

Decolonizing Attribution: Traditions of Exclusion

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ABSTRACT: In this article we provide a structural critique of attribution as it is figured in colonial practices and ongoing settler-colonial logics that form the basis for creating, circulating, and sharing knowledge through research practices, methods, and platforms. Settler colonialism is a tradition, and as such, it has habits. One of these habits is to hide specific tactics and practices in operationalizing dispossession. Attribution is one of these tactics. Attribution functions as a key mechanism within a copyright/author/archive matrix which maintains hierarchies of knowledge production by reducing Indigenous and non-European subjectivity and legitimating the ongoing appropriation of Indigenous¹ cultural material by non-Indigenous authors. The colonial force of attribution and its practices of exclusion are hidden in the stacks and how they are populated; in the rights fields of databases and how they are cited; in archival processes of selection, appraisal, and accessioning; and through efforts to digitize content and collections in order to make them open without acknowledgment and ongoing relationships. We argue that one mode of decolonizing practices for libraries and archives is through remaking, reframing, and refiguring attribution through ongoing Indigenous connections to land and knowledge.

Keywords: Settler colonialism, libraries, archives, property, copyright, attribution



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1 In this article we use Indigenous, First Nations, Native American, and Aboriginal to refer to specific communities and/or individuals depending on territorial and homelands contexts, as well as the known expressed wishes of specific authors or contributors.

Introduction

On May 14, 2016, we were sitting inside the Wabanaki Cultural Center in Calais, Maine, with a group of Passamaquoddy elders, language teachers, and preschool-aged children from the Passamaquoddy language immersion class. We were there with Guha Shankar from the American Folklife Center at the Library of Congress to repatriate digital files of Passamaquoddy songs that had been recorded in 1890 on the then-new wax cylinder phonograph (Gitelman 1999, 2006). We had been working together for over a year negotiating the repatriation of the digital files, metadata, and documentation while working through questions of copyright, ownership, and authorship that plague such collections. And this project of digital repatriation was no different with a university, a federal institution, and a legacy of attribution that all worked to silence Passamaquoddy people, knowledge, and authority (Anderson and Christen 2013; Christen 2015).

After introductions, we played the songs, one, then another, and another. The room was silent. Then there were murmurs between community members and looks of recognition. We paused. When the conversations ended, we played the songs again. As we listened the second time through to the third recording on the playlist—the SR29 cylinder containing two songs labeled in English “War Song” and “Trading Song”—something different happened (Selmore 1890). What started as listening quickly became singing by elder Gracie Davis. Then another person joined in. Then many, young and old. Kids shuffled their feet and clapped their hands. Gracie tapped her hand to the beat, tribal historian Donald Soctomah began to sing halfway through, and others sang quietly from the back of the room following Gracie’s lead. After the song ended, Gracie told us that her sister from across the river in New Brunswick had taught her the “Trading Song” we had just heard. Donald and elder Wayne Newell shared how, within Wabanaki culture,² there are several different kinds of trading songs (Passamaquoddy People n.d.). The conversation then turned to the meaning of specific words that could be heard and deciphered. For the rest of the morning we listened to that one two-minute song over and over, verse by verse. Later that afternoon, when we left to return to our homes, Guha left all the digital files on hard drives with accompanying metadata and field notes from the original collection at the Library of Congress with Donald at the Wabanaki Center. Returning the files permanently was a central part of the negotiation over the return of this material, and one of our specific roles had been assisting the Passamaquoddy in this process. It would not be enough to merely play the songs for the

2 The Wabanaki Confederacy are the First Nation and Native American confederacy of five principle tribes—the Passamaquoddy, the Penobscot, the Mi’kmaq, the Maliseet, and the Abnaki.

community. That day, the songs from the cylinder were reconnected into community practices—knowledge exchange, language instruction, historical education, and so on. This was only a beginning. What they wanted, and insisted on, was a complete repatriation so that the songs themselves and the ancestors singing the songs could be home—could rest again on Passamaquoddy homelands and be part of the community on their own terms. This initial step in the repatriation process—the digital return of the files, metadata, and documents—prefigured the request for Passamaquoddy control over this heritage for the future to determine and define its use, reuse, circulation, narration, and curation.

Two days later, we received an email from Donald. In the email was a video recording of Gracie singing; Donald had used his phone to record it and wanted us to have a copy. He also told us of plans to have listening sessions with small groups of community members. After another brief meeting in Calais in September that year, it was several months into the next year before we heard from Donald again. When we did, he told us that during listening sessions, community members had isolated more words, phrases, and beats that they were defining and using in language classes, and younger children who did not speak the language were using the beats to create new songs. The new language immersion preschool class was also learning the “Trading Song” through Gracie’s instruction.

With this momentum, the Passamaquoddy community decided to move forward with asserting Passamaquoddy cultural authority over the recordings held at the Library of Congress. The first step they identified was redefining the attribution associated with these recordings. This reclamation of attribution was not viewed as correcting a mistake within the record. Instead, this was seen by all as an epistemological revision that dislodged settler control and voice and placed authority and control with the Passamaquoddy. With Passamaquoddy attribution clearly defined and marked, the next steps would be incorporating additional cultural protocols for access to and use of the songs. Through months of community conversations, Passamaquoddy had decided to use both the Traditional Knowledge (TK) Labels they were adapting, as well as the Mukurtu CMS platform to provide relevant and respectful access to these materials following Passamaquoddy rules, responsibilities, and obligations (Christen 2015).³ These steps would allow Passamaquoddy to undo the nineteenth century assertions of possession, the fiction of Jesse Walter Fewkes as author, and Harvard University as the other legal owner of the

3 For more information on TK Labels, see www.localcontexts.org. For Mukurtu, see www.mukurtu.org. For the Passamaquoddy community Mukurtu site with the 1890 recordings launched on September 26, 2018, see <http://www.passamaquoddypeople.com>. For more on Mukurtu CMS and TK Labels as platforms for digital repatriation, see Christen and Anderson (forthcoming).

original recordings that had been carried through catalogue records, citational documents, and digital metadata into the twenty-first century. As Passamaquoddy songs connected to and recorded on Passamaquoddy traditional lands, the Passamaquoddy never ceded their rights and authority over the 1890 recordings. The presumed shift in ownership from Passamaquoddy to Fewkes to Harvard had been the work of settler-colonial property regimes and accepted by collecting institutions and repositories. For Passamaquoddy, reclaiming attribution within the documentation record was a deliberate ontological undoing of these property regimes and colonial fictions.

Redefining attribution through Passamaquoddy cultural authority *initiates* the unraveling of settler-colonial structures of property possession exerted over Indigenous knowledge. While it is not an end in itself, it pushes toward encountering and accounting for the complex cultural ecosystem of Passamaquoddy rules and responsibilities around access to and the circulation of knowledge, language, and heritage. One hundred and twenty-nine years after their recording on wax cylinders, unsettling the colonial attribution regime begins a pathway towards a decolonial elsewhere—determined by Passamaquoddy (Tuck and Yang 2012).

