Acadiensis
Journal of the History of the Atlantic Region
Revue d'histoire de la région Atlantique

ACADIENSIS

A Thought-Exercise in Decolonization
Reflections from a Mi'kmaw Historian Revisiting the Acadiensis Readers

Mercedes Peter

Volume 50, numéro 2, automne 2021

URI : https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1091262ar

Aller au sommaire du numéro

Éditeur(s)

Department of History at the University of New Brunswick

ISSN

0044-5851 (imprimé)
1712-7432 (numérique)

Découvrir la revue

Citer ce document

Peter, M. (2021). A Thought-Exercise in Decolonization: Reflections from a Mi'kmaw Historian Revisiting the Acadiensis Readers. *Acadiensis*, *50*(2), 115–135.

A Thought-Exercise in Decolonization: Reflections from a Mi'kmaw Historian Revisiting the *Acadiensis* Readers

THIS COMMENTARY IS ALMOST A YEAR-AND-A-HALF in the making. It began with an email inquiry about whether or not I would be interested in doing a Mi'kmaw historian's reading of a set of readers *Acadiensis* published in the early 1990s. I am currently training as a historian in an era where more scholars than ever are considering what it means to do scholarship that breaks down the oppressive structures that have shaped the academy for generations before us, and, at the same time, my lived experiences as a Mi'kmaw woman shape my work. So, in the original plan, I was going to write a commentary on what *The Atlantic Region to Confederation* and *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation* looked like through the eyes of a historian using a decolonizing lens.[1] Before I get into what I mean by decolonization in the context of scholarly writing, I think it is important to explain *why* this forum piece took over a year to produce because, in an almost serendipitous way, it was the extra time I spent thinking about this commentary that allowed it to morph into what it eventually became.

This is still, in part, a commentary on the *Acadiensis* readers I was initially asked to review, but more than that it is an attempt to make transparent the kinds of collaborative thought-work and action that must go into decolonizing scholarship in general and in the Atlantic Region specifically (Mi'kma'ki/Mi'gma'gi, Nitassinan, Nunatsiavut, Peskotomuhkati, and Wəlastəkwihkok). This is by no means a definitive or prescriptive discussion about how we could decolonize writing histories in and about this region, nor is it a piece that simply asks for more representation of Indigenous peoples in our field. Instead, in the little space I do have, I want to start a conversation by asking questions

1 Phillip A. Buckner and John G. Reid, *The Atlantic Region to Confederation: A History* (Toronto and Fredericton: University of Toronto Press and Acadiensis Press, 1994); E.R. Forbes and D.A. Muise, *The Atlantic Provinces in Confederation* (Toronto and Fredericton: University of Toronto Press and Acadiensis Press, 1993). The author wants to extend a special thanks and gratitude to Harvey Amani Whitfield, Natasha Simon, and Thomas Peace – *paqsitpi wela'lioq*.

Mercedes Peters, "A Thought-Exercise in Decolonization: Reflections from a Mi'kmaw Historian Revisiting the *Acadiensis* Readers," *Acadiensis* 50, no. 2 (Autumn/automne 2021): 115-135.

of those who do history – or any scholarship, for that matter – in and about the "Atlantic Region" however one might define it.[2] Decolonization, despite a prefix that denotes a closure of, or a moving away from, is a remarkably generative process that necessitates a collaborative effort of learning, unlearning, and thinking beyond the colonial boundaries our discipline has set for us. To demonstrate this, at least on a smaller scale, I have set up this forum piece as a kind of collaboration.

At the core of my commentary sits three conversations I had with three brilliant historians doing work on the Atlantic Region: Harvey Amani Whitfield, Natasha Simon, and Thomas Peace. Each conversation ended up centering around a key theme that got me thinking not as much about the original *Acadiensis* readers as I did about the possibilities inherent in a new generation of readers. What follows is an overview of how these conversations shaped my own thinking about how colonialism has impacted Atlantic Region historiographical projects, and what it would look like to embark on a re-writing of this region's history in a way that refuses the colonial boundaries that have shaped it.

The pandemic's impact

What the isolation that came with COVID-19 offered was a seemingly endless time to think, something that is not always beneficial to someone trying to fit their thoughts into a three-to-four-thousand-word piece. At the same time as we reckoned with the inequalities in our societies that the pandemic fed upon and made worse, this year also presented an inescapable barrage of colonial violence that made focusing and existing as an Indigenous woman in the academy exhausting beyond words. This experience is not isolated to 2020 and 2021, but there was something about the lack of interaction with our usual support networks that made it particularly grueling. When I began writing this back in October of 2020, I watched live from my home in Vancouver as RCMP officers, DFO officials, and settler fishers launched attacks on Mi'kmaw lobster fishers from Sipekne'katik First Nation for exercising treaty rights. I took

2 Atlantic Region scholars have spent time considering what it is we mean when we say "Atlantic Region." Jerry Bannister wrestles with "varying definitions of northeastern North America and the territory that eventually became Atlantic Canada" in a 2014 *Acadiensis* article – 43, no. 2 (Summer/Autumn): 3-30 – entitled "Atlantic Canada in an Atlantic World? Northeastern North America in the Long 18th Century." He explains that various definitions of the region, as well as the ways "historians have deployed them" have an "overlapping nature" (4). See also Ian McKay, "A Note of 'Region' in Writing the History of Atlantic Canada," *Acadiensis* 29, no. 2 (Spring 2000): 89-101.

off for home, hoping to be of some support on the ground; however, shortly after I arrived, Nova Scotia entered a second COVID lockdown and I instead spent my time east isolated and unable to summon the energy to write about decolonizing history work. It was hard to think about decolonization within academic scholarship when I had to process the helplessness I felt watching the immediate impacts of these ongoing, oppressive structures play out in my everyday life. I wrestled with this piece for months after my trip home and, the week I finally pulled together a final draft, coverage of and discussions about the uncovering of the graves of 215 First Nations children at the former site of the Kamloops Indian Residential School[3] and a vicious Islamophobic terrorist attack that took the lives of nearly an entire family in London, Ontario (Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, Lūnaapéewak, and Attawandaron territory) was almost all I could see on the news. How could I convey in a brief forum piece what would take volumes to word properly?

