (Harris 2004, 175). In the words of Larsen and Johnson (2017), “Erased of placed knowledge, these blank spaces on the map could be filled with settlers, cows, sheep, crops, railroads; the fabric of colonial resource extraction” (105). Maps themselves have been a tool of this erasure.

Maps have also been crucial in assisting settler colonial language replacement, through re-naming the land. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2002) says that “renaming the land was probably as powerful ideologically as changing the land” (107). When places in Dena Kēyeh are represented and referred to in their colonial (usually English) names, multiple forms of violence are inflicted. Kaska Dena histories, knowledge, and presence are erased, and settler existence on Kaska Dena land is normalized. Naming mountains, rivers and lakes after men is another form of establishing man’s domination over land, through perpetuating understandings of the dominance of men, and of land as a resource. Renaming exemplifies the power of language and works alongside terra nullius representations to justify colonial settlement. In the Yukon, places haven’t only been renamed on maps, but in a related settler colonial effort of replacement, vast parts of Dena Kēyeh and other Indigenous homelands are called “wilderness.”

Notions of pristine wilderness are especially central to Canadian settler colonialism. lyko Day (2017) illustrates capitalism's reliance on human/nature and city/wilderness dualities in Canadian settler colonial contexts. Through looking at North American paintings and photography of "natural landscapes," Day argues that iconic North American art, such as paintings from the Group of Seven, work to erase histories of the dispossession and domination of Indigenous peoples, and replace them with ideas of an ancient and noble Native way, while also emphasizing settler relations to land intricately tied to capitalist exploitation. In this sense, settler notions of wilderness at once erase Indigenous history and presence, solidify the settler Canadian identity, and facilitate capitalist exploitation. Returning to Dena Kēyeh as a concept invokes a dramatically different reality: as a relation between Dena and land itself, Dena Kēyeh centres Dena presence, while rejecting capitalism, wilderness, and settler colonial practices of erasure. As demonstrated through the Dena wisdom embodied in the story of our Land-Use Planning meetings, the concept of Dena Kēyeh even triggers interrogation of common western standards around land planning and land management that rely on static divisions and classifications of land.

The other concept core to the objective explored here, "Yukon Indian Person," is defined at the outset of the UFA as "a person enrolled under one of the Yukon First Nation Final Agreements" (Council of Yukon First Nations, 9). Therefore, this definition should exclude Kaska Dena, as Canada wasn't successful in their attempt to reach a final agreement with the Kaska. Problematically, Yukon Government still imposes UFA-legislation on Kaska Dena inside the Yukon and treats Kaska Dena as "Yukon Indian People." Aside from the obvious issues with the word "Indian," a term used here because 500 years before the ratification of the UFA, Christopher Columbus got lost and confused the Taino territory where he landed for India, there are other important reasons why Kaska Dena may not want to be called Yukon Indian People. For one, this

definition ties Kaska Dena to the borders of the Yukon and therefore solidifies Kaska individuals as Yukon citizens, and by extension citizens of Canada. Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson (2014) describes the “granting of citizenship” as “the primary way in which the state’s power is made real and personal” (18). By making Indigenous people citizens of the nation-state with the accompanying rights as citizens, the settler colonial project pushes them to search for self-determination through recognition of the nation-state.

Crucially, the citizenship concept, as it is understood in English and through a western lens, is only available to humans. As Nadasdy (2017) describes, the very concept of citizenship is built around European liberal values that emphasize the individual and exclude non-humans. Clearly, through the layered and complex meaning of Dena discussed already, the exclusion of non-humans as citizens is another idea that collides with Kaska Dena worldview. Many non-human Dena make important contributions to Dena society. And humans are not considered to be superior to their non-human kin; unlike in the Christian narrative, humans aren’t appointed to the top of a hierarchal ladder of beings. ‘Yukon Indian People’ are also necessarily citizens of only one Yukon First Nation. Despite both a long history of movement through different territories and the overwhelmingly common feature of Dena folks having family from other places, the UFA forces Indigenous people in the Yukon to tie themselves to one Yukon First Nation, as citizens of that group, with a defined territory.

Settler colonial nation-states have a longstanding obsession with imposing European territoriality to Indigenous nations. Anishinaabe scholar Heidi Stark (2012) demonstrates that despite early Anishinaabe resistance to the creation of “fixed lines” within and around their territory, both Canada and the United States demanded the fixing of

boundaries, through the use of borders. Borders, Stark shows, make it easier to “manage” Indigenous peoples. The European border that has become common throughout the world today functions differently than most Indigenous conceptions of territoriality. As Leanne Simpson (2011) describes “‘boundaries’ in an Indigenous sense, are about relationships” (89), where further accountability to and cooperation with neighbouring nations is increasingly demanded as one moves from the centre, or the core, of their territory to the frontiers, or shared parts of their territory. This idea is echoed in a Kaska Dena context by Roger Macdonell’s (1984) comment that “In no sense is [Kaska Dena] a unit of social consciousness for those it embraces, and there is no real border or periphery, only a gradual and incremental shift of emphasis and convention as one moves out of the virtual centre of the area” (53). Ideologically, this sets up a very different relation with neighbours than those relations built through the linear borders between Yukon First Nations required in the UFA. ‘Yukon Indian People’ is an idea that ties Indigenous people to their Yukon First Nation, with a specific place and role in the political order of the nation-state, and demands that Indigenous people within the so-called Yukon accept (and by extension re-enforce) practices of exclusion intrinsic to European conceptions of citizenship and territoriality.

A clear example of the local impacts of territoriality is seen in the registered trapline system. After years of discussion around its creation, registration of traplines in the Yukon was finally initiated in 1951 (Weinstein, 1993). Trapline registration represents a defined space that demands exclusion: only the individual to whom the trapline is registered has the legal rights to trap in the area. People with longstanding history in the area and relational responsibilities to the area are excluded from trapping there if the trapline doesn't belong to them. In this way the European distinction between ownership and belonging is drilled into people’s everyday experience. Trapline registration

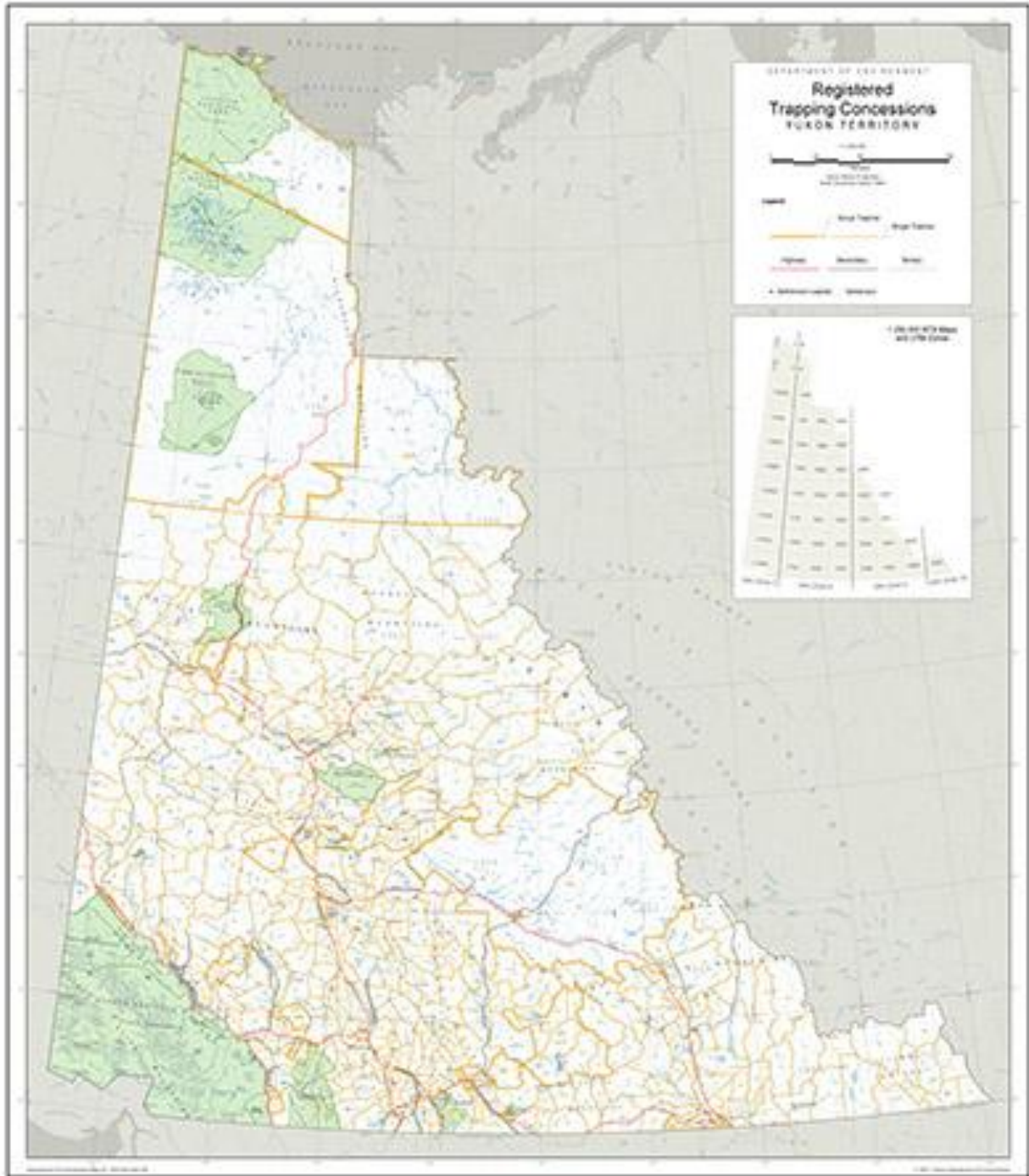
proved to be a powerful way in which the state introduced a pattern of land-use tied closely to capitalism and to concepts of property and territoriality into people's everyday experience.

Furthermore, traplines in Canada were registered to men, and European patriarchy demanded that sons inherit lines from their fathers. Indigenous women were disproportionately targeted in colonial practices of erasure. Zapotec scholar Isabel Altamirano-Jimenez (2013) suggests that settler colonial maps are used for the specific targeting of Indigenous women by removing them from the land, thereby making land increasingly available to settlers, and further gendering the land through the re-naming of Indigenous places with settler names- usually those of white men. Vanessa Watts (2013, 24) ties this violence to the spread of the Christian origin story, arguing that the ideology is a result of the narratives that follow Eve's action in eating the forbidden fruit. In the Christian narrative this action damns all future humankind; a story that justifies men's superiority to women and creates the ideological human/nature divide through shunning humans from the garden. Also, the disastrous effect of human communication with animals leads to the discouragement of future human communication with the non-human realm; a philosophy that, upon the arrival of settlers, would have profound impacts for Indigenous societies that hold up communication between humans and non-humans. Yukon traplines were registered to men and separated from one-another through neat, linear borders that fit nicely into a European land management ideology of which property, territoriality, and patriarchy are central pillars. Additionally, traplines are registered under the Yukon Government, a part of the nation-state of Canada, thereby constantly re-enforcing nation-state sovereignty on stolen Indigenous lands. I believe that the renewable resource economy language perpetuated in the UFA can be tied closely to the imposition of the registered trapline system.

But in looking at a map of registered Yukon traplines (see Figure 3), two areas stand out as relatively large blocks of land without lines through them: in both the areas of the Ross River Dena and the Vuntut Gwich'in, the respective nations have accomplished the registration of "group lines" instead of individually registered lines. As Weinstein (1993) says of the Ross River line, "During the mid-1950's, after Ross River Indians had been persuaded to register personal traplines, community leaders lobbied territorial wildlife officials to re-combine them into 3 group areas. At a later date, in the 1960's, the 3 blocks were combined into a single grouped-trapline covering most of the territory used by the Ross River Indian People during the mid-20th century" (21). I believe that this was a stance deeply founded in Kaska Dena brilliance and of tremendous wisdom and foresight by the Dena leaders of that time, and has played an important role in shaping contemporary Kaska Dena politics.

