

INTRODUCTION

DECOLONIZING OUR MINDS AND ACTIONS

*Waziyatawin and
Michael Yellow Bird*

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A. Introduction and Background

In 2005, eight Indigenous intellectuals created the volume *For Indigenous Eyes Only: A Decolonization Handbook*, to offer hands-on suggestions and activities for Indigenous communities to engage in as they worked to develop decolonizing activities. Beginning from the assumption that Indigenous Peoples have the power, strength, and intelligence to develop culturally specific decolonization strategies to pursue our own strategies of liberation, we attempted to begin to demystify the language of colonization and decolonization. Through a step-by-step process, we hoped to help Indigenous readers identify useful concepts, terms, and intellectual frameworks that will assist all of us in our struggle toward meaningful change and self-determination. The handbook covered a wide range of topics including Indigenous governance, education, languages, oral tradition, repatriation, images and stereotypes, nutritional strategies, and truth-telling.

In this volume, a number of new Indigenous scholars, writers, and activists have collaborated for the

**“The most potent weapon in the
hands of the oppressor is the mind
of the oppressed.”**

—Steve Biko

creation of a sequel to the *Decolonization Handbook*. The title, *For Indigenous Minds Only*, reflects an understanding that decolonizing actions must begin in the mind, and that creative, consistent, decolonized thinking shapes and empowers the brain, which in turn provides a major prime for positive change. Undoing the effects of colonialism and working toward decolonization requires each of us to consciously consider to what degree we have been affected by not only the physical aspects of colonization, but also the psychological, mental, and spiritual aspects. Kenyan intellectual Ngugi wa Thiong’o, in his book *Decolonising the Mind*, describes the “cultural bomb” as the greatest weapon unleashed by imperialism:

The effect of the cultural bomb is to annihilate a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves. It makes them see their past as one wasteland of non-achievement and it makes them want to distance themselves from that wasteland. It makes them want to identify with that which is furthest removed from themselves; for instance, with other peoples’ languages rather than their own. It makes them identify with that which is decadent and reactionary, all those forces that would stop their own springs of life. It even plants serious doubts about the moral righteousness of struggle. Possibilities of triumph or victory are seen as remote, ridiculous dreams. The intended results are despair, despondency and a collective death-wish.

The planting and igniting of this “cultural bomb” by the colonizing forces has been essential to the colonization process, for if our minds are contaminated with self-hatred and the belief that we are inferior to our colonizers, we will believe in both the necessity and virtue of our own colonization. We will begin to

diminish the wisdom and beauty of Indigenous ways of being and embrace the ways of the colonizers as inherently superior. When we believe in their superiority, our motivation to fight for our own liberation is splintered and eventually seriously damaged. However, we do not believe that it can be killed. That destiny lies within each of us. Still, if we accept the cultural bomb, why would we fight for something we perceive to be undesirable?

Working toward decolonization, then, requires us to consciously and critically assess how our minds have been affected by the cultural bomb of colonization. Only then will we be positioned to take action that reflects a rejection of the programming of self-hatred with which we have been indoctrinated. We will also learn to assess the claims of colonizer society regarding its justification for colonization and its sense of superiority. When we regain a belief in the wisdom and beauty of our traditional ways of being and reject the colonial lies that have inundated us, we will release the pent-up dreams of liberation and again realize the need for resistance to colonization. This volume is dedicated to facilitating the critical

thinking that will help us work toward our collective decolonization.

B. Definitions of Colonization and Decolonization

Colonization generally refers to the process that is perpetuated after the initial control over Indigenous Peoples is achieved through invasion and conquest. Perpetuating colonization allows the colonizers to maintain or expand their social, political, and economic power. It is detrimental to us because their power comes at the expense of Indigenous lands,

**From the song “Ancestors” (2007)
by Savage Family
from Skokomish (Tuwaduq):**
***If our ancestors came back and
asked us who we are/
would we be too far gone
to recognize them/
through the stars and the
stripes of the flags/
living our lives as they say?/
If our ancestors came back
would we fight them today?!***

COLONIZATION refers to both the formal and informal methods (behavioral, ideological, institutional, political, and economical) that maintain the subjugation and/or exploitation of Indigenous Peoples, lands, and resources.

DECOLONIZATION is the meaningful and active resistance to the forces of colonialism that perpetuate the subjugation and/or exploitation of our minds, bodies, and lands. Decolonization is engaged for the ultimate purpose of overturning the colonial structure and realizing Indigenous liberation.

resources, lives, and self-determination. Not only has colonization resulted in the loss of major rights such as land and self-determination, most of our contemporary daily struggles are also a direct consequence of colonization (poverty, family violence, chemical dependency, suicide, health deterioration). Colonization is an all-encompassing presence in our lives.

Decolonization is the meaningful and active resistance to the forces of colonialism that perpetuate the subjugation and/or exploitation of our minds, bodies, and lands. Its ultimate purpose is to overturn the colonial structure and realize Indigenous liberation. First and foremost, decolonization must occur in our own minds. The Tunisian decolonization activist, Albert Memmi, wrote, “In order for the colonizer to be the complete master, it is not enough for him to be so in actual fact, he must also believe in its legitimacy. In order for that legitimacy to be complete, it is not enough for the colonized to be a slave, he must also accept his role.” The first step toward decolonization, then, is to question the legitimacy of colonization. Once we recognize the truth of this injustice, we can think about ways to resist and challenge colonial institutions and ideologies. Thus, decolonization is not passive, but rather it requires something called *praxis*. Brazilian liberatory educator Paulo Freire defined *praxis* as “reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it.” This is the means by which we turn from subjugated human beings into liberated human beings. In accepting the premise of colonization and working toward decolonization, we are not relegating ourselves to a status as victim, but rather we are actively working toward our own freedom to transform our lives and the world around us. The project that begins with our minds, therefore, has revolutionary potential.