Even without the constant reminder of what settler colonialism is and does, I find articulating my thoughts about decolonization difficult on a good day. Scholars have been debating about what exactly decolonization is for decades, and as understandings about Canada as a settler state become more widespread in a post-Reconciliation era – in the years following the publication of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's final report in 2015[4] – academic audiences increasingly turn to Indigenous people inside and outside of the academy for guidance about what decolonization looks like in academic settings.[5] I am one Mi'kmaw scholar. I do not speak for other Mi'kmaq, I do

3 As more and more communities are continuing the search for lost loved ones, this number has risen significantly, and will likely be even higher when this piece goes to print.

4 In this case I am referring to the years following the release of the 2015 *Final Report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission*, with 94 Calls to Action. There has been an interesting rhetorical development in Canada surrounding the idea of "reconciliation" as an attempt to move forward from the historical harms that the Indian Residential School system caused, and continues to cause, Indigenous communities. See, for instance, Michelle Daigle, "The Spectacle of Reconciliation: On (the) Unsettling Responsibilities to Indigenous Peoples in the Academy," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 37, no. 4 (2019): 703–721; David Gaertner, *The Theatre of Regret: Literature, Art, and the Politics of Reconciliation in Canada*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2020); Hannah Wyile, "The Currency that is Reconciliation Discourse in Canada: Contesting Neoliberal Reconciliation," *Studies in Canadian Literature* 43, no. 2 (2018): 121–43; Mercedes Peters, "History Not Enough: A Look at the Climate of Reconciliation in Canada Today," *Acadiensis Blog*, 23 January, 2017.

5 Whether or not decolonizing the academy as an inherently colonial institution is even possible remains a debate among scholars of decolonial thought. The core of this debate is best described with the question Audre Lorde poses – and to which she answers a resounding "No" – in *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Trumansburg, NY: Crossing Press, 1984): "Can the Master's Tools Dismantle the Master's House?" 110–14.

not speak for other Indigenous people, and I do not speak for any other person who intimately experiences the lived realities of colonial oppression. But what I can say is that it is imperative to remember that decolonization is more than just academic theory and practice.[6] It is more than a descriptor for a post-Second World War breakdown of a European colonial hold on Africa and Asia. It is more than a lens through which to read a set of foundational texts in a field of study. What I want readers to understand as they interact with this forum piece is that colonization impacted and continues to impact every single person living in the Atlantic Region – including the lives of white settlers – in material ways. It impacts me in my work as a historian, and as I mentioned before, my thinking behind this piece comes from lived experience.

When I sat down to write the original version of this commentary, I froze. Decolonization as a liberatory theory and a structure requires reciprocal and multi-nodal conversations and actions that cross communities both within and outside of the academy.[7] As I considered what it would mean to look at the *Acadiensis* readers from the point of view of a scholar attempting to do anti-colonial or decolonial work, I felt strongly that I could not capture enough of what decolonizing practice looked like by writing on my own. When we talk about decolonization, we cannot just talk about Indigenous experiences in

---

For example, in *Indigenous Methodologies: Characteristics, Conversations, and Context*s (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), Margaret Kovach argues that "the infusion of Indigenous knowledge systems and research frameworks [into academic spaces] informed by the distinctiveness of cultural epistemologies transforms homogeneity [and] provides another environment where Indigenous knowledges can live, but changes the nature of the academy itself" (12). Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang express concerns about the use of Indigenous knowledges in the academy, and how "the language of decolonization has been superficially adopted into education and other social sciences" (2). They argue that the adoption of decolonization language without active acknowledgement of Indigenous sovereignties and active destruction of white supremacy presents decolonization as a "metaphor"; see Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012): 1-40.

6 See, for example, Tuck and Yang, "Decolonization is not a Metaphor."

7 For some great resources, see Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous People*s (London: Zed Books, 1999); Sarah Hunt, "Ontologies of Indigeneity: The Politics of Embodying a Concept," *Cultural Geographies* 21, no. 1 (2013): 27-32; Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "R-Words: Refusing Research," in *Humanizing Research: Decolonizing Qualitative Inquiry with Youth and Communities*, ed. D. Paris and M.T. Winn (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications, 2014); Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, *As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance* (Minneapolis: Minnesota University Press, 2017); Scott Lauria Morgensen, *Spaces Between Us: Queer Settler Colonialism and Indigenous Decolonization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press: 2011); Tiffany Lethabo King, Jenell Navarro, and Andrea Smith, *Otherwise Worlds: Against Settler Colonialism and Anti-Blackness*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2020).

North America because settler colonialism required more than just Indigenous erasure to function. Patrick Wolfe's foundational work presents settler colonialism as an ongoing structure rooted in white supremacy that requires both the elimination of Indigenous peoples and the racialization, enslavement, and labour of Black people to ensure continued settler control of territory and the overall stability of settler states.[8] The structure Wolfe identifies is visible now in the treatment of Black Canadians, of Indigenous nations, and refugees who come to these lands after colonial violence displaces them from their home territories. If settler colonialism is a project that requires the continuous oppression of multiple groups in unique ways that are all designed to uphold white supremacy, then decolonization must involve collaboration between multiple groups to end settler colonialism.[9] With this in mind, I decided to structure this piece around conversations I had with other historians. I wanted to get across to readers a sense that decolonization is a group effort in a very short amount of space.

Initially, my plan was to simply interview a scholar from the generation who worked on the original readers, talk to them about how they saw the field shift into a direction that challenged colonial convention in history, and to have a conversation about how I viewed the field as a Mi'kmaw scholar after I had done an in-depth exploration of the readers. Due to availability, pandemic exhaustion, and time constraints, however, what was meant to be a

8 Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (2006): 387–409.