In September 2019, I was driving down the road with Norman Sterriah. We were going to visit a fall hunting camp, where community hunters were harvesting moose and fish for Elders and those who can't easily leave the community. As we drove, I was talking with Norman and floating ideas by him. For a long time now, his values and teachings have been influential to me. We were talking about the registered trapline system. Through a few comments, he drove home an important point related to the positive implications of the Ross River group trapline. During the mid 20th century, and for a good hundred years leading up to it, the Kaska Dena mode of life centred around the trapping industry. A significant amount of time and energy throughout the seasonal round was dedicated to trapping: typically from October to March people were staying in areas where they trap and either preparing for the trapping season, or actively trapping. When they could avoid residential schools, Ross River Dena children grew up in the winter months with their families trapping, and staying at various trapping cabins

Figure 3 - Map of Yukon Traplines



and tent camps in the bush. The trapping lifestyle had tremendous impact on their youth, and many of these children went on to become Elders and leaders during the time of land claims negotiations through the 90's and early 2000's. The relative absence of individually-owned traplines stands out as a stark difference to most nations neighbouring the Ross River Dena. Perhaps, as Norman suggested to me, the impact of the group line, in contrast to individually-owned traplines, played an important role in the decision to reject the UFA.

The late Charlie Dick explained that one important foundational rationale for the rejection of the UFA is based on the ethic that people cannot own land, and therefore cannot sell or trade it. According to Elders like Charlie who were an active part of the land claim discussions, Kēyeh is not a material that can be owned, divided, and managed based on arbitrary lines drawn on a map. Rather than a concept of ownership, the Elders will often speak of their responsibility to care for Dena Kēyeh. It is a responsibility inherited from their ancestors, and one that will be passed on to Kaska Dena descendants. The responsibility is founded not on a sense of ownership, but on a deep and permanent sense of belonging or connectedness. As Sterriah says, "It's really hard for me to delegate my responsibility as a traditional land steward to somebody else. I can't do it...unless they're my grandchild and I teach them real good. But to a third party, nope, I can't do it." (<https://www.dechinta.ca/naisa2022>). When understood in this light, the idea of an agreement made with colonial governments that would convert the vast majority of Dena Kēyeh into "Crown Land", thereby effectively transferring the ultimate responsibility to care for the land to the Crown, an entity that has no belonging here, is incompatible with Kaska Dena ethics.

Sterriah's argument is that the existence of the Ross River Dena group line helped foster this ideology and other Kaska Dena politics that value the collective over the individual and oppose the stratified and hierarchal nature of western politics. According to Cristopher Alcantara (2013), in a comparative study of land claims negotiations in the Yukon, aside from the consistent Kaska Dena objection to the "cede, release, and surrender" clause, the Kaska Dena were also particularly adamant that grassroots people be involved in negotiations and in decision-making. Alcantara says that, "There is a strong feeling amongst the grassroots that Kaska leaders cannot agree to anything unless they have a clear mandate from the membership and have a substantial number of grassroots members in attendance at negotiation meetings" (106), and "especially the Kaska First Nations were concerned that negotiations were conducted far too secretly" (84). I agree with Norman that, given the significance of the trapping mode of life during most of the 20th century, the Ross River group line no doubt helped maintain both a collective, grassroots-based governance model, and the refusal to treat Kēyeh as wilderness or as property; two key ethical positions that inform opposition to the UFA.

Chapter 3 – Dena Language Brilliance

3.1 Language as Worldview, Language as Reality

“Language embodies the way a society thinks. Through learning and speaking a particular language, an individual absorbs the collective thought process of a people.”

Leroy Little Bear, 2000

It was a dusty mid-summer day of 2018 in Tū́ Łídl̄ini, or Ross River. Cars and trucks were lined up all along the dirt road surrounding the Hope Centre, the only building in town large enough to host meetings this big. Inside, there were two rows of chairs and tables facing one another. One row was filled by members of the Yukon Government (YG) Department of Environment, including the Deputy Minister and other “big wigs” of the “game branch,” as it is known locally. On the other side of the room sat the RRDC Chief and Council and Lands Department staff. Behind the two rows, a cluster of local Dena Elders, youth, and other un-elected leaders were gathered, listening attentively and once in a while quietly conversing with one other.

In an unusual twist, the Department requested this meeting. Typically, RRDC need to insist on having more discussions like this and reminding settler governments of their “duty to consult.” But here, just three weeks after the RRDC’s first Public Notice⁴ that any non-Kaska person wishing to hunt in Dena Kēyeh must hereby require a hunting permit issued by the RRDC and guided by Dena ethics, the Department was desperate to meet. The Public Notice had garnered significant media attention; hunters and non-hunters alike were talking about it. It was the first time in the territory that an Indigenous Nation had announced its own hunting permit system that applies to all Yukoners, yet is entirely separate from the Yukon’s Wildlife Act and has no endorsement from YG. Perhaps the Department felt the meeting was important in pacifying the Dena. Maybe the government bureaucrats felt the need to remind RRDC that the Yukon is huge and its “public resources” need to be

<https://briarpatchmagazine.com/articles/view/we-have-our-footsteps-everywhere>

shared amongst all Yukoners. Or maybe pacification would come through the reminder that all YG's wildlife management laws and policies are based on western science and principles of conservation, while of course also incorporating "traditional knowledge" that is shared with them. Canadian political leaders like to celebrate this as the age of "reconciliation," after all. Or perhaps, given the history of litigation between them, YG was simply here to strengthen their "consultation record," in the event that the issue end up in Court; maybe sending such important people to Ross River on this hot summer day would be useful in building evidence that would demonstrate, in the eyes of a judge anyway, an attempt to collaborate on wildlife management.

We shared stories of Dena people being displaced from their family hunting camps during the fall hunting season because of the sheer amount of non-Kaska hunters that take over so many special places. We shared stories of people witnessing meat wastage and disrespectful hunting practices by outsiders hunting on a YG license, and Outfitters selling hunts for sport. We shared other long-standing concerns with them: of hunting bull (male) caribou too late in the season when the meat is virtually inedible, of the negative implications to the herd that result from over-harvesting too many large, or "trophy" bulls, and of unethical wildlife management practices YG endorses, like radio-collaring and catch-and-release fishing.

The Deputy Minister and a pair of biologists shared data. They put charts on the wall to educate people on what a "sustainable harvest" was, and how, based on the numbers extrapolated from their annual "population surveys," their established quotas for each of the "big-game" species are sustainable. They showed GIS points that tracked caribou through the use of radio collars in the Ross River Dena homeland. They argued that these GIS points prove the importance of radio collaring to identifying critical habitat and migration corridors; information supposedly crucial in assessing the many resource-extraction projects in the area. They even reminded us of the (colonial) legal reality: that on Yukon's Crown Land, the Wildlife Act applies and the Minister of Environment has the ultimate authority on these issues, and that since RRDC and other Kaska have not signed a final land

claim agreement and therefore have no “settlement lands,” this reality applies throughout their territory.

After listening to the bureaucrats and biologists for a while, tensions were building. A few people in the room yelled out to the department in anger and frustration. The Deputy Minister ignored most of this and continued addressing the Chief sitting across from him. Then I noticed a hand go up in the back. I looked over to see a well-respected Elder stand up and wait to be called upon to speak. The facilitator acknowledged him and he began speaking. He spoke in his language. Without any introduction or explanation in English, he let his language flow from him and immediately changed the tone of the meeting. As he proceeded to speak, the Elder became more and more impassioned. His eyes lit up, his voice elevated and gained strength, and his lip occasionally trembled. His emotion was apparent to all, even those who couldn't understand the words. The Elder spoke with power and with respect. He spoke of the land, of how special the land is to him, of how the land has taken care of him, of his love for the land. He spoke of his ancestors that walked here before him and of the children coming after him. He spoke of the water. The Elder spoke of Dena ethics, of the decision to reject the land claim, of responsibilities he carries as a Dena. The Elder spoke of his language itself; of the power that flows through the language. He said that when speaking in Dena K'éh you are speaking through your heart. He spoke to all of us- to his fellow Elders, to the RRDC elected leaders, to the youth, and to the strangers in the room. He addressed the strangers for the longest, speaking clearly to them about who he is, the responsibility that he carries to take care of Dena Kēyeh, and how that is what his people are doing with this initiative- living with their inherited responsibility.

The Elder spoke for close to an hour; for the remainder of the meeting. When he was done, the facilitator called for a closing prayer and people went their separate ways. Often I leave meetings like this one with a sense of frustration around listening to YG wax eloquently about reconciliation, while basically refusing to work with the Kaska outside the Yukon land claim framework. That political stance remained consistent today, but I left this

meeting inspired and encouraged. I was inspired at what I had just witnessed: at the Elder's strength. At his ability to flow in the world of Dena K'éh for so long and with such elegance and eloquence, despite the measures the state and church had taken throughout his life to destroy his language. I was inspired, yet again, at the sheer beauty and brilliance of Dena K'éh, the language of this place, and the way it feels so intricately woven into the soil of this Kēyeh. I left inspired by the political statement the Elder made through his choice to speak in his language at such length; the unapologetic decision to bring the dialogue into Dena K'éh while here in Dena Kēyeh, even if the "big wigs" couldn't hear him. And I was encouraged that, although the staff from the Department didn't understand his words, they must have left this meeting and traveled back to Whitehorse with a feeling of having been strangers in someone else's home. The Elder's choice to bring the meeting into the language of this place turned the tables. While he embodied the Dena ethic of treating visitors with respect, it made the YG staff feel uncomfortable too. It was a beautiful move.

Language is much more than a means of description. It is also a way of expressing morals and communicating conceptual understandings of ourselves and what surrounds us. Language represents the home, history, knowledge, and values of a people. Kikuyu anti-colonial writer Wa Thiong'o Ngugi (1993) describes language as having two interconnected aspects; both "as an agent that enables us to communicate with one another in our struggle to find the means for survival" and "as a carrier of the history and culture built into the process of that communication over time" (30). Through engaging in a language, individuals are connected to the intimacies of "the collective thought process of a people" (Little Bear, 2000, 1). Language is a portal into the depths of culture, it is an expression of cosmology, it is the voice of place.

Language exemplifies diversity. Unique conceptions and ideologies that have come to be in certain places and from certain people are only possible within the language that voices them. As linguists Susan Gal and Kathryn Woolard (2014) write, “representations of language phenomena gain social authority - in fact may only be thinkable - from the institutional locations from which their proponents speak” (4). In other words, specific ideas can only be represented, and therefore only reproduced and taught, within the language they derive from. If a worldview is a river, language is the bedrock; the foundation from which ideologies take form. Worldviews born from distinct homelands and histories lack critical parts of their essence when not shared in their languages.

From this lens, looking at both expressions of governance articulated within the world of Kaska Dena language, and at the language that guides wildlife management in the Yukon, it is clear that the conceptual understandings both represented and produced through Kaska Dena ideology are not compatible with Yukon wildlife management. The differences are too stark. Through a critical look at the language of the Fish and Wildlife chapter of the UFA, and language the settler colonial project deploys in Kaska Dena territory in relation to the “management” of caribou, these profound incompatibilities become clear. In Dena Kēyeh, if all governance of human relations with caribou, land, and one another were to return to the sphere of Dena K’éh, we would at once centre the brilliance of Kaska Dena ideology, while refusing the violence of settler colonial wildlife management.

Language is powerful. Canadian settler colonialism has for a long time attacked Indigenous languages - in the past through punishing children for speaking their languages in residential schools, and today through demanding that dominant governance in Indigenous homelands take place in one of the official (and European) languages of the

state. Indigenous languages produce and represent worldviews that do not always fit inside western systems. And that is why they pose such a threat to the settler colonial project. Through the relational obligations born in the ideology that is tied to it, the resurgence of Kaska Dena language supports processes that threaten the very pillars of settler colonialism: Canadian sovereignty and free-market capitalism. Settler colonial nation-states and Christian churches have aggressively attacked Indigenous languages because of this very threat. It is also because of this outstanding potential that Indigenous language resurgence is so important to anti-colonialism.

3.2 Language Colonization

“In colonial relations, words are not used merely to describe, but also to conceal, in order to fulfill imperialist motivations”

Silvia Rivera-Cusicanqui, 2015

The UFA is written in English. Consultation that the Crown engages in with the Kaska Dena takes place in English. Dominant political discussions regarding human relations with caribou in Dena Kēyeh happen in English. Law and policy that come out of these discussions are framed in English. And as discussed earlier, I believe that core objectives of Yukon wildlife management, articulated as they are within the linguistic confines of English, are not compatible with Kaska Dena ethics from within Dena language ideology.

Ngugi Wa Thiong’o (1993) has contributed brilliant insights into language colonization in an African context. Speaking of the power dynamic at play when languages meet, Ngugi suggests that nations meeting on equal terms will typically choose to communicate with one another in the language of the other, in order to foster respectful relations and cooperation between the two groups. This reminds me of Leanne Simpson’s

(2011) insights on boundaries that I referenced earlier, where she explains that according to her Nishnaabeg ethics, accountability to one's neighbour increases as one moves from the core of their territory to the parts of their territory shared with neighbouring nations. Both these ideas speak to international relations in stark contrast to colonial relationships; respect and accountability to one another demand effort and cooperation; cooperation that mutually benefits both groups. On the contrary, Ngugi stresses that "when [nations] meet as oppressor and oppressed, as for instance under imperialism, then their nations cannot experience a genuinely democratic encounter. The oppressor nation uses language as a means of entrenching itself in the oppressed nation" (31). Here in Dena Kēyeh, settler colonial governments use English as a way of attempting to entrench themselves in the Kaska Dena nation.

I think it's important to always be mindful of the historical relationship that Canada has had with Indigenous languages. In Dena Kēyeh, like so many other Indigenous territories in Canada, it was not so long ago that shameful language colonization efforts were undertaken by the government and the church at residential schools. In describing an event for survivors of the Lower Post Residential School, Kaska Dena writer and community organizer Gillian Farnell (2010) says, "The stories about the residential school told at the event are horrific; beatings and public humiliation were not uncommon. One person who spoke at the event described a needle being put through his tongue when he spoke the only language he knew" (29-30). From the attack on Indigenous languages in these schools, to the imposition of English and French as official, language continues to be a central means by which the oppressor nation entrenches itself in Indigenous nations.

Indigenous languages, it should be remembered, represent the very land they are a part of. The use of Indigenous languages fosters deep connection with Indigenous

place. In the words of Maliseet writer Andrea Bear Nicolas (2011), "So closely did language tie indigenous peoples to their lands that authorities focussed on deliberately destroying First Nations languages as the key to severing ties between the people and their lands." In discussing contemporary linguicide- the killing of languages without killing the speakers- Nicolas (2011) comments that, "While Canada may insist it did not know its policies would have such destructive consequences at first, it can no longer plead ignorance." Today, settler colonialism demands that English be the language of governance in Kaska Dena territory. The language of the Kaska Dena that has cradled the brilliance of Dena Á' Nézén has not been a part of the design of the UFA, nor the boards and processes born from the UFA and imposed here that serve to guide human relations with caribou, nor consultation with the Crown around impacts to people and rights.

While Dena K'éh is the language of the very land in question, and English comes from across the Atlantic Ocean and from a worldview tied to agriculture, patriarchy, and christianity, these two languages still do not meet as equals. English has become so fundamental to settler colonialism in Canada and in other colonial contexts, from Australia, to India, to South Africa, that we rarely question the ideological violence that its forced dominance inflicts each and every day. As a global imperialist language, English is dominant on the world stage too. Even other European colonial languages, like Spanish and French, are inferior to English on a global governance scale.

It is important to stress that different languages represent truly different realities that have come to be as a result of "the history and culture built into the process of that communication over time" (Ngugi 1993, 30). As a language of imperialism, English has been shaped through colonial and capitalist projects- whether that be inside the United Kingdom, or throughout the world- from America, to Africa, to Asia, to Australia. Silvia

Rivera Cuisicanqui, an Aymara scholar from Bolivia, has contributed to anti-colonial thought for the past fifty years. In *Sociology of the Image* (2015), one of Cuisicanqui's central arguments is that "in colonial relations, words are not used merely to describe, but also to conceal, in order to fulfill imperialist motivations." Whether for the purpose of concealing Dena place names with settler names, or concealing Dena worldviews with European ideologies, language is used as an important tool in settler colonial replacement. When the Yukon deploys wording such as "renewable resource management" to human-caribou relations, Rivera-Cuisicanqui's thesis crystallizes. Through the ideology associated with this language, Yukon governance structures conceal Kaska Dena conceptions of human-caribou relations, such as those articulated through Dena Á' Nézés, that by their very relational nature inherently challenge capitalism and threaten the settler colonial project.

In the Yukon, the Umbrella Final Agreement, and subsequent legislation tied to that agreement and also articulated in English, such as the Wildlife Act or the Assessment Act, serve as important tools in bringing English's dominance into wildlife laws and policies. Yet given the absence of a Final Agreement in Kaska Dena Kēyeh, Yukon must find other means of ensuring a common model and approach throughout the land claimed within its borders. There must be another way of justifying the imposition of the western standard and of maintaining a common approach to wildlife management. Language of integration becomes critical to the settler colonial order, even when the process is actively rejected by those the state attempts to integrate. Another central objective of Chapter 16 of the UFA is "to integrate the relevant knowledge and experience both of Yukon Indian People and of the scientific communities in order to achieve Conservation" (Council of Yukon First Nations, Umbrella Final Agreement, 169). A common integration technique related to Indigenous languages is to find translations for preconceived western concepts.

In English, Dena Á' Nézen is reduced to translations like "traditional law." Linguist Susan Gal (2015) argues that translations are not merely repetitions, but they are also accompanied by the moral weight of the respective speakers, and rarely represent word-for-word matches. Furthermore, Gal says that in colonial relationships "translation can convert the typified speech of one group into evidence for another group's project" (231); an argument that emphasizes Rivera-Cusicanqui's idea that in colonialism words are in fact deployed in order to hide deeper meanings. Seen through this lens, I don't think that there is any good way of saying "traditional law" in Dena K'éh. Instead of searching for 'equivalences' to that idea in Indigenous languages, we should allow space for Indigenous language brilliance to inform the politics that govern our relations inside and with Indigenous lands. Equating Dena Á' Nézen to "traditional law" stems from a desire to say "law" in Dena K'éh; it is not an attempt to articulate meaning for Dena Á' Nézen in English. This form of translation not only centres the colonial ideology, but also runs the risk of effectively gutting the Indigenous concepts that are used as translations.

There are many other examples of translation stripping Indigenous conceptions of their essence when equivalency with colonial languages is forced. Linda Tuhiwahi Smith (1999) describes the challenge Maori women have had in proving to the courts of New Zealand that they are as much rangatira (a Maori concept comparable to the idea of 'leaders') as Maori men are, given that its common English translation has been 'chieftainship;' a word that has been associated with men by the system that has interpreted the Maori language. In this case, longstanding European patriarchy has shaped the concept of leadership to be associated with men. Because of the dominance of English, this ideology has had profound implications for Maori rangatira who are not men. Similarly, Vera Palmer (2014) discusses the violent imposition of the concept of sin

brought to Iroquois territory through the forceful introduction of Christianity, coupled with English and French. She describes how early Iroquoian converts to Christianity may have understood sin to mean something very different, because in Iroquoian languages the concept of doing wrong is not connected with ideas of good and evil, but rather with misunderstanding or confusion, resulting in *discussion* instead of *judgement* (272-273, emphasis added). Yet, as colonization proceeds in Iroquois territory, concepts such as sin are understood more and more through the lens of one of the colonial languages and less through the Iroquois lens referenced above. Due to the combined effect of both people communicating increasingly in European languages, along with Christian missionary projects, concepts such as sin are introduced to Indigenous place. This move conceals conceptual meanings for Iroquoian words that were used by early missionaries as translations for sin. As people begin relating to the Iroquoian words more and more through translation from English or French, rather than understanding them through the lens of the Iroquoian language, certain terms used by early missionaries as translation for sin come to be understood as that itself: as sin instead of as the ideas that they truly represent.

Mary Druke Becker (1998) presents another example around the English and French relations with the Iroquois. As Druke Becker explains, the fact that the Iroquois agreed to refer to both European nations by the term "father" meant something very different to the Iroquois than it did to the colonizers. Coming from a patriarchal worldview, the English and the French both believed the use of the term was a demonstration that the Iroquois agreed to be their subjects. On the contrary, in Iroquois society, "father" was a common term used among Iroquois people to signify alliance with one another, but was not associated with an authoritative figure. Druke Becker explains that due to their very different language ideology, the Iroquois use of the term meant *allegiance*, while

the colonizers took it to mean *subservience*. Again, this case demonstrates an introduction of a European concept, and a masking of Indigenous meaning of words chosen to represent the introduced concept. These problems with translation do not stem from distinct languages meeting one another, but with the power dynamic at play when those languages meet in colonial relations.

In the Yukon today, Indigenous languages are being incorporated into the political processes that govern human relations with non-humans. As Nadasdy (2017) says, “Before Southern Tutchone - or any other indigenous language of the Yukon - could become a language of bureaucratic administration, it would have to undergo the same kind of conscious language reform that swept Europe in the nineteenth century, the central goal of which was to transform largely spoken vernacular languages into languages of state” (227). This idea pushes me to interrogate Indigenous language translation: what is being protected, and what is being hidden in this practice? Wendy Brown (1996) discusses how in liberal states the language of recognition can easily become the language of unfreedom, through deploying recognition to oppressed groups with language inherently tied to conceptual understandings of the oppressor. As she says, “articulation in language, in the context of liberal and disciplinary discourse, becomes a vehicle of subordination through individualization, normalization, and regulation, even as it strives to produce visibility and acceptance” (66). Sprinkling English-dominated Yukon governance with concepts translated from Indigenous languages does few favours to Indigenous struggles for self-determination. In Dena Kēyeh, without a radical shift in how we govern our relations with Gudzj̄h- a shift that centres Dena languages on their own terms, a sprinkle of Dena language incorporation runs the risk of locking up Dena ideology in “the linguistic prison of English” (Wa Thiong’o 1993, 37) and masking continual erasure behind reconciliation or indigenization.

The story at the outset of this chapter of the Elder centring his language in the meeting with YG's "game branch" had nothing to do with reconciliation. It was not an attempt to integrate his Dena philosophy into the settler colonial system. On the contrary, it was an unapologetic act of what Leanne Simpson (2017) calls "generative refusal." In making the choice to speak at such length in Dena K'éh during this important consultation session, the Elder refused YG's attempts to pacify the Kaska; he refused colonial strategies of co-opting what the dominant narrative classifies as "concerns," and he refused for his knowledge or his language to be integrated by the settler colonial government and celebrated in "co-management." At the same time, his decision to bring out his language supported Dena knowledge generation, pride, and love for Dena Kēyeh and for Dena K'éh. His speech sparked a sense of belief for those of us in the room invested in anti-colonialism and language resurgence in Dena Kēyeh. In this way the refusal proved to be generative too; it didn't stop at refusing the tactics of settler colonialism, but went on to generate energy and momentum for anti-colonial processes of resurgence. I remember this moment as a powerful display of Kaska Dena strength, and a clear reminder to all of us in that meeting that we were sitting in Dena Kēyeh and that Kaska Dena ways are still, and forever will be, the ways of this place.

In this light, what if Dena K'éh was once again centred as the dominant language of governance here? Kaska Elders would resume their inherent role of governing human interaction with Dena Kēyeh from a place within Dena ideology. The practice of wildlife management would not be imposed, as wildlife management doesn't exist as a concept inside Dena K'éh. Instead, Dena ethics would thoroughly guide our relations with caribou and other animals, from how we hunt them, to how we learn about them, to how we talk about them. If meanings for Dena terms or ideas needed to be shared, words would be broken down into their little words and in this way this we would seek

to articulate meaning in English, rather than find pre-conceived “matches” for English concepts in Dena K’éh. To centre Dena K’éh in this way would allow for the language to be free from the domination of the colonial mental universe, and would honour it as the language of this land. To centre Dena K’éh in this way, together with other forms of land recuperation and the return of jurisdictional authority, would support it’s resurgence, and also foster deep relations of respect and love for the land that are inherently and uniquely apart of the language.

Chapter 4 – Responsibility to Kēyeh

4.1 Codes of Ethics, not the Wildlife Act

“It’s really hard for me to delegate my responsibility as a traditional land steward to somebody else. I can’t do it...unless they’re my grandchild and I teach them real good.

But to a third party, nope, I can’t do it.”

Norman Sterriah, 2022

In an old Chevy pickup, we slowly make our way down the trail that connects the main road to the lake ahead of us. The leaves are a riot of bright yellows, tangerines, and burgundies. In the passenger seat sits Amos, a Dena Elder, who was born well before this road – or any other road in his country – was even built. Amos remembers travelling to this lake by dog team as a young boy with his mom and dad, visiting friends and family who were staying here. He remembers travelling the river in a moose skin boat and trading beaver pelts for bullets, flour, and sugar at the old post that has since burned to ash. He remembers going out hunting on the mountain, while down by the lake brilliant Dena midwives assisted mothers as they gave birth in wall tents on the shore. He remembers sitting inside those tents during the long winter nights in the 1930s and ’40s, listening to stories the Elders told in the language of this place, stories of a time from before the world flooded thousands of years ago. Amos has come here for most of his 90-some years.

As we approach the waterfront, his energy changes. We see a number of trucks parked by the lake, some tents, a few trailers. Beer cans lie on the ground beside a fireplace. Eight moose hang from trees and poles around the camps along that same shore. Eight moose. We do not recognize anyone from the groups. While our licence plates indicate that we are all from the Yukon, here by the lake, these people are strangers. To Amos, these people are strangers. We stop the truck, get out, and no one acknowledges Amos. Nobody approaches him to offer him tea or some of the meat that they have harvested from Dena Kēyeh. After a tense minute of observation, Amos looks at us and suggests, in his humble

and peaceful Dena way, that we return home to Tū Éídlīni. Despite his calm tone and confident demeanour, there is pain in his eyes.

Since 2018 the Ross River Dena Council has applied its own hunting permit system that requires non-Kaska hunters wishing to harvest moose, caribou, or sheep in Dena Kēyeh to first obtain a permit issued by the RRDC. The permit system is deeply informed by the Elders Council and Dena ethics, and therefore is based on a different set of principles than Yukon hunting regulations. The RRDC outlines to the public various areas in Dena Kēyeh that are closed for non-Kaska hunters, puts its own quotas on the number of permits RRDC issues, and has modified the hunting season to be more respectful of Dena ways. For example, permits for caribou aren't issued after September 15th, when the bulls get into the "rut," the time of year that they begin to move around breed. As former RRDC Councillor Derrick Redies stated of the initiative, "We're really just exercising our inherent right to be self-governing, because we're not a signed First Nation and we view this as protecting our identity, protecting our culture, and who we are." (CBC News, 2018). When RRDC initiated this, it was the first time in the Yukon that an Indigenous Nation took the step of implementing its own hunting permitting system that applies to the general public but operates separately from Yukon's laws of general application.

This has been a longstanding issue for the Ross River Dena. YG's laws allow for continual impacts to Dena ways and inherent responsibilities, as well as to the animals hunted with YG licenses. Every fall, more and more non-Indigenous hunters from cities such as Whitehorse and Yellowknife come into Dena Kēyeh to hunt moose, caribou, sheep,

goats, and bears. The many roads penetrating Dena Kēyeh and built without Dena consent, to facilitate resource extraction, also provide easy access into prime moose and caribou country. Big-Game outfitters fly hunters into the more remote parts of Dena Kēyeh, landing planes on various lakes or gravel airstrips throughout the bush. YG law does not require that hunters or Outfitters obtain any form of consent from the Dena to hunt in Dena Kēyeh; there is not even a requirement to know whose nation they are hunting in. In Dena Kēyeh, Yukon hunting laws exemplify settler colonial erasure and dispossession.

Many hunting practices endorsed by YG are counter to Dena ethics. The largest bull moose and caribou and the largest ram sheep, whose genes are critical to population health and who serve roles as protectors of the herds, are being selectively over-harvested for their "trophy" antlers and horns. Yukon caribou hunting continues well after the bulls go into the rut, the time of year when they move around and breed. During this time the bulls stop eating and their bodies are pumped with hormones, sometimes making the meat basically inedible. As former RRDC Chief Jack Caesar put it, "Caribou, we tell them to hold back – don't take bull caribous – and they just take them. Trophy-wise, they'll get them, after the rutting season when their meat's no good to eat during that time. But they get them anyways for trophy's sake." (APTN News, 2021). Places like mineral licks that are associated with important Dena protocols are being hunted by strangers with no knowledge of these protocols. Wastage of meat, organs, and hides is becoming more common.

Harvesting camps that have been used and cared for by certain Dena families for as long as they remember are being occupied in the fall months by settler hunters, in a contemporary form of displacement. Speaking about one cherished place, beside

which the U.S. Army built a road in 1942 to access an oil pipeline, Kaska Dena Elder Louie Tommy says, “What’s the use of going up there? There's nothing but other hunters up there. You can't even make a good camp; you go up to Sheldon Lake, you want to put a boat in. Already about five, six boats there already. Same thing with Dragon Lake. Every year. And a guy gets tired of it.” (CBC News, 2018). Local Dena are increasingly not harvesting the animals that their families need in the fall; not only is moose and caribou meat central to Dena cultures and traditions, but it is still relied upon as food staples in many Ross River households living in poor economic conditions.

The Ross River Dena Council permitting system was designed through Dena Á' Nézén and Dena K'éh Gus'ān. Dena K'éh Gus'ān is another foundational ethical articulation from within Dena language ideology. In returning to the method of breaking words down to search for deeper meaning within them, we see that this articulation also differs from the term “ethics.” Dena K'éh is one way people name the language itself, in the language. But Dena K'éh describes much more than a set of vocabulary, phonetics, and grammatical rules. Ideas like “Dena way”, “Dena culture”, or “Dena values” are encoded inside Dena K'éh. In light of the layered meaning of Dena already discussed in chapter 2, to better understand the deep meaning of this phrase it is helpful to look at other uses for K'éh. Kón means ‘fire’ and Kón K'éh describes the ring of rocks around a campfire. Sā means ‘Sun’ and Sā K'éh describes the course of movement the sun takes throughout the sky. Kē means ‘feet’, and Kē K'éh is the name for the foot-piece of snowshoes. Therefore, K'éh might describe a sort of boundary; the shape of an entity, its guiding limits. The fact that Dena K'éh is the chosen way to describe the language itself is beautiful and meaningful. In this sense language sets boundaries, language

shapes culture. Dena K'éh is the guiding ways of a people, as the sun's guiding course of movement across the sky is to the sun.

Dena K'éh is also of place, it is embedded within Dena Kēyeh. Farnell (2010), says that, "As a perception and a way of life using respect and reverence for the landscape and environment, Dene K'éh is a form of knowledge that clearly derives from and is transmitted by means of a sense of belonging to Dene Keyeh" (25-26). The late Lakota philosopher Vine Deloria Jr articulates the central importance that place plays in the societal organization of many North American Indigenous peoples. When "ideology is divided according to American Indian and Western European [traditions]," writes Deloria, the "fundamental difference is one of great philosophical importance. American Indians hold their lands – places – as having the highest possible meaning, and all their statements are made with this reference point in mind" (1992: 62). Dena K'éh is deeply connected to this country. In the articulation referenced above, Kón K'éh, K'éh is the place of the fire, protected and held by the rocks that surround it. Like that meaning, Dena K'éh is also the place of Dena; it is part of Dena Kēyeh. It is not only the language of the people of Dena Kēyeh, but it is also the mother tongue of this country itself.

The final part of this governance articulation, Gus'ān, implies longevity; that it exists before and after those currently alive. The beginning of this word, Gu, is used at the start of a verb or state of being to give the action a general-ness important in conveying meaning. The second part of this word, s'ān, is a verb used for something in place. Hés means "mountain" and Hés s'ān refers to a mountains existence. To say Hés s'ān is something like saying, "the mountain stands there," or "the mountain is there." Kóá means "cabin" and Kóá s'ān describes the existence of a cabin. Gus'ān is an action-

word articulating the existence of something that could be singular or plural, or perhaps both, in place. The fact that Gus'ān forms part of this ethical articulation is testament to the endurance of the values within Dena K'éh. I understand Dena K'éh Gus'ān therefore as invoking a long-lasting guideline or shape of connection to Dena Kēyeh, Dena language, and and to other Dena from long ago, today, and of the future.

One settler colonial reaction to Kaska Dena assertion of jurisdiction through the permit system has been to portray western science as the best tool for informing good governance. As Gord Zealand, former Executive Director of the Yukon Fish & Game Association, stated to the CBC soon after the first RRDC public notice, "Bottom line is, if there's an issue over numbers or if there's a concern over the resource, we're front and centre in terms of full support ensuring that management. But we want it to be science-based, not based on my wishes, or your wishes, or whatever, in terms of what our own personal thoughts might be" (CBC News, 2018). Responses like this exemplify the colonial logic of maintaining western science's dominance in decision-making processes that govern human relations with non-humans in Dena Kēyeh. The permit system was informed by brilliant Kaska Dena Elders who are intimately connected to Dena Kēyeh and who are guided by the time-tested complexities of Dena K'éh Gus'ān. To characterize it as "based on my wishes, or your wishes, or whatever..." is both uninformed and racist.

The comments made by the Yukon Fish & Game Association in response to RRDC's hunting permit initiative reflect the settler colonial demand for knowledge to be recognizable, to the western eye, if it is to play any role in informing mainstream governance. As Kwakwaka'wakw scholar Sarah Hunt (2014) puts it, "in order to be legible, Indigenous geographic knowledge must adhere to recognized forms of representation" (29). Mario

Blaser (2016) has shed light on this process in Innu territory, after, in 2013, the Government of Newfoundland imposed a caribou hunting ban that applied to Innu and non-Innu alike. Despite strong opposition to the ban from Innu hunters and Elders, the Government insisted that the hunting ban was critical to the health of caribou populations. Blaser explains that Innu opposition to the ban was informed by the knowledge that to not respectfully hunt Atîku, translated in English as “caribou,” would contribute to their disappearance. The Government implemented the ban anyway, in a decision based on what Blaser calls *reasonable politics*. He claims that the hunting ban was imposed despite Innu opposition because the Government believed to have access to the truth behind the decline of caribou, and that Innu concerns, such as the importance of maintaining a healthy and respectful relationship with Atîku that includes harvesting, were based on knowledge deemed *unreasonable*. The problem with this approach is that it “defin[es] in advance what kinds of differences are at stake in such conflicts” (548) and dismisses Indigenous knowledge that is not considered realistic, or does not meet the bar of reason according to western moral orders.