Michael Yellow Bird has created a **Conceptual Model of Decolonization** in which he defines decolonization as both an event and a process:

Event – As an event, decolonization concerns reaching a level of critical consciousness, an active understanding that you are (or have been) colonized and are thus responding to life circumstances in ways that are limited, destructive, and externally controlled.

Process – As a process, decolonization means engaging in the activities of creating, restoring, and birthing. It means creating and consciously using various strategies to liberate oneself, adapt to or survive oppressive conditions; it means restoring cultural practices, thinking, beliefs, and values that were taken away or abandoned but are still relevant and necessary to survival; and it means the birthing of new ideas, thinking, technologies, and lifestyles that contribute to the advancement and empowerment of Indigenous Peoples.

In the first *Decolonization Handbook*, as the first activity we encouraged readers to work within their own cultural traditions to develop words in their own Indigenous language for both colonization and decolonization. This exercise provides an opportunity for individuals and communities to think consciously and critically about the meaning of the terms from within their own cultural framework. If you have not yet engaged in this activity, it is a good place to start. Identifying the literal and figurative meanings of both these terms will allow you to consciously understand your culture's view of them.

Michael Yellow Bird's conceptual model provides an analytical tool with which we can facilitate understanding and create strategies for decolonization in various ways and contexts. With this framework in mind, contributors to this volume attempted to address the following questions as they pertain to their particular topic: (1) how has colonialism affected our lives, and (2) what strategies for decolonization might we employ to not only challenge colonialism at its core, but also to undo, counter, or reverse the effects of colonialism. These are questions you may also keep in mind when thinking about the realities, struggles, and hopes of your family and community.

C. The Context and the Topics

This *Handbook*, more so than the first volume, is written with a sense of urgency. We are heading into a new era in which we will no longer be able to deny the effects of industrial "civilization's" grave damage to the diverse zones and ecosystems of our planet. As Indigenous Peoples we know that this devastation has been occurring on Turtle Island for the last five centuries; and, for that length of time, our ancestors have continued to sound the alarm to the ongoing, un-restrained feeding frenzy of non-renewable resources by the corporate-led, capitalist engines of colonial society. We know from the stories and prophecies of our ancestors that this mindless consumption activity portends a future of deep hardship and dramatic change for all forms of life on the earth. We are now bearing witness to the collapse of major ecosystems, the extinction of many species, the desertification of fertile lands, the

rise in infectious diseases, a decline in fisheries, and a staggering increase in the toxicity of the lands, waters, and air.

Moreover, we now have become even more aware of how this collapse is contributing to the suffering of all Indigenous life. What is happening now differs from the natural declines of species and changes to the earth in that the planet has now reached a "tipping point" that will undoubtedly threaten the foundations of industrial civilization and the survival of much of life. The whole earth will reap the effects of hyper-exploitation, exceeding the carrying capacity, and wide-scale ecological degradation or destruction. To be clear, this present and impending disaster was not the making of our ancestors who maintained ingenious, sustainable ways of life—ways that were considered to be backward, primitive, and undeveloped by our colonizers. Still, the cultural bomb has infected many, but not all, Indigenous Peoples in the current generation, making us apologists and cheerleaders for the unfettered corporatocracy that continues to bring about the rapid decline of our planet. Our uncritical participation in this colonial system undoubtedly increases the rate at which we are falling and failing.

In his recent volume, *Red Alert: Saving the Planet with Indigenous Knowledge*, Daniel Wildcat asserted, "Many political leaders throughout Indian country and around the world continue to speak of sovereignty, self-determination, economic development, and occasionally even democracy. As important as these topics are in the everyday lives of humankind, in the big picture of life on the planet, such talk is beginning to appear meaningless unless explicitly related to the climate changes we are observing." Likewise, in his article "American Indian Studies in the Time of Global Warming," Michael Yellow Bird addresses his comments to Indigenous scholars. In discussing why he chose to play off the title of Gabriel Garcia Marquez's best-selling novel *Love in the Time of Cholera*, which regarded lovesickness as an actual disease like cholera, Yellow Bird writes, "Similarly, I look upon global warming (climate change) as a self-inflicted illness that is overriding and overshadowing all that we are doing, planning, and hoping for in our little human

lives. Unless we keep this enormous planetary event at the center of our reality and immediately engage in effective antidotes, the future of our world, including American Indian/Indigenous nations studies, will surely be more fleeting than it might have been if ‘natural’ events were allowed to unfold.”

Global climate change is not the only crisis with which our people will be contending in the coming decades, however. Other practices resulting from a faulty belief in unlimited growth and progress are now proving to be failures. We are witnessing the endgame of capitalism. As the US debt grows by over a million dollars every minute (for an update, visit www.usdebtclock.org) and we reach the point of peak debt—our borrowing limit—we find ourselves on the verge of an economic collapse from which a recovery does not look possible. Furthermore, peak debt will only be compounded by the issue of peak oil use (not to mention peak natural gas, peak coal, peak uranium, etc.). We are about to run headlong into a number of simultaneous crises.

Thus, when we discuss strategies for decolonization, we also cannot afford to ignore our current predicament. While addressing colonialism in our lives, it is important for us to understand how that struggle influences, interacts with, and is affected by these other global emergencies. It is an awareness of these impending crises that must foreground all our visions, thoughts, and actions related to decolonization. All of this means that as Indigenous people, we can no longer pretend that it is in our best interest to get on board with the project of modernity and economic development as a pathway to self-determination. That ship is quickly sinking. It is in this context that we present the following discussions.

For this volume, we have taken on a host of new topics and offered some additional perspectives on some of the old topics. Included in this volume are discussions of global collapse; what to consider in returning to a land-based existence; neurodecolonization; demilitarization for imperial purposes and re-militarization for Indigenous purposes; survival strategies for tribal prisoners; moving beyond the nation-state model; a land-based educational model;

methods for developing healthy family relationships; decolonization strategies for youth in custody; and the decolonizing of gender roles. As with the first volume, we do not intend to provide universal solutions for problems stemming from centuries of colonialism. Rather, we hope to facilitate and encourage critical thinking skills while offering recommendations for fostering community discussions and plans for purposeful community action.

Chapter 2 by Waziyatawin and chapter 3 by Na’cha’uaht/Kam’ayaam (Cliff Atleo Jr.) focus on Indigenous responses to global crises. They both raise questions about our current level of preparation and offer ideas about how we might successfully weather the coming storms by revitalizing our ancient relationships with our territories. Waziyatawin’s chapter, “Indigenous Survival in the Coming Collapse,” provides an overview of the impending crises such as depletion of resources, declining per capita food production, global climate change, economic collapse, and increased political instability. Given the American and Canadian dependence on cheap oil, she then spells out why peak oil, in particular, threatens the foundations of American and Canadian societies with no viable alternatives that will allow for the continuation of this way of life. In discussing the “promising” alternative energy sources—many of them labeled “green energy” or “clean energy”—Waziyatawin explains why those too do not provide long-term solutions because of their dependence on fossil fuels. The dispelling of myths regarding the dominant society’s capacity to continue this way of life raises questions about a whole host of lies fed to us by colonizing society that most of us have come to accept. Once we shed our misconceptions (and the sooner the better), we become open to strategizing about how to respond to collapse. When we realize how our future survival will be intimately linked with the health of our land base and the integrity of our ecosystems, it quickly becomes apparent that as Indigenous Peoples we must take much more seriously our role as defenders of the land.

Waziyatawin then offers a seven-point Indigenous Action Plan for responding to economic, ecological, and fossil-fuel collapse that encourages Indigenous

people to return, first and foremost, to our own spiritual and cultural foundations. Since many Indigenous people have stories, prophecies or teachings about the coming times, as well as Original Instructions about how we are supposed to live on the land, understanding and living those teachings will be an important component in facilitating the rebirth of our nations at the same time settler society is collapsing. Waziyatawin then calls for all of us to diligently work to “ignite the flame of revolution” within our communities by building a culture of resistance. She encourages individuals, families, and communities to get armed so that we may work in defense of our people and lands. She advocates “life-boat building” in which Indigenous people shed dependency on settler society and seek to establish food, water, and land security. For those who do not have a sufficient land base for survival, she recommends developing a plan for the reclamation of lands. Her Action Plan’s last two steps include working to dismantle the existing systems and institutions that are destroying our homelands and planet and committing to defending the land at all costs. Ultimately, she says, preparing for collapse calls us to “live the meaning of indigeneity.”

Na’cha’uaht continues the discussion of crisis preparedness in his chapter, “Returning to the Land: What Does It Take and Are You Ready?” He begins with the provocative statement, “It is said that Vancouver Island has only three days of supplies at any given time.” This stark reality requires Indigenous people on the island to consider what would happen if the flow of supplies were interrupted as a consequence of any disaster. Na’cha’uaht addresses the issue of crisis preparedness in the context of his father’s people, the Nuuchahnulth community of Ahousaht. By examining the potential for short- and long-term survival within his own context, he provides a framework for us to begin asking questions about the capacity for survival within our own communities.

In the age of increasing natural disasters due to climate change, it is quite practical to assume that any of our communities might be subjected to natural disasters, and aid may not come in a timely manner (or might not come at all). One need understand only

that New Orleans is still attempting to recover from Hurricane Katrina, which devastated the region in 2005. For example, in the United States, 2011 was an unprecedented year for natural disasters (such as drought, tornadoes, and flooding), causing fourteen different billion-dollar weather disasters that devastated region after region. On the global level, seven countries and one territory suffered the hottest temperatures on record in 2011. Indigenous communities may be particularly vulnerable to natural disasters and disruptions in services. During the 2010–2011 winter, Alaska experienced record snowfalls and northern villages were iced in, unable to receive needed fuel oil that would get them through the long, harsh winter (with temperatures hovering at -45°F). It was not until January that a Russian tanker was able to break through the Bering Sea ice and deliver 1.3 million gallons of oil to the town of Nome.

While all our ancestors were obviously self-sufficient and practitioners of sustainable ways of living—our occupation of the same land base over thousands of years without destroying it is proof of this—Na’cha’uaht points out that under colonial rule our capacity for self-sufficiency has been undermined and diminished, leaving us in tenuous and dependent positions today. He encourages us to take inventory of our current ability to meet our basic needs, especially shelter, water, food, and security, and recommends that we develop and hone our survival skills now, so that we do not have to learn by trial and error while in the midst of a crisis. Recognizing how deeply our lives have been altered through colonization, Na’cha’uaht calls on us to be flexible in our thinking about our futures and to reject a dogmatic adherence to “tradition,” which may not have the same relevance to our lives and may actually hinder our capacity to survive in certain situations. Still, he says, there are core values by which we must live if we are going to help ensure the long-term health and viability of Mother Earth. While not all Indigenous people may yet be prepared to take up this task, Na’cha’uaht reminds us that it is important that some of us do so right now.

In chapter 4 we move from discussions of crises and survival to a discussion of “Neurodecolonization:

Using Mindfulness Practices to Delete the Neural Networks of Colonialism.” Anti-colonial thinkers, writers, and activists have long understood the importance of decolonizing the mind, and Michael Yellow Bird’s latest research reveals that colonized people can successfully transform their neural networks in positive ways that will allow us “the personal resources, strengths, talents, and abilities we need to overcome the oppressions of colonialism.” In breaking down the latest neuroscience research and explaining his experience with mindfulness practice, he teaches us that we can improve our mental and physical well-being by shedding unconstructive negative thinking, feelings, and behaviors. We can then strengthen weak neural pathways and create new ones associated with positive attributes and behaviors.

Yellow Bird explains how the constant stresses of colonialism—the effects of which we experience in our daily lives—take an enormous toll on Indigenous health. But, he explains, we have the power to limit or reverse the negative effects of past trauma and harms through consistent mindfulness practice. This alone does not alter the colonial relationship we endure, but it strengthens our capacity to create additional positive change in all aspects of our lives, including challenging colonialism more forcefully and effectively. While many of us today may think mindfulness practice is something that comes from another culture, Yellow Bird reminds us that it is also an Indigenous practice, one that has been a part of both traditional and contemporary ceremonies among Indigenous Peoples. Thus, in engaging mindfulness practice, we are part of an ancient tradition practiced by our ancestors who benefited from such practices. He tells us, “Whether it is mainstream or traditional cultural mindfulness practices that we engage in, we will change the function and structure of our brains for

the better... It will increase our compassion, patience, creativity, emotional intelligence, and courage.” In this way we might achieve freedom from the hold that trauma has had on us while simultaneously attaining the highest levels of brain performance and well-being that we can.

In chapter 5, “Living in a Longer Now: Moving Beyond the State-Centric System,” Jeff Corntassel builds on the notion of Indigenous populations renewing our relationships to our territories, including our relationship of accountability. He roots his discussion in the Tsalagi teaching to “Live in a longer ‘now’—learn your history and culture and understand it is what you are now.” This philosophy, he says, urges us

**“No matter how briefly
colonization may have lasted,
all memory of freedom seems
distant; [s]he forgets what it
costs or else [s]he no longer
dares to pay the price for it....
Everything has been brought
into play to destroy [her]his
courage to die and face the
sight of blood.”**

**—Albert Memmi,
*The Colonizer and the Colonized***

“to remember our histories by strengthening and revitalizing our relationships.” Renewing our roles and responsibilities within our own communities, however, calls into question many of the ideas we have uncritically accepted under colonial rule.

Corntassel reveals the myths behind terms such as “sovereignty,” “nation,” “state,” and “globalization,” and teaches us to see beyond the rhetoric and institutions of colonizing society toward a responsibility-based relationship with our homelands. For example, in discussing the inappropriateness of Indigenous Peoples seeking something called “sovereignty” within a nation-state framework, Corntassel tells us that in denying our self-determination, states are actually exposing their inherent violence against Indigenous nations. He further states that “acts of state-building are also actions of Indigenous nation-destroying.” Because our self-determination cannot be granted by an outside entity or negotiated with a colonial state, he reminds us that self-determination is something that we must take for ourselves. He tells us, “this is about Indigenous Peoples re-asserting our responsibilities, not rights. Then we

can once again say that we are defenders of our homelands.” Furthermore, because “self-determination is asserted, not negotiated,” he recommends we cease trying to define self-determination through state-centered forums like the United Nations, and instead define it on our own terms and according to our renewed relationship with our homelands. Finally, Cornassel closes with the hopeful reminder: “Indigenous Peoples are persistent and resilient—we are nations that existed well before states were created and our nations will outlast them.”

Scott DeMuth begins chapter 6, “Colonization Is Always War,” by describing how any Indigenous challenges to state authority today, even peaceful challenges, are met with threats of police violence, arrests, and heavy surveillance. This serves as a useful reminder to Indigenous people who have come to believe that because we do not observe open repression on a daily basis, we have made progress in our relationships with our colonizers, or that colonization at its core is not still serving the same purpose it always has. DeMuth asserts that because colonization is inherently a war for territory and resources, “If colonization continues today, then it follows that war continues to be waged against Indigenous Peoples and territories.” In this context, it is imperative that Indigenous people develop a proper response to warfare, requiring the development of an organized resistance movement. Rather than viewing a potential resistance movement as an offensive action, however, DeMuth points out that decolonization is actually a self-defensive action against the war that is colonization.

DeMuth argues that once we have a foundational understanding of the colonial relationship and the need to engage in resistance efforts, we can then work on building a resistance movement. Drawing from the writings of British officer Frank Kitson on the basic tactics of counterinsurgency, DeMuth uses his analysis to walk us through three phases of resistance movements and how they are typically suppressed by the state. In understanding counterinsurgency efforts, we can learn more about effective insurgency tactics. Warning of the dangers of COINTELPRO (counter intelligence program) tactics used by the state, he encourages us to

develop counter measures, including the development of a strong security culture, and to employ successful methods of asymmetrical warfare. Furthermore, rather than bogging the resistance movement down with divisions over the use of violence or nonviolence, DeMuth encourages Indigenous resistance movements to embrace a diversity of tactics. Arguing a sense of urgency, DeMuth relates, “The longer we wait to stand and defend ourselves, the more we will lose.”

One possibility for building a culture of resistance within our communities is to train a new generation of Indigenous people committed to the cause of Indigenous liberation. Waziyatawin addresses this topic in chapter 7, “*Zuya Wicasta Naka Icahwicayapi* (Raising New Warriors).” Indigenous youth continue to be problematized in our society, but rather than seeing their struggles as a symptom of the colonial condition or a reflection of the sense of meaninglessness imbued in their lives, society often blames our youth, our families, and our communities for some kind of failure. It is true that we could do more to support our youth, but not in the sense that colonizer society might suggest. Rather than offering a different way of living and a commitment to indigeneity, we have been forced under threat of colonial violence to teach indigeneity as a sort of supplement to the teachings of settler society. Most of us, for example, turn over our children to the colonizers’ educational system for seven hours a day to be indoctrinated with values and teachings that are often in direct opposition or in contradiction to many Indigenous values and teachings. Under colonial rule, we have failed to offer them a meaningful alternative to acquiescing to settler society, and they have suffered as a consequence.

We currently risk jail time or the loss of custody of our children if we withhold them from the educational system, but there are other options for young people once they have either graduated or passed the age requirement for compulsory education. In chapter 7, Waziyatawin discusses the concept of a cultural immersion camp to train the next generations of warriors. These camps could be embraced within Indigenous communities at the present moment to undo the colonial teachings of settler society and re-ignite a

fierce commitment to defending Indigenous Peoples and homelands. She has outlined a plan for a two-year program for young adults, dedicated to decolonizing all the ways in which we are affected by colonial rule. The program would entail a critical assessment of these effects and conscious efforts to replace colonial ways with reclaimed Indigenous ways of being. Such warrior training, if supported by a community, would provide a communal living experience in which young adults could practice physical strengthening and discipline, self-sufficiency and sustainable living, and service to the People and homelands. If a group of new warriors were honored and celebrated by the broader community, it would set these young people on a new pathway to self-determination in this era of major changes. Waziyatawin reminds us, “Our youth will be the ones to lead this struggle and we need to prepare them the best that we can. If our Peoples are to survive, we must teach our young people to live the mantra, ‘For the People! For the Land!’”

Gregory Cajete, in chapter 8, also examines the education of our young people, but seeks to intervene and make changes at a much earlier stage in the educational process by offering a land-based educational alternative. In his chapter, “Decolonizing Indigenous Education in a Twenty-first Century World,” Cajete asks us to “critically analyze the effects modern education has had on our collective cultural, psychological, and ecological viability,” which inevitably leads us to the realization that the mainstream educational system has failed to serve our interests and honor our ways of being. Indeed, he argues that the system in the United States has failed all Americans as it has led to a crisis of identity and disconnection from the natural world: “Those who identify most with the ‘bottom line’ more often than not suffer from image without substance, technique without soul, and knowledge without context: the cumulative psychological results of which are usually unabridged alienation, loss of community, and a deep sense of incompleteness.”

Traditional Indigenous education, on the other hand, offers a powerful antidote to the current educational crisis because it emphasizes the interconnectedness and interdependence of all beings, both human

and nonhuman, and is therefore a profoundly environmental education. This is “education for life’s sake.” Cajete explains the stages of a traditional education, from the first recognition of spirit and orientation to place that occurs at birth, through the seventh stage of deep understanding, enlightenment, and wisdom. He then provides ten essential characteristics of Indigenous education that exemplify its transformational nature. While this life-affirming educational approach would also serve as a useful model for mainstream educational systems, Cajete says that ultimately it is most important that we revitalize our expressions of education for our future generations. “As we collectively ‘Look to the Mountain,’” he tells us, “we must truly think of that seventh generation of Indigenous children, for it is they who will judge whether we were as true to our responsibility to them as our relatives were for us seven generations before.”

In chapter 9 we shift gears as Michael Yellow Bird challenges us to think critically and make decisions about another institution with which Indigenous people are intimately acquainted—the military industrial complex that continues to serve imperial interests. His chapter, “A BROWN PAPER on the Iraq War,” is written in a report format with Indigenous interests at heart to “expressly solicit consultation from Indigenous, native, tribal, and aboriginal communities on a major public policy issue.” Arguing that under colonial rule our capacity and will to carefully deliberate over decisions regarding both war and peacemaking has been diminished or undermined, Yellow Bird encourages us to resume these inherent powers of self-governance. Citing data about the cost of the Iraq War in dollars, human lives, damage to infrastructure, relationships between Indigenous Peoples, and devastation to the land, he convincingly argues that this war does not serve Indigenous interests, yet few Indigenous nations have declared a position about whether they agree with the US-led invasion of Iraq. This silence, along with our people’s continued presence serving in the US military, means that our nations “are in de facto agreement with the Bush administration’s reasons for this war,” however trumped up or illegitimate these reasons may be.

To address the issue of the Iraq War and avoid being drawn into immoral or unjustified future wars of aggression by imperial forces, Yellow Bird discusses what actions we can take within our own communities. He provides step-by-step directions for initiating broad discussions within our communities and between nations to consciously develop an informed, thoughtful, and collective position on the Iraq War, as well as a political and moral code for evaluating all stages of future wars. This type of thoughtful deliberation of warfare was practiced by our ancestors, and it can be resumed by our Peoples today, but it will require a shift in our perceptions about our role in the world and our capacity for self-determination. Yellow Bird tells us, “Perhaps most important is that Indigenous governments regard themselves as legitimate political bodies within the international community who must participate in all affairs that concern the well-being of all nations on the planet.” He closes his chapter with suggestions for how all people within our communities—from tribal leaders to tribal youth—may participate and assist in this project.

Chapters 10 and 11 address the topic of our populations in custody. Given the reality that Indigenous people continue to be disproportionately represented in prisons and detention centers, we felt it important to speak to our incarcerated relatives, as well as the people who work with those who are incarcerated. Molly Wickham has developed programming in British Columbia designed to help young people understand their experience within the larger colonial context, while also encouraging a sense of empowerment rooted in their indigeneity. In chapter 10, “Initiating the Process of Youth Decolonization: Reclaiming Our Right to Know and Act on Our Experiences,” she begins by relaying her own personal experiences with what she calls “the intergenerational effects of residential schools, foster care, and displacement” and the development of her own

commitment to decolonization. Wickham rejects the pathologizing of Indigenous youth by governmental programs, which, she says, “focus on individualistic remedies that deny the greater context of colonization and imply that there is something inherently wrong with Indigenous youth.” In contrast to this approach, Wickham relates how Indigenous families and communities have been systematically torn apart (literally in many cases, as children were ripped away from their families) and explains the current social problems as a direct outcome of those genocidal governmental policies. Understanding the legacy of colonization is only one part of the process, however. As Wickham points out, “Once youth have been introduced to colonization, it is critical that they also be introduced to resistance efforts and decolonization.”

One counter to the devastating disconnection from family and community is the conscious rebuilding of Indigenous relationships. This is the first theme Wickham addressed in her pilot project developed and facilitated by a group of Indigenous adults

for youth in custody. Throughout the program they continued to collectively explore relationship building as it applies to the themes of land, spirituality, and family. To engage the youth on these topics, the team used a series of activities, including physical and visual activities, to facilitate openness, communication, and learning. Wickham provides activities in this chapter that youth workers may utilize or adapt for work in their own communities and institutions. Through these efforts, she has experienced a remarkable receptiveness among the youth, which bodes well for future efforts in this area: “By mentoring youth and building relationships, a positive sense of community will provide an alternative way of viewing their past experiences and help them imagine a different future.” This transformation is essential if we want to help prevent our young people from transitioning from the juvenile (in)justice system to the adult “correctional” system.

“Jails and prisons are designed to break human beings, to convert the population into specimens in a zoo—obedient to our keepers, but dangerous to each other.”

**—Angela Davis,
*The Black Scholar***

This is a particularly urgent issue in the United States context. The rapid expansion of the prison system in the last few decades of the twentieth century caused scholar and activist Angela Davis to dub the phenomenon the Prison Industrial Complex (PIC) in 1998: “Taking into account the structural similarities of business-government linkages in the realms of military production and public punishment, the expanding penal system can now be characterized as a ‘prison industrial complex.’” PIC refers to not only the rapid expansion and privatization of prisons, but also the exploitation of inmate labor and building prisons as a source of job creation. In 2002 the prison population passed the two million mark, which meant that one in every 142 citizens in the United States was imprisoned (with males and people of color bearing the disproportionate brunt of that reality). By 2008 the number reached 2.3 million with one in every 100 adults imprisoned. Today, the United States has the dubious record of the highest rate of incarceration in the world. This has severe implications for Indigenous populations.

Chapter 11, “Decolonization Lessons for Tribal Prisoners,” is written from the perspective of someone inside the prison walls. George Blue Bird has been incarcerated since 1983 and is currently in the Jameson Annex of the South Dakota State Penitentiary in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. As a lifer in a maximum security prison, Blue Bird lives within the confines of the most tangible manifestation of colonialism—the prison. Conscious of the way the prison has been used as a weapon by colonial powers to ensure our subjugation from the earliest periods of white invasion, Blue Bird understands the linkages between past generations of Dakota, Lakota, and Nakota people imprisoned in jail cells and concentration camps and our populations trying to survive in prisons today. Furthermore, he has wisdom to share based on his experience: “Anyone serving a life sentence without parole or anything over twenty years must live with the bitter realities that are everywhere in prison. Visits are far and few in between. Contact with the outside world fades in and out. We grow old and live without the crucial elements of our families and people. Time becomes a yearly test

of survival and hope.” Because his wisdom is born of experience that may help others survive imprisonment, his chapter in this volume is primarily offered as a message to other tribal prisoners. It is filled with suggestions about how to maintain sanity, integrity, humanity, and a spirit of resistance, all while doing time in an inhumane environment. Through his writings, we witness how he has learned to survive decades of confinement.

In his chapter, Blue Bird pays tribute to the life of “Nisko” Iron Moccasin, who he believes modeled a code to live by in prison. By explaining the way Nisko did time, Blue Bird illuminates the important details of day-to-day prison life that can make it tolerable, while also building a sense of unity among tribal prisoners. He then addresses issues that tribal prisoners frequently have to endure, such as administrative segregation (the “hole”), infiltration by informants, and the loss of spouses on the outside. But he also emphasizes ways to stay strong. For example, he focuses on the importance of practicing our spirituality, learning to find joy in small pleasures, and the necessity of maintaining discipline. Blue Bird also describes his commitment to activism, which is based on the understanding that our suffering as Indigenous Peoples is ongoing, and that tribal prisoners can work for the People while imprisoned, including working toward the improvement of their own prison conditions.

Finding ways to recover from debilitating circumstances, initiate healing, and restore well-being to our families and communities is an important decolonizing project. The value of these undertakings is illuminated in chapter 12, “Kua Tupu Te Pā Harakeke: Developing Healthy *Whānau* Relationships,” contributed by Māori women Leonie Pihama (researcher) and Ngaropi Diane Cameron (service provider). They contend that Indigenous people may draw from traditional knowledge as a means of healing contemporary issues, and they provide an example from their home territory of Aotearoa (the place referred to in colonial terms as New Zealand). Specifically, they focus on how to repair the damage done to relationships (family relationships, intimate relationships, and friendships) by returning to their traditional teachings. Beginning

with the story of Niwareka and Mataora, they illustrate how Indigenous ancestors have passed on knowledge to us about how we are to live with one another in a good way, and they demonstrate how often-overlooked teachings embedded in the story offer lessons that can be applied today. However, because many of our stories have been translated and interpreted by the colonizers (usually men who overlook and diminish the role of women in the stories), only through delving more deeply into this particular story were they able to reveal the power and importance of the female ancestor, Niwareka, who challenges and leaves her abusive partner to return to the support of her people.

Pihama and Cameron then describe how similar traditional teachings have been an essential component in service programs dedicated to decolonization, particularly programs from the organization headed by Cameron, Tū Tama Wahine O Taranaki, which addresses the issue of domestic violence. Many Indigenous academics were introduced to the concept of *Kaupapa Māori* (Māori philosophies, Māori approaches, and Māori ways of being) as a tool for research through Linda Tuhiwai Smith's book, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, and in this chapter we learn that Kaupapa Māori may also be applied to a wide range of community services, programs, and initiatives. Like Wickham (chapter 10), Cajete (chapter 8), and Yellow Bird (chapter 9), who argue that help for Indigenous people will not be found in the colonizers' institutions, Pihama and Cameron argue that transformation will not occur through programs of the colonial government "as they have no interest in our people affirming our language, our culture, and our cultural identity." Thus, they say, "the work remains with us as Indigenous Peoples globally to decolonize and reassert those cultural ways of being that will bring well-being to this and future generations." By incorporating language, values, stories, and other teachings into programming that services Indigenous communities, they initiate healing in a way that genuinely supports self-determination.

The final chapter in this volume, "Remaking Balance: Decolonizing Gender Relations in Indigenous Communities" (chapter 13), is contributed by

Nuu-chah-nulth intellectual and writer, Chaw-win-is (Ruth Ogilvie). In addressing issues of gender within contemporary Indigenous communities, Chaw-win-is begins by situating herself within her own community politics, stating, "This disclosure is important anytime an Indigenous woman acts politically or changes personally. Her 'credibility' is questioned and she may become a target for lateral or physical violence." Unfortunately, given the high rates of gender oppression within our communities, Indigenous women need to be conscious of the potential consequences for our political actions or decisions to step outside gender boundaries, traditional or not, in a way that few heterosexual men ever need to think about. Furthermore, if we do not step outside those prescribed roles or become politically active, we also fall prey to frequent expressions of patriarchal violence stemming from our experience under colonialism. It is precisely because our cultures have been detrimentally impacted by colonization that rigid teachings about gender roles, even traditional ones, are often difficult to reconcile with our present circumstances. Thus, Chaw-win-is emphasizes our need to *remake* gender balance as an act of decolonization, rather than viewing this process as a simple "recovering of" or "reviving of" traditional roles.

Chaw-win-is argues that "the task of decolonization under our current conditions may require that we de-gender our traditional roles as we re-make them." This requires a critical evaluation of what we perceive as traditional gender roles and an understanding of how they might be influenced by experiences with colonial institutions like boarding or residential schools. To engage such a critical assessment, she encourages open communication as well as a renewed emphasis on competency or capability over gender, especially in regards to leadership roles in the community. Furthermore, she demonstrates that we can conceptualize ways to defend and protect abused women and children while also strengthening the best of our institutions and capacity for self-determination. Chaw-win-is also recognizes the importance of practicality and common sense in the lives of our people, both past and present, reminding us that "our actions must make sense in our homelands." She encourages

us to ask fundamental questions about our traditions and practices so that we may consciously understand when we are clinging to ideas simply because someone told us to or because they fulfill an idea of unexamined tradition, or if we can identify the heart of a teaching and determine how best to practice it in today's context. Having embraced her own role as *witwaak* (warrior), she offers a useful model by which we can see how this seemingly gender-role defying responsibility was negotiated within her family and community.