9 Until very recently – and this is still a growing conversation – discussions about settler colonialism in Indigenous studies reinforced a binary between "Indigenous" and "Settler" that overlooked and sometimes actively excluded the ways in which the enslavement and racialization of Black people was also a crucial pillar of white supremacist settler colonialism. Justin Leroy has argued that in both Indigenous and Black studies, until recently, the treatment of Indigenous land dispossession and African slavery/Black racialization as mutually exclusive have limited opportunities for solidarity. He argues that this separation exists as "a form of colonial unknowing" and that "the refusal to see the full scope of slavery and settlement's interconnected history abets a colonial ontology"; see Justin Leroy, "Black History in Occupied Territory: On the Entanglements of Slavery and Settler Colonialism" *Theory and Event* 19, no. 4 (2016). Iyko Day has also recently contributed a crucial point in *Alien Capital: Asian Racialization and the Logic of Settler Capitalism* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), arguing that another overlooked part of settler colonial structure is how it defined Asian people as an "alien" labour force to uphold white supremacist capitalist control, dehumanizing them, while simultaneously denying Asian people full participation in settler states through viciously racist exclusionary immigration policies. The point here is that decolonization must be able to address the complex, intersecting threads that settler colonialism has planted; this cannot be done alone. Part of settler colonialism's project is to build barriers to solidarity – understanding how these structures do this, and breaking down those barriers, is key to decolonization.

printed one-on-one interview, became a loosely organized reflection on three, extremely fruitful, Zoom conversations with three historians I admire: Harvey Amani Whitfield, Natasha Simon, and Thomas Peace. While none of these historians are of this previous generation, they were all influenced – whether directly or through the legacies that generation left in the structure of Atlantic scholarship – by the group of scholars that contributed to the *Acadiensis* readers. The circumstances that had made it difficult to bring this piece to life in the first place gave me the opportunity to co-conceptualize questions that get us thinking about decolonizing Atlantic Region history. I got to participate in the exact kinds of discussions I hope I can spark with this piece. I am leaning into the chaos of the last year-and-a-half by acknowledging that this is by no means a formal essay, but because decolonization is and will continue to be no doubt a messy process and there is no harm in demonstrating what that could look like in writing.

The *Acadiensis* readers' original project

In order to frame my reading of the *Acadiensis* set, I think it is important to establish what the editors and authors of the volumes themselves wanted to do. By the early 1990s, in the 30-odd years since W.S. MacNutt had penned the first comprehensive history of the Atlantic Region[10] – a work that inspired a renewed interest in the histories of the Atlantic provinces – scholars continued to struggle to convince those outside the region that this was a place that mattered – that Atlantic Canadians, their political and economic concerns, and their rich histories, mattered. Seeking to pose a reminder to Canadian historians that Canadian history did not stop at the colonial Quebec-New Brunswick-Labrador borders, a group of Atlantic Region historians compiled a series of essays that introduced an innovative approach to this region's history by working to include, among other themes, more on the everyday lives of Atlantic Canadians. The books organized a series of significant moments to both the region, and to Canada, into a chronologically and thematically organized duology that demonstrated, contrary to a widespread belief that Atlantic Canada was simply not important enough to consider in the Canadian historical narrative, that the region boasted a robust history that remained important to the overall story of the nation itself. With one volume covering pre-Confederation history, and the other, significantly longer, dedicated to

10 W.S. MacNutt, *The Atlantic Provinces: The Emergence of Colonial Society, 1712–1857* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1965).

the region post-Confederation, the readers were designed to synthesize some of the region's diverse, historical threads – threads linked to more than just the dealings of powerful men. Importantly, the readers brought class, gender, and what the books often refer to as "ethnicity" into conversation with one another at a time where studies of "ordinary people" were desperately needed. These readers affirmed and reinvigorated a historical tradition in the area that worked to embrace diversity and complexity and acknowledged the richness that these interlocking stories added to Canadian history overall.

I view starting discussions about decolonizing Atlantic Region history as part of the same mission on which the editors and authors of the original texts embarked. The *Acadiensis* readers were designed to encourage others to see Atlantic Region history in a significant and new light. Instead of 30 years on from MacNutt, I write 30 years on from the readers themselves; and when I was asked to contribute to this anniversary issue it became clear to me that we are entering another period of re-evaluation when it comes to our understandings of what Atlantic Region history is, *whose* history it is, and to whom it should matter. The texts themselves developed through months of discussions between scholars about what to include in the books, how to frame overarching arguments, and what topics were important to cover.[11] Their ideas shaped how the books turned out, and their goal was to start important conversations amongst historians. In a similar way, this small sampling of my own thoughts, and the presentation of pieces of the conversations I was privileged to have with my colleagues, is designed to encourage the same kind of robust discussion.

What is decolonization?

In order to set a baseline for how I understand decolonization, I will start with a simple premise: colonization is not over in Canada or in the United States. It never ended. As I worked my way through the *Acadiensis* readers, I noticed that historians had – and I would argue continue to have – marked a clear beginning and end to the colonial period. In the timeline the readers establish, by 1867, when the Maritime colonies join Confederation as provinces, the colonial era is effectively over[12] and the struggles of Atlantic Canadians for

11 Buckner and Reid, *Atlantic Region to Confederation*, ix-x; Forbes and Muise, *Atlantic Provinces in Confederation*, x.

12 It is important to note that the readers do not argue that Confederation marks an end to the oppression of Black and Indigenous groups in the region.

recognition from other Canadians begins.[13] Practitioners of decolonial and anti-colonial scholarship challenge timelines like this. Instead of the establishment of a nation-state marking a new direction for its citizens and ending colonial occupation, the very existence of these states is a symptom of ongoing colonial oppression. Marking an end to a colonial era necessarily implies a post-colonial period, and talking about post-colonialism is where I feel that historians close off the potential for true decolonial study – at least in settler colonial spaces.[14] Until recently, decolonization in history was most commonly temporally linked to the decades following the Second World War and the development of Third World liberation movements. Decolonization

13 Phillip A. Buckner, "The 1860s: An End and a Beginning," in Buckner and Reid, *Atlantic Region to Confederation*, 360–86.

14 Editors' Note: Much can be said here about the interrelation, and also differences, between anti-colonial, post-colonial, and decolonial and decolonizing movements, theories, and histories. Part of our editorial commitment to writing the history of this place (Mi'kma'ki/Mi'gma'gi, Nitassinan, Nunasiavut, Peskotomuhkati, and Wəlastəkwihkok) necessitates acknowledging that decolonization has not yet happened in the US and Canadian white settler colonial states. This creates a different historical and theoretical context within which to discuss Indigenous decolonization in settler states, even though there may also be very good reasons to draw on anti-colonial and post-colonial theories and writings from outside of these contexts. Postcolonial theory, as associated with writers such as Edward Said and his now classic text *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage Books, 1978) and writers of the Subaltern Studies school such as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, primarily refers to literary and cultural theory that addresses the "post" colonial experiences of former European colonies; see, for example, Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" in *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg and Cary Nelson (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1988). Anti-colonial theory, typically centred on Black Caribbean, African and African diasporic, Asian, and particularly Southeast Asian liberation movements – from writers and theorists such as Aimé Césaire, Franz Fanon, and Reynaldo C. Ileto – offer perspectives on colonialism that suggest that those liberated from empires through resistance still must resist colonialism's discourses, subjectivity, and political struggle. These theorists located their critique of European colonialism in the resistance movements of the formerly enslaved, including the Haitian Revolution, as well as the armed resistance of modern anti-colonial movements, such as the Algerian Revolution. Decolonial theory, primarily located in the work of Latin American and Caribbean philosophers such as Aníbal Quijano, Walter Mignolo, Maria Lugones, and Sylvia Wynter, challenged the "colonial matrix of power," or coloniality, to critique the legacies of European empires. Decolonial theorists use the concept of "coloniality" to argue that imperial structures change (from Europe to the US, for example) and yet still continue to implement social and political hierarchies through racialization, political economic dominance, and military occupation. Decolonizing theory, which positions decolonial resistance within the continued colonial occupation within settler states, owes a lot to Indigenous and Black feminist theories, methodologies, and praxis. Māori, Ngāti Awa, and Ngāti Porou iwi scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith's influential 2016 text *Decolonizing Methodologies*, for example, brought the decades-long work of Indigenous feminists globally to the forefront of many fields of research, and centres Indigenous knowledge formation in research and theory. As editors, we are very grateful to Mercedes Peters for bringing these wider discussions of colonial histories and decolonizing resistance to our readers.

is often presented in this context as a descriptor for an era, the end of which was marked by the development of multiple new, independent nation-states.[15] It is important to note that studying Third World decolonization requires a different lens than considering what it means to decolonize in a settler state. What makes discussing decolonization in settler states like Canada and the United States difficult is that in our case the colonizer never left, and the achievement of an independent nation-state is either not considered possible due to the power of settler states compared to the populations they colonized, or, in the case of many groups of people fighting settler colonialism, desirable at all.[16] In this context, historians of settler colonialism, and of Black and Indigenous experiences in settler states, have pushed to expand our understanding of what is decolonization. This is the school of thought I come from, and in the vein of that scholarship, at the foundation of this forum piece, I am arguing that decolonization is not an era, or even a theory on its own, but an ongoing process designed to render visible and then dismantle the structures of white supremacist settler colonialism.[17] One way historians can begin this process is by interrogating how we research, write, and present historical narratives. In other words, historians need to consider how our research practices, the way we choose to frame time and space, and even the languages in which we convey information all contribute to settler colonial power structures.

Decolonization, both as academic theory and lived praxis, is a generative practice. In naming and dismantling the colonial systems that shape our thought and being, decolonization makes space for groups of people and stories that have been occluded within the structures that have informed much academic historical practice since the beginning of history as a discipline. It

15 See Farina Mir, "Introduction," *American Historical Review* 120, no. 3 (June 2015): 844. Dane Kennedy explains that "what we normally characterize as decolonization was the collapse of colonial empires and the creation of new nation-states across what came to be known in the decades following World War II as the Third World" (5). Kennedy challenges the idea that decolonization could be confined to this period, and lists two earlier "waves" of decolonization. His presentation remains tightly linked to the creation of nation-states; see Kennedy, *Decolonization: A Very Short Introduction* (London: Oxford University Press, 2016) as well as Frederick Cooper, *Decolonization and African Society: The Labor Question in French and British Africa* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 20.

16 See Glen Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); Simpson, *As We Have Always Done*; George Manuel and Michael Posluns, *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2018).

17 Wolfe's characterization of settler colonialism as a "structure," rather than an "event," rings true here; see Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native."

opens more doors. This is not a project we can undertake as individuals, and that is part of the reason why I leaned into interviewing other scholars as I thought about this piece. We cannot decolonize our research, scholarship, or even learning on our own, especially when we consider the kinds of intersecting privileges our positions as academics offer us in a colonial world. Because we cannot always see the places where our work perpetuates colonial harm, we must always be listening to and learning from one another in ways that acknowledge how we each embody intersections of power and oppression.

The following summaries of the conversations I had with Amani, Natasha, and Tom are small-scale examples of one of the ways we can move toward decolonizing Atlantic Region history as we reflect on where the field has been. For the sake of a clearly defined methodology, I began each conversation by describing my work with the *Acadiensis* readers to my colleagues and highlighting some of my own observations about the themes I had picked up in my reading. From that point on the conversations were open-ended, and out of each developed a unique theme that helped me consider how we might frame a new set of *Acadiensis* readers. The themes centered around language and formatting, space and time, and the significance of lived experience in shaping historical scholarship. These themes are by no means an exhaustive list of "how-tos" related to decolonizing history in the Atlantic Region. I also do not cover the conversations I had with each historian in any great depth; that would require more space than I have been given here. The summaries of what we discussed are also solely my own interpretation of our conversations, which means that, in the end, all unintentional misrepresentations or ideological framings come from me alone. They are not responsible for my words. This piece is simply an attempt to plant seeds to encourage conversations among readers by highlighting some of my thoughts and the conversations I have had over the course of the last year. I hope as readers you can get something from them.

Theme #1: Language and format (Tom)

I caught up with Tom Peace via Zoom on a Sunday morning in April of 2021. After some catching up, our conversation turned to how Tom has envisioned his role as a settler scholar studying histories of relationships between Indigenous nations and settler groups. For the last few years, Tom has

demonstrated an admirable dedication to public history,[18] and to imagining the role digital platforms can play in making history accessible to more people.[19] He has also produced and engaged with French scholarship.[20] Knowing this, I brought our conversation around to the physical formatting of the *Acadiensis* readers and what that meant in terms of their overall accessibility. If we were to write another set of readers in 2021, Peace then asked me, what would they look like if the main project was decolonizing Atlantic Region history? My thoughts immediately went to language. The *Acadiensis* readers were entirely in English, and for many English-speakers this really does not mean much. The very language we use to convey a concept to an audience, however, has an immense amount of influence on how that concept can be interpreted, especially when that language is linked to colonial violence.

Language is a theme that comes up a lot when people talk about decolonization, especially considering that the destruction of Indigenous languages was and is a key pillar of colonial oppression.[21] Indigenous peoples across North America have had to fight against the extinction of languages that hold within their syntax the very structures that protect and inform Indigenous conceptions of history and overall worldviews.[22] In Canada, the barrage of assimilation policies designed to demand Indigenous peoples speak English or French, and the continued reinforcement of these policies with the recognition of only English and French as official federal and provincial languages, has reinforced Indigenous language loss. At the most basic level, any attempt to create a new set of "decolonized" readers in this region would require multiple

18 Tom is one of the editors of *Active History*, a blog website designed to make historical research and historians' engagement with contemporary events accessible to public audiences; see http://activehistory.ca/about/.

19 See Thomas Peace and Gillian Allen, "Rethinking Access to the Past: History and Archives in the Digital Age," *Acadiensis* 49, no. 2 (Autumn 2019): 217–29.

20 See Thomas Peace, with Jonathan Lainey, "Louis Vincent Sawantanan : premier bachelier autochtone canadien," in *Vivre la Conquête: Des parcours individuels*, ed. Gaston Deschênes et Denis Vaugeois (Sillery, QC: Septentrion, 2013).

21 Lorena Sekwan Fontaine, "Redress for Linguicide: Residential Schools and Assimilation in Canada," *British Jounral of Canadian Studies* 30, no. 2 (2017): 27–41; Jane Griffith, "Of Linguicide and Resistance: Children and English Instruction in Nineteenth-Century Indian Boarding Schools in Canada," *Paedagogica Historica* 53, no. 6 (March 2017): 763–82; Grace A. Gomashie, "Kanien'keha/Mohawk Indigenous Language Revitalisation Efforts in Canada," *McGill Journal of Education* 54, no. 1 (Winter 2019): 151–71.

22 Trudy Sable and Bernie Francis, *The Language of this Land, Mi'kma'ki* (Sydney: Cape Breton University Press, 2012); Lindsay Keegitah Borrows, *Otter's Journey through Indigenous Language and Law* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2018).

languages, including, but not limited to, Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqiyik, and Innu dialects.[23]

The comments that come up the most when we consider what publishing in a language other than English or French in Canada is concern about how articles in these other languages are no longer accessible to broader audiences. How are historians supposed to learn about the past if they cannot read the newest articles in production? The challenge decolonial thought would pose to this question is to ask English-speaking, and perhaps French-speaking, scholars in the Atlantic Region to consider what meaning is lost when Indigenous languages and conceptions of history are translated for anglophone or francophone audiences. Who does this loss of meaning disproportionately impact? What would it mean to Mi'kmaw, Wolastoqiyik, Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, Inuit, or Innu students to see articles available in their own languages in a respected journal without an attempt to make them legible to English- or French-speaking audiences? What would it mean to elders? What impact could it have on the revitalization of Indigenous languages in the region? What challenges would this pose to historians who take the dominance of English in Atlantic Region publications for granted?

Tom and I also considered the potential of multimedia resources and what a collaborative work of Atlantic Region history could look like in a digital format. Considering the access we now have to diverse forms of digital media, it would not be too much of a stretch to imagine a digital *Acadiensis* reader that made room for diverse forms of media and opportunities to connect with history in new ways. As Tom and I brainstormed what a new digital reader could look like, I immediately thought of Tla'amin Elder Elsie Paul's *As I Remember It,* the first digital book published through Ravenspace by UBC Press.[24] Based on the book *Written As I Remember It,* which Paul wrote with the help of historian Paige Raibmon, and Paul's niece Harmony Johnson,[25] the team of authors

23 There is precedent for scholarship written entirely in Indigenous languages. Mi'kmaw policy analyst, historian, and environmental studies scholar Fred Metallic was the first person to write a PhD dissertation in Canada in an Indigenous language without translation. He defended his thesis in the Mi'kmaw community of Listuguj, and received his PhD in Environmental Studies from York University in 2011; see https://ammsa.com/publications/windspeaker/students-excited-about-new-rule as well as https://this.org/2009/05/12/mikmaq-phd-thesis/.

24 Elsie Paul, Davis McKenzie, Harmony Johnson, and Paige Raibmon, *As I Remember It* (Vancouver: Ravenspace – UBC Press, 2019), http://publications.ravenspacepublishing.org/as-i-remember-it/index.

25 Elsie Paul, Paige Raibmon and Harmony Johnson, *Written as I Remember It: Teachings from the Life of a Sliammon Elder* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2015).

viewed the digital version as an opportunity to combine written histories – in both English and Tla'amin languages – with Paul's oral accounts of her life into a format that rejected the linear construction of a book and more closely resembled Tla'amin storytelling structures. *As I Remember It* also introduces a set of ethics that requires visitors to the website to consider who they are responsible to as they engage with the history on a website that is considered Tla'amin territory; this is an act that opens up a library of new possibilities for engaging with digital spaces and knowledge in general. Paul's "book" demonstrates is that there is precedent for considering radically different ways of presenting historical knowledge available to us already. If we were to revisit the *Acadiensis* readers, we could have important conversations about how format could portray the region's histories in new ways. In the end, I felt that the conversation I had with Tom reaffirmed that decolonization as a scholarly practice is not just about what we write about. Colonialism has shaped the very way we as historians convey information to others.

Theme #2: Time and space (Amani)

What remains the most striking part about the *Acadiensis* readers, to me, is the way they are structured temporally. The division of Canadian history into pre- and post-Confederation eras, is, for many, almost second nature. This is a timeline that has structured nearly every university textbook and Canadian history course I have ever taken; Confederation's influence on how Canadians conceptualize time cannot be understated. In the case of the project the authors of *Acadiensis* readers undertook, the pre- and post-Confederation divide makes a great deal of sense: to many Canadians in the Maritimes, and later Atlantic Canada, Confederation changed everything, and became a defining moment for generations to come. Through my eyes as a Mi'kmaw historian, however, the pre- and post-Confederation timeline is not the most inclusive means of conceptualizing Atlantic Region history. In fact, I would argue that this framing obstructs many important parts of this history and, in some cases, actually overstates Confederation's impact on different groups of people in the region. Martha Walls argues as much in a 2017 *Acadiensis* article entitled "Confederation and Maritime First Nations." She explains that "the lived experiences of First Nations people suggest that the dividing line between pre- and post-Confederation that has been sketched by scholars was largely

irrelevant to their daily lives."[26] Walls demonstrates that while Confederation could have changed a great deal for settler Canadians in the region in a short amount of time, life for Mi'kmaq and Wolastoqiyik struggling to survive through an ongoing colonial occupation did not change much; through First Nations' people's eyes, Confederation loses its significance.

Using Confederation as a centre point in Atlantic Region history, I feel, also perhaps unintentionally establishes a binding geography on historians of the region, one that ends up ignoring, or downplaying, how the Atlantic Provinces continued their relationship to the United States, undervaluing Newfoundland until 1949,[27] and completely hindering any ability to consider Indigenous geographies after 1867. This is a framing, I would argue, that further informs a specifically Canadian characterization of history that contributes to myths about Canada's role as a "kinder" colonial power while also creating a resilient amnesia surrounding the treatment of Indigenous peoples in this country as well as Canada's pre-Confederation history of active participation in African and Indigenous slavery and the ways in which that system's legacy continues to shape Canadian society today.[28]

I reached out to Amani Whitfield primarily because I admire the work he has done on Black migration, linking the colonies that would become Atlantic Canada to an international African diaspora in the 18th and 19th centuries as well as his studies on the active role enslaved Black people played in ending slavery in the Maritime colonies. As I mentioned earlier, colonization in northern North America, which eventually became Canada, did not and does not only affect Indigenous peoples. While I could think about challenging the timeline from an Indigenous perspective, I also wanted to consider how the framing of Confederation as *the* key moment in an Atlantic Canadian historiography impacted the lives of the descendants of

26 Martha Walls, "Confederation and Maritime First Nations," *Acadiensis* 46, no. 2 (Summer/Autumn 2017): 156.

27 Forbes and Muise, *Atlantic Provinces in Confederation*, x, xii, 13–47, 349–516.

28 See, for example: Harvey Amani Whitfield and Barry Cahill, "Slave Life and Slave Law in Colonial Prince Edward Island, 1769–1825," *Acadiensis* 38, no. 2 (Summer 2009): 29–51; Barry Cahill, "The Black Loyalist Myth in Atlantic Canada," *Acadiensis* 29, no. 1 (Autumn 1999): 76–87; Brett Rushforth, *Bonds of Alliance: Indigenous and Atlantic Slaveries in New France* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2012); D.G. Bell, *Slavery and Slave Law in the Maritimes* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2017); Ken Donovan, "Slavery and Freedom in Atlantic Canada's African Diaspora: Introduction," *Acadiensis* 43, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2014): 109–15; Catherine M.A. Cottreau-Robins, "Searching for the Enslaved in Nova Scotia's Loyalist Landscape," *Acadiensis* 43, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2014): 125–36; Ken Donovan, "Female Slaves as Sexual Victims in Île Royale," *Acadiensis* 43, no. 1 (Winter/Spring 2014): 147–56.

Black Loyalists, enslaved Black people, Black refugees from the War of 1812, and later arriving migrants from the United States and the Caribbean. What Amani has demonstrated, along with many other brilliant Black historians like Afua Cooper,[29] is that despite Maritime slavery having ended for the most part before Confederation, the structures it left in its wake[30] gave way to a legacy of "virulent"[31] racism that continues to shape Black lives in the Atlantic Region. Pre-Confederation slavery must be considered within the fabric of a post-Confederation Canada. We also cannot ignore geographic framings that manufacture an artificial cognitive boundary between the United States and Canada that absolves Canada of its participation in networks of slavery and the benefits Canadians have experienced because of slavery's legacy.

I spoke with Amani at length about how we could conceptualize time and space differently in the Atlantic Region. As we brainstormed about what it would mean to step away from an intense focus on Confederation as a defining moment altogether and what that might mean for histories of the region – especially if that meant we could better recognize the experiences of Black and Indigenous peoples – Amani pushed me further: he posited that we can certainly recognize that Confederation may not have been significant for certain groups, but we also cannot ignore the material impact it had and has on many lives in the region – including those of Black and Indigenous peoples. We would need to include that reality if we were to embark on creating a second "new synthesis" of Atlantic Region history.

---

29 See Afua Cooper, *The Hanging of Angelique: The Untold Story of Canadian Slavery and the Burning of Old Montreal* (Toronto: HarperCollins, 2006) and Cooper, "Acts of Resistance: Black Men and Women Engage Slavery in Upper Canada, 1793-1803," *Ontario History* 99, no. 1 (Spring 2007): 5-17.

30 English and Black Studies scholar Christina Sharpe has developed the concept of "wake work" – meaning that the legacies of slavery, and its "denial of Black humanity," is "constitutive of the contemporary conditions" of Black life and enforced "non-being" in settler states. She writes: "In the wake, the semiotics of the slave ship continue: from the forced movements of the enslaved to the forced movements of the migrant and the refugee, to the regulation of Black people in North American streets and neighbourhoods, to those ongoing crossings of and drownings in the Mediterranean Sea, to the brutal colonial reimaginings of the slave ship and the ark, to the reappearances of the slave ship in everyday life in the form of the prison, the camp, and the school. . . . We must think through containment, regulation, punishment, capture, and captivity and the ways the manifold representations of blackness become the symbol, par excellence, for the less-than-human being condemned to death"; see Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness and Being* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2016), 21.

31 Harvey Amani Whitfield, "The Struggle over Slavery in the Maritime Colonies," *Acadiensis* 41, no. 2 (Summer/Autumn 2012): 21.

We continued to chat then, about what it would mean to acknowledge multiple temporalities at play simultaneously in the Atlantic Region.[32] While I am definitely not yet at a spot where I can imagine a set of readers that could capture all of these timelines without sacrificing the overarching narrative the original readers constructed – though maybe the point of decolonizing Atlantic Region history in the first place is to explore different narrative structures[33] – I remain convinced that the pre- and post-Confederation framing cannot be the only means of considering history in this region. Confederation erases the continued existence of Indigenous groups living in their unceded territories. It potentially erases a very important thread between pre-Confederation Maritime slavery and the legacies it carries into the present. It even makes it difficult to consider the role Newfoundland plays in the decades immediately following 1867 when we consider the geographic boundaries that Confederation established, both physical and imagined. A decolonial approach to history demands that we question the legitimacy of settler states like Canada and the US, or at least cease taking their existence for granted; this includes questioning the timelines national histories establish. The pre- and post-Confederation framing of the original readers served an important purpose, and I do not believe that we lose that if we were to step away from this original timeline. It is clear to me that dedicating an entire volume of the *Acadiensis* readers to post-Confederation Atlantic Region history was beneficial at the time of its publication, especially because the Atlantic Provinces were, and are still, to a great degree, marginalized in post-Confederation Canadian historiography.[34] But what would it mean to experiment with our timelines a little? What would it mean to ask questions about who benefits from structuring Atlantic Region history around Confederation? What more could we explore if we chose a different significant event or events on which to rest our analyses?

---

32 Scholars have recently been wrestling with the impacts of colonialism on perception of time. For some examples, see Mark Rifkin, *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2017) and C. Riley Snorton, *Black on Both Sides: A Racial History of Trans Identity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

33 See Gregory Younging, *Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing By and About Indigenous Peoples* (Edmonton: Brush Education, 2018).

34 As Forbes and Muise argue in the preface to their reader, *Atlantic Provinces in Confederation*, "the field was late in developing, remaining for most of the century outside the research interests of Canadian historians" (xi).

Theme #3: Honouring lived experience (Natasha)

While decolonization is not about asking for representation within a pre-existing colonial academic structure, the practice does ask us to think about how colonization has rendered certain groups invisible in the ways in which we talk about history today. One of the most common reasons I have seen cited for the poor representation of Indigenous, Black, and other marginalized groups in Atlantic Region history is a lack of useable evidence. The readers themselves certainly address this in reference to Indigenous nations in the area pre-contact,[35] but this does not justify how it is that, as the years pass, the appearances Mi'kmaq, Wolastoqiyik, Passamaquoddy, Innu and Inuit make are fewer and fewer. The issue that this raises for me, and it is one that historians in the region have addressed since the readers' publication, is how the colonial structuring of our archival systems contributes to this marginalization.[36] It is well-known that the archival systems colonial societies built paint colonized peoples in ways that reflected how the colonizer saw them. Anishinaabe historian Jean O'Brien demonstrates this in her exploration of the idea of "the vanishing Indian" and how American archives are structured in ways that quite literally write Indigenous people into extinction and reinforce the idea that we no longer exist.[37]

This becomes particularly frustrating when the written colonial archive, and the ways we have been taught to engage with it, are used to deny recognition of Indigenous lived experience in historiography, and as a means of justifying further marginalization of Indigenous knowledge and research practices in academic spaces. We saw this recently, for example, in David J. Silverman's April 2020 *AHR* review of Abenaki historian Lisa Brooks' Bancroft Award-winning book, *Our Beloved Kin*. In it, Silverman criticizes Brooks for working too closely with the Wampanoag communities whose ancestors featured in her re-evaluation of the history of King Philip's War. Brooks speaks openly in *Our Beloved Kin* about "benefit[ting] tremendously from conversations with [contemporary Wampanoag] language speakers" as she worked to understand the context of sources covering King Philip's War

35 Stephen A. Davis, "Early Societies: Sequences of Change," in Buckner and Reid, *Atlantic Region to Confederation*, 3-21; Ralph Pastore, "The Sixteenth Century: Aboriginal Peoples and European Contact," in Buckner and Reid, *Atlantic Region to Confederation*, 22-39.

36 Walls, "Confederation and Maritime First Nations"; William C. Wicken, *The Colonization of Mi'kmaw Memory and History, 1794-1928:* The King v. Gabriel Sylliboy (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012).

37 Jean O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians Out of Existence in New Englan*d (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010).

from a Wampanoag point of view.[38] Silverman argues in his review that this community influence risked presentist interpretations of the past, and the practice of deeply engaged community collaboration with historians could lead to eventual "drift[ing] from the basic disciplinary standard that historians must make convincing appeals to primary sources."[39] What Silverman may be missing in his review, and what critiques of contemporary Indigenous interpretation of written archives ignores, is how deeply rooted ancestral memory is in Indigenous communities. A contemporary Indigenous reading of a centuries-old document is not necessarily a presentist reading and has often been able to reveal new insights about Indigenous lives – even when colonial framings make Indigenous lives blurry. William Wicken demonstrated this in his study of Mi'kmaw oral treaty knowledge in *The Colonization of Mi'kmaq Memory and History* in 2012.[40] We are perhaps left with not enough evidence for fruitful study of Indigenous histories because we do not know how to look for it. This is why Indigenous perspectives and Indigenous historians are desperately needed in this field.[41] I have often been met with discomfort or skepticism when I make this statement, especially from historians. As a field in general, we are frequently held to a standard of rigid objectivity; while this practice does not necessarily bar community members from writing histories about themselves, in many cases, especially when it comes to Indigenous peoples' readings and interpretations of their own histories, the field tends to question the legitimacy of the work and has silenced these perspectives.

Decolonization as a practice challenges the existence of historical objectivity on the whole, even naming demands for objectivity as a tool used to devalue Indigenous knowledges.[42] We are each informed by our own lived experiences, and these experiences shape how we conceptualize, research, and write our histories. They also shape how we engage with and criticize those histories. For centuries, in settler states like Canada, white settler scholars have dominated history as a field, shaping what stories get told about Indigenous nations, Black

38 Lisa Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin: A New History of King Philip's War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), 7.

39 David J. Silverman, "Living with the Past: Thoughts on Community Collaboration and Difficult History in Native American and Indigenous Studies," *American Historical Review* 125, no. 2 (April 2020): 527; David J. Silverman, "Historians and Native American and Indigenous Studies: A Reply," *American Historical Review* 125, no. 2 (April 2020): 546.

40 Wicken, *Colonization of Mi'kmaw Memory and History*.

41 Brooks, *Our Beloved Kin*.

42 Linda Tuhiwai Smith, "Imperialism, History, Writing and Theory," in Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*.

communities, and other marginalized groups. This was the case 30 years ago, at the time the *Acadiensis* readers were published, and it remains the case now. Today, while there are certainly more scholars from marginalized backgrounds represented in historical literature, we are still outnumbered, which means that our perspectives are still undervalued – particularly when it comes to how our lived experiences come out in our work. In my reading of the *Acadiensis* set, what began with the pleasant surprise at the framing of Mi'kmaw, Wolastoqiyik, and Passamaquoddy nations as important sovereign players with historical agency in the pre-Confederation era[43] turned into an all-too familiar exercise of digging for needles in haystacks by the end of the post-Confederation reader. First Nations groups and Black Maritimers are characterized as minor ethnic groups and feature very infrequently. There are also no Black or Indigenous historians featured in these readers. The reasoning for this is systematic and has a lot to do with the lack of access marginalized people have to university institutions, but it does not change the impacts this absence has on the shape of those readers.

With these thoughts in mind, I reached out to Natasha. I met her at a virtual panel event through the Mi'kmaw-Wolastoqey Centre at the University of New Brunswick, where she serves as director while completing her doctorate.[44] To find another Lnu'skw doing a PhD in history was extremely exciting, especially in a field where we are so few. Our conversation turned immediately to how our lived experiences growing up led us to our study of contemporary Mi'kmaw history. What was strikingly similar in our accounts were our feelings about how the histories we knew intimately from the stories we had heard from our families growing up had never really been reflected in the academic histories we learned in public schools and post-secondary institutions. We are both driven by a desire to see ourselves, our communities, and our ancestors reflected in the work that we do in ways that honour our nations, and that necessarily involves challenging conventional historical research structures and questioning some of the larger settler-focused historical narratives at play in the Atlantic Provinces. In some cases, this also involves letting our communities

43 Stephen A. Davis, "Early Societies: Sequences and Change"; Pastore, "Sixteenth Century: Aboriginal Peoples and European Contact"; John G. Reid, "1686–1720: Imperial Intrusions," in Buckner and Reid, *Atlantic Region to Confederation*.

44 To read an example of Natasha's work, see Natasha Simon, "Beyond Cultural Differences: Interpreting a Treaty between the Mi'kmaq and British at Belcher's Farm, 1761," in *Living Treaties: Narrating Mi'kmaw Treaty Relations*, ed. Marie Battiste (Sydney, NS: Cape Breton University Press, 2016).

dictate what research projects are worth exploring, changing research direction if a topic is not useful or is actively harmful, and valuing the input of Indigenous knowledge holders outside of the academy in our work at the same level as, or higher than those who earned PhDs within it. In other cases, it involves deciding with community members that certain stories that some historians may find fascinating or useful should remain within communities and stay out of university or popular monographs.[45]

Now, this is not to say that the field has not changed in the three decades since the readers' publication; I have pointed to some important developments in Atlantic Region historiography over the course of this piece, and the historians who worked on those readers have continued to do amazing work here – much of it influencing my own training. However, decolonizing history is more than just looking for more Native or Black authors to include their thoughts in works still framed in ways that uphold colonial systems of dominance. Yes, representation is important; the excitement and renewal I felt when I met Natasha and got to connect with her is testament to this. But decolonization requires more than just having more Mi'kmaw women doing PhDs: it demands we actively make room for underrepresented groups' modes of thought, narrative structure, and relationship to research while allowing these things to unsettle and break down many of the foundations on which this field has stood and continues to stand. We can start by asking ourselves more questions related to our own work. Maybe writing a new set of *Acadiensis* readers could start by asking these: for whom are we writing our histories, and to whom are we responsible when we write histories? How might our lived experiences shape how we understand our research? And how does our individual positionality impact what we can and cannot do within the realm of historical research?

A brief conclusion

The purpose of the *Acadiensis* readers was to bring historians together to demonstrate the strength of a region whose history had been devalued in Canada. In the 30 years that have passed since their publication, and on the foundation the historians featured in these readers helped build, Atlantic

45 Mohawk anthropologist Audra Simpson writes about the ways in which Indigenous communities can and should be able to refuse to engage with research, or set boundaries for what they offer to researchers; see Audra Simpson, *Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler State* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

Region history has blossomed into a robust field that continues down exciting paths. But there is always room to move forward, or, in this case, take a completely different direction altogether. Decolonization is a remarkably uncomfortable process for many people, especially when it asks us to give up power that we hold. But as I have argued here, it is ultimately generative in nature. It asks us to dream beyond what we already have in front of us, or even beyond what we think is possible. It asks us to collaborate with and follow the lead of diverse groups of people, to listen and learn from them. It asks us to acknowledge and break down boundaries that we uphold and have set without recognizing. The discussions I had with Amani, Natasha, and Tom were exciting because each in its own way revealed how the generations following the cohort of scholars behind the *Acadiensis* readers have been questioning and considering new ways of framing, communicating, and imagining history. In this way, the intention of the original readers has come to fruition. This reflection on those readers and their legacy is simply designed to plant seeds to start conversations about where this area of study could go, and how it could contribute to breaking down structures of oppression that harm many of us. In many ways, this was the original readers' goal. I hope we can carry it even further.

MERCEDES PETERS

MERCEDES PETERS est une candidate au doctorat en histoire à l'Université de la Colombie-Britannique dont les recherches actuelles et la thèse portent sur l'activisme populaire chez les femmes abénaquises et les réseaux de soins au-delà de l'État colonisateur à l'ère du mouvement Red Power de la fin du 20e siècle. Sa publication la plus récente, « Settler Forgetting in Saulnierville: The Sipekne'katik Mi'kmaw Fishery as Reminder », a paru sur le site Web de la Nouvelle initiative canadienne en histoire de l'environnement (NiCHE).

MERCEDES PETERS is a doctoral candidate in history at the University of British Columbia currently researching and writing her dissertation on Wabanaki women's grassroots activism and networks of care beyond the reaches of the settler state during the Red Power era of the late 20th century. Her most recent publication, "Settler Forgetting in Saulnerville: The Sipekne'katik Mi'kmaw Fishery as Reminder," was published on the Network in Canadian History and Environment (NiCHE) website.