In their strident call for change, Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012) ask scholars to move beyond the metaphor of decolonization as a framing narrative device for action. In order to undo the ongoing realities of colonial projects, this necessarily requires making visible the embedded and often hidden practices of settler colonialism. Within settler colonialism, these practices are many and varied, as they mirror the logic of settler colonialism's well-worn habits and traditions of erasure, including orders, classifications, and modalities of organization that persist in marginalizing Indigenous peoples' voices and perspectives. The vital work for libraries and archives in this decolonial shift is addressing questions of colonial privilege on the one hand, and simultaneously locating the ongoing sites and mechanisms of erasure and exclusion on the other. This work begins with a necessary acknowledgement that these institutional spaces have never been neutral nor safe (Christen 2011, 2015; McKemmish, Faulkhead, and Russell 2011; Janke and Iacovino 2012; Thorpe 2014; Ramirez 2015; Drake 2016a; Drake 2016b; Ghaddar 2016; Gilliland and Caswell 2016; Jules 2016; Caswell, Punzalan, and Sangwand 2017; Hathcock and Sendaula 2017; Hudson 2017; Schlesselman-Tarango 2017). In settler-colonial contexts, Indigenous dispossession from land in the first instance cannot be separated from continued exclusions related to knowledge production and the circulation of cultural information that is part of colonial collecting legacies. For libraries and archives, then, decolonizing must be a territorial project. That is, the work of decolonization must be facilitated through the practical and

methodical connection of lands, languages, and communities within the systems of collection, classification, organization, presentation, and return, as well as through the formation of long-term relationships with Indigenous communities on whose land these institutions sit (Bruyneel 2007; Byrd 2011; L. B. Simpson 2013, 2017; Goeman 2019).

Many archivists and librarians engaged in critical examinations of the field and its methods have shown the structural inequalities embedded within the creation of categories and normalized forms of classification within libraries and archives (Yeh 1971; Lincoln 1987; Young and Doolittle 1994; Olson 1998, 2001c, 2004; Drabinski 2013; Caldera and Neal 2014; Cherry and Mukunda 2015; Littletree and Metoyer 2015; Adler 2017). Locating these inequalities within settler-colonial projects and their framing logics allows us to engage with this critique and make two arguments that extend this mode of inquiry. First, as institutions of settler colonialism, libraries and archives have inherent ambitions surrounding collection, circulation, access, and preservation. In practice, these ambitions are articulated through policies, procedure, and workflows. The strategies embedded within these daily activities and framing narratives often reproduce marginalization and amplify the erasure of difference. Second, in the settler-colonial context, these mechanisms enable and enhance the possibility for the possession of Indigenous peoples' land and knowledge (Moreton-Robinson 2015). In this article, we focus on one of these mechanisms of erasure and possession: attribution.

As a mechanism of settler-colonial erasure and possession of Indigenous knowledge, attribution is a technique of ownership in that it signifies an authorial relationship. Working in a complementary way to the function of land title, attribution rewrites relationships to knowledge through a colonial property paradigm that is “the primary means of appropriating land and resources” (Bhandar 2018, 4). As we expand this analysis and point to the very real and deliberate synthesis of control over Indigenous lands and knowledges played out through real property (land) and intellectual property (knowledge and culture) law, we also locate where these logics of possession are buried and normalized within classificatory systems, organizational processes, and infrastructural logics of institutions themselves.⁴ Thus, our concerns move in a slightly different, although complementary, direction than those of the above scholars. For example, when we look closely at the dislocation and misclassification of Indigenous voices, we also start to see the parallel project of deliberate appropriation and

4 In legal philosophy, especially in English common law traditions, the phrase “real property” refers to land, including anything grown upon, affixed to, and built upon the land. Thus, real property marks a distinction between personal property and moveable property. As a more recent legal phrase, “intellectual property” allows for the grouping of areas of distinct law (copyright, patents, designs, etc.) understood to transform into property something that was previously intangible (knowledge and culture, for instance).

possession of knowledge and culture upholding settler-colonial motivations of Indigenous erasure and territorial taking (Wolfe 2006; Rifkin 2014; Kauanui 2016). This trajectory inevitably leads us to follow the colonial lives of intellectual property—how it is created, managed, and circulated within specific legal and social systems—and how it is integrated into the institutional structures and processes for the possession of Indigenous peoples’ knowledge, lands, and bodies. Specifically, as we trace the scaffolding on which attribution—and its logics of displacement—are built, we inevitably see the frameworks of intellectual property and real property merge.

There is a reason why research is a dirty word in Indigenous contexts (Smith 1999). It is understood as another form of displacement—*taking*—that is carried out by non-Indigenous scholars and institutions. In this taking, Indigenous knowledges and forms of cultural expressions are transformed in academic and public spaces into resources and property sustaining colonial production of knowledge about Indigenous peoples, including Indigenous languages, histories, social relationships, and cultural practices. Subsequently, this knowledge production is used to justify targeted policies, like the seizure of children and separation from families, or specialized surveillance alongside biopolitical governmentality (Dhillon 2017). It is at the crossroads of research, circulation, and authorship that we see attribution’s role and reach in creating and maintaining systems of exclusion and erasure. Tuck and Yang (2012, 5-6) argue that, “In the process of settler colonialism, land is remade into property and human relationships to land are restricted to the relationship of the owner to his property. Epistemological, ontological, and cosmological relationships to land are interred, indeed made pre-modern and backward. Made savage.” We suggest that this process of remaking relationships to land has subsequent consequences where relationships to knowledge are also made through property’s lens and with the blunt instrument of attribution.

We join others who are weary of blanket professional calls to decolonize archives and libraries without attention to the tools, techniques, and technologies that perpetuate ongoing processes and attempts at dispossession of land, resources, and knowledge (Buchanan 2007; Cushman 2013; Doyle, Lawson, and Dupont 2015; Duarte and Belarde-Lewis 2015; O’Neal 2015). Institutions remain profoundly implicated in ongoing settler-colonial projects to the extent that questions about the very possibility of decolonization at all remain.⁵ For instance,

5 The possibility of institutional decolonization was roundly rebuked by all the Indigenous artists in the March 2019 New York City symposium, “Resisting, Reclaiming, Reframing: Indigenous Communities and Art Museum Collections.” See <http://italianacademy.columbia.edu/event/resisting-reclaiming-reframing-indigenous-communities-and-art-museum-collections>.

institutions that hold and claim partnerships with Indigenous peoples on one hand, and actively remain invested in extractive industries and pipeline projects on the other, highlight the deep and embedded networks of racialized power that continue to inform institutions and their contradictory claims to “diversity” (Ahmed 2012; Hudson 2017; Dhillon 2018).⁶

Conscious of these institutional powers and techniques of acknowledgement that deny structural changes, we explicitly link relations to land, ancestors, kin, and community to the logic of attribution in order to bring about a fundamental shift in how scholars, librarians, and archivists reproduce attribution’s power within institutional structures, policies, workflows, and technological systems. In part one of this article, we offer a close reading of the structures of settler colonialism and how relations of property are mobilized and embedded as normative forms of practice. We argue that the dispossession of homelands runs hand in hand with dispossession of knowledge, and, as such, we bring the colonial functions of copyright law and, thus, authorship and attribution itself, into focus. In this section, we flesh out our conceptual framing of the practice of attribution and how it operates as a key site for the expanded colonial ambition of erasure of Indigenous peoples from their territories. In part two, we provide an example of the enduring practices and logics of attribution and their consequential effects by examining the first ethnographic sound recordings made in 1890 with the Passamaquoddy community in Calais, Maine. The collection—generally referred to and “discoverable” as the “Fewkes” cylinder recordings—foregrounds the problem of attribution as/for possession that we examine in this section. We illustrate the extended temporal and structural work that attribution as a colonial tool achieves and, conversely, the social and cultural consequences of misattribution, incorrect attribution, possession, and erasure. While our example begins in the late nineteenth century, our point is to highlight how embedded this structural work is and how it continues to thrive in our libraries and archives today. That these layers of attribution and possession are incredibly difficult to dislodge is indicative of the power of attribution’s and therefore (intellectual) property’s infrastructure. Our final section begins the discussion of practical applications of decolonization for institutions, researchers, scholars, librarians, and archivists. Drawing upon critical race theory—specifically articulated through Indigenous scholars and activists—this section includes an exploration of the policies, workflows,

6 University divestments in fossil fuel industries or pipelines are largely not phrased as decolonization but as decarbonization and, therefore, within another register of the environmental movement. The failure to connect universities and extractive industries to the colonization of Indigenous lands reminds us of the very real difficulties in bringing dispossession of Indigenous lands into the conversation. More recently, activism at Standing Rock and actions over the Dakota Access Pipeline have offered a significant moment of reckoning, making these connections more visible. See also Yazzie (2018), Spice (2018), Curnow and Helferty (2018), Dhillon (2018), and Estes (2019).

processes, and procedures necessary for beginning the work of responsible, respectful, and ethical applications of attribution.