All the chapters in this volume seek to illuminate some aspect of our struggle as colonized people and suggest ways we might effectively challenge, or at least mitigate, the worst effects of colonization. We have attempted to refrain from using a lot of academic jargon and have largely eliminated academic citations as a way to make the book more accessible to a wider audience. The exception is Michael Yellow Bird's "BROWN PAPER"

chapter, which required endnotes because of the large amount of data included in his analysis. We recognize that our efforts build on the efforts of generations of Indigenous people who came before us—people who resisted colonization on their watch, in their own way. We are attempting to carry on that five-hundred-year-old tradition in defense of our homelands and Peoples. We do not claim to provide universal solutions, nor do we think that every community suffers from identical problems. What we do know is that colonized populations tend to suffer similar effects of colonization and share common struggles. Thus, we encourage readers to utilize what makes sense in your particular context, and to adapt, improve, or throw out what does not make sense.

D. Ramping Up Resistance

In the first volume of the *Handbook, For Indigenous Eyes Only*, we wrote, "As Indigenous intellectuals concerned about the survival of our Peoples, we have included exercises and activities that we felt we could responsibly advocate as beginning decolonization strategies. We are not advocating the immediate taking up of arms or the organization of an Indigenous militia. Instead, we are advocating peaceful, intelligent, and courageous challenges to existing institutions of colonialism as well as questioning our own complicity

in those institutions." We also wrote, "But, make no mistake: Decolonization ultimately requires the overturning of the colonial structure. It is not about tweaking the existing structure to make it more Indigenous-friendly or a little less oppressive. The existing system is fundamentally and irreparably flawed."

For this second volume, at least some of us are now prepared to actively encourage ramping up our resistance and organizing a resistance movement. Not only do some of us

believe it is something we can responsibly advocate, we recognize that it would be irresponsible for us to recommend otherwise given the numerous crises our populations will face in the coming decades. If you are not yet willing to mobilize a serious resistance effort for your people, practice decolonization in whatever way you can. If you are willing, know you are not alone. Seek out those who are like-minded, and work to build your movement. But be careful. For example, in addition to being a colonial power, the United States is increasingly becoming a totalitarian police state. When President Obama signed the National Defense Authorization Act, he made it legal for the military to indefinitely detain without trial any US citizen perceived to be a terrorist or an accessory to

"The struggle for decolonization requires us to identify clearly our objectives and to critically question whether they are constrained by the parameters of thought set by colonialism, or whether they traverse those parameters and reflect our desires as free, Indigenous Peoples of the land. We can be free, but only if we first imagine, and then seek our freedom."

—Waziyatawin, *What Does Justice Look Like? The Struggle for Liberation in Dakota Homeland*

terrorism. Of course, anything that threatens the state or corporate capitalism will be construed as terrorism. Our people have a long history of being labeled as terrorists precisely because Indigenous interests directly challenge colonial authority. Today is no exception, but the state has greater capacity for surveillance and suppression of resistance than at any time in the past. Still, with so much at stake, it is essential that we find ways to resist, just as our ancestors did.

For more than five hundred years, Indigenous populations have experienced the ravages of imperial

powers as they annihilated our people and plundered our homelands. We observed the insanity, knowing it was suicidal to destroy the earth in that manner, and we knew that kind of pillaging could not continue indefinitely. Now, the failure of colonizer ways is written in every collapsing economy, every effect of climate change, and in every “peak” fossil fuel. Never before has the untenable nature of colonialism been so apparent here on Turtle Island. Colonial rule will come to an end. We need to prepare to take back our freedom.

Below is an excerpt from the song “Rain” by Savage Family. This particular song is a collaboration between Dakota, Nataysha, Derek, and Anthony. According to their biography, like all Savage Family lyrics, these lyrics “represent a voice of Indigenous revolution for social change in communities that are plagued by the social ills created through colonization and genocide.”

*Why's there so much love and yet so much pain / Let the rain wash it all away/
Ancestors call in the thunder hear them coming / Let the rain wash it all away/
Why's there so much love and yet so much pain / Let the rain wash it all away/
Ancestors call in the thunder hear them coming / Let the rain wash it all away//
What if we went back in the time living with our ancestors /
Hearing the stories of our people knowing everyone has blessed us /
Fam I'm restless, trying to find my life in this world so cold /
Searching for traditions that most boys and girls don't know /
Most never grew up with it, most never learned to live it /
But what were we supposed to do when the Cavalry came to burn the village /
Buried and burned, is anybody very concerned /
Ancestors sacrificed their lives for this we're meant to return /
Stronger than ever our connection won't be broken /
This the prophets foretold and by the unspoken for the hearts that've been stolen /
And hold in hostage by the pain, thinking it will never be the same /
Patiently waiting for the rain to wash it all away /
And I mean all away creator bring us right back /
To the traditions, back to the wisdom, we need to listen to the past /
In these times of turmoil how much longer will we survive /
How many more of our people will die in this genocidal lie (Native why) //*