In the current Yukon wildlife management model, there is a constant demand for Indigenous knowledge to fit inside western systems in order to inform dominant governance. Maybe this explains why, after years of Dena opposition towards such practices as sport trophy hunting, radio-collaring wildlife, and catch-and-release fishing, YG continues practicing or allowing for those practices inside Dena Kēyeh. The Yukon wildlife management system applied to Dena Kēyeh places a constant burden on Kaska Dena to make their knowledge recognizable to western standards, yet there is no requirement for YG decision-makers to understand, in even a limited way, the ethics of Kaska Dena governance, such as that articulated through Dena K’éh Gus’ān. This injustice is

re-enforced through the dominant mainstream Canadian narrative,⁵ that because there is no Final Agreement in Dena Kēyeh, the Ross River Dena Council, and their Kaska brothers and sisters from other First Nations, are not yet “self-governing First Nations,” and therefore are somehow behind the 11 Yukon First Nations with Final Agreements.

As recently as the 2021 hunting season, in a press release responding to RRDC’s hunting permit system, YG’s Minister of Environment, Nils Clarke, said that, “Yukon’s licensed hunters are guided by the Wildlife Act and the rules of general application always apply.” The minister went on to make it clear that “Licensed hunters do not require permission to hunt on non-Settlement Lands in any traditional territory”.⁶ This statement is consistent with a common colonial approach YG takes in dealing with Kaska issues: it classifies the entirety of Dena Kēyeh as “non-Settlement Lands” because of the absence of a Land Claim, even though “non-Settlement Lands” is a category for lands not chosen as “Settlement Lands” in the Final Agreements. To this effect, “non-Settlement Lands” are lands on which Yukon First Nations and Crown governments have mutually agreed that ultimate jurisdiction rests with the Crown. In the Kaska Dena situation, none of Dena Kēyeh was accepted to be “non-Settlement Lands,” as there is no Final Agreement. If there are no “Settlement Lands” in Kaska territory because of the absence of a Final Agreement, how is it that any land is classified as “non-Settlement Lands,” let alone the entirety of the territory? This press release is one of many examples of the Yukon government unilaterally applying language and land categories derived from the UFA to the hunting context in Dena Kēyeh.

⁵ <https://www.rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca/eng/1100100028429/1616789617763>

⁶ <https://yukon.ca/en/news/statement-minister-clarke-regarding-hunting-yukon-first-nations-traditional-territories>

In maintaining the settler colonial order, YG depends on Canadian constitutional law. In a similar government response to the permit system, YG's former Chief Conservation Officer, Gordon Hitchcock, said that, "As it stands right now, the Kaska have an asserted right to subsistence harvest in their traditional territory. As well, the licensed hunters have access to public lands, non-settlement lands, for the purpose of hunting that is governed by the Wildlife Act and regulations. That's how the land and framework looks right now. So, a licensed hunter right now, if they're operating under an authority of the Wildlife Act and a licence, cannot be excluded [to] public lands, and that is where the issue is." (APTN News, 2021). According to this logic, for YG to recognize any real Kaska Dena jurisdiction within Dene Kēyeh in the absence of modern treaty, RRDC or other Kaska bands would have to change the Canadian legal reality in the court system. Yet to engage in this struggle doesn't come without complications of its own.

4.2 Inherent Responsibilities, not Aboriginal Rights

"Colonial powers will only recognize the collective rights and identities of Indigenous peoples insofar as this recognition does not throw into question the background legal, political, and economic framework of the colonial relationship itself."

Glen Coulthard, 2014

It was a warm early-summer day beside ƭegāenjōji, the lake named for an ancient Dena hunt in which caribou were chased into snares. The sun poured down on us as we dug with spade shovels. We were eight today- three Land Guardians, a couple more of us from the Lands Department, and three Elders to oversee and offer their guidance. This felt good. The work was physical and meaningful, we were on the land, and we were together. When we finished filling the signpost in with rocks and dirt, we all took a moment to stand

back with the Elders and have a good look at the sign. It may not be the largest sign in the world, but it felt big to us.

For a while now, this lake has been over-hunted by outsiders licensed by YG with no requirement to first learn something about the Dena ethics of this place. For a while now, fish have been caught in this lake and thrown back to the water, after being non-consensually held by the gills and photographed. For a while now, this lake has been named after Duncan Finlayson, a Board of Director of the Hudson Bay Company.⁷ While it may seem like a small step, installing this sign, and the other signs that the Land Guardians are putting up in special places throughout Dena K̄yeh, has deep significance. It serves as a reminder that Finlayson is not the name of this lake; that this lake had a name long before foreigners began referring to it after some guy who never set foot here; that the true name of this lake is profound, articulated in the language of this land, and at once teaches of ecology, history, and Dena relationship with this place. The sign serves as a striking reminder too for locals and visitors alike that this remains Dena country, and that Dena protocols, expressed most recently through the new requirement to obtain a permit issued by the RRDC before hunting here, continue to apply.

The installation of this sign came on the back of litigation RRDC brought to the Yukon Supreme Court over YG's unilateral issuance of hunting licenses that allows Yukoners to hunt in un-ceded Kaska territory without proper consultation.⁸ Unfortunately, the courts are not an unfamiliar place to the RRDC. This case represents one of many times that Kaska bands in the Yukon have litigated issues against federal and/or territorial governments since 1986, the most of any so-called Yukon First Nation (Alcantara, 2013). The argument this time was that YG must do a better job of consulting and accommodating RRDC prior to offering Yukoners the opportunity to hunt in the Ross River part of Dena K̄yeh. Perhaps,

⁷ <https://sightsandsites.ca/central/site/finlayson-lake>

⁸ <https://www.mondaq.com/canada/environmental-law/452214/ross-river-dena-council-v-yukon-the-duty-to-consult-and-wildlife-management>

argued RRDC's legal counsel, similar to the mineral staking situation, in the absence of a land claim YG should use its colonial legal power to put a moratorium on Yukon hunting in the Ross River Area while it attempts to work with Kaska bands to create a more fair system that gives time and space for the Crown to meet its duty to consult. Yet the judge didn't see things this way. While he confirmed that the duty to consult over the issuance of hunting licenses exists, he also found that YG was actively meeting that duty through such endeavours as counting moose and caribou from planes, and holding the occasional meeting with the RRDC leadership and community to shed light on government management and hear local perspectives so that concerns could be incorporated into strategies and policies that are ultimately drafted and approved from desks in Whitehorse. We had hoped that in today's era consultation meant more than that.

Regardless, putting up the sign at Łegāenjōji felt good. This sign, like others the Land Guardians are installing, embodies Kaska Dena responsibility-based ethics and confronts settler colonialism. The signs educate viewers of Dena history and ethics, reinforce Dena place names, and support Kaska Dena self-determination. And, perhaps as important as anything, installing the signs involves Land Guardians, Elders, and other community members physically moving through Dena Kēyeh together. Days like these are naturally filled with laughter, language learning, and knowledge transmission. Days like these reinforce inherent responsibilities and rekindle love for the land.

In 1967 the Nisga'a nation brought uncertainty to settler colonial 'progress' in their territory, through proving inside the boundaries of a colonial court that their people had unique rights to their land that are tied to use and occupancy pre-dating the assertion of Crown sovereignty. Since that time, Aboriginal rights in Canada have increasingly become a focus of Indigenous struggles for self-determination. While some profound

moves towards self-determination have been gained through the evolution of Aboriginal rights, they do not always compliment Indigenous political and ethical responsibilities, like Dena K'éh Gūs'ān.

Aboriginal rights, similar to other constitutionally entrenched rights, rely on British Common Law. In Dena Kēyeh, where Kaska Dena have never consented to the imposition of this foreign legal system, British Common Law continues to be imposed. During the late 1800's, in what would become Treaty 8 territory, Commissioner Laird made the following statement: "One thing Indians must understand, that if they do not make a treaty they must obey the laws of the land - that will be just the same whether you make a treaty or not: the laws must be obeyed" (Daniel, 58). As seen above, these comments made more than 100 years ago still resonate today in YG's approach to the Kaska Dena situation. The imposition of British Common Law in Dena Kēyeh continues to be a major source of dispossession (C.Harris 2004, Cornassel 2008, Blomely 2016), through the legitimization of settler entitlement to lands and rights and through the dismissal of Kaska Dena systems of governance that existed on that land long before the arrival of settlers. Canadian law has continually allowed for violence towards Indigenous people and other oppressed groups. As Black organizer and scholar Robyn Maynard (2017) says, "grave injustices, including slavery, segregation, and more recently, decades of disproportionate police killings of unarmed black civilians - have all been accomplished within, not outside of, the scope of Canadian law" (6). In an Indigenous context, Canadian law has supported such injustices as the Doctrine of Discovery, the creation of the Indian reserve system, the penalization of Indigenous parents for not willingly sending their children to residential schools, and the criminalization of Indigenous peoples for practicing their very way of life, if those practices haven't abided by settler colonial fish and game laws.

Some will argue that these actions happened a long time ago. Some will argue that we have moved beyond that today, that today we are in the age of reconciliation. While I acknowledge that some things have changed for the better, we cannot ignore the reality that still today Dena Kēyeh is being managed by a colonial government according to logics of property. Hunting licenses, outfitting concessions, mineral exploration permits, and land itself, for settlement, are still offered to non-Indigenous settlers and businesses in Dena Kēyeh by a colonial government whose leaders don't live anywhere near here. Still, Yukon denies Kaska Dena jurisdiction without first agreeing to a land claims settlement in which they would be required to surrender claims to title in about 93% of Dena Kēyeh to the British Crown. The Indian Act is still imposed on Dena people. Still, English is imposed as the language of law and order here.

The empowerment sought out through the recognition of state-endorsed rights, like Aboriginal rights, ultimately runs the risk of further subjugating the disempowered group, through legitimizing the very regime that is the source of disempowerment (Brown 1995, 23). Aboriginal rights are recognized inside Canadian law. In a critique of the rights discourse in Canada and the United States, Million (2013) says "it is to law in both of these nation-states that indigenous peoples are forced to go - to trust once more that law is a realm where we might stop the violence that is in fact a violence integral to this law" (55). This violence is seen on a daily basis in English's domination as the official language. Any argument the Kaska Dena bring to the colonial legal system must be framed inside the 'linguistic prison' of English. This linguistic prison centres ideological realities that form the backbone of settler colonialism, such as property, resource, and management. Even if a Kaska Dena were to use their own language to articulate their argument in court, by the time the statement goes through the process of translation and has a chance of informing the ruling, it will have undergone a significant

ideological change, and quite possibly represent something different. The judges, none of whom speak Kaska Dena, won't hear the essence of the argument. What's more, the law is "wrapped in a specialized professional language and in practices that [are] obscure to most people" (Harris 2004, 177). Not only is English the language of British Common Law in Dena Kēyeh, but it is a highly specialized, legal version of English that is inaccessible to most Yukon citizens, let alone Kaska Dena Elders for whom English is their second or third or fourth language.

Aboriginal rights are often described as frozen. Anishinaabe lawyer and scholar John Borrows (2016) has illustrated how, in order to achieve legal recognition, there remains a constant burden on Indigenous peoples in Canada to tie their claimed rights to practices their ancestors engaged in prior to the influx of settlers to their lands. In his words, "We are not permitted to claim rights flowing from practices developed after Europeans arrived because they are regarded as developing solely through European influence" (31). Recognition of Aboriginal rights places a constant burden on Indigenous peoples to appeal to historic moments in which their ancestors were observed and recorded. Despite the fact that Indigenous sovereignty, in the words of Audra Simpson (2014), "is tied to practices that do not solely mean making baskets your ancestors did a hundred years ago, or hunting with the precise instruments your great-grandfather did 150 years ago, in the exact same spot he did as well, when witnessed and contextualized by a white person" (20), there remains a burden on Indigenous peoples to tie their claimed rights to those observations. Yukon Government continues undertaking "strength of claim" studies for Dena Kēyeh, in which, using predominantly English written records from white anthropologists, they evaluate Kaska claims to title through a European lens.

Furthermore, while Aboriginal rights in Canada have resulted in some gains for Indigenous peoples, even the cases celebrated as the most victorious have solidified Crown authority to override Indigenous self-determination when such action is deemed necessary for the public good. In *Dalgamuukw v. British Columbia* 2002, industrial endeavours such as forestry, hydroelectric development, mining, and agriculture are just some of the activities that the court declared can warrant Crown infringement of Aboriginal rights. As Coulthard (2014) states, “colonial powers will only recognize the collective rights and identities of Indigenous peoples insofar as this recognition does not throw into question the background legal, political, and economic framework of the colonial relationship itself” (40). Similarly, Altamirano-Jimenez (2013) argues that translating the unique and complex Indigenous relational obligations into a “bundle of rights and Western notions of property” (81) serves Canadian neoliberal goals through securing development and conservation projects. Attempting to protect the integrity of Dena K’éh Gūs’ān in Dena Kēyeh with a “bundle of rights” is not unlike translating Dena Á’ Nézen into “traditional law;” it allows the settler colonial project to interpret and frame the limits of such articulations, thereby potentially stripping them of their essence.

In one of the currently precedent-setting cases on Aboriginal title, *Tsilhqot’in Nation v. British Columbia* 2014, the courts have ruled that Aboriginal title includes such rights as “the right to possess the land” and “the right to pro-actively use and manage the land.”⁹ Yet if the concepts of human possession or management of land are incompatible with Dena K’éh Gūs’ān, never mind the arbitrary determination of what type of use is “pro-active,” then the struggle for Aboriginal title runs the risk, as Coulthard (2014) describes, of reorienting the struggle from one that was informed by the land as a system of accountability and relations, to a struggle for land, understood increasingly in

⁹ <https://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/14246/index.do>

material terms. The struggle for Aboriginal title in itself has profound ideological implications. A fight over ownership of as much acreage as possible is a very different struggle from one that defends Kaska Dena inherent responsibilities to govern human relations in and with the entirety of Dena Kēyeh according to Dena K'éh Gus'an.

Furthermore, as Nicholas Blomley (2016) demonstrates, in the settler colonial context, continued possession of land by the settler, will, over time, result in the granting of their title to that land. In title's establishment, "the court looks to the success and endurance of the lived territorial control of the interloper, rather than the niceties of title" (597). In effect, the longer the settler occupies stolen land, the greater their claim to title of that land is. Fee-simple title to land has been awarded to settlers throughout Dena Kēyeh, without Kaska Dena consent. With the stroke of pens in Whitehorse and Ottawa, places that people's ancestors have cared for over thousands of years have come to be understood and managed as somebody else's fee-simple land; all without any Final Agreement or any consent of the family who has inherited the responsibility to care for that place. In recent litigation regarding Aboriginal title in Kaska Dena territory (*Ross River Dena Council v. Yukon* 2019), the judge found that "RRDC is at the claim stage of asserting Aboriginal title. It is not at the final resolution or shortly before the establishment of Aboriginal title" meaning, "RRDC does not have a right to veto any development or impose a duty to agree or require that RRDC consents to any developments in the Ross River Area." I want to stress the fact that this is a ruling from 2019; it happened well within the Trudeau age of reconciliation.

For a long time now, Canada has actively fought against Indigenous groups that seek political empowerment; whether the struggles takes place in Aboriginal rights cases that Indigenous peoples bring to the courts, or in the physical defence of their territory

that the state labels as 'civil disobedience.' One important tenet the nation-state relies on in order to maintain such paternalistic governance of Indigenous peoples has been the conceptual separation of politics from culture, and the acceptance of cultural practices, so long as they are not political. By separating culture from politics, the settler colonial project endorses expressions of Indigenous culture, usually practices pre-defined by so-called "authorities," like anthropologists, to take place within the multicultural fabric of Canada; a move that does little to disrupt Canadian sovereignty and capitalist exploitation on Indigenous lands (ex. A. Simpson 2014, L. Simpson 2017). While the state's discourse has shifted, the motivation behind this move is not new in Canada. As Métis scholar Howard Adams wrote in 1975, "Pow-wows and other rituals were allowed or discouraged according to the functions they originally performed in the native society. If they served the original political or religious purposes, they were discouraged because that tended to strengthen the native culture; if they were regarded by the whites as simply colourful, primitive performances, they were permitted and even encouraged" (34). The Indigenous "culture" that is freely and commonly encouraged in Dena Kēyeh is not tied to political and jurisdictional self-determination.

Today in Dena Kēyeh, settler governments do not outlaw drumming and hand games as they did in the past. Today they throw money at Kaska Dena language revitalization projects and they are beginning to "go back" to Indigenous place names for communities. But officially, these places are still considered to be within the jurisdiction of Yukon and Canada, and official political decisions still must take place in the colonial language. Canadian multiculturalism, and the allowance for Indigenous 'cultural' practices inside Canada, masks ongoing political dispossession. As Coulthard (2014) says of Canadian land claims policies with the NWT Dene, "the state insisted that any institution-

alized accommodation of Indigenous cultural difference be reconcilable with *one* political formation - namely colonial sovereignty - and *one* mode of production - namely, capitalism" (66). By separating culture from politics, the state can endorse such principles as "cultural freedom of expression" without threatening the backbone of settler colonialism.

Today, Canada portrays an appearance as if having turned a page in its relation with Indigenous peoples. In Dena Kēyeh, Canada allows Kaska Dena to practice what the state considers to be their culture, like hunting caribou and making drums with their skins, unlike in the past when the state and the church worked together to ban hand games, burn drums, and punish Kaska Dena people for not following colonial hunting laws. Dena practices that are considered strictly "cultural" are now allowed for. But the state still does not allow Kaska Dena political freedom, like governing the ways visitors to their land relate with caribou. Despite years of Kaska Dena objections towards much of the state's wildlife management, YG still actively endorses practices that are contrary to Dena K'éh Gūs'ān, such as catch and release fishing and big-game sport hunting. The freedom to govern these actions is considered political and not cultural, according to dominant settler colonial logic. Therefore, the freedom to uphold Dena relational responsibilities outlined by Norman Sterriah and others, is still under attack by the state.

In re-visiting the ideology of Dena K'éh Gūs'ān for a moment, we can see that the articulation is inherently political. Dena K'éh Gūs'ān teaches, guides, and governs at the same time. Drumming, playing hand games, and language revitalization classes are as much Dena K'éh Gus'ān as is a group of Elders making decisions about human land-use, or decisions around justice, or guiding international relations. There is no division between culture and politics in Dena K'éh Gus'ān. No matter the extent of so-called

“cultural practices” the state permits, so long as Yukon Government continues imposing wildlife management born from western ideologies in Dena Kēyeh, its relation with the Kaska Dena remains colonial in nature.

Dena K'éh Gūs'ān exists independently of settler colonial recognition. It is a system of governance that Kaska Dena inherit from their Elders and ancestors. It does not change in the absence of recognized Aboriginal rights. In fact, Dena K'éh Gūs'ān really has little to do with rights; it is a code and way of life that guides individual and collective action. If it is connected to any right, it is the Kaska Dena inherent right to maintain their systems; to fulfill relational responsibilities. Opaskwayak Cree artist and scholar Tara Williamson (2009) draws attention to the fact that inherent rights really stop being inherent if they depend on the recognition of Canadian law. As she puts it, accepting that the right is apart of the Canadian Constitution “is irreconcilable with the claim that it is inherent and so upon claiming the right, the foundation of the right actually ceases to exist” (79). Building on this, Cherokee scholar Jeff Corntassel (2008) pushes for a shift in Indigenous struggles for self-determination from seeking the recognition of rights, to instead prioritizing “local, indigenous-centred responsibility-based movements” (122). For the foreseeable future, the fight for rights will take place inside colonial courts and boardrooms and within the linguistic prison of English. It will need to be paid for and it will not be cheap. The struggle for rights can and does take place away from the land to which the responsibilities are tied.

On the other hand, Dena K'éh Gūs'ān grounds individuals to land; to place; to language. As Daigle (2018) says of her Mushkegowuk Cree struggles for self-determination, while both civil disobedience, such as blockades, and participation in processes

deemed legitimate by the state, such as negotiation and litigation, are important, neither will matter if her people do not maintain a clear sense of their inherent political responsibilities to their land and governance practices. She says that physically being on her land and waters; moving through her territory, facilitates the reactivation of these responsibilities. In Dena Kēyeh, Land Guardian programs exemplify Daigle's argument. Since the original application of the hunting permit system, for example, Tū Łídlīni Dena Land Guardians have begun moving through vast parts of northern Dena Kēyeh and installing signs in important places. Among other messages, the signs detail some historical and cultural significance of the place, and outline the requirement for non-Kaska hunters to obtain a permit from the RRDC. Critically, the signs also indicate the true name of the place in Dena K'éh, the language of the place. The signs themselves are an expression of Kaska Dena jurisdiction and language resurgence. The initiative, undertaken by Dena Land Guardians physically moving through their homeland, facilitates the reactivation of their responsibilities in and to Dena Kēyeh.

Based on the outstanding potential intrinsic in language to represent and produce worldviews, language resurgence, along with physically being on the lands and waters, facilitates the reactivation of these responsibilities. To free our relations with caribou and other non-human Dena from the linguistic prison of English and re-centre Dena language instead, supports relations guided by the brilliance of Dena K'éh Gus'ān.

Chapter 5 – Conclusion

5.1 Spaces of Generative Refusal

Dena governance principles, articulated within the mountainous depths of Dena K'éh, foster peaceful, respectful, and consensual relations with caribou and other Dena. Yukon wildlife management, born from Euroamerican colonial ideology and built around loaded English concepts like "resource," "property," and "management," represents and (re)produces a starkly different set of relations; relations that are incompatible with Dena ways. The ongoing settler colonial imposition of laws and management practices framed inside the linguistic prison of English directly threaten Dena relations that have fostered healthy coexistence for thousands of years. Despite the absence of any treaty or land claim with the Kaska, Yukon Government imposes language, laws, and land categories from the UFA in un-ceded Kaska territory and attempts to integrate Kaska Dena knowledge into the dominant system of governance. Rather than allow for Kaska Dena worldviews to be centred on their own terms and support an anti-colonial approach to governing human relations with wildlife in Dena Kēyeh, Yukon epitomizes common colonial practices used throughout the world, through presenting Kaska refusal as "unreasonable."

Dena language resurgence in itself supports anti-colonialism. In his 2022 CBC Massey Lecture, Cree writer, storyteller, and philosopher Thomson Highway offers a beautiful and important metaphor related to the resurgence of Indigenous languages. Stories, Highway explains, contribute greatly to the human condition, insofar as they play central roles in creating and upholding widely-held societal values. Highway shows how in the Christian narrative, the separation of humans from the non-human realm, or the Garden, influences a core value of dominant western society. In his words, "with the

story of the Garden, the fundamental thing was that the umbilical cord that tied civilization to mother earth, was cut at the moment of eviction.” Re-enforced today through English language ideology and capitalism, the garden becomes exploitable. Assumptions embedded within this religious story allow for human management and exploitation of Dena Kēyeh itself and the non-human Dena that are apart of it. Yet, as Highway describes, one essential difference between Indigenous languages and European languages is that, “in the structure of Aboriginal languages, the very structure of them, and the respective mythologies that come out of that, the umbilical cord has not yet been cut; we’re still connected to [the Garden].” Articulations like Dena Á’ Nézén, Dena Kēyeh, and Dena K’éh Gus’ān embody this connection. Encoded within these concepts, and the general structure of Dene languages, is a brilliance and wisdom that naturally strengthens Dena connections and challenges Euroamerican colonial assumptions.

