

Article

Naandamo: Indigenous Connections to Underwater Heritage, Settler Colonialism, and Underwater Archaeology in the North American Great Lakes

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Abstract

The North American Great Lakes offer a dynamic case study of inundated cultural landscapes. These bodies of water and the life around them have never been static. While submerged lands offer avenues for archaeological research, it is essential to first understand that these cultural landscapes have also been flooded with invasive power dynamics through settler colonialism. For example, the land and water systems in Anishinaabe Akiing (the northern Great Lakes) have fundamentally shifted from flourishing life systems to poisoned areas and now struggle to deal with invasive species. When seeking to learn from or otherwise engage Indigenous knowledge, it is essential to work from a perspective that takes all these changes into consideration. There are Indigenous communities who are interested in these inundated landscapes, and in this research, but a pause, naandamo, is needed to ethically consider the ongoing process of settler colonialism and Indigenous perspectives. Here we address ethical considerations for researchers participating in, or interested in participating in, submerged site research. By incorporating settler colonialism as a methodology of understanding, we will provide an ethical starting place for working with Indigenous communities and inundated landscapes.

Keywords: settler colonialism; Indigenous archaeology; Native North America; underwater archaeology; submerged landscapes; ethics



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1. Introduction

Humans have always had a special relationship with water—from our earliest beginnings to the role it plays in the physical composition of our bodies, water is and has been critical to life. Strong ties to coastal, lacustrine, and riverine environments have made humans witness to vast climatic changes including water level fluctuations and coastal inundation. Our communities have had a front row seat to the increasing pollution, acidification, presence of invasive species, industrialization, and urbanization on the world's coastlines during the Holocene and Anthropocene. As bodies of water as big as the oceans and as small as lakes and ponds have changed, Indigenous peoples have profound connections with these places that can offer insight into their shifting states and histories. Inundation impacts contemporary people and environments in numerous ways, and one unique aspect of historical sea or water level rise is its flooding of past cultural landscapes.

At the time of the Last Glacial Maximum, vast stretches of the world's continental shelves and other shallow coastal areas were exposed. These areas were often dry for thousands of years, creating unique environmental and anthropogenic landscapes, populated by plants, animals, and humans. Over time, as global sea levels rose, these landscapes became inundated and today many remain underwater. Archaeological records dating to these periods of lower water levels have revealed unique data about past human use of these regions, and the wonderful preservation provided by a waterlogged environment often protects more archaeological sites and materials than on land. While archaeological research on submerged landscapes is increasing, it has largely focused on the technological and methodological challenges of conducting such investigations underwater, rather than theoretical [1] and ethical issues. Globally, there are Indigenous perspectives, insights, and connections to these landscapes and their underwater heritage that cannot be ignored. Underwater archaeology is a dynamic field, and the pace of technological innovation is rapid; given developments in subsea sensors, we can now reach deeper and farther into the water, and into the past, than ever before, but how is this research being conducted? What role do connections to submerged heritage in Indigenous communities play and what emphasis is placed on them?

The North American Great Lakes offer a case study of inundated cultural landscapes and Indigenous connections to underwater heritage. Since their creation, the lakes have experienced significant fluctuations in water level due to glacial retreat, isostatic rebound, and climatic changes. These geological mechanisms created shifting shorelines resulting in both high and low water stands, often flooding cultural landscapes. However, despite over 12,000+ years of history, maritime research on cultural heritage in the Great Lakes has almost exclusively focused on Euro-American shipwrecks, immigration, extractive industries such as logging, and the urbanization of port towns. What of Indigenous connections, narratives, conceptions, and interactions of and with the Great Lakes?

While submerged landscapes in the Great Lakes offer avenues for archaeological research, it is essential to understand that these cultural landscapes have also been flooded with invasive power dynamics through settler colonialism. While sites can be discovered underwater, should archaeological research on Indigenous underwater heritage in the Great Lakes take place? What are the ethical issues involved and what are our responsibilities to these places and the communities that call them home? The Indigenous archaeology movement has called for methodological care and true intellectual respect for Indigenous worldviews/ways of knowing, e.g., [2,3] how can these concepts be applied to inundated landscapes?

While we can all learn from Linda Tuhiwai Smith's *Decolonizing Methodologies* [4] and shift some of our thinking around research or Audra Simpson's *Mohawk Interruptus* [5] and the notion of ethnographic refusal, putting these concepts into practice is not always conducive to academic research timelines. Building relationships takes time, and community engagement is often not cited as an academic research "product". Furthermore, within the context of the United States, the ethics of research for cultural knowledge in inundated landscapes will likely involve the same Tribal Historic Preservation Officers who are currently inundated from the significant Native American Graves and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) requirements that are also their responsibility. In acknowledgment of these challenges, here we address ethical considerations for submerged site research.

As two tenured Anthropologists at a United States university on the Great Lakes, we outline topics relevant to the region, and by incorporating settler colonialism as a methodology of understanding, we seek to infuse this viewpoint into inundated landscape studies—using the Great Lakes as a case study. In order to outline our perspectives, short biographies are included here.

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2. Settler Colonialism as a Method of Understanding

Anthropology and other disciplines have worked to better understand and characterize processes of colonization and colonialism. Largely in response to the use and conception of “post-colonial”, settler colonialism emerged as an analytical construct [6] to characterize a distinct political formation [7]. Settler colonialism is a structure—not an event [8,9]—which seeks to replace Indigenous populations with a new society of settler individuals [10] following the “logics of elimination” [9]. Because settler colonialism is not an event, it does not have an end, and in this sense, there is no post-colonial. Instead, decolonial has been used to denote that colonialism is still ongoing in numerous contexts, particularly in settler colonial areas. This framework is particularly relevant for those working and living in settler states, such as Australia and the United States, but has been applied elsewhere, e.g., [11].

Settler colonialism relies on access to territory, and in settler colonial states, such as the British invasion of Australia, colonizers simply declared, by their own legal standards, that the land was uninhabited. For example, the *terra nullius* doctrine characterized Australia as the “land belonging to no one”, despite Indigenous occupation of the continent for millennia [12]. In the United States, the legal standard became the Doctrine of Discovery, a principle used to justify colonization, which became enshrined in Supreme Court jurisprudence as the Marshall Trilogy of three early 19th century court cases [13]. These cases, *Johnson v. McIntosh* (1823), *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia* (1831), and *Worcester v. Georgia* (1832) legally defined the relationships between the United States federal government and Native American populations. The implementation of this doctrine often resulted in treaties with Indigenous inhabitants as well as forcible removal. Many Indigenous peoples and communities became diasporic after physical displacement from their homelands and/or relocation to reservations and urban areas due to settler colonialism ([6], p. 478). In settler colonial studies, issues of violence, oppression, and displacement, are balanced with counter-narratives of resilience, agency, persistence and survivance [14], and many studies work to challenge the concept of Indigenous absence, e.g., [15].

How has settler colonialism impacted North American archaeology? The discipline of archaeology itself and the study of material culture are entangled in ongoing processes of settler colonialism, such as sexism and racialization [16,17]. In contrast to the notion of decolonial, there are numerous studies comparing the “pre” and “post-contact” eras in North American archaeology, e.g., [18], that is before and after colonial/European contact. Rather than working towards a decolonial understanding of the past, this dichotomy reifies the concept of post-colonial, as well as obscures cultural, social, religious, linguistic, and political diversity inherent in Indigenous populations before contact—as if there is a homogenous “before” and “after”, see [19–21] “It Never Existed”. The implementation of settler colonialism as a concept in archaeological research in North America has primarily addressed Indigenous histories since 1492 and enslaved Africans and their descendants [6]—but it can be applied much more widely. Anthropologists/archaeologists should be self-reflexive to understand the role they themselves and the discipline still plays in contributing to and/or reifying the settler colonial structure.

Settler Colonialism in Underwater Archaeology

Has settler colonialism been incorporated in underwater archaeological studies? Underwater archaeology is subject to these same entanglements, though it is rarely made explicit. It is a diverse field of research, and much like the broader discipline of archaeology, underwater archaeology has at least two theoretical and methodological homes in the United States: one in History and one in Anthropology. The disciplinary orientation of the individual researcher impacts the methods, perspectives, and goals of the project and divergences include the scale of research, bodies of theory drawn on, and the types of research questions that are asked [22]. Additionally, within underwater archaeology there are numerous subfields or specialties depending on the type of archaeological sites and/or time periods under investigation. These include nautical archaeology (the study of shipwrecks), maritime archaeology (the study of maritime landscapes including ports, harbors, and lighthouses), submerged prehistory (the study of ancient, inundated landscapes), and many others [22].

Underwater archaeological research in North America is largely of two types: historical investigations of ships and prehistorical investigations of landscapes. These disciplinary and temporal distinctions reify and reproduce the distinct categories of “settlers” and “Indigenous” and “pre” and “post-contact”. Historical shipwreck research is primarily focused on themes like industrialization, capitalism, urbanization, etc., with often little attention given to race, ethnicity, gender, or the settler colonial dynamics of this period. In contrast, settler colonialism studies work to complicate the Indigenous-settler paradigm, as neither one is a homogenous or static category, and heterogeneous descendant communities exist today. Sites other than shipwrecks, such as those preserved on inundated landscapes, are defined by their age and are dubbed ‘precontact’ or ‘prehistoric’. The very nature of these research specializations tends to reaffirm settler colonial ideas. However, some research has directly addressed issues of colonialism/decolonialism, despite the fact that nautical and maritime archaeologies are deeply a part of colonial and settler colonial endeavors (see below).

Boats were the essential mechanism for settler colonialism—they were the very means by which settlers came to new places and the vessels used to move the profits of extraction, exploitation, commodification, and appropriation ([23], p. 3667). Rich et al. argue that the Anthropocene geological epoch started with the maritime expansion of European conquistadors, crusaders, missionaries, and settlers [23]. The result of this expansion, fueled by maritime travel and exploration, resulted in the death of so many Indigenous peoples in the Western Hemisphere that global carbon dioxide emissions dropped [24,25].

The Anthropocene is essentially the continuation of settler colonialism and the “extension and enactment of colonial logic” [24]. Within this broader picture, maritime archaeology is central as the transoceanic movement of people, things, and ideas ushered in settler colonial states and Anthropocene more generally [26,27]. Since 1500, boats were crucial for colonial and settler colonial states, specifically the penal transport of Europeans to Australia and the Americas, as well as the widespread forcible movement of enslaved African peoples, particularly across the Atlantic to the Western Hemisphere in the 17th and 19th centuries.

Despite this deep role in the colonial endeavor, underwater archaeology lags behind other fields in recognizing how enduring power relationships impact interpretations of the past and the management of underwater sites [23]. McGhee notes the absence of African diaspora and Indigenous Americans in nautical archaeology [28], two topics that are the focus of many settler colonial studies, leaving underwater archaeologists disengaged from the concept and its applications. In contrast, Rich’s work outlining the case of an illegally removed dugout canoe directly engages with settler colonial legacies [23]. The canoe offered a unique opportunity to explore anti-colonialism in maritime archaeology and discuss how standard preservation practices of large shipwrecks may be at odds with Indigenous perspectives and decolonial approaches. This case study is summarized below as an opening for exploring settler colonialism, underwater archaeology, and Native American peoples more generally in the rest of the paper.

The discovery of a Native American dugout canoe in South Carolina in 1987 sparked conversations between archaeologists, conservators, and tribal organizations. Most often in nautical archaeology when large wooden ships are discovered, particularly those thought to be of great historical significance, they are retrieved/raised from the water and conserved, often for public display. These methods for preservation were developed by the nautical archaeology field which is still largely focused on large, wooden European and Euro-American shipwrecks. Beginning in the Mediterranean, early work targeted trade ships, such as the late Bronze Age Uluburun wreck and other archaeological investigations have focused on military, transport, and exploration ships. Due to this focus, many methods have been developed for documenting and preserving large wooden ships after wrecking or sinking, most from the 17th century.

The process of raising these types of vessels and conserving them has been dubbed the “resurrection model” in nautical archaeology [29]. In this model, shipwrecks are viewed as dead and the process of raising the ship from the watery depths positions the scholar as the savior, with the resurrected vessel placed on display in a museum. Rich argues that this model has been central to nautical archaeology from the beginning and is replicated in many famous “resurrections” such as the *Vasa*, *Mary Rose*, *Nanhai No. 1*, and *Batavia*. Most aptly the retrieval, conservation, and display of La Salle’s ship published as “From a Watery Grave: The Discovery and Excavation of La Salle’s Shipwreck, *La Belle*” [30] poignantly reinforces Rich’s model. A key aspect of this model is the concept of immortality and the frequent external preservation of recovered wrecks through either digital means (e.g., photogrammetry, etc.) and/or conservation via polyethylene glycol (PEG), which is considered to be the standard technique for preserving wooden remains.

But what happens when ancient remains meet contemporary Indigenous peoples such as when a dugout canoe is resurfaced? The oldest known watercraft in the state of South Carolina is a dugout canoe that was illegally removed by a private individual without a license, likely from the Cooper River [31]. Dugout canoes have been recovered from many parts of the world, including numerous states in the United States, e.g., [32,33]. The Cooper River canoe is late Archaic in age with a radiocarbon date of 4170 \pm 70 years cal. BP. In 2020, invitations for consultation were sent to 14 state recognized tribal entities and two tribal non-profits to discuss the canoe with archaeologists and conservators. Over the

course of the one-day consultation, information about PEG treatment was shared [23,31]. PEG is one solution, often thought to be the standard, among other methods of conserving waterlogged wood include freeze-drying, in-water retainment, and sugar-alcohol impregnation. Returning wooden objects to the water they were retrieved from is also an option. It is also worth noting that the UNESCO 2001 Convention on the Protection of the Underwater Cultural Heritage indicates in situ preservation, leaving the objects in place as the first option.

In the case of the canoe, which had already been removed from its original context and stored in water, PEG treatment was recommended by the conservators and archaeologists. PEG treatment fundamentally changes the composition of the objects it is used to preserve, from organic to inorganic and from wet to dry ([23], p. 3671), as it infuses the wooden cellular structure of the object with petroleum-derived liquid plastic. For some of the Native Americans present at the consultation, fundamentally altering the nature of canoe and preserving it indefinitely gave pause because the processes of disintegration and returning back to the earth are important parts of the sacred life cycle [23]. Rooted in Indigenous epistemologies, these views are in many ways the exact opposite of Western-trained conservators seeking to preserve objects indefinitely. It is also worth noting that while PEG is considered the industry standard, its actual long-term effects and preservational potential have not been adequately tested, and in fact the Vasa, one of the largest and most well-known PEG treatments, seems to be deteriorating faster now with the treatment than it was when it was completely underwater [34].

Because it was ultimately decided to conserve the Cooper River canoe with PEG and display it in a public museum, Rich et al. interrogate the 2020 Indigenous consultation event. At first glance, it seems to provide a good example of partnership with Indigenous peoples, but on closer reflection it may have reinforced colonial ideals of resurrection and public display. In the context of South Carolina, of the sixteen or more tribal entities in the state, only one is federally recognized, and another nine have state recognition. In the United States, being federally recognized or not has significant legal and political ramifications, including directly participating in NAGPRA repatriation requests. In this case, the authors viewed the political importance of the canoe as a shared symbol of Indigenous presence, survival, and unification of Native American groups in South Carolina, and that given this importance, its conservation and placement in a museum outweighed the concerns of changing the nature of the object, its spirit, and individual life cycle [23]. In seeking to advance anti-colonialism in maritime archaeology, Rich et al. urge that practitioners need not always follow the industry standards, especially when there are good reasons for questioning these practices in the first place, [23] and instead advocate for being open to a broader range of approaches. This case study shows the stark difference between worldviews and conservation practices as well as ideas of display, with the canoe being displayed in a museum versus capture, where canoes in museums can be seen as canoe-beings hung in jail [35].

From the perspective of archaeologists, one of the key aspects of the canoe was its age; “Because of the canoe’s extraordinary antiquity, ownership cannot legitimately be claimed by any one contemporary tribal group, so the consultation presented an opportunity for diverse descendent communities to unite in a decision that would potentially affect everyone” ([23], p. 3671). Due to its age, there was also interest from the conservation team in making sure it would be preserved. Issues of chronology and temporality broadly come into play in settler colonialism—particularly with its central tenant that it is a structure and not an event. This concept can be difficult for archaeologists to grapple with given the focus on time and the age of sites and materials. Many scholars working in historical time periods, for example, post 1500 in North America, Indigenous archaeologists, and others,

have directly confronted the enduring legacies of settler colonialism, e.g., [2,3,36–42]. But in general, underwater archaeologists are less likely to engage directly in these issues and none have discussed their relevance for inundated landscapes. Broadly, archaeologists often prioritize age and time over place, which is a different way of viewing (see below).

3. Gibichiwebinaadaa! Anishinaabeg Nandotaw (All of Us Stop! The Original People, Listen to Them)

There is an overwhelming issue to overcome when the concept of settler colonialism is utilized as a means of analysis. That is, one can only engage in that analysis if they have a good idea of what that concept means and how it is related to the topic at hand. Rarely is it given the sustained attention that would allow for a deeper understanding. Like a land acknowledgement, it is uttered into a room or read from a page and it is presumed the audience has done or will do the work to come to a deeper understanding of the term, and hopefully, incorporate its importance into their own work. However, the continued lack of understanding of Indigenous people and knowledges further demonstrates that hope is not a method.

At the intersection of archaeology and Indigenous peoples is a fundamental question of space and time. The lands on which settler colonial peoples and states reside, until recently, have been inhabited by Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples hold their relationships to space, including both land and water, to the highest degree [43]. These places provide a literal and narrative grounding, which has produced flourishing communities. This is a flourishing of all our relatives, including the flora, fauna, rocks, manidoo, and celestial bodies, which orient us to these places in daily and annual solar cycles.

Settler colonial communities have used linear temporal constructions as a primary orienting feature, focusing instead on a narrative of a people across time. While that time takes place in space, their relationships to space became abstracted through the settler colonial project, which allowed for creative legal maneuvers to lay claim to land, even though Indigenous peoples were residing there [43]. These fundamentally different negotiations of space have yet to be understood by academic researchers who have participated, and in some cases continue to participate, in the justification of settler colonialism [44].

Now listen.

As Cherokee author Thomas King has commented, “stories are all we are” [45]. While some contemporary archaeologists have begun to take relationships with Indigenous communities seriously, rarely has there been opportunity to take into consideration a full-spectrum understanding of an interrelated set of settler colonial violences. In this place of Gichigame (The Big Sea, The Great Lakes) let us take this opportunity to develop a better understanding of what is at stake for Indigenous peoples, as there is, yet again, another intrusion into our space. Let me tell you a story...

The starting place for Indigenous memory of our respective places goes back much further than colonial history. While many textbooks describe us in various states of survival, an Indigenous memory of Gichigame is one of flourishing. Indigenous peoples all over the Great Lakes area were able to live very well, in large numbers. With rich forests, prairies, and aquatic ecosystems all around us, it was rather easy to make a good living through a range of agricultural, hunting, and fishing practices. Indeed, this account of flourishing is unanimous among early Europeans [46]. With detailed knowledge of our environments, the ability to feed, clothe, shelter, and provide medicine was rather easy. The surrounding flora and fauna provided a plethora of medicines to heal almost any ailment. Flourishing of life is remembered in countless narratives, with their lessons on how to achieve such beauty [47].

As Europeans entered this area, the knowledge of these complex systems was more difficult to pass on to younger generations, as diseases were both intentionally and unintentionally spread throughout the region. Disease in the 1600s was followed by warfare and more disease in the 1700s, setting up a vicious cycle of sickness, loss of life, cultural dislocation with the loss of elders and wisdom, and less access to medicines, including our usual foodstuffs that sustain our health [48]. In a weakened state, we were moved to reservations in the 1800s, radically altering our social systems based in doodem (clan)-led consensus democracy in our villages, giving way to unbalanced (usually) male authority in the reservation [49]. At the turn of the century, education was proclaimed the solution to the Indian problem and the United States government and Christian churches stole our children to assimilate them. In these North American residential schools, the vicious cycle of disease, abuse, and malnourishment killed approximately one out of three Indigenous children taken between 1893 and 1934 [50]. The 1900s brought more disease in the form of influenza and government policies, including the Indian Reorganization Act of 1934, which forced colonial governmental frameworks as a condition of our existence. This period ushered in further intervention in the form of Congressional Acts and Supreme Court cases, which worked to erode our ability to govern and protect ourselves and continually limit the scope of Tribal government abilities [51].

Our relatives with whom we shared the space shared a similar fate. The extraction industries fueling “progress” laid waste to our vast forests, radically changing landscapes and severely limiting access to food, shelter, clothing, and medicine in our homelands. Timber, mining, and growing cities polluted Gichigame and its tributaries to the point that fish like sturgeon and lake trout populations began crashing [52]. Industrial agriculture would become one of the largest polluters in the 1900s by replacing natural soil enhancements of manure and cover crops with synthetic nitrogen, pesticides, herbicides, and fungicides. Many lakes, rivers, and streams became uninhabitable for our aquatic relatives.

Our contemporary era is not much different. Indigenous communities in the Gichigame region continually resist extraction by timber, mining, and agricultural corporations which pollute our areas. As an Anishinaabe inini growing up in this region, I could not, and still cannot, eat many fish from these watersheds because of the high risk of cancer [52,53]. A mature forest is about as rare as tall grass prairies, both of which used to dominate this landscape. I grew up in what once was a thriving Anishinaabeg village, Chiasining (now Chesaning, Michigan). When my parents moved to this town from northern Michigan in 1966, the Shiawassee River, which ran through the center of town did not freeze in the winter due to its high pollutant level and was bereft of fish or amphibian life. This town sits at a latitude of 43 degrees north and at the time spent four months of the year well below freezing temperatures. Adding insult to injury, this town high school used “Indians” as its school mascot [54].

I did my undergraduate work at the University of Michigan in 1991, one year after the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) was passed. The full extent of the significant collection of Indigenous ancestors and funerary objects housed at the university would not come to light until about 2020 when control of the process was finally passed to an Indigenous person [55]. I left the Gichigame area for graduate school at the Iliff School of Theology in 2003. This is a Methodist-affiliated school, which until 1972 had a book on the history of Christianity which was bound in the skin of an Indigenous relative, who was killed and had their human skin tanned for this purpose [56]. After graduating with a PhD, I made my way to the South Dakota State University, which was started as a “land grant” college, that is that it was created with proceeds from stolen Indigenous land, in particular Lakota and Dakota land. I arrived at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee in 2022 to find that the Anthropology Department I now found

myself in as an Associate Professor had not taken NAGPRA seriously and still housed well over 200 Indigenous ancestors, 32 years after NAGPRA was passed.

This autobiographical statement is not meant to demonstrate victimhood or be seen as some exceptional ordeal. What I aim to highlight is the way that Archaeology and Anthropology and the structure of our educational system are part of settler colonial continuum of violence. From K-12 education to advanced graduate studies, the academic disciplines followed their own developmental trajectories alongside the violence suggested above and supported settler colonialism by developing theories and methods that sanitized the genocide of Indigenous peoples with narratives of our primitive societies as static entities hopelessly fading into history. *Most egregious is the reality that thousands of anthropological and archaeological practitioners were actively writing about the demise of native societies and coming to our communities while our children were being stolen and killed in residential schools, and there is almost no mention of the genocide in the written record until very recently.* This silence, in both its historical form and in its contemporary continuance of silence on NAGPRA by many practitioners in the United States, is very much on the minds of Indigenous people across the globe. It is essential for the disciplines of Anthropology and Archaeology to fundamentally recognize their own complicity, historically and contemporarily, as part of the continuum of settler colonial violence. What makes this narrative so remarkable is the banality with which the erasure of genocide and violence is negotiated in plain sight. Settler colonial violence is so ubiquitous that we all participate in the maintenance of the system through just living in our contemporary landscapes. Our daily activities of eating, heating our homes, transportation and often recreation all rely upon the continuation of extraction industries that further pollute our land and water.

This narrative helps to highlight the difficulties that other Indigenous Archaeologists and Anthropologists have been espousing over the last three decades. In the Archeological world, one can point to Sonya Atalay, Tsim Schneider, and other contributors to the Special Issue of American Indian Quarterly in 2006 and their discourse in Decolonizing Archaeology. This useful contribution provides a snapshot of Indigenous optimism at the intersection of decolonial studies and Archaeology, with authors providing critical insight into the need to address the shortcomings of the discipline as “it is predominantly scholars from Western culture and worldviews who have held the political, social and economic power to study, interpret, write, and teach about Indigenous pasts, viewing them from within a Western framework or ‘lens’, to create knowledge for consumption by Western public and scholarly audiences” ([2], p. 283). Atalay’s call for decolonizing Archaeology is a critical intervention in the discipline, and she articulates the next steps to accomplish the task. This trajectory of decolonization can be followed by Tsim Schneider and Katherine Hayes’s discussion of the same topic in 2020, instead asking “Is it Possible to Decolonize Archaeology?” ([3], p. 127). Schneider and Hayes argue, in part, that decolonization must “extend beyond individual projects, methods or collaborations into the structures of both academic and compliance-driven work” ([3], p. 129). Taken together, we can see a strong desire among Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics in the field of Archaeology working diligently for change, but these changes are slow and sometimes not at all.

This intellectual trajectory helps to highlight the complexity that ethical shifts within the disciplines of Anthropology and Archaeology face. A noun-based language system like English is well suited to describing a problem, but often lacks the direct connection to action that a verb-based language system, like many Indigenous language systems, offers. This slow-to-action phenomenon is only exacerbated by the deep socio-political ramifications that come with taking Indigenous people and our relationships to our respective places seriously. Discourse, without a direct connection to policy, law, and accountability in and of itself is impotent. It can even mask the problem by allowing a researcher who reads these

words to assume that the work is done, or at least that other people are putting the work into action. However, with my local Indigenous relatives in the Gichigami area inundated with NAGPRA in consultation meetings, it is also clear that many academics in universities and museums have interpreted the policy and law as suggestions, not ethical mandates. There is a power at the local level that has yet to be fully realized, and Indigenous peoples and ancestors continue to be negatively impacted by it.

As archaeology is embarking on yet another method and space of inquiry—underwater in Gichigame, I have to say *gibichiwebinaadaa*, let us all stop! Do you know about this place? Do you have a memory of this place over thousands of years that may help guide an inquiry? Maybe most important in this, what is your purpose here? What do you think you will find and how might it benefit all our relatives?

3.1. *Nibi (Water)*

To understand the importance of *nibi* among Indigenous peoples in the Gichigami area, one must know how it relates to the origins of this area. The first human fell from *giizhig*, the sky. *Giizhigokwe*, Sky Woman, fell through *bigonegiizhig*, a hole in the sky (Pleiades star constellation) to a water world. The other animals were already in existence, and they brought her down to rest on *Mikinaak*, the great snapping turtle's back. To build a life for her, *Wazhashk*, the muskrat dove to the bottom of the water, sacrificing their life to obtain a bit of soil to renew the earth on the back of *Mikinaak*. From this starting place of a water world, *Giizhigokwe* remolds the earth for her and all our relatives. When she becomes hungry, *Ashigan*, the bass, offers itself to eat [57].

The power of water is conceptualized among Anishinaabeg peoples in several ways. *Nibi* is not just the lakes, but also the rain falling from the sky providing the earth with sustenance to grow. It is also the snow falling in the winter, purifying the land in the season period of *biboon*. As *biboon* becomes *ziigwan*, all of that purifying snow and ice is then carried to the lakes with the warming temperatures. In *ziigwan*, the constellation of *mishupiizhu* (the underwater panther) is higher in the sky, warning us that this time of renewal is both beautiful and dangerous, as ice becomes thin and hard to read and rivers can overflow their banks and cause a lot of damage.

Nibi is understood as both one of the most powerful forces on the face of the earth, and at the same time, it is also loving, generous, and beautiful. The rain is necessary to produce the flourishing of life on the land. Due to this life sustaining quality, *nibi* is often conceptualized as a feminine relative. It is women who are responsible for our water songs and are recognized as leaders in taking care of our relationship to water. A healthy relationship to *nibi* includes both within our bodies as we stay hydrated to function and to our environment. *Nibi* is also used in ceremony as a purifier, experienced as steam to purify our bodies and minds. However, *nibi* is not just a purifier, it must also be purified. As it trickles through the earth in small capillaries, the soil in turn purifies the water. Wetlands are also purifying mechanisms, allowing the water to release its sediment and other items. This system of reciprocity between the earth and the water offers us an ethical framework of navigating our relationship with these places we go to. As *Giizhigokwe* remolds the earth in relationship to water, those logics of reciprocal relationships set forth require continual attention.

As settler colonial logics worked to replace these life-giving systems, we all now know what the consequences can be for failing to learn from our elder relatives. The logics of *Giizhigokwe* in this place of Gichigami provide an alternative logical system from which to produce knowledge. This logic of place for Indigenous peoples co-molded a rich ecological setting in which the flourishing of all our relatives was possible. This is the difference of worldview, the difference between space and time. For the dugout canoe in South Carolina,

does it really matter how old it is? It likely does not to the local Indigenous peoples. What matters is that it is in shared space. This is really hard to communicate to non-Indigenous peoples, but our ancestors are not past tense. We share these places with them, and they are available for council through ceremony and narrative. That the events tied to them happened *mewinzha*, in the long, long ago, does not matter. In Anishinaabemowin (Anishinaabe language), the term *aadizookaanaag* is used for both ancestors and their narratives, and they are both linguistically considered a living entities, imbued with power.

However, as the South Carolina case shows, if time is given precedence over space, then the Indigenous peoples are perceived as disconnected from the canoe, and their voice and ideas are simultaneously diminished in the process. This is settler colonialism as a logic at work in people who likely consider themselves to be empathetic to Indigenous people and ideas.

3.2. *Naandamo (Pausing, to Think Clearly About What You Are Going to Do and Say)*

The above narrative is a call to a collective, relational pause. The type of thoughtful pause associated with the concept of *naandamo* can be seen when someone is harvesting food or a medicine. When taking the life of something, something must be given in return. In the case of Anishinaabeg, *asema*, or tobacco, is often used as this gift. *Asema* has a communicative quality when offered or burned, translating the thought and intentions in that pause to the life that offered itself. In this relational engagement, similar to the relationship between water and land, life and death between relatives is balanced.

When we think about academics entering our seas and waterways, many Indigenous peoples experience an anxiety associated with that. What are they looking for? How will they go about it? If they find something, will they share it with us or will they keep it? Will they cause any harm to the water and its inhabitants? Will they understand what they find, or will this be yet another gem supporting any number of Euro-Christian theories that place us in the background or as primitive? Who will benefit from this?

As this essay helps to relay, the harm caused to Indigenous peoples, the land, and water are rarely recognized in the discourse by non-Indigenous peoples. We can learn from the mistakes of past academics who looked out upon the destruction of Indigenous peoples, land, and water only to provide a self-serving settler colonial narrative from the experience. Instead, this time, *naandamo*, pause before you go into the water and think about how these actions are connected to all that has been stated in this essay. Before you board that boat and get into the water, go find out from some Indigenous peoples what flourishing looks like in that place. Remember with them the beauty of that place and the possibilities of life-giving forces that emanate from those places. Learn a little bit about their origins and their languages so you know how to communicate with those places. Ask yourself, am I reciprocating, am I giving back to a place I am taking from? Ask yourselves, *how might this work benefit all the relatives connected to this place?* If you cannot answer, then maybe you should not be there.

3.3. *Inawendiwag (They Are Related to One Another)*

For anyone interested engaging in a reciprocal relationship in which all parties can continually bring their best, Indigenous communities offer a lot of practical examples that you may be able to follow. For example, many Indigenous communities maintain long standing community agreements often conceptualized as treaties. These agreements offer an opportunity to engage in a mutually interdependent relationship where groups of people can agree and rely upon one another for support. For this to take place one can consider the economics of gifting. Relationships of this kind require annual attention. When the treaty is between two or more villages then there will be a celebration and feast in

which the details of the agreement are recited, and gifts are exchanged [13]. These annual meetings are also the time to address any challenges or perceived transgressions during the previous year. If there are any, then the parties can work through these difficulties and move into the next year knowing the relationship is on good terms. This is one of the primary differences between an intra-Indigenous treaty and a treaty between an Indigenous group and European colonizers. Rarely was there an annual meeting between parties in which the transgressions of settler colonialism would be addressed and rectified. In the intra-Indigenous example, we see an effective methodology in place to maintain relationships over time.

4. Ethical Frameworks for Great Lakes Underwater Archaeology

This narrative is an offering, a call for an ethical pause to deeply consider the dynamics of power associated with our work producing knowledge. This is a challenge to a greater responsibility to the places that we live and work in, and to a much larger conceptualization of the life that shares those spaces with us. To consider the logics of settler colonialism and the power associated with that system is only a step, as knowledge will continually be produced in relationship to power. But how might that power be constructed in relationship to us and our work? To paraphrase Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred, the problems we are currently facing will not be solved from within the same framework of thought that is causing the problems in the first place [58]. What Indigenous peoples and thought have to offer us is quite substantial. However, it often does require the decentering of settler thought and language to reorient ourselves to the places we are in.

Where do you say that you are? If one is interested in learning to think outside of settler colonial logics, then Indigenous peoples offer a fundamentally different way of negotiating base relationships to space, time, and the rest of life. The logics orienting us to space can be analyzed through Indigenous origins, which are not burdened with conceptualizations of linear time. Indigenous place names often offer insight into Indigenous experiences of those places. Those place names can provide a pathway of engagement with Indigenous peoples and knowledge.

The role of Minowakiing, or the Good Land, as Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in the southwestern Gichigami has been named, can provide an example of this. This place has a significant role in the region as a meeting place of three rivers and the important riverine and estuary structures filled with name (pronounced nau-may, the sturgeon) and manoomin (wild rice). This area has been an area of international communication, trade, and meeting for millennia. The waterscapes inland and in Gichigami tell us this narrative. Minowakiing is the common Indigenous name associated with this place. In Anishinaabemowin, mino is a prefix which translates as “good”. Aki is a morpheme associated with land in a general sense, and “ing” at the end is a locative, denoting the speaker is in that place. To provide some context, Anishinaabe refers to a confederacy of three distinct peoples, the Ojibwe, Potawatomi, and Odawa. Having stated that, this is a curious naming strategy, as Minowakiing is of the Ojibwe dialect of Anishinaabemowin and Ojibwe communities have only been in this place in a peripheral way. The primary Indigenous residents were the Potawatomi, with the Menominee and Ho Chunk peoples also well represented. So why would this place now hold a naming convention of a people who were not established in this place? I would suggest that this naming convention is part of the settler colonial confusion and erasure of settler colonial violence. Repeating “Minowakiing” as the Indigenous origin of this place is seductive because it has such a positive appeal. To suggest this is a “good place” and connecting it to an Indigenous language presumes that language was spoken by the people here, and by uttering that phrase in the present, it connects settler peoples to a glorious Indigenous past. If one does not dig further, the contemporary reality

of polluted rivers, lakes, land, and almost no visible presence of the original peoples of this land can be erased. Good can be attached to their own settler colonial experience, even though that good has come at the expense of the Potawatomi and other Indigenous peoples. One of the names that the Potawatomi call this place is Menewuk, the place we were removed from.

An engagement with the intersection of settler colonial logics and an Indigenous logic of place may be quite challenging. It takes a lot of courage to confront these realities of removal, destruction, and genocide. However, if one is able to sit in the sometimes-difficult liminal space, it is possible to begin to develop new relationships, new thinking, and new methodologies that were not available before.

To think in terms of space, one must take into consideration all the life shared within this place, which includes those relatives, those species, that are no longer with us. To think in terms of space is to remember with the possibilities of flourishing within Indigenous experiences of those places. A researcher will have to ask themselves, how am I related to this place and what type of responsibility do I have?

As a starting place, there is a growing body of Indigenous literature that takes these questions seriously and can help one on this journey to an Indigenous conceptualization. However, if someone is interested in a deeper understanding, they will have to put their body in Indigenous spaces and develop relationships to people. This is often challenging for academics, as this type of long-term relationship building is not conducive to tenure or grant and publication timelines. This is a career and life-long commitment. Eventually a researcher will be asked, what is your why? That is, why do you want to do this work, what is your work related to, and how will it benefit this place? If someone is coming to these relationships from a place of integrity, then they will already have thought about this question and can effectively articulate their why.

This pathway can be difficult. It will require a lot of listening and humility. It will take years to develop relationships. It may also produce some of the more fulfilling relationships you have and produce some of the most cutting-edge knowledge.

One of the realities settler colonialism sets before us all is that we are here together in this place. There is not any going back. Therefore, we must confront the difficulties of the post-apocalyptic land and seascapes produced by settler colonial logics. With climate change so radically altering our relationships to *nibi*, it is important to remember there are options in producing knowledge. An interrogation of the logics that caused these problems in the first place and the Indigenous experