

RESEARCH ARTICLE/ÉTUDE ORIGINALE

# The Roles of Settler Canadians within Decolonization: Re-evaluating Invitation, Belonging and Rights

Deanne Aline Marie Leblanc\* 

Department of Political Science, University of British Columbia, 1866 Main Mall C425, Vancouver, BC V6T 1Z1

\*Corresponding author. E-mail: [deanne.am.leblanc@gmail.com](mailto:deanne.am.leblanc@gmail.com)

## Abstract

This article, grounded within the argument that liberal citizenship and recognition-based approaches to decolonization are inappropriate responses to Indigenous calls to decolonize, proposes an alternative approach premised on re-evaluating non-Indigenous understandings of invitation, belonging and rights within the Canadian settler state. I suggest that non-Indigenous peoples consider themselves “foreigners” in need of invitation onto Indigenous lands and that, as *colonial denizens*, non-Indigenous Canadians take up an ethos that encourages them to re-evaluate their lives and relations with Indigenous peoples, Indigenous lands and the settler state. Such re-evaluations would encourage settlers to question the sovereignty of the state and their daily relations, as well as encourage them to place responsibilities to others above inwardly focused rights. I contend that identifying and acting upon such an ethos can provide a way through which non-Indigenous peoples can appropriately and seriously meet Indigenous peoples’ calls for change.

## Résumé

En m'appuyant sur l'argument d'après lequel la citoyenneté libérale et les approches de la décolonisation fondées sur la reconnaissance constituent des réponses inadéquates aux appels lancés par les Autochtones, je propose une autre démarche reposant sur la prémisse d'une réévaluation de la compréhension par les non-Autochtones de l'invitation qui leur est adressée, ainsi que de l'appartenance et des droits au sein de l'État colonisateur canadien. Comme alternative, je suggère que les non-Autochtones se considèrent comme des « étrangers » qui ont besoin d'être invités sur les terres autochtones. Je suggère qu'en tant qu'habitants de la colonie, les Canadiens non-Autochtones adoptent un principe éthique qui les incite à réévaluer leur vie et leurs relations avec les peuples autochtones, les territoires autochtones et l'État colonisateur. Des réévaluations qui encouragent les colons à remettre en question la souveraineté de l'État et leurs relations quotidiennes, tout en les incitant à placer les responsabilités envers autrui au-dessus des droits centrés sur eux-mêmes. Je soutiens que la légitimation et la mise en œuvre de cette attitude peuvent permettre aux peuples non-Autochtones de répondre dûment et sérieusement aux appels au changement qui leur sont adressés.

**Keywords:** colonialism; resurgence; decolonization; Indigenous; recognition

**Mots-clés :** colonialisme; résurgence; décolonisation; Autochtone; reconnaissance

The publication of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's 2015 *Final Report* appears to have fostered an environment of nascent reflexivity throughout non-Indigenous Canadian society focused on identifying and addressing the collective colonial issues of today (Canada, Truth and Reconciliation Commission, 2015). While many non-Indigenous Canadians are now searching in good faith for ways of reorienting themselves toward truth and reconciliation, many find themselves alienated and uncertain of how to move forward. This uncertainty and alienation is due to the nature of contemporary state-led reconciliation efforts and the inability of current paradigms to substantively challenge settler colonialism and offer its participants a method of moving beyond its logics and structures. What I am offering here, through the *colonial denizen*, is one way through which interested non-Indigenous peoples might begin discursively reorienting themselves beyond contemporary Western paradigms<sup>1</sup> so that they find appropriate roles in decolonization that help sustain and privilege Indigenous<sup>2</sup> goals and priorities toward decolonization.<sup>3</sup>

An important issue facing contemporary non-Indigenous peoples in the move forward is that reconciliation efforts readily provided look for reconciliation, the restoration of “friendly” relations,<sup>4</sup> before and beyond decolonization, the recentering of Indigenous life and land (Tuck and Yang, 2012), and so are set up to fail because they are not properly focused on challenging and dismantling settler colonial structures and privileges as a means of complementing Indigenous resurgence initiatives. Rather, what these efforts accomplish according to Dene scholar, Glen Coulthard, is the extension of settler colonialism's structured dispossession and the reproduction of “the very configurations of colonist, racist, patriarchal state power that Indigenous peoples' demands for recognition have historically sought to transcend” (2014: 3). These seemingly reconciliatory moves, therefore, do not achieve their stated ends because they are focused on securing settler futurity. Inevitably, they reproduce settler colonialism rather than doing the transformative work of privileging Indigenous nationhoods, goals and priorities. These initiatives are the state-provided guideposts with which interested non-Indigenous peoples are provided—guideposts that (if accepted) lead participants to further entrench settler colonial structures, relations and privileges.

When colonialism is defined as a continuing form of domination over and dispossession of Indigenous peoples, specific to the logics of erasure evidenced in settler colonial states (Coulthard, 2014; Simpson, 2011), decolonization requires the resurgence and recentering of Indigenous life and land (Simpson, 2011; Tuck and Yang, 2012) at the same time that it requires a step away from the liberal state (Coulthard, 2014) and the willingness of non-Indigenous peoples to step aside and to be open to transformative change. This means that settlers must go from unreflexively “living their privilege” to thinking through that privilege, challenging and changing it (Irlbacher-Fox, 2014b: 152). The failure of current liberal-democratic-based initiatives to identify this issue, beyond their privileged silence on encouraging meaningful structural change, is part of what leads to settler

uncertainty and alienation for those interested in acting otherwise toward a politics of decolonization: they have little to no substantive language/discourse/paradigm through which to think, imagine and act differently.

The following, therefore, proposes the concept of the colonial denizen as a new analytic tool that can help settler colonists reorient themselves so that they can begin contributing to decolonization in ways that do not reinscribe settler colonialism—primarily through helping settlers establish the critical, analytical foundations for identifying, challenging and dismantling settler colonial privileges and structures. Such work would provide for the fuller realization of Indigenous resurgence (Barker and Battell Lowman, 2016) while also providing settlers with the tools to reorient themselves toward Indigenous peoples and lands, so that settlers are able to engage in relations and realizations of Indigenous resurgence through means that do not look to secure settler futurity (that is, privileges) before and beyond Indigenous futurity (that is, resurgence).

As such, the colonial denizen is specifically proffered as a theory and thought experiment that can lead to the establishment of an identity and deeply active ethos through which contemporary settler colonists can begin to actively dismantle the structures, processes, privileges and relations that stand in the way of decolonization efforts, while situating themselves to better respond to, understand and engage with Indigenous peoples, their lands and their goals and priorities. It is my contention that the normative-analytical power of the colonial denizen can simultaneously allow non-Indigenous peoples to identify themselves appropriately in relation to historical realities and colonial thought and action while creating a theoretical basis upon which to engage in the process of decolonization with respect to Indigenous peoples. The colonial denizen, therefore, begins as a thought experiment that encourages contemporary settler colonists to identify themselves as “foreigners” in need of invitation onto Indigenous land (past and present). Importantly, this invitation is not meant to be the driving force behind a denizen ethos. Such a single-minded focus would lead to the reinscription of settler colonialism through its focus on securing settler futurity. Rather, the place of invitation within this thought experiment is the redefinition and reframing of the problem of colonialism away from Indigenous difference and toward settler privilege (Irlbacher-Fox, 2014b: 146) in ways that help spark engagement, imagination and the critical re-storying of Western paradigms and settler myths toward an active ethos that enables the dismantling of the settler colonial structures that continue to stymie decolonization. The potential promise of the denizen is the dismantling of settler security through identifying the actual precarity of settler presence on Indigenous land through a workable and active ethos of engagement.

The following develops the rationale for using this term and establishes a foundational articulation of the colonial denizen upon which future work is encouraged. As such, I begin by situating the colonial denizen within Jodi Byrd’s “cacophony of contradictorily hegemonic and horizontal struggles” (Byrd, 2011: 53) and among traditional colonist terms already established (settler, arrivant, and so on) within the colonial literature, arguing that the denizen offers a fresh and necessary addition to these terms and conceptions of colonial actors—one that provides the normative foundations for escaping the logic of settler colonialism and the uncertainty and alienation of un-settled colonists. From here I will begin articulating the colonial

denizen against its use within the ancient, medieval and contemporary world. This will lead me into a fuller articulation of the colonial denizen and its potential to help discursively reorient non-Indigenous peoples interested in responding to Indigenous calls for decolonization.

### An Argument for the Denizen within Jodi Byrd's Cacophony

There is already a large lexicon of terms used throughout colonial-focused literature to describe the various positions of differently situated colonists. It is important to contextualize the denizen among some of the more prominent of these terms as a way of highlighting the utility of the colonial denizen and to present a fuller understanding of its potential application. As I present it here, the colonial denizen is not meant to replace already existing terminology but to add a useful and necessary term that serves both descriptive and normative functions and which works among and as part of these already established roles. As such, the following presents a short summation of the colonial cacophony as lexicon, identifying three of its more prominent roles (settler, arrivant, guest) and the ways in which the colonial denizen fits into and adds to the literature and understanding of colonial roles and relations.

First, it is important to identify the term *colonist* as referring to anyone who comes to a given colony from away. Everyone who participates (historically and today) at some level in the practice of leaving for a colony or settler colonial state is part of this cacophony and is likely implicated in some way within the colonial project as colonist. Both voluntary and involuntary, as well as permanent and temporary members of the colony (or settler colonial state) therefore become implicated within the structures and processes of the colonial project—in some cases, simultaneously occupying the position of dominator and dominated (Arneil, 2017). Such a broad application of the term *colonist* is supported today in the works of Indigenous and racialized scholars such as Bonita Lawrence and Enakshi Dua who, in challenging anti-racial studies to decolonize, recognize that the application of the term *colonist* is not confined to Caucasian men and women but is applied to all those who “come from away” who (while they might experience domination themselves) benefit in some way from the colonial project (Lawrence and Dua, 2005).

It is through the various alternative terms (settler, arrivant, and so on) that one identifies and analyzes diversity within the colonist body. These differences speak predominately, though not exclusively, to differences between one's position as voluntary or involuntary, permanent or temporary colonist within the broader colonial project. For instance, the *settler* term is suggestive of a voluntary and permanent colonist who benefits from a settler colonial state. Within the literature of settler colonial studies (Wolfe, 1999; Veracini, 2010), through which the term has been brought to the forefront of recent discussion, “settlers are *founders* of political orders [who] . . . carry their sovereignty with them” (Veracini, 2010: 3). Settlers are men and women who ultimately seek to establish themselves as Indigenous to foreign lands—a process that is never complete, seemingly inescapable, and dependent on the continued erasure of Indigenous lives. In this way, *settler* further normatively modifies *colonist* from within a specific type of colonization. There is,

therefore, no further normative differentiation of the settler colonist actor as such: there are no “good” or “bad” settlers—only settlers.

In juxtaposition to the settler is the *arrivant*—a term initially identified in the work of Caribbean poet Kamau Brathwaite and borrowed by Jodi Byrd. This term refers to “those people forced into the Americas through the violence of European and Anglo-American colonialism and imperialism around the globe” (Byrd, 2011: xix). While the term is principally used to identify the role of slaves and indentured servants within the literature, it could also be extended to women like the *filles du roi*, who were (in many cases) forced to come to New France to settle and help populate the French-Canadian colonies (Charbonneau et al., 1993). This term is used to identify involuntary colonists who experience (d) subordinate roles of domination within the colonial project and yet who may still be implicated as colonists. Such colonists can be either temporary or permanent.<sup>5</sup>

The denizen serves as an analytic tool through which to identify and analyze the ways that the positions of differently situated actors—their various relations to Indigenous peoples and the lands—affect(ed) not only their actions but also their willingness and ability to act as denizen: as those who recognize(d) their foreignness to Indigenous lands and act(ed), in respect to Indigenous peoples, nations and societies, in kind. As such, it also demonstrates the importance of context both in past and present and how this can inform the employment of the denizen ethos today; in other words, looking to act as a colonial denizen will mean something different to a given individual based on various factors (for example, how they came to reside on Indigenous lands, their own relation to the colonial state and its structures, and the specific interests and governance structures of local Indigenous peoples with which a given individual may look to dialogically present themselves as denizen). In this way, the denizen is applicable across the already existing lexicon as a further guide to surveying the actual actions and roles of colonists as well as the potential roles of denizens. In addition, it provides a normative lens through which to examine potential moments and models of denizen behaviour that can help inform the contemporary paradigm shift needed to begin dismantling settler colonial structures to help aid and provide appropriate space for Indigenous resurgence in ways that do not reinforce settler colonialism and privilege.

The denizen is most closely related to the concept of *guest*. Contemporary land acknowledgments that draw to light the colonial privilege of living and working on territories that are not one’s own have led Indigenous peoples (who are not on their own land) and non-Indigenous peoples to identify themselves as “uninvited guests” on Indigenous lands. Identifying oneself in this way suggests that the person in question recognizes they have not been invited onto the Indigenous land they find themselves on and yet who, unlike an *invader*, want to establish positive and anti-colonial relationships with the peoples on whose lands they find themselves. Identifying oneself as a guest in this way, while it could be seen as an imposition in and of itself (through forcing the role of the host), is generally identified as establishing the grounds for positive engagement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

One of the first colonial applications of this term was made by Secwépemc, Sylix and Nlaka:pamux peoples of the Pacific West Coast in reference to non-Indigenous

peoples. As recent work by Jim Tully highlights, by 1910 these nations identified the French-Canadian fur traders who came, visited and lived within their territories prior to 1858 as “good guests”—guests who respectfully interacted with these nations and demonstrated deference to their laws and customs. Alternatively, these nations identified those colonists who came into their territories after 1858 as “bad guests” who sought to impose their laws and customs on the Indigenous nations (Tully, 2020: 639–42). Tully’s (2020) analysis of these nations’ historical and continuing application of the *good guest* term brings to light important ways through which non-Indigenous peoples might act in better and anti-colonial relations with the Indigenous peoples on whose lands they find themselves. In this way, similarly to my intention with the colonial denizen, the guest becomes not only part of the descriptive colonial lexicon but also introduces a normative element—a way through which non-Indigenous peoples might come to think and act otherwise. Taking direction from these nations, Tully argues that acting as a good guest means that those who find themselves as foreigners on Indigenous lands respect their hosts’ laws and customs, do not interfere with nor seek to dismantle tribal organizations, do not force their conceptions and world-views on their hosts, do not try to steal or appropriate, and do not go “completely native” but instead share useful knowledge and technologies with their hosts through entering gift-reciprocity relationships.

The denizen takes on a similar role as descriptor, normative ideal and ethos within the colonial lexicon. Yet where the guest, by very nature of its definition, suggests impermanence, further supported by the transient positions of the original good guests of the fur trade, the denizen has the capacity to refer to more permanent presence on Indigenous lands. Given the reality of contemporary global situations and the reasoning that (due to their roles in colonialism) non-Indigenous peoples will likely have important roles to play in decolonization, one needs to approach decolonization from the understanding that non-Indigenous peoples might be “here to stay” and yet are people who should begin to act otherwise. As such, there is a need to substantively engage with the potential permanence of the non-Indigenous body within the colonial cacophony. The denizen, therefore, offers a way to reconceptualize not only the descriptive but also normative analysis of non-Indigenous roles in colonialism and decolonization around this more indefinite and possibly permanent prospect.