Governance designed through English language ideology and capitalist systems of oppression have perpetuated the understanding that caribou are a resource that should be managed by western professionals. Since western wildlife management practices have been imposed, caribou herds have been disappearing from Dena Kēyeh and across the north (i.e. Charlie and Barichello 2022). Despite this general trend, YG continues approving resource-extraction projects in Dena Kēyeh within known caribou calving grounds and other important habitats.¹⁰ YG continues to endorse practices counter to Dena ethics, like radio-collaring caribou, and allowing for the sale of trophy hunts on a global market. YG continues unilaterally categorizing Dena Kēyeh as non-settlement lands, and therefore impeding RRDC’s hunting permit system and offering

¹⁰ <https://kudzzekayah.com/>

Yukoner's practically unfettered hunting access into Dena Kēyeh with no form of Dena consent required.

For those of us committed to working collectively towards language resurgence and the re-centring of Indigenous governance, we can look to teachings from scholars like Aurdra Simpson and Leanne Simpson around refusal as anti-colonial practice. I push us to build our movements around generative refusal. According to Leanne Simpson (2017), generative refusal both "refuses the politics of recognition as a mechanism to bring about change, and it is generative; that is, it is organizing and mobilizing that takes place within nation-based grounded normativities" (178). Generative refusal is anti-colonialism and resurgence together.

The ongoing Kaska political decision to reject the UFA is generative refusal; it generates complex and reciprocal Dena relations with land, and refuses colonial ideologies built around concepts like property, resource, and wilderness. The application of a hunting permitting system, built by Dena Elders and guided by Dena protocols, is generative refusal; it generates responsibility-based ethics and refuses colonial authority in unceded Dena Kēyeh. Land Guardian expeditions that travel Dena Kēyeh to install signs to maintain the use of Dena place names and educate outsiders about how to be respectful visitors are generative refusal; they generate respect for Dena ways and Kaska jurisdiction, and they refuse settler colonial practices of erasure. Dena Elders taking over consultation meetings with YG's Fish and Wildlife Branch through unapologetically re-centring Dena language in Dena Kēyeh is generative refusal; it generates language resurgence and pride for Dena ways, and it refuses the dominance of English.

In my opinion, given the conceptual distance between English and Dena K'éh, and the history of colonial relations between YG and the Kaska, the translation of Dena language and the incorporation of Dena values into the dominant settler colonial institutions will not result in the radical shift needed in respect of how we govern our relations in Dena Kēyeh. Instead of forcing incorporation into the failed systems that have been imposed since the arrival of us settlers here, I believe we need to support the re-centring of the Kaska Dena ways and worldviews on their own terms. The re-centring of Dena K'éh as the language of individual and collective governance in Dena Kēyeh generates healthy relations and Kaska Dena self-determination and jurisdiction in Dena Kēyeh. The re-centring of Dena K'éh contributes to a refusal of capitalism, and is crucial to anti-colonialism. The re-centring of Dena K'éh in un-ceded Dena Kēyeh is good for us, and good for Gudzjh.

My hand runs over tiny glands along the stem of kuhsāze and my eyes closely follow the purposeful pattern the knife makes as it separates caribou ribs from the backbone holding them in place. The Elder is careful with the ribs as she removes them one at a time and hangs them to sway in the buckbrush smoke and the mountain breeze. Kids and youth gather around and watch too. Another old-timer runs his knife down the length of the back-strap he holds in his left hand so he can slowly unfold it and turn it into dry meat to hang in the smoke beside the ribs. Once in a while, the two Elders converse together, all in the Dena language that this mountain valley knows and understands. The way they speak resembles how they move their knives; with a gentle, sophisticated brilliance, and with heartfelt intention. Another couple fluent speakers occasionally join in on the conversation as they watch the knives flow.

Our space has been intentionally re-converted into a Dena language setting, as we are gathered in the mountains for a Kaska Dena language immersion camp. Last night one of the hunters was successful, and today caribou has brought our camp to life. Everyone is busy; some are butchering meat, others are preparing and cooking goodies like kidney, heart, and bum guts, some gather poles to hang meat from, and others are watching attentively and learning. Any words spoken are done so inside the realm of Dena K'éh. Aside from the unique wisdom of the way ideas are articulated inside the language, I am also conscious of other beautiful nuances of Dena K'éh that have contributed to a shift in our space. Everyone there, even those of us who are not fluent speakers and are at different places in our language journeys, can appreciate other subtleties within the newly re-converted Dena K'éh space.

You rarely ever hear more than one speaker at a time, and their words are carefully considered. While fewer words are spoken than an English conversation, each word is embedded with an intention that carries significance as it travels through listening minds and hearts. Words are powerful. The silence between words and sentences adds meaning, as listeners process messages. Listeners are given time to think and feel through what has just been said before hearing the next words spoken. Pauses provide speakers with time too, to consider how listeners are processing so far and to hone the delivery of the following part of the message. I sit in awe of how average conversation in Dena K'éh sounds and feels like a story. Fluent listeners add depth and art to the story through throwing in the occasional expression of emphasis. In important pauses between sentences, you hear multiple voices echoing "jeh!," or "dah!" Speakers feed off the energy of listeners and they all hold the story together. Importantly, a contagious laughter frequently reverberates through camp.

This space is generative refusal. The way this space looks and feels reminds young Kaska Dena that this is their land; that settler colonial narratives of discovery, of wilderness, and of the superiority of western languages and values, are a joke. Sitting in that mountain val-

ley, I am reminded of how shallow it is to govern our relations with caribou through English discussions in downtown boardrooms instead of through sharing time and space with caribou, and inside the language of caribou country. The space is a reminder too that settler colonial jurisdiction here is a lie, that despite the attempted erasure of Indigenous peoples and the creation of nation-state sovereignty on Indigenous lands, Dena K'éh is still and will always be the way of this land, even if it may be sleeping from time to time because of settler colonial violence. Despite measures the government and church have taken to destroy Dena K'éh, and the current state of the language because of those practices, there remains hope for a true resurgence of the language here. The hope is inspired by resilient Elder speakers who patiently and consistently devote so much of their lives to their languages, and by young Indigenous language champions who embody a deep and tireless commitment to language resurgence. The purposeful re-centring of Dena K'éh in spaces like this fosters that resurgence, as well as Dena ways of knowing, self-determination, cultural pride, and love for land. The purposeful re-centring of Dena K'éh in spaces like this refuses settler colonialism in a truly intricate, beautiful, and generative way.

Bibliography

Adams, Howard. (1975). *Prison of Grass: Canada from the native point of view*. Toronto: General Publishing.

Alcantara, Christopher. (2013). *Negotiating the Deal: Comprehensive Land Claims Agreements in Canada*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Altamirano-Jimenez, Isabel. (2014). *Indigenous Encounters with Neoliberalism: Place, Women, and the Environment in Canada and Mexico*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press.

Asch, Michael. (1977). *The Dene Economy*. *Dene Nation: the colony within*, edited by Mel Watkins. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press.

Atleo, Richard. (2011). *Principles of Tsawalk: An Indigenous Approach to Global Crisis*. Vancouver and Toronto: UBC Press.

Banivanua Mar, Tracey. (2016). *Settler Colonial Landscapes and Narratives of Possession*. *The Settler Complex: Recuperating Binarism in Colonial Studies*, edited by Patrick Wolfe. Los Angeles: UCLA Press.

Barker, Adam J. (2009). *The Contemporary Reality of Canadian Imperialism: Settler Colonialism and the Hybrid Colonial State*. *American Indian Quarterly* 33(3), 325-351.

Barichello, Josh and Lianne Charlie. (2022). "We Have Our Footsteps Everywhere:" The Ross River Dena's fight to protect Dena Kēyeh / Kaska Country. *Briarpatch Magazine* 51(1), 16-21.

Bird-Rose, Deborah. (2013). *Val Plumwood's Philosophical Animism: attentive interactions in the sentient world*. *Environmental Humanities* 3, 93-109.

Blaser, Mario. (2016). *Is Another Cosmopolitics Possible?* *Cultural Anthropology* 31(4), 545-570.

Blaser, Mario. (2013). *Ontological Conflicts and the Stories of Peoples in Spite of Europe*. *Current Anthropology* 54(5), 547-569.

Blaser, Mario. (2010). *Storytelling Globalization from the Chaco and Beyond*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Blomley, Nicholas. (2016). The territory of property. *Progress in Human Geography* 40(5), 593-609.

Blomley, Nicholas. (2013). Performing Property: making the world. *Canadian Journal of Law and Jurisprudence* 26(1).

Blondin, George. (2006). *Trail of the Spirit: The Mysteries of Medicine Power Revealed*. Edmonton: NeWest Press.

Blondin, George. (1990). *When the World Was New: Stories of the Sahtú Dene*. Yellowknife: Outcrop.

Borrows, John. (2016). *Freedom and Indigenous Constitutionalism*. Toronto, Buffalo and London: University of Toronto Press.

Braun, Bruce. (2002). *The Intemperate Rainforest: Nature, Culture, and Power on Canada's West Coast*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

Brown, Wendy. (1995). *States of Injury: Power and Freedom in Late Modernity*. New Jersey: Princeton University Press.

Cameron, Emilie and Tyler Levitan. (2014). Impact and Benefit Agreements and the Neoliberalization of Resource Governance and Indigenous-State Relations in Northern Canada. *Studies in Political Economy* 93(1), 25-52.

Connors, Sara. (2021, 08, 16). Kaska nations concerned with 'over-hunting' in their territories. 2021, August 16 <https://www.aptnnews.ca/national-news/kaska-nations-concerned-with-over-hunting-in-their-territories/>

Cortassel, Jeff. (2013). *We Belong to Each Other: Resurgent Indigenous Nations*. Indigenous Nationhood Movement.

Cortassel, Jeff. (2008). Toward Sustainable Self-Determination: Rethinking the Contemporary Indigenous Rights Discourse. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political* 33(1), 105-132.

Coulthard, Glen and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson. (2016). Grounded Normativity / Place-based Solidarity. *American Indian Quarterly* 68(2), 249-255.

Coulthard, Glen Sean. (2014). *Red Skin White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

Coulthard, Glen. (2014). From Wards of the State to Subjects of Recognition? Marx, Indigenous Peoples, and the Politics of Dispossession in Denendeh. *theorizing Native Studies*, edited by Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Coulthard, Glen. (2013). For our nations to live, capitalism must die. Indigenous Nationhood Movement. <http://nationrising.org/for-our-nations-to-live-capitalism-must-die/twitter.com/denerevenge>

Council of Yukon First Nations. (2023). *Umbrella Final Agreement* <https://cyfn.ca/agreements/umbrella-final-agreement/>

Cusicanqui, Silvia Rivera. (2015). *Sociología de la imagen: miradas ch'ixi desde la historia andina*. Buenos Aires: Tinta Limón.

Cusicanqui, Silvia Rivera. (2012). Ch'ixinakax utxiwa: A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization. *The South Atlantic Quarterly* 111(1), 95-109.

Cusicanqui, Silvia Rivera. (2010). The Notion of "Rights" and the Paradoxes of Post-colonial Modernity: Indigenous Peoples and Women in Bolivia. *Qui Parle* 18(2), 29-54.

Cusicanqui, Silvia Rivera. (2005). El potencial epistemológico y teórico de la historia oral: de la lógica instrumental a la descolonización de la historia. *Voces Recobradas: Revista de Historia Oral* 8(21), 12-22.

Daigle, Michelle. (2018). Resurging through Kishiichiwan: The spatial politics of Indigenous water relations. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 7(1), 159-172.

Daigle, Michelle. (2016). Awawanenitakik: The spatial politics of recognition and relational geographies of Indigenous self-determination. *The Canadian Geographer* 60(2), 259-269.

Day, Iyko. (2016). *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Colonial Capitalism*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Deloria, Vine Jr. (1988). *Evolution, Creationism, and Other Modern Myths: A Critical Inquiry*. Golden, Colorado: Fulcrum Publishing.