To be clear, this project does not advocate “correcting” mistakes in attribution as an end in itself. Instead, we argue that because attribution is a mechanism of settler possession, changes in and to attribution make possible Indigenous returns and authority that were previously impossible or improbable. Attribution is not benign recognition devoid of accountability and action. Reframing attribution in practice, policies, and procedures is a first step toward decolonizing relationships and practices. Addressing the erasures that attribution facilitates disrupts settler futurity by repositioning Indigenous protocols, responsibilities, obligations, authority, and control over knowledge and the lands where this knowledge emanates and is maintained (Sinclair 2018). Decolonizing attribution necessitates an Indigenous presence, giving meaning and possibility to Indigenous temporal sovereignty in the record, outside the record, across pasts, and into futures and memories (Rifkin 2017).

Part One:

Infrastructures of Settler Colonialism: Attribution for Possession

Attribution: n

- 1) the action of regarding something as being caused by a person or thing.

Settler colonialism constitutes the messy formations of what is currently understood and named as the United States. Spanish, Dutch, English, and French colonialism mark the territory and its institutions in both explicit and subtle forms, including the founding operational and organizational logics of state institutions, the targeting of specific populations as sites of governance, resource extraction, territorial acquisition, and juridical developments and applications, all alongside ideological and nationhood myth-making. Colonialism has no temporal limits in that it is not of the past, but continually remade in the present. Alyosha Goldstein (2014, 3; italics added) makes the critical point that, “United States colonialism is a *continuously failing—or at least a perpetually incomplete—project* that labors to find a workable means of resolution to sustain its logic of possession and inevitably, by disavowing the ongoing contestation in which it is confronted and violent displacement that it demands.” In this constant failing, there is also a perpetual remaking: re-routing the possible means for attaining colonial ambitions. As such, colonialism’s habits and traditions become patterns of operation that are embedded socially and psychologically and are difficult to identify and harder still to dislodge (Fanon 1967; Coulthard 2014). Habits form

themselves over time as they become intimate in their articulation (Stoler 2002, 2016). Habits can become traditions. The trope of tradition is helpful for creating a framework to understand the hidden and ongoing work that settler colonialism achieves as a structure with extensive processes in its daily operation. As Patrick Wolfe (2006) has explained, and others have extended, settler colonialism is not an event. It is a structure with constantly unfolding ambitions and techniques for maintaining the possibility of territorial accumulation for the settler—a process that continues to the present.

For settler colonialism, ambition is located in the eradication of Indigenous peoples and their replacement with settlers. Establishing a new colonial society on a land base requires the dispossession of those previously present. As Wolfe (2006, 388) argues, “[t]erritoriality is settler colonialism’s specific irreducible element.” That is,

Elimination is an organizing principal of settler-colonial society rather than a one-off (and superseded) occurrence . . . outcomes of the logic of elimination can include officially encouraged miscegenation, the breaking-down of native title into alienable individual freeholds, native citizenship, child abduction, religious conversion, resocialization in total institutions such as missions or boarding schools, and a whole range of cognate biocultural assimilations. All these strategies, including frontier homicide, are characteristic of settler colonialism. (2006, 388)

Processes of erasure are thus folded into the settler-colonial social fabric in intricate ways. They are an integral part of how history is written and recorded, as well as how meaning about events and identities are produced and circulated. Jean O’Brien (2010) offers a nuanced understanding of these processes of erasure through a focused analysis of the language of “firsts” and “lasts” within local history documentation in the Northeastern United States. A focus on firsts—the *first* settlers, the *first* houses, the *first* churches—in local histories across the new settlements in New England marks an enunciative framework simultaneously of origins and ownership. The strategic deployment of a language of firsting created epistemological pathways for re-imagining territorial acquisition through the idea of the eradication of Native peoples from the landscape and from a presence in the modern political settler world order. Here, we see a settler remaking of place as theirs and a positioning of Indigenous peoples as part of a past. This enunciative power works to justify settler presence on the land owing to a complementary constructed language about the “demise” of Indigenous peoples—the *last* Mohegan, the *last* Nipmuc, the *last* Wampanoag. O’Brien highlights how this language normalizes, justifies, and enables taking, the

consequences of which continue, as Indigenous peoples face the weight of these erasure narratives in multiple contexts, including meeting settler-colonial expectations of continued existence through, for instance, applications for federal recognition (Adams-Campbell, Falzetti, and Rivard 2014; Indian Legal Program 2014).

Creating the orders of origin and ownership through naming firsts and, conversely, lasts is also important for our argument. Firsting is a linguistic act that supports and makes possible the physical act of taking: it is, fundamentally, an act of *settler-colonial attribution*. Firsting names something in order to erase what was before it—eliding both a previous existence and continued presence. Firsting, then, is a mechanism that supports a colonial property paradigm of possession through taking, naming, and attributing. Following this logic, property ownership is centrally located within the life and existence of the settler. It functions as the settler's primary condition of possibility: to not only remain on the lands taken from Indigenous peoples, but also to justify that presence legally, as well as to deny counterclaims. Critical legal scholar Cheryl Harris (1993) argues that property is a foundational mechanism for establishing racial and gendered hierarchies and identities, that although “the systems of Blacks and Native Americans differed in form—the former involving the seizure and appropriation of labor, and the latter involving the seizure and appropriation of land—undergirding both was a racialized conception of property implemented by force and ratified by law” (Harris 1993, 1715). Property holds a central role in the production and fabrication of relationships of inequality. Within a settler-colonial framing, it establishes sophisticated racialized techniques of possession that remain operationalized within the present. It not only matters that “property law is the primary means of appropriating land and resources,” but that property ownership is central to the formation of the “proper legal subject in the political sphere” (Bhandar 2018, 4). Within this system, attribution as a mechanism of possession is easily conferred to the non-Indigenous person (researcher, recorder, missionary, etc.), as Indigenous peoples are neither regarded nor recognized as proper legal political subjects. These are the racialized hierarchies that property law *makes* and *distributes*.

To understand how attribution functions as part of the colonial property paradigm as a mechanism for possession, we need to simultaneously follow the colonial lives of intellectual property law. Theorists of settler colonialism focus largely on real property law—the body of law that relates to land. If, however, property law legitimates and rationalizes settler-colonial practices (Harris 1993; Bhandar 2018), while racializing those it deems unfit to own property, how might we understand this operation within other areas of property,

particularly in contexts of ownership in relationship to knowledge and/or culture? As settler colonialism requires flexibility in its legal devices and mechanisms, intellectual property law must also be understood as functioning as an integral extension of colonial proprietary power.

Intellectual property (IP) law is not a singular body of law, but made up of discrete laws that have been recently grouped together because they are understood to share a similar objective—determining the extent of a property right in the intangible (Anderson 2015). IP is real property law’s counterpart, incorporating that which real property cannot (or was not initially devised to) hold. Importantly (if unsurprisingly), IP’s principle logics of property derive from the same philosophical European mentalities that underpin real property law (Locke [1689] 1990; Blackstone [1775-69] 1975; Bhandar 2018). For copyright law, the primary owner is the author—the person who exerts the labor and makes the intangible tangible. In its most basic definitions and justifications, the relationship to real property is evident, even in its efforts to be distinct. There needs to be some material, tangible manifestation of the property for the property right to be conferred. Ownership is located with the individual who meets these requirements (of laboring and later, creative laboring) and that person is (re)named as an author.

Copyright ownership is potentially possible for anyone who is an author. The problem, however, is that not everyone can be an author. Like a real property holder, the author is a modern social political subject (Barthes 1967; Foucault 1969; Harris 1993; Bhandar 2018). In other words, there are some people who are categorically and perpetually denied a position as authors because they are not recognized as having the requisite sociopolitical modernity to occupy that status. For instance, they don’t “labor” in the same way. Because the kind of labor required for authorship mirrors that required for real property, we see an overlap in the making of racialized subjects and those deemed unfit to be authors. Moreover, authorship is determined and conferred through hierarchies of documentation practices where the written word exists as the pinnacle of a civilizational imaginary and thus informs the ideal modern political subject. Those who don’t write and don’t have an identifiable written culture are reduced in this property model to a lower status (Mignolo 1995).

The colonial racialization of copyright occurs precisely and initially at the point at which one is considered a writer—a creator. Following this identification, the creative writer then maps easily to author and, ultimately, property owner. Later, this colonial authorial logic is extended into emergent technologies like photography and sound recording, which are

included as specific kinds of works within copyright's framework. In these instances, settler-colonial logics resituate the author as the "genius" behind the camera or the sound machine, rather than those in the photographs or the recordings. These technologies also operate as tools to justify settler-colonial taking. The authorship conferred to the photographer or the sound recordist functions as a complementary site of erasure of Indigenous peoples' presence. The vast *empty* landscapes of the west by Ansel Adams and the hundreds of photos of Native Americans attributed to Edward Curtis illustrate the role of specific technologies serving as colonial tools of displacement through documentation. They also illustrate the pathways for authorial cultural memory made possible by making Adams and Curtis the only names remembered—and endlessly reproduced—in the historical record. Textual, aural, and visual authorship becomes a powerful tool for possessing land alongside the cultural knowledge and representations of those who aren't, and cannot be, recognized as authors. The modern liberal author and their (Indigenous) subjects are thus made, remade, and endlessly reproduced.

Authorship is a category that has been well interrogated by theorists from a range of disciplines (Woodmansee 1984; Woodmansee and Jaszi 1994; Rose 1993, 1994a, 1994b). What is under-explored, however, is authorship as both a site of colonial power and as one of settler colonialism's flexible legal devices for maintaining control and possession of knowledge *upon* Indigenous lands, even as those lands are subjected to projects of expropriation (Anderson 2013; Bhandar 2018, 24). As a legal, social and cultural construct that maintains specific exclusions and relations of power within settler-colonial contexts, authoring becomes a supplementary mechanism for dispossessing—another means for physically and ideologically writing Indigenous peoples out of existence (O'Brien 2010).

Taking land also requires knowledge about the land.⁷ Research and documentation provide supplementary (re)sources for land dispossession. Conferring authorship to non-Indigenous collectors and document producers is a complementary modality of settler ownership of lands through territorial dispossession. Consequently, where colonial materials get amassed and held, as well as the networks of authority that are put in place around them (including who is authorized to access and use them), form the basis for managing these new possessions and their consequent futures. Copyright is the key legal device for turning Indigenous knowledge and culture into a form of property, thereby establishing it as a

7 President Thomas Jefferson funded multiple expeditions (including the Lewis and Clarke Expedition of 1803-1806) to gather data and information on Native Americans. Set on settler expansion, Jefferson clearly identified that the possibility of taking land, or westward expansion, depended upon knowing about the land, and this also meant having knowledge of Native languages.

possession to be controlled by non-Indigenous peoples. Libraries and archives are implicated in real property and IP techniques of settler-colonial taking. These colonial logics remain hidden in the stacks and how they are populated; in the rights fields in databases; in archival processes of selection, appraisal, and accessioning; and through efforts to digitize content and collections in order to make them “open to the public” (Anderson and Christen 2013; Christen 2015). Authorship confers authority and produces entitlement through the exclusion of others. While authorship has a fluid legal life, it also has an extensive legal *after-life*.

Attribution is the after-life of authorship. It is one of authorship’s key entitlements wherein an author ostensibly maintains that status well beyond the legal rights granted by copyright: the author’s name stays permanently with the work. An author’s name is embedded into institutional infrastructures, catalogues, and records and, through such, is also embedded in social and cultural memory, including through citational practices (Coulthard 2014). To be perpetually known as the author—regardless of whether the legal rights are still held—is a powerful legacy. As the after-life of authoring, attribution socially circulates that which was initially put in place legally. This is most forcefully achieved in how the name associated with the property is remembered, circulated, and cited.

Attribution is the foundation of libraries and archives writ large. It is encoded with colonial proprietary privilege and racialized subject positions which prevent, or at least make incredibly difficult, those originally excluded from holding that status, any entry back to disrupt or unsettle the conditions inherent in the making of the record or the document (A. Simpson 2018). The *long-term* social, cultural, and political consequences of misattribution, non-attribution, deliberate exclusion, and the failure to attribute properly are barely noticed. Yet, they profoundly affect how Indigenous peoples can participate in their own public and published narratives, how sovereignty can be enacted and maintained, how access to heritage is made possible, how histories and narratives can be retold, and how Indigenous peoples can upend colonial proprietary regimes that reach into the infrastructures of institutions as well as infrastructures of social and cultural memory. Attribution itself, then, must be subjected to more substantive attention and critique within the institutions that embed, maintain, and distribute it.

Part Two: Attribution's Exclusionary Function

Attribution: n

2) the action of ascribing a work or remark to a particular author, artist, or person.

Molly Neptune Parker is leaning into the computer. She is singularly focused on the sound of the voice singing. She leans in closer. "Aw, his voice is thick and heavy. Hear that? I am sure that was a French word. Stop. Play it again."

Jane stops the recording, goes back three or four seconds, and plays it again.

"I know that word. Ah. What is it? Play it again?"

Molly waits as Jane stops the recording and goes back the three or four seconds, again. "Aw, it's on the tip of my tongue. My mother used to use that word and I can't remember it. The Lacoutes you know, my mother's family, they came from over the river [Canada]. Perle Lacoute, he was the brother of my grandmother on my mother's side. He must have come over on this day. Why was he there? The Lacoutes were French speaking Passamaquoddy. . . . gives me chills listening to his voice after all this time."

Donald, Molly, and Jane are sitting in the Passamaquoddy Museum in Indian Township, Maine. It is Jane's eighth visit to work with Passamaquoddy language speakers to identify, transcribe, and translate songs and stories recorded in 1890 and now known as the first ethnographic recordings made with the new phonograph technology. They were first returned to the community by the American Folklife Center in the 1980s on cassette tapes.⁸ As is evidenced through the time it took for them to be returned, the recorded songs and stories were not made for the Passamaquoddy. Instead, they were made through both privately funded and governmental extractive research agendas focused on Native American peoples' culture as part of an experiment with new technology to see how it could assist in these projects (Hochman 2014). During the initial return of the cassette tapes in the 1980s, there was delight within the community at hearing ancestral voices, but also frustration since

8 Their return in 1982 occurred when the recordings were transferred to the Library of Congress as part of the Federal Cylinder Project. Upon their receipt at the American Folklife Center (AFC), they were identified, copied, and returned as part of the Library's changing ethical commitment to return cultural heritage to communities that had been historically separated from it. This repatriation of sound by the AFC happened twenty years before the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) was passed and became federal legislation that mandated the return of only very specific kinds of heritage.

the sound quality was poor and little could be deciphered. With updated sonic restoration technologies now available and applied to the cylinder recordings, the clarity that had previously been hoped for was actualized as we sat listening in 2017.

Molly and Jane re-listen to the two minutes and forty-five seconds of the SR23 recording (Selmore and Joseph 1890). Molly is working hard to decipher the words and the meaning. It is a two-step process. First, Molly has to identify the Passamaquoddy words themselves, which are thick with a French accent. In 1890, many Passamaquoddy people spoke French, which subsequently became inflected within the Passamaquoddy language, too. Today, there are no French-speaking Passamaquoddy people because English is the predominant language alongside Passamaquoddy. Molly is a fluent Passamaquoddy speaker, and her parents and grandparents spoke both Passamaquoddy and French. After identifying the Passamaquoddy words, she has to translate these into English and make sense of them within a social and cultural context and within her own cultural and familial memories. Her thoughts travel quickly. Jane writes down some of the phrases and meanings that Molly interprets so that when they start listening again, Molly can have these initial thoughts as a reference and memory prompt. The process is fragmentary, like the recordings themselves. Fewkes did not record a full song or a full story, only parts and pieces:

They are going to a gathering,

Indian people and the light,

Mi'kmaq and Penobscot,

They are going to a place,

Is it an introduction at a gathering?

Are they going to Canada?

Why was he going?

St John? St Ann? Quebec?

A giant gathering—could be some history?

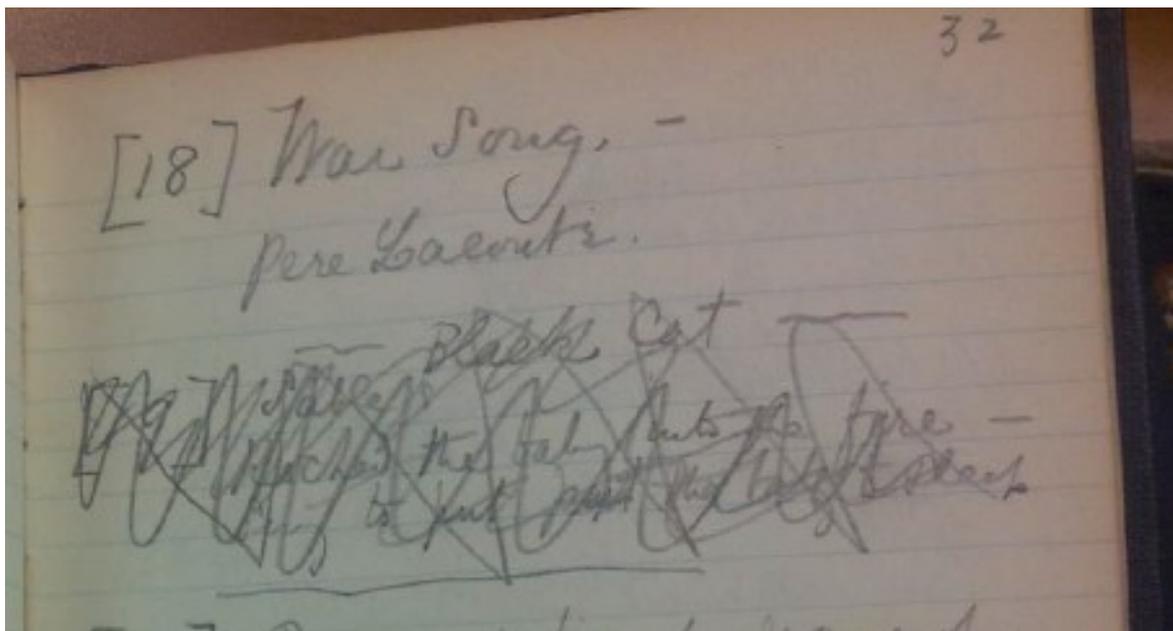
Wampum Readers would go to Canada before the Catholics stopped them.

It's definitely about a gathering—I just don't know, can't make out what kind of gathering.

We work on just three recordings that day—SR23, SR17, and SR18—and we listen to them at least a dozen times (Joseph 1890; Lacoute 1890; Selmore and Joseph 1890). Only one of them has a title given to it by Fewkes: SR18, “War Song” (Lacoute 1890). All the other songs are marked in the catalogue as “unidentified.” Since the songs are sung in Passamaquoddy, only Passamaquoddy speakers know what they are about, and conversely, know if the documentation and titling from Fewkes is correct.

It is long and tiring work because of the concentration needed to listen closely while trying to make sense of sounds from the past. It is also emotionally taxing to hear and re-hear ancestors’ voices. Sometimes we stop, and Molly and Donald talk about what we might have heard in the recording and about who else in the community would be able to help decipher them. Other times the recording activates a much larger conversation about Passamaquoddy history, family, culture, homelands, and relations.

Before this listening session, Molly, Donald, and Wayne Newell had identified a third singer on one of the recordings, SR18 (Lacoute 1890). The voice is now distinct and clear because of the enhanced audio, where before it had been hidden by the wax cylinder’s lack of clarity and Fewkes’ minimal documentation. He only sings one song. Hearing this new voice prompted us to return to all the documentation for the recordings we had gathered. While this was minimal—Fewkes’ field notes from his visit to Calais, held at the National Anthropological Archives in Washington, DC, hold the most information. Buried in Fewkes’ field notes on page thirty-two is a small note at the top of the document next to cylinder eighteen. It reads [18] *War Song, - Pere Lacoute* (Fewkes 1890d).



Finding this entry, we then re-read the whole notebook to see if there was any other reference to Lacoute. Finding no other reference, we started listening again with only this clue. The name of the singer on this recording is Perle (Peter) Lacoute. This is Molly's grandmother's brother. As we play this recording, there is a deep reverence for the ancestors and elders, for this is the first time that Molly has ever heard his voice.

Through the listening process, it is not the content that is activated for Molly, but instead the Lacoute family history and intimate familial memories. We all listen as Molly identifies several words and phrases, and then we talk about her family—her grandmother and all her children (Kenneth, Molly, Elena and Phylis), and how her grandmother died of a hernia rupture in her stomach when Phylis was born. Molly talks about her French-speaking family, about her grandmother's brother's family—one of the last families to leave the Canadian reservation to come over to these Passamaquoddy homelands where we are now listening to the recordings. Molly is visibly moved by the conversations and the space around her own memories. We do very little work on translating SR18, "War Song" (Lacoute 1890). The focus stays on bringing Perle out of the recording, displacing Fewkes. It is a temporal relay of knowledge and culture across the community and across the river.

Activating Lacoute's name and hearing part of his story through Molly's own memory makes a different kind of remembering possible. This is remembering based on kin-land relations. It is also deeply emotional. In June 2018, when Perle's name was added into the public catalog record at both the Library of Congress and in the Passamaquoddy's digital archive, it was not a "correction" to the attribution. Instead, this process of re-attribution repositions the recordings themselves within a Passamaquoddy temporal framing, marking a sustained relational presence—one that is tied to lands and families and connected to creating futures for those Passamaquoddy yet to be born (Ancestral Voices Roundtable 2018).⁹ In this rearticulation of authorship and attribution, there is a deliberate act of making visible both specific settler-colonial histories deliberately minimized and erased in the records, as well as Passamaquoddy *survivance* (Vizenor 2008). When future listeners are directed through Passamaquoddy reckonings, not the settler-colonial authority that was given through attribution to Fewkes, the recordings themselves transform what can be heard. For the first

9 See the video from the Ancestral Voices Roundtable at the public launch of the project for Dwayne Tomah's (Passamaquoddy elder, language speaker and performer) moving tribute to his ancestors (Ancestral Voices Roundtable, 2018). For the online catalog for the Ancestral Voices project that holds the revised wax cylinders with TK Labels defining Passamaquoddy attribution and cultural authority, see <https://www.loc.gov/collections/ancestral-voices/about-this-collection/>.

time in the library and archive, Passamaquoddy cultural authority is an integral part of the listening.

The settler possession of Indigenous knowledge, here the Passamaquoddy songs and stories, is slowly being broken, disentangled, and rearticulated. At every level of circulation—within finding aids, collection records, catalogue metadata, the national registry, and the online documentation—the cylinders have been known as the “Fewkes recordings.” They have been immortalized as the “heritage of the nation” with attribution to Fewkes. A large photograph of Fewkes accompanies most of the documentations of the recordings online.¹⁰ At times, like with the National Recording Registry, the name of the Passamaquoddy community is included. But more often, it is not, and individual Passamaquoddy names are almost exclusively left out. While the Passamaquoddy names have been missing in relation to attribution in the catalogue and in the social contexts through which the public catalog record circulates, they were never fully erased (Fewkes 1890a, 1890b, 1890c.)

Passamaquoddy men were not recognized by Fewkes or others as important enough to be included in articles or institutional records as co- or additional authors. Their status as knowledge holders, contributors, creators, and/or authors was denied, deflected, or dislodged from the research documentation, the sound experiment, and the subsequent historical record in the library.¹¹ These individuals were instead the “subjects” for the sound experiment from which Fewkes generated his authorship, his sound “property,” which, in 1890, was treated as real property like land and protected in perpetuity (Besek 2005, 2009; Jaszi and Lewis 2009). In Fewkes’ ethnographic experiment, Peter Selmore, Noel Joseph, and Perle Lacoute were already racialized as non-authors and non-owners. When Fewkes arrived in Calais, Maine, in March 1890, this was a normalized settler-colonial practice. As wards of the state, surveilled by Indian agents who sent regular reports to the Governor and the Council of the State of Maine, they had already been recognized within the settler state as having no capacity to hold property—real or intellectual. More than this, though, Peter, Noel and Perle existed in a social hierarchy wherein they could become subjected to an experiment—could become subjects of science—where Fewkes, an arbitrary visitor to their

10 In the Library of Congress collection, this photograph has now been changed to an image of Noel Joseph, one of the main Passamaquoddy singers on the recordings.

11 The Kwakwaka’wakw descendants of George Hunt, with anthropologist and Associate Professor Aaron Glass, argue cogently, and with extensive evidence, that Franz Boas did exactly the same thing with his key “informant” Hunt. Hunt was excluded as a co-author when clearly much of the information Boas was able to determine about Kwakwaka’wakw was through Hunt. The exhibition “The Story Box: Franz Boas, George Hunt and the Making of Anthropology” at the Bard Graduate Center, February 14-July 7, 2019, articulates this failure to include Hunt as an author and how Boas perpetuated the idea of his singular authorship. See <https://www.bgc.bard.edu/gallery/exhibitions/88/the-story-box>.

traditional homelands, would not be subject to Passamaquoddy laws, rules, and protocols, but would have been assumed to be in a superior position of power and authority.

By 1890, enormous tracts of Passamaquoddy traditional territory had been sold first by Massachusetts and then by Maine to settler interests. Indeed, the town of Calais itself, including the town library, is built on traditional Passamaquoddy territory. Passamaquoddy peoples had been relegated to two small reservations: Sipayik (Pleasant Point) and Motahkomikuk (Indian Township and Peter Dana Point). Despite concerted efforts by Jesuit and Catholic denominations and the states of Massachusetts and Maine, Passamaquoddy still spoke their language and shared their culture in meaningful ways (Soctomah 2002, 2005, 2009). However, the settler search for new resources moved from land acquisition to Native American people (bodies) and their cultural knowledge (Riley and Carpenter 2016). The thick evolutionary narrative mythologies of the “demise” of traditional Native culture and peoples propelled the acquisition and taking of anything Native American before it was “all lost.”¹² This logic certainly fueled the burgeoning science of anthropology (Cole 1985; Hinsley 1994; Bennett 1995, 2009, 2014). Documentation and preservation became the vocabulary through which dispossession was articulated and moved into techniques of control and surveillance.¹³

Tracking back and forth between these 1890 recordings within the framework of settler-colonial possession and current Passamaquoddy uses of those recordings, it becomes clear how the foundation of research is often a fundamental building block for embedding racialized subject positions and relations of property over knowledge and culture. Research that is flawed at its origin by foundational colonial power relationships making research “subjects” and “objects” creates practices of mis- and non-attribution and citation logics. Attribution as a technique of ownership works itself through a variety of contexts with multiple consequences and effects. The erasure and displacement of names deliberately restructures social memory through a settler-colonial worldview. The *power and perversion* of attributions’ colonial logics mandates the assumption that the written story itself originates with the “owner.” Instigating a legal infrastructure of ownership over knowledge and culture

12 This history has been well documented, and there are too many examples of this mentality found in numerous contexts. Here is a quotation from Josiah Nott and George Gliddon from *Types of Mankind* [1854] (1969): “It is as clear as the sun at noon-day, that in a few generations more the last of these Red men will be numbered with the dead” (466).

13 The first page of Fewkes’ notebook makes this point, as the title page reads, “A trip to Calais Maine for the purpose of *experimenting* with the phonograph as an instrument to *preserve* the ancient language of that tribe” (1890d).

that replicates the land-based project of taking—literally the writing, authoring, and attributions of culture—affirms settler-colonial logics of possession.

Our current culture of attribution is based upon the intricate and enduring settler-colonial practices of possession and property. These are what need to change in order to decolonize the function of attribution—its logic and reach. The logic of attribution will not be undone by assuming we are “fixing mistakes” in the record. Instead, to decolonize attribution as a technique of dispossession means that we need to reframe attribution around and in relation to Indigenous knowledge systems and relationships—which include and are based in connections to land, kin, and language in the present. This process of reframing and resituating attribution and its affordances requires a radical shift in understanding what attribution *does* and *means*; it requires accounting for these techniques of erasure and allowing for Indigenous presence in how this specific mechanism of the settler state is interpreted and appropriated.

Part Three: Shifting Attribution’s Power

Attribution: n

- 3) the action of regarding a quality or feature as characteristic of, or possessed by, a person or thing.

Attribution is a site of ongoing settler-colonial power. It remains an integrated node for the possession of Indigenous peoples’ knowledge and cultural representations held and distributed within the logics of libraries and archives in the present. Attribution is spread throughout library and archive practices, policies, and structures; it reaches into infrastructure, mission, and professional foundations. Yet the power attribution wields remains barely noticed, hidden in collections, routines, research traditions, citation references, and in future planning. The problem is immense and extensive. The problem is structural. But it must be addressed.

The impetus for this article came from a conference where the keynote speaker—addressing power and inequality within the library—had no answer for a question from a public librarian in the audience about tackling decolonization *within* the library. The capacity to identify the issue of power and inequality outside the library, and the failure to address the ongoing settler-colonial legacies of property—real and intellectual—within library infrastructures and practices, was pronounced. We immediately noted the challenge and

resistance to naming the multiple sites of settler-colonial power internally and the need to develop strategies that reach in, resist, and overturn these. As Aboriginal scholars Martin Nakata and Marcia Langton (2005, 3) argue, in the context of libraries and archives, what must happen is an “unsettling of established practice, and questioning of some of the assumptions on which accepted practice rests.”

Identification

Land and territorial acknowledgements have become more common across the United States in the last five years. In Australia and Canada, these have been more common and quite standardized in public and academic spaces for at least twenty years. As Metis scholar Chelsea Vowel (Âpihtawikosisân 2016, paragraph 10) notes about the history of such statements in Canada, “When territorial acknowledgments first began, they were fairly powerful statements of presence, somewhat shocking, perhaps even unwelcome in settler spaces. They provoked discomfort and centered Indigenous priority on these lands.” Land and territorial acknowledgements began in Australia and Canada within frameworks of Indigenous activism and as public announcements of enduring relations to and assertions of stewardship over physical places (McKenna 2014). One powerful element of such acknowledgements is the centrality given to Indigenous place names, as well as specificity in naming communities in their own terms. Mark McKenna (2014, 478) has argued that in Australia, “they constitute the infiltration of a radically different understanding of both history and place.” In addition, many acknowledgments in North America include the complex, overlapping, and historical relationships upon which territorial affiliation rests. This type of territorial identification can disrupt normative understandings of place, thereby opening the door for new, or renewed, types of actions, interactions, relationships, and forms of reciprocity (Garcia 2018; Johnson 2018).

Alongside the increase in land acknowledgements within university and institutional contexts has also come important critique (McKenna 2014; Kesīqnaeh 2016; King 2019). Concern rightly points to the way in which an acknowledgement can be co-opted and rendered empty because there is no action and no change that is necessarily demanded. As a normalizing practice, especially used by government officials or within university or institutional contexts that maintain and actively support ongoing settler-colonial projects, territorial acknowledgements can be strategically deployed to perform “inclusion” whilst simultaneously functioning as a tool for settler innocence (Ahmed 2012; Tuck and Yang 2012). That is, territorial acknowledgements may not directly affect the structures of

property if offered as lone gestures without attention to structural changes (Asher, Curnow, and Davis 2018). In fact, such acknowledgements may function as mechanisms to prop up institutional power and privilege if not embedded within long-term and deep shifts in organizational structure and infrastructure. That is, territorial acknowledgements cannot function as ends in themselves, a box to be ticked in service of settler innocence or bland multicultural forms of recognition. They must be tethered to deep-rooted institutional changes and reformulations.

We began this article by arguing that decolonizing practices within libraries and archives must be territorial as well as intellectual and procedural propositions. That is, decolonization must be structural: there is no other form of decolonization. This is why we must distinguish decolonization from singular efforts at inclusion and recognition (Ahmed 2012; Coulthard 2014; A. Simpson 2014; Hudson 2017). When territorial acknowledgements are given alongside and as a part of commitments that compel action, they are steps *towards* decolonization. But they are not, in and of themselves, decolonizing because they do not force change within a system of colonial property relations. As Kesīqnaeh (2016, paragraph 21) explains, “settlers know the land is stolen and that existentially and phenomenologically, this knowledge compromises their sense of integrity, being, and property.” Therefore, it is the settler-colonial property matrix—as a whole—that must be addressed through the return of lands, alongside the return of authority over cultural knowledge and property.

Structural change also means undoing what is in place, not adding to it. Land acknowledgements and addressing structural possession through attribution differ because attribution itself has functioned as a key mechanism of possession. Attribution is more than recognition—it is an embedded form of property relations that maintains erasure and exclusion and reinforces settler-colonial memory (Bruyneel 2016, 2017). New practices of attribution are an active undoing of the normative property relationships and a refusal of their enduring legacies beyond law. Articulating Indigenous attribution immediately begins a tangible unraveling of property in the institution itself (through return) and within all the practices that uphold, normalize, and maintain property’s hold by the prominence and presence of Indigenous knowledge. Therefore, we must take inventory of where current modalities of attribution operate within library and archive systems to uphold perverse property regimes. Where is attribution embedded, where is it assumed, where is it granted, and where and how is it updated, altered, or changed? Where does it enter in analog form, and how is it multiplied across digital systems, platforms, tools, and APIs? Finally, we have to be willing to upend entrenched technical and social systems: content management systems

whose author fields deny Indigenous authors; rights fields that are built on settler-colonial authorship structures; copyright and property traditions that erase legacies of taking; citation practices that embed authoring legacies and embolden settler collective memory; and circulation processes that deny diverse types of protocols for viewing, listening, and sharing materials.

Indigenous peoples have systematically and forcefully asserted their role in stewarding collections as creators, collaborators, and contributors within libraries and archives. A crucial step in the process of identification is the necessary reckoning with the systematic procedures of the movement from often unnamed “subjects” to contributors, authors, and stewards of the materials collected, collated, and curated by others. The shift begins when Indigenous peoples are not only recognized, but are able to effect change within these power-laden spaces as authorities and knowledge holders. Under the weight of these shifts, settler-colonial logics of authorship and attribution will necessarily crack. Routines and current practices will come under pressure. New habits will need to form institutionally and socially. For instance, Fewkes can no longer be privileged as an expert of Passamaquoddy cultural narratives. This status was a fiction made possible through settler-colonial projects of legal control and possession built into library and archival infrastructures and the socialities and norms that are subsequently circulated. With Passamaquoddy attribution in the public record and within institutional catalogue and organizational schemes comes a reckoning with the totality of Fewkes’ colonial fabrications, including the subsequent century of erasure and misattribution.

Context and correction

In many contexts, Indigenous advocates are initiating new directions where collaboration is central to breaking with property traditions. For example, a recent meeting with a tribal member at a university library began with a very common question about how much material the library held about or in relation to the community. The librarian was unable to answer. There was just no knowledge about how much this library—which is located on the homeland of the tribal member—holds about the community. It became clear through discussions with the librarian that the reasons for this lack of knowledge were due, at least in part, to the structure of the metadata. Within the schema there was no association made between content and tribal nations, communities, or territories. There was no field for identifying these types of relations between land, people, and knowledge. There was no field where homelands were named as a part of knowledge relations, no field where communities,

clans, families, or ceremonial societies were acknowledged as authorities. What is prominent, of course, is the author field—bearing the weight of its colonial underpinnings. It is the presumed authors of this material, not the content itself, that was privileged within the library catalog and therefore within the ideological circulation of the material, including its citation practices. But for the community representative, the author was a sidebar story of colonial research and entitlement. The main story was the community's histories, chronicled, and cataloged.

The issue for Indigenous peoples is not only finding and accessing their cultural content, but also being able to undo and reframe the materials within the metadata first, and then adding community perspectives that can affect how decisions about its use, reuse, and circulation can be made. There is well-documented literature within library and archive sciences around the history of racist, offensive, demeaning, and degrading subject terms and classification schemes that continue to structure current systems (Marshall 1972, 1977; Olson 2001a, 2001b, 2002; Knowlton 2005; Drabinski 2008; Hathcock 2015, 2018; Schlesselman-Tarango 2017). Indigenous librarians and archivists have called for decolonizing processes to upend universal formats, undo presumed neutrality, and uncover legacies of citational erasure. Native legal scholar Rebecca Tsosie (2002, 315) highlights the perverseness of this paradox: “Indeed, absent some claim for economic harm that ‘fits’ in with the Anglo-American legal system’s standard categories for protecting ‘intellectual property’ and aspects of the creative process, Indian people have no protection against the harm caused by cultural appropriation.” In her terms, cultural appropriation includes the taking of Native images, languages, lands, and bodies for use by and in service of others’ needs. Buttressed by colonial dispossession as we have seen, this taking built IP regimes that gave us authorship, copyright, and the legal fiction of the public domain as a space where materials circulate freely for all. Embedded within this taking is the appropriation of knowledge that happens at the fundamental, first step of authoring. Calling for a decolonization process, Native scholars Marissa Duarte and Miranda Belarde-Lewis (2015, 678-79) argue that, “In the contemporary colonial moment, as an outcome of effective marginalization, Indigenous peoples have largely had to either make do with inaccurately and imprecisely organized documents by reading through and searching through the interstices of subject headings and classification systems or by collecting and collating their own items in smaller, flexible, sometimes ephemeral private offline and online locations.” They suggest, however, that decolonizing moves can happen in partnerships “for building systems that reflect, as appropriate, Indigenous epistemologies and local needs” (679). Systems, schemas, and

structures that reflect Indigenous ontologies—in all of their complexities—will also bring about a shift in library and archive sciences more generally as we grapple with legacies of control and displacement in their totality.

Research, Access, and Return

Following Mohawk scholar Audra Simpson's theoretical imperative to foreground refusal as both strategy and structure within ethnographic research, Tuck and Yang (2014, 223) suggest a "refusal to do research, or a refusal within research, as a way of thinking about humanizing researchers." This is, the frameworks under which research is conducted and the assumptions underpinning research practices must come under scrutiny in ways that highlight these fault lines. The critical imperative is to examine *how* processes of research have inherent logics of possession embedded within them at multiple scales and sites of production. The author of research also makes subjects, and these subjects are not entitled to occupy a space of authority. Research is a deeply hierarchical activity, laden with power and the making of distinct subject positions. In the context of our argument, research is the starting point for authoring and simultaneously the long legacy of attribution. *Attribution is the legacy of settler colonialism's proprietary authoring regimes.* If we pay closer attention to the property that research makes, who benefits from this property, and how colonial proprietary relations are normalized through the various lives that this property goes on to have in social memory, as well as in libraries and archives, we can begin to reframe its routes and undo its power.

The initial point of authorship that research affords defines a set of privileges and entitlements that are consequently made and circulated through notions of access to knowledge. Copyright excluded Indigenous peoples from holding authority and control over knowledge and knowledge systems; it simultaneously classified Indigenous peoples and cultural knowledge as open for taking and using without any regard for different systems of access, use, and/or circulation. For Indigenous peoples, research and access are not experienced as a universal good—especially for communities that have been subjected to extreme conditions of study, collection, and analysis as part of colonial research agendas. Following Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999), Tuck and Yang (2014) note that research has been a vehicle for extreme loss as well as harmful representations that informed destructive policies and continue to negatively impact Indigenous peoples' lives. Research has been a tool of colonialism—a form of taking predicated on access that precludes Indigenous circulation routes. Universal access to that research prompts a subsequent question about equity in the

initial collection, as well as in its future digital circulation.

If research practices prompt the initial authorial fictions and attribution's perversion, then return—through repatriation and restitution—can facilitate a reversal of the research trap. Digital repatriation, then, is a set of political, social, and cultural practices that cede decision making about access, narration, curation, and circulation to the original stewards of research materials—and this affects future documentation, recording, metadata, as well as publication. These are conscious acts of return that foreground *not taking* by refusing myths of neutrality about how knowledge is created, circulated, and cared for within the communities from which they came. Digital repatriation must grapple simultaneously with the circulation of and access to Indigenous materials through the lens of decolonization—that is through an active undoing of structures of erasure and dispossession within both platforms and process. It is not enough to digitize and return sacred, culturally sensitive, or yet-to-be vetted materials to communities and at the same time maintain them in online catalogs where they are endlessly circulated, appropriated, and misattributed. Instead, the systems themselves have to be purged of the structures that maintain and perpetuate these cultural violences. The digital repatriation—return within a consciously political and territorial set of relationships growing from histories of exclusion and moving towards reparations—of Passamaquoddy cultural materials provides a glimpse into how digital repatriation can function within library and archive practices to rectify misattribution and initiate new types of community authority and presence within the institution and through connections between the community and the institution (Christen 2011, 2015; Anderson and Christen 2013; Hennessy et al. 2012; Bell, Christen, and Turin 2013; Koch 2018; Reed 2018).

Conclusion: Redirecting Attribution's Power

In 1910, another anthropologist, William Mecheling, visited Passamaquoddy and Maliseet homelands with a phonograph. The technology had improved significantly in the twenty years since Fewkes' visit with Peter Selmore, Noel Joseph, and Peter Lacoute. The Passamaquoddy and Maliseet sang some similar songs to those that the Passamaquoddy had sung in 1890. Mecheling made a dozen or so wax cylinders—also for the purposes of documenting cultures that were considered on the verge of extinction. Like Fewkes, Mecheling has also been afforded the authority over Maliseet songs in the historical record, embedded within settler cultural memory through archival structures of attribution.

In a similar stretch of settler-colonial practices from the early twentieth century to today, Jeremy Dutcher from the Tobique First Nation in Canada was directed to the Museum of Civilization (now the Museum of History) by his aunty Maggie Paul. The recordings he located were a long way from their homelands. Maggie and Gracie Davis from Passamaquoddy are sisters, and it is Gracie's 2016 singing of the "Trading Song" that we open this article with. Maggie told Jeremy about the wax cylinders and encouraged him to go and hear them. The resulting album *Wolastoqiyik Lintuwakonawa*, in which Jeremy sings in Wolastoqiyik (Maliseet), transforms and connects these ancestral voices (Dutcher 2018a). It is a work of collaboration with ancestors over time. Like the work with the Passamaquoddy, community members spent many hours listening and transcribing the songs, working out the Wolastoqiyik titles that should have been attached to the recordings from the beginning. They also identified each of the singers in order to elevate individual and community authority that was summarily negated in the catalogue and biographical documentation that accompanies these recordings.

On Tuesday, September 18, 2018, Jeremy Dutcher won the highest Canadian music award, the Polaris Music Prize, for his album *Wolastoqiyik Lintuwakonawa*. In his acceptance speech, he poignantly asked, "Canada. You are in the middle of Indigenous Renaissance. Are you ready for the truths to be told? Are you ready to see the things that need to be seen?" (2018b). The responsibility for developing pathways to these truths in order to see what needs to be seen is one that libraries and archives must take on. Dutcher asks for Indigenous excellence to be seen, heard, and reckoned with. What he asks to be seen are Indigenous people as creators and authorities. Just a week after Dutcher's award, on September 26, 2018, at the Passamaquoddy community gathering celebrating the launch of their community digital portal and the return of the songs from the wax cylinders, Dwayne Tomah (2018), one of the Passamaquoddy language speakers who had been working closely translating and relearning the songs, called the recordings "gifts that have been left from the ancestors." In their framing and invocations, Dutcher and Tomah call for acknowledging the strength, persistence, and survivance of Indigenous cultures in the face of deliberate and structural strategies of erasure through material, categorical, practical, ideological, and institutional practices of possession. What is laid bare is the "ideological formation and material consequences of the white racial hegemony found in institutions and practices in LIS" (Honma 2005). The recordings show how land and knowledge are connected, intimately formed at times of creation, during ongoing performance, through generations living with and being connected to places, kin, and ancestors. Decolonizing attribution

means making these connections—future and past—visible and tangible. Reckoning must happen at structural levels by naming complicity and untangling the material consequences of attribution within the multiple spheres, including the logics of property, in which they circulate. There is no singular or simple way to decolonize attribution—there are many paths, and they all begin with tearing down what was built on false recognition, territorial taking, displacement, and egregious claims to authorship.

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