Analysis here would be incomplete without a brief discussion of the term’s relationship to the *treaty partner*. The treaty partner is a role that gained prominence following the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples’ 1996 report—having since been taken up by various scholars (Asch, 2014; Borrows, 2010; Mills, 2016). It is a role that is deeply tied to concepts of mutual recognition, coexistence and Indigenous self-governance as presented within the same report (Canada et al., 1996). Certainly, there are similarities that can also be drawn between the colonial denizen and treaty partner, in terms of their descriptive and normative orientations for non-Indigenous peoples and their relations to Indigenous peoples and lands. For instance, mutual recognition between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples makes up a substantial component of both treaty partner and denizen ethos. And for the colonial denizen, treaties themselves constitute significant sites of potential invitation for non-Indigenous peoples onto Indigenous lands. Yet, unlike with the

treaty partner, the denizen cannot assume they are here to stay. Instead they must be open to the possibility of refusal—that an invitation will not be extended. This means that while the treaty partner is encouraged to take invitation for granted (through invoking the concept of treaty as already established, the invitation has already been assumed), the denizen cannot do so and is, in fact, focused on establishing dialogical relationships with local Indigenous peoples not already premised on such potentially colonizing assumptions. There is a liminality and vulnerability that is necessary in the move toward decolonization that is not immediately fostered within the role of treaty partner. This needs to be taken up in a serious and conscientious way through a denizen ethos. Furthermore, given the co-optation of treaty by government through the modern treaty agreements (with their imbalanced power), as well as mainstream understandings of treaty throughout Canadian society, there is perhaps a broader practical element to moving away from the treaty partner role and toward the less weighted colonial denizen.

### Situating the Colonial Denizen against Its Political Origins and Contemporary Use

There are multiple definitions of the denizen, including an inhabitant of a specified space or a person admitted residence in a foreign country.<sup>6</sup> While the former tends to be used within the natural sciences as a non-politicized term, the latter is derived from historical practices of inclusion within territorially specified areas. A colonial articulation of the denizen finds its grounding with the term's political application. This is partially to do with the term's "natural" science application as hindered by its implicit naturalization of subjects, which troublingly aligns with settler colonial moves to erase Indigenous populations and Indigenize colonists in their place. Alignment with its political use is also due to the overwhelmingly political nature of reorienting non-Indigenous peoples toward substantive decolonization with Indigenous peoples and to the ability of a political articulation to help illuminate vital aspects of such a paradigm shift that helps recentre Indigenous sovereignties and nationhoods.

The term itself is derived from the Latin root words: *de intus*, meaning "from within," and *aneus*, meaning "foreign"—therefore, meaning "foreigner from within" (Berry, 1944: 491). Broadly, this term has been used as a political identity marker: a status bestowed upon an individual who is a foreigner within a territory, who has been allowed to inhabit this area given that they pledge allegiance as well as fulfil certain obligations to the preeminent political power of the territory. Traditionally, this was a status that conferred upon the foreigner a curtailed membership based upon the fulfilment of a set of responsibilities under the political power to which they sought standing.

This historical and contemporary use of the denizen, however, is tied up in the practice and study of colonization, empire and citizenships—the very things that state and society need to address and move past when the goal is decolonization. In ancient Rome, for instance, the process of *civitas sine suffragio*, which is closely associated with the medieval practice of denizenization (Berry, 1944), was an imperial tool through which the Romans commodified their civil law to incorporate and colonize conquered peoples. They would extend partial citizenship to conquered



colonies on the condition that certain obligations were met each year (Yeo, 1959). In the early days of the empire, this helped strengthen Roman power throughout conquered lands (MacKendrick, 1952). So why am I interested in using this term for decolonial ends? And perhaps importantly, how can it be salvaged for such ends?

First and foremost, the core of the political definition, beyond its specific applications within the ancient and, later, medieval worlds, holds considerable potential in encouraging a decolonial paradigm shift. The core of the definition identifies an important relationship of belonging, dependence and responsibility that appears to be needed within the contemporary Western political lexicon. It situates those who are foreign to a given area as requiring not only recognition of their foreignness but also invitation, by those of the area, to coexist with those who are sovereign/responsible to the lands upon which the foreigners seek to rest or live. In this way, it helps to discursively resituate and balance power relations through the realization of Indigenous people's sovereignties and nationhoods. It places "invited foreigners" within vulnerable positions as those who are not "native" to the territory and who do not, necessarily, get to experience full access to membership. This is accomplished through a term that itself is not tied down to contemporary functions and logics of the settler colonial nation-state. If non-Indigenous peoples within settler colonial states began to understand themselves and their civic ancestors as potential denizens (based on this core definition), they would understand that, in most cases, they have not been invited to cohabit Indigenous territories; that if invitation was ever extended through dialogical relations, their position on such territories would require a recognition of Indigenous law and governance structures as legitimate and primary; that *they* would be the populations requiring invitation and, by extension, recognition within a decolonial society, or else negotiating a set of societies of separate coexisting sovereignties, a refusal of invitation, or whatever list of possible Indigenous-centred futures are naturally presented through resurgence efforts; and that any possible invitation and recognition would require the continual fulfilment of responsibilities under local Indigenous governance structures. Importantly, denizens would also need to be open to the very real possibility of refusal: that no invitation would be extended and that a search for invitation cannot be the guiding force of their interest in decolonization, as this could co-opt the entire process. Taking the concept from its bare-bones definition, therefore, and reformatting it from within a (de)colonial lens demonstrates the denizen's potential to resituate Indigenous life and land through recognizing Indigenous populations' sovereignties and settler peoples' vulnerabilities as foreign, non-Indigenous peoples.

Taking up the denizen concept in this way would be a huge paradigm shift through which to properly acknowledge Indigenous peoples' pre-existing and continuing governance structures, legal systems and self-determination—all necessary acknowledgments in the engagement of Indigenous resurgence. One could make the argument that the original European colonists should have recognized themselves as foreigners requiring invitation onto Indigenous lands through Indigenous governance and legal structures wherein, upon invitation, the European presence was as denizens not imperial powers. While Indigenous records, as well as the progression of history, have demonstrated that high-level European intentions were always, ultimately imperially driven and problematic (Dickason, 2001; Vincent, 2002), this fact does not discount



the potential of the denizen concept and its use as a guide to re-evaluate the vast history of Indigenous/colonist relations. If anything, it only amplifies the term's potential to act as a tool to revisit and re-story histories of contact and relations, given the term's ability to highlight both descriptive and normative realities, as well as tensions, throughout the history of Indigenous/colonist relations.

Despite the term's colonial entanglements, there may still be key aspects of the term's historical use in the ancient and medieval worlds, as well as within its contemporary analysis in citizenship studies, that can offer some potential insights as to how one might further conceive of the colonial denizen (even where its application has been under paradigms that need to be transcended). As an example, the denizen's early use within the ancient and medieval worlds demonstrates that the term's origins are not confined to state-centric logics. Neither ancient Rome nor medieval England were composed as nation-states. This supports the introduction of the term into contemporary use as a fresh concept, unburdened by the baggage of the nation-state and its associated terms of belonging. Consciously turning from state-centric terms can enable greater paradigm shifting among non-Indigenous populations. Such application of the denizen is even available within the contemporary citizenship literature. Focusing on the effects of neoliberalism and privatization, the work of Clifford Shearing and Jennifer Wood, for instance, applies the term to identify and explain the multiplicity of obligations people share across various governance sites (beyond the state) that are difficult to categorize by the public/private divide (Shearing and Wood, 2003). Not only do Shearing and Wood apply the denizen in a contemporary non-state-centric manner but their application of the denizen also opens up space for the term to carry a desirable, and even exclusive, status within society—like being a denizen of a gated community. Such a positive connotation is noteworthy, given traditional connotations of the status as being “less than” and undesirable. This positive connotation can serve to inspire ways to balance unsettling, hope and belonging when taking up a denizen ethos.

Finally, Mick Smith's (2005) application of the denizen demonstrates the productive and creative capacities inherent within the term itself. Apart from the more traditional citizenship-based applications (Hammar, 1990; Standing, 2011; Turner, 2016), Smith looks to articulate a reformulated citizenship ethos that is more in line with environmental ethics. According to Smith, modern citizenship (and the *res publica* it helps to sustain) establishes an ethos that excludes nonhuman life. This exclusion prohibits the inclusion of appropriate—and for Smith, necessary—environmental ethics within contemporary Western governance practices and citizenship regimes. This, in turn, threatens both the human and nonhuman worlds. For Smith, the denizen offers a positive way through which to establish a different *res publica*, one that incorporates both the human and nonhuman worlds in mutually sustainable ways. According to Smith, if humans are to resituate themselves as denizens to the natural world, they would recognize themselves as occupying a more ambiguous place (in relation to the nonhuman world) than they currently do when they consider themselves citizens from within a Western paradigm. As denizens they would be in relations not of “rule-bound equality imposed by an external authority . . . but on an understanding and recognition of the importance of context and difference” (Smith, 2005: 159). For Smith, therefore, a denizen ethos enables societies to restructure themselves in ways that force them

to question preconceived concepts of life, politics and the world and to reimagine political orders more inclusive of the nonhuman world, their dependence on this world and environmental ethics. Smith's application of the denizen appears particularly compelling when applying the term to a colonial context. He takes stock of the term's productive capacities, its ability to help people to think otherwise and to re-evaluate their relations to people and land: the same re-evaluations that are needed within a decolonial application of the denizen. While the denizen offers such creative potential, it could also be used to reorient the colonial denizen in rule-bound equality to local Indigenous *res publicas*—or else *res publicas* more in line with Indigenous legal and governance systems.

While the historical uses and contemporary applications of the denizen are troublingly colonial and citizenship-oriented, such applications still offer valuable guideposts in the move to articulating a colonial denizen. Such applications demonstrate the utility of the term as not beholden to state-centric origins and applications, its capacity to engage with belonging as non-teleological, and its productive capacity to encourage people to reimagine their relations to life and land beyond confining state-centric paradigms of liberal citizenship and recognition.

### Articulating the Colonial Denizen: Realigning Responsibilities, Lands and People

This paradigm shift is a guide for non-Indigenous state and society to begin engaging Indigenous calls for decolonization (resurgent goals and priorities) on their own merits, outside the confining approaches to the current paradigm and through ways that do not merely reinscribe settler colonial privilege. What I am proposing here is a theory that could animate such a shift: the theory of the colonial denizen. What I am specifically presenting here, however, are only the first two components of this shift: the theory and the discursive exercise that leads to the more substantive and specifically local instantiations of a deeply active ethos and its resultant broader societal paradigm shift.

While I have already begun to flesh out the theory of the colonial denizen above, within this final section I will elaborate upon my intentions with its use as contemporary discursive exercise proffered to inform the development of a deeply active colonial denizen ethos. All articulations are made in recognition that Indigenous resurgence is always the first order of decolonization and that non-Indigenous roles are secondary, supporting and focused on dismantling the settler colonial structures through which these privileges are sourced and sustained. The denizen is, therefore, about reorienting settler colonists to do this work, as well as to better situate themselves to “grapple with what it means to be accountable to Indigenous resurgence” (Barker and Battell Lowman, 2016: 209). These are the driving orientations of a colonial denizen theory and ethos.

As a discursive exercise, the theory of the colonial denizen animates a thought experiment focused on confronting and challenging the various assumptions present within contemporary (and historical) paradigms and settlement narratives that work to support the establishment and continuing vitality of colonial processes and structures. For instance, the denizen can be used to explore and challenge the Lockean-liberal theory that not only supported the concept of *terra nullius* and

which helped justify early European colonization but also has grounded modern understandings of the sovereign individual endowed with reason and the isolating theory of individual rights that animate contemporary liberal-democratic paradigms. The colonial denizen can help provide the language and discursive expansion necessary for non-Indigenous peoples to recognize the limits of these paradigms, to hear and begin to more accurately understand the calls and demands of people who are situated outside of these paradigms, and to actively take up an ethos that helps transform structures and relations of these paradigms to support Indigenous resurgence efforts. In this way, the discursive exercise of the colonial denizen is meant to be a guide, founded on abstracted theory, which can bring about an ethos to help mobilize localized, dialogical engagement (where it is deemed desirable and a positive contribution toward decolonial change) as well as a larger societal paradigm shift.

As such, it is important to provide a brief overview of the colonial denizen theory before delving into the broader discursive exercise. The theory of the colonial denizen suggests that if non-Indigenous peoples can understand themselves (both historically and today) as foreigners in need of invitation by Indigenous peoples for their presence on Indigenous lands to be legitimate, then Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples might be able to collectively move toward a properly grounded decolonization that exists beyond the confines of the contemporary liberal-democratic paradigm and its bolstering of settler colonialism. This theory is not based directly in Indigenous thought or critical political theory but on the understanding that if the Europeans that originally colonized the Indigenous peoples of North America had properly understood themselves as foreigners to Indigenous lands and societies, their place (and the place of their civic progeny)—upon invitation—would have been as denizens of a foreign land. And if this were the case, then non-Indigenous peoples would have been living in better relation with Indigenous peoples, or else would have been sent home, and would have not instantiated colonizing relationships. In this way, the theory of the colonial denizen is structured on a discursive revisiting of settlement history that asks what the past, present and future would look like if non-Indigenous peoples recognized that they had to be invited onto Indigenous lands. Here recognition of oneself as a foreigner to Indigenous lands requires the recognition of and acceptance that invitation might not be extended and that further discussion might need to occur as to what that means. The recognition of oneself as colonial denizen, where such invitation has been extended, then requires the privileging of responsibilities (to decolonize) over rights, an acknowledgment of and deference toward Indigenous legal systems, and the sustenance of mutual coexistence and respect in relations with Indigenous peoples and lands. The following will engage the concepts of Indigenous life and land, treaty and invitation, through the use of the colonial denizen theory in order to demonstrate how one might begin exploring the proposed discursive exercise that should naturally lead to the development of an active ethos and paradigm shift.

Since decolonization requires the recentering of Indigenous life and land, the ethos and paradigm shift that non-Indigenous society needs has to encourage this recentering. This recentering can begin through discursive practice, through encouraging the provincialization of Western thought and institutions and the

re-evaluation of origin and settlement stories in ways that not only open space for Indigenous voice and vision but open such spaces in ways that encourage non-Indigenous peoples to actively step back from the centre of their colonially derived narratives and institutions.

Taking up a denizen ethos needs to privilege the identification of land and treaties as important aspects in the discourse around decolonization. For instance, state-centred citizenship approaches take the land largely for granted, similar to how they take the nation-state's legitimacy for granted. As a number of Indigenous scholars and activists argue, Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples cannot move forward toward any type of reconciliation or decolonization without talking about land. As Leanne Simpson, an Anishnaabekwe from Mississauga territory, argues: "Land is an important conversation for Indigenous peoples and Canada to have because land is at the root of our conflicts. Far from asking settler Canadians to pack up and leave, it is critical that we think about how we can better share land. That's a conversation we're not having" (2016).

Just as land is often absent in discussions of settler positionality and privilege, it also remains largely absent from any substantive discussion of decolonization. And yet with Mick Smith's employment of the term *denizen*, one can see how using a denizen ethos can be instrumental in encouraging non-Indigenous peoples to re-evaluate their relationships with land. Smith's work offers interlocuters a way through which they might recentre the discourse of decolonization around land in such a way that they can re-evaluate their direct relationships to it. Given that Indigenous worldviews, governance structures and legal systems are based on vulnerable, formative and responsibility-driven relationships to both the human and nonhuman world, wherein which land is included (Chilisa, 2012; Wilson, 2009; Little Bear, 2000), the denizen provides two important avenues to encourage paradigm shifts in the move to decolonize. The first is the recentering of land within the discourse surrounding decolonization; the second is the establishment of a foundation from which to re-evaluate more direct relationships to the land in such a way that non-Indigenous peoples are encouraged to recognize and practice more holistic relations to land and the nonhuman world that align with local Indigenous governance structures and processes. These two avenues are intrinsically pursued when the intended territorial nature of the denizen—its invocation at the local level—is employed through the establishment of meaningful dialogue between local Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, as premised on the position of non-Indigenous peoples as potential colonial denizens.

Treaty also becomes an important part of analysis under the colonial denizen ethos. This is because treaty, whether formally or informally established, is easily identifiable as a possible form of invitation. Yet treaty must be approached cautiously from a colonial denizen ethos due to settler states' continuing ability to "discursively transform . . . treaties from relationships to land cession contracts . . . [as a way to] disguise the illegitimacy of their [settler states'] settlement, which ha[s] been rendered unlawful [since] the moment they violated the treaty relationships and commitments that authorized their presence across Indigenous lands" (Stark, 2016).

As recent work by Heidi Stark highlights, the treaty process in Canada has transformed over the years to better follow the "eliminary logic of settler

colonialism . . . reconstruct[ing] treaties away from Indigenous visions of living relationships toward a contractual event” (2016). Grappling with treaty from a colonial denizen ethos, therefore, necessitates the acknowledgment of this colonization of treaty with a view toward successfully understanding, engaging and acting from Indigenous-based understandings of treaties as living relationships and potential sites of invitation.

Treaties as living relationships have been an important aspect of many Indigenous governance, worldviews and legal structures since time immemorial. As living relationships, they are premised on the concepts of respect, responsibility and renewal among participants (Stark, 2010; Williams, 1997). And so to understand treaty from such a lens requires that interlocuters enter into treaty on the sustained basis of mutual respect and mutual responsibility toward each other, as well as on the understanding that their living relationship will need to be consistently tended to and maintained throughout its course. It is treaties that establish living relationships and so set the ground for recognition between peoples and therefore exist as potential sites of Indigenous invitation to non-Indigenous foreigners to visit/exist/cohabit Indigenous territories. For instance, it has been argued that early treaties between the Innu and the French during the early seventeenth century established such a relationship, wherein the French were permitted to coexist (to what extent is disputed) on Innu territory in exchange for their military and economic aid (Pollack, 2012).

As Stark points out, a well-rounded understanding of treaties is deeper than even this; it requires the recognition that (if such treaties act as sites of invitation) they also act as a site of (some sort of) induction into the already existing webs of treaties as relations that a given Indigenous peoples have with other Indigenous peoples as well as with the nonhuman world (Stark, 2012). This, in turn, places upon the invited foreigners-turned-denizens responsibilities to uphold not only the conditions of the given treaty but the broader web of treaties as relationships that their treaty partners already hold. The fostering of a colonial denizen ethos today therefore requires understanding treaty as a living relationship that could act as a site of (partial) invitation onto Indigenous lands as well as into Indigenous legal and political orders: an invitation that is only available through the continual fulfilment of obligations as outlined and revisited between treaty members, wherein treaties are more than documents between Indigenous peoples and the Crown but necessarily include non-Indigenous inhabitants of a given treaty area as members. As such, revisiting treaties as living relationships not only identifies and recenters Indigenous nationhood and governance but acts as a natural site (given the role of responsibilities, relations and potential invitation) to situate non-Indigenous peoples as foreigners and potential colonial denizens.

It is important that treaties or treaty-like relationships, to the extent they are deemed desirable, be approached from outside the contemporary liberal-democratic paradigm. When treaties and the associated contemporary concepts, such as mutual recognition, are approached within this colonially supportive paradigm, they are transmuted into alternative creations that do not uphold the primacy of Indigenous worldviews, life and land but, instead, settler security and certainty—the colonial privileges of those who benefit from the current paradigms. From here, Indigenous interests are conceded only so far as they do not fundamentally disrupt the security

and certainty of settler colonial states and society. Approaching treaty from a colonial denizen ethos, however, encourages the repoliticization of treaty as a potential site of invitation and mutual recognition that, according to David Scott (2003), has long been depoliticized through the imperializing lens of culture, where treaty and its interpretation are reduced to a difference in culture rather than politics. The colonial denizen is meant to encourage non-Indigenous society from this comfort zone, from the place where it depoliticizes Indigenous life, land and treaties so that it can maintain its privilege and security.

Where treaty through liberal democracy seeks to make room for Indigenous difference through a sort of devolution of some governance powers to recognized groups and where it frames the discourse of coexistence as an issue of living together across cultural difference, treaty through the colonial denizen seeks to shift power relations and repoliticize issues of treaty and mutual recognition. Where the treaty partner of the liberal-democratic paradigm takes invitation for granted, the colonial denizen does not. Where the treaty partner makes room for Indigenous difference within liberal democracy, the colonial denizen asks what would it look like if s(he) had to accommodate to Indigenous legal systems and political paradigms. Where the treaty partner maintains their colonial certainty and security, the colonial denizen risks losing them. In embracing vulnerability, in looking to recenter Indigenous life and land, this discursive work looks to repoliticize issues around colonialism, coexistence and mutual recognition within non-Indigenous society away from the confining liberal-democratic paradigm so that decolonization can be realized.

Having said all this, it is important to provide room for invitation and relations beyond such a specific treaty-focused conceptualization. As will become clear in the reorientation of the contact narrative, not all places throughout Canada where non-Indigenous peoples currently reside are marked by treaty. And many, if not all, of those areas that are marked by treaty have been identified as thinly veiled land grabs—some of these without any substantive invitation or discussion. An application of the colonial denizen, therefore, needs to be cognizant of how vastly different contact histories across the continent have occurred and been upheld and how vastly different Indigenous peoples, cultures and lived experiences are; it also needs to be flexible in application to such differences. Even in areas of treaty—as vast and multifaceted as treaties and treaty relations are—space and relation have eclipsed these important, living relations and (potential) invitations. One of the strengths in applying a denizen ethos is that it is adaptable to these various contexts and to reimaginings of treaty-like relationships in areas where treaties do not currently exist, while not pursuing them for the sake of securing settler futurity but on the basis of interest, resurgence and invitation on behalf of Indigenous actors and nations who might find such moves desirable.

In connection to treaties and treaty-like relations, one of the concept's most intriguing contributions might be its potential to challenge Western notions around rights and responsibilities. Within a liberal-democratic state, there is a tendency to place greater emphasis on the rights of membership (as citizenship) rather than the duties. This is, in part, due to modern understandings of citizenship and politics wherein the sovereign individual is vested with inalienable rights and freedoms prior to political association (Insin and Wood, 1999). Under such an understanding



of citizenship, the sovereign individual has the right to decide whether or not they wish to actively participate within the public sphere; they have the right to relinquish or ignore some, if not all, of their political duties. This modern privileging of rights clearly pre-dates the neoliberal turn, as it is also present within earlier citizenship literature (Marshall, 1950). If one approaches one's position relative to others and the land as denizen, however, responsibilities (to Indigenous resurgence efforts) take centre stage and rights become precarious privileges dependent on the fulfilling of responsibilities. Not only does such a reorientation hold enormous decolonizing potential in and of itself, as previously alluded to, it also better aligns with many Indigenous ontologies and understandings around relationships to the human and nonhuman world (Chilisa, 2012; Wilson, 2009; Little Bear, 2000; Stark, 2012). While a politics of responsibility, as I have laid it out here, does not sit level on a scale with a politics of rights-based citizenship and recognition, it does provide the seeds with which to plant and support the development of an equally scaled politics. Furthermore, such alignment with Indigenous ontologies helps to recenter Indigenous peoples, governance and lands within the discourse, at the same time that it offers interested non-Indigenous peoples the language and knowledge to begin transforming their own discursive understandings around settler colonialism and decolonization—and their place(s) therein.

What I am ultimately suggesting is that taking up a denizen ethos today entails revisiting our conceptions around belonging and membership and the relationships Canadians have to the public sphere, rights and duties. It is through such a refocusing that non-Indigenous peoples can challenge their privilege and positionality, the legitimacy of the state, and notions about property and their colonial implications, as well as help recenter the discourse of decolonization around Indigenous peoples and lands. Hopefully, this refocusing leads to an avoidance of moves to innocence and the reification of colonial thought and action that occurs when non-Indigenous peoples do not open themselves up to substantive change. As decolonization requires a taking up of responsibility in an effort to move forward (Irlbacher-Fox, 2014a; Simpson, 2011; Wallace, 2013; Regan, 2010), such a reassessment of rights, responsibilities and privileges would be appropriate.

Acting as a denizen can and needs to mean different things in different contexts. The reality is that Canada—the nation-state, as it is largely recognized today—is an artificial construction. Not only were these lands colonized at different times and in different ways but the Indigenous peoples whose lands these are—the Indigenous peoples who have continually fought against settler colonialism—are vastly different peoples, even though within certain geographical concentrations, they may share a common language or culture. Acting from a colonial denizen ethos is to realize all of these things and to act, locally, in kind: to act locally and yet see local connections to national and international structures, institutions, thought and action (Tully, 2008). Acting on a denizen ethos in this way will mean something different for me living where I grew up, on the traditional lands of the Anishinabek Mississauga (Toronto), an area “granted” through a controversial land surrender agreement (Canada, Indian Claims Commission, 2003; Smith, 1981; Freeman, 2010), then it will for me living on the unceded territory of the Musqueam peoples (Vancouver) as a graduate student. And yet the combination of these two realities will for me mean something altogether different in terms of



my thoughts and actions in relation to the state, the province(s), Indigenous peoples, the land and the nonhuman world.

What I am offering here is a potential first step for non-Indigenous peoples, who are themselves interested in decolonization, to discursively reorient themselves to better understand and actively take up more appropriate roles in the move toward decolonization with Indigenous peoples. The colonial denizen, as presented here, has the ability to provide such colonists with the tools to accomplish this by establishing a new descriptive and normatively focused concept for the colonial cacophony that helps contemporary colonists to situate themselves (and their civic ancestors) as foreigners in need of invitation onto Indigenous lands (past and present).

In applying the denizen concept to both the colonial and decolonial, I am arguing that there is no sunset clause on the need for invitation. There is a need to consider what (non)invitation should have looked like at the various points of initial contact across the land, as well as ask what it might look like to either revisit and take up initial invitations and agreements or else to ask what a refusal of invitation on any Indigenous lands means; even refusal will require dialogical engagement to determine a process and structure of outcome. Taking up a denizen ethos requires that non-Indigenous peoples do not assume their privileges to live on Indigenous lands based on their access to colonial property regimes. Rather, a denizen ethos requires that non-Indigenous peoples challenge such regimes, recognize them as colonial mechanisms and refuse them, while revisiting the need for invitation and responsibilities to Indigenous resurgence efforts. It is only when non-Indigenous peoples can actively engage with such a paradigm shift (as presented with the colonial denizen) that they will be in a position to meet with Indigenous peoples to more accurately hear their calls for decolonization, recognize and not harmfully interfere with resurgence efforts, and so be open to the substantive change that decolonization demands.

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## Notes

1 Here I refer specifically to Western paradigms that encompass liberal democracy and recognition approaches to state and society and which uphold settler colonial logics and structures.

2 Here the term *Indigenous* is being used to refer to a multiplicity of differently situated peoples across the country whose relationships to each other, the Canadian state and other actors is not the same.

3 Here I am distinguishing between a discursive as opposed to more material approach or intention within my work, wherein a shift through the discursive will eventually influence a shift in the material.

4 *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "reconciliation," accessed October 11, 2018, <http://dictionary.oed.com/>.

5 It would be inappropriate to identify slaves who were themselves colonized as colonists, although other involuntary actors may be more appropriately identified as such.

6 *Oxford English Dictionary Online*, s.v. "denizen" accessed July 10, 2016, <http://dictionary.oed.com/>.

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