Dennis, Oscar. (2014). *How I Learned the Language: The Pedagogical Structure of the Tāltān Language*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia, First Nation Studies.

Dueling, Meagan and Dave Croft. (2018, 06, 25). *Yukon First Nation causes stir with plan to issue their own hunting permits*. 2018, June 25 <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/yukon-hunting-ross-river-dena-council-1.4721409>

Farnell, Gillian. (2010). *The Kaska Dene: A Study of Colonialism, Trauma, and Healing in Dene Kēyeh*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia, Anthropology.

Fanon, Frantz. (1963). *The Wretched of the Earth*. New York: Grove Press.

Flowers, Rachel. (2015). *Refusal to forgive: Indigenous women's love and rage*. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 4(2), 32-49.

Gal, Susan. (2015). *The Politics of Translation*. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 44, 225-240.

Gal, Susan and Kathryn A. Woolard. (2014). *Language and Publics: The Making of Authority (Encounters)*. London and New York: Routledge.

Geiger, William A. (2017). *From the Logic of Elimination to the Logic of the Gift: Towards a Decolonial Theory of Tlingit Language Revitalization*. *Open Linguistics* 3, 219-235.

Goeman, Mishuana. (2017). *Ongoing storms and struggles: gender violence and resource exploitation*. *Critically Sovereign: Indigenous Gender, Sexuality, and Feminist Studies*, edited by Joanne Barker. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Goeman, Mishuana. (2014). *Disrupting a Settler Colonial Grammar of Place: The Visual Memoir of Hulleah Tsinhnahjinnie*. *theorizing Native Studies*, edited by Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Goeman, Mishuana. (2012). The Tools of a Cartographic Poet: Unmapping Settler Colonialism in Joy Harjo's Poetry. *Settler Colonial Studies* 2(2), 89-112.

Harris, Cole. (2004). How Did Colonialism Disposess? Comments from an Edge of Empire. *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 94(1), 165-182.

Harris, Douglas C. (2009). A Court Between: Aboriginal Treaty Rights in the British Columbia Court of Appeal. *BC Studies* 162, 137-152.

Hayes, Bob. (2016). *Wolves of the Yukon*.

Highway, Thomson. (2022). 2022 CBC Massey Lectures #1: On Language. Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada. <https://www.cbc.ca/player/play/2107484739999>

Hinkson, Melinda. (2017). Precarious Placemaking. *Annual Review of Anthropology* 46, 49-64.

Hoogeveen, Dawn. (2014). Sub-surface Property, Free-entry Mineral Staking and Settler Colonialism in Canada. *Antipode* 47(1), 121-138.

Hunt, Sarah. (2014). Ontologies of Indigeneity: the politics of embodying a concept. *Cultural Geographies* 2(1), 27-32.

Huseman, Jennifer and Damien Short. (2012). 'A slow industrial genocide': tar sands and the indigenous peoples of northern Alberta. *The International Journal of Human Rights* 16(1), 216-237.

Iceton, Glenn. (2019). 'Many Families of Unseen Indians': Trapline Registrations and Understandings of Aboriginal Title in the BC-Yukon Borderlands. *BC Studies; Vancouver* 201, 67-91.

Johnson, Leslie Main. (2010). *Trail of Story, Traveller's Path*. Edmonton: AU Press.

Kelley, Robin D.G. (2002). *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination*. Boston: Beacon Press.

Larsen, S.C. and J.T. Johnson. (2017). *Being Together in Place: Indigenous Coexistence in a More Than Human World*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Little Bear, Leroy. (2000). *Worldview: Jagged Worldviews Colliding. Reclaiming Indigenous Voice and Vision.*

Lowman, Emma B. and Adam J. Barker. (2015). *Settler: Identity and Colonialism in 21st Century Canada.* Black Point, NS and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.

Manuel, Arthur and Grand Chief Ronald M. Derrickson. (2015). *Unsettling Canada: A National Wake-Up Call.* Toronto: Between the Lines.

Manuel, George and Michael Posluns. (1974). *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality.* Ontario: Collier-Macmillan Canada Ltd.

Maracle, Lee. (1988). *I am Woman: Native Perspective of Sociology and Feminism.* Vancouver: Press Gang Publishing.

Maynard, Robyn. (2017). *Policing Black Lives: State Violence in Canada from Slavery to the Present.* Halifax and Winnipeg: Fernwood Publishing.

Mcdonnell, Roger Francis. (1963). *Kasini Society: Some Aspects of the Social Organization of an Athapaskan Culture Between 1900-1950.* Vancouver: University of British Columbia, Philosophy.

Memmi, Albert. (1965). *The Colonizer and the Colonized.* Boston: Beacon Press.

Million, Dian. (2014). *There is a River in Me: Theory from Life.* *theorizing Native Studies*, edited by Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Million, Dian. (2013). *Therapeutic Nations: Healing in an Age of Indigenous Human Rights.* Tucson: University of Arizona Press.

Moore, Patrick. (2018). *Shifting: Amerindian perspectivism in Kaska narrative performances.* *Language and Communication* 63, 33-48.

Nadasdy, Paul. (2017). *Sovereignty's Entailments: First Nation State Formation in the Yukon.* Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Nadasdy, Paul. (2016). First Nations, Citizenship and Animals, or Why Northern Indigenous People Might Not Want to Live in Zoopolis. *Canadian Journal of Political Science* 49(1), 1-20.

Nadasdy, Paul. (2012). Boundaries among Kin: Sovereignty, the Modern Treaty Process, and the Rise of Ethno-Territorial Nationalism among Yukon First Nations. *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 54(3), 499-532.

Nadasdy, Paul. (2005). Transcending the Debate over the Ecologically Noble Indian: Indigenous Peoples and Environmentalism. *Ethnohistory* 52(2), 291-331.

Nahanni, Phoebe. (1977). The Mapping Project. *Dene Nation: the colony within*, edited by Mel Watkins. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press.

Nicholas, Andrea Bear. (2011). Linguicide: Submersion education and the killing of languages in Canada. *Briarpatch Magazine*.

Nichols, Robert. (2020). *Theft is Property!: Dispossession and Critical Theory*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Ngugi, Wa Thiong'o. (1993). *Moving the Centre: The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms*. Nairobi: East African Educational Publishers.

Oxford English Dictionary. (1596-) Resource <https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=resource>

Oxford English Dictionary. (c1200-) Wilderness <https://www.oed.com/search/dictionary/?scope=Entries&q=wilderness>

Palmer, Vera. (2014). The Devils in the Details: Controverting an American Indian Conversation Narrative. *theorizing Native Studies*, edited by Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Pasternak, Shiri. (2017). *Grounded Authority: The Algonquins of Barriere Lake Against the State*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Pasternak, Shiri. (2016). The fiscal body of sovereignty: to 'make live' in Indian country. *Settler Colonial Studies* 6(4), 317-338.

Pasternak, Shiri. (2014). Jurisdiction and Settler Colonialism: Where Do Laws Meet? *Canadian Journal of Law and Society* 29(2), 145-161.

Povinelli, Elizabeth A. (2016). *Geontologies: A Requiem to Late Liberalism*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Preston, Jen. (2013). Neoliberal settler colonialism, Canada and the tar sands. *Race and Class* 55(2), 42-59.

Real Academia Española. (2023). Manejar <https://dle.rae.es/manejar>

Rushforth, Scott. (1977). *Country Food*. Dene Nation: the colony within, edited by Mel Watkins. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press.

Samson, Colin and Elizabeth Cassel. (2013). The Long Reach of Frontier Justice: Canadian Land Claims 'Negotiation' Strategies as Human Rights Violations. *International Journal of Human Rights* 17(1), 35-55.

Smith, Linda Tuhiwai. (1999). *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples*. London: Zed Books.

Simpson, Audra. (2016). Consent's Revenge. *Cultural Anthropology* 31(3), 326-333.

Simpson, Audra. (2014). *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Simpson, Audra and Andrea Smith. (2014). *Theorizing Native Studies*. Durham and London: Duke University Press.

Simpson, Leanne Betasamosake. (2017). *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance*. Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press.

Simpson, Leanne. (2011). *Dancing On Our Turtle's Back: Stories of Nishnaabeg Re-Creation, Resurgence, and a New Emergence*. Winnipeg: Arbeiter Ring Publishing.

Simpson, Leanne. (2004). Anticolonial Strategies for the Recovery and Maintenance of Indigenous Knowledge. *American Indian Quarterly* 28(3/4), 373-384.

Simpson, Leanne. (2001). Aboriginal Peoples And Knowledge: Decolonizing Our Processes. *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 21 (1), 137-148.

Stark, Heidi Kiiwetinepinesiik. (2012). Marked by Fire: Anishinaabe Articulations of Nationhood in Treaty Making with the United States and Canada. *American Indian Quarterly* 36(2), 119-149.

Snelgrove, Cory and Rita Kaur Dhamoon and Jeff Corntassel (2014). Unsettling settler colonialism: The discourse and politics of settlers, and solidarity with Indigenous nations. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 3(2), 1-32.

Supreme Court of Canada. (2014, 06, 26). *Tsilhqot'in Nation v. British Columbia*. 2014, June 26 <https://scc-csc.lexum.com/scc-csc/scc-csc/en/item/14246/index.do>

Thomson, Nancy. (2018, 09, 28). 'It's our way of life': Ross River Dena defend hunting permits plan. 2018, September 28 <https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/north/ross-river-dena-hunting-permits-1.4841907>

Tuck, Eve and K. Wayne Yang. (2012). Decolonization is not a metaphor. *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1(1), 1-40.

Veracini, Lorenzo. (2013). The Other Shift: Settler Colonialism, Isreal, and the Occupation. *Journal of Palestine Studies* 42(2), 26-42.

Vimalassery, Manu. (2016). The Wealth of the Natives: Toward a Critique of Settler Colonial Political Economy. *The Settler Complex: Recuperating Binarism in Colonial Studies*, edited by Patrick Wolfe. Los Angeles: UCLA Press.

Viveiros de Castro, Eduardo. (1998). Cosmological Deixis and Amerindian Perspectivism. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 4, 469-488.

Watkins, Mel. (1977). *The Colony Within*. Toronto and Buffalo: University of Toronto Press.

Watts, Vanessa. (2016). Smudge This: Assimilation, State-Favoured Communities and the Denial of Indigenous Spiritual Lives. *International Journal of Child, Youth and Family Studies* 7(1), 148-170.

Watts, Vanessa. (2013). Indigenous place-thought & agency amongst humans and non-humans (First Woman and Sky Woman go on a European world tour!) *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 2(1), 20-34.

Weinstein, Martin. (1993). *The Ross River Dena: A Yukon Aboriginal Economy*. M.S Weinstein Consulting Services. Comox, BC.

Whetung, Madeline and Sarah Wakefield. (2018). Colonial Conventions: Institutionalized Research Relationships and Decolonizing Research Ethics. *Indigenous and Decolonizing Studies in Education: Mapping the Long View*, edited by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang. New York: Routledge.

Williamson, Tara. (2009). The Edges of Exception: Implications for Indigenous Liberation in Canada. *Appeal Rev. Current L. & L. Reform* 14, 68-?

Wilson, Nicole J. (2018). *More Precious than Gold: Indigenous Water Governance in the Context of Modern Land Claims in Yukon*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia, Institute for Resources, Environment and Sustainability.

Wolfe, Patrick. (2013). *The Settler Complex: Recuperating Binarism in Colonial Studies*. Los Angeles: UCLA Press.

Wolfe, Patrick. (2006). Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native. *Journal of Genocide Research* 8(4), 387-409.

Yukon Government. (2021, 09, 08). *Statement from Minister Clarke regarding hunting in Yukon First Nations traditional territories*. 2021, September 8 <https://yukon.ca/en/news/statement-minister-clarke-regarding-hunting-yukon-first-nations-traditional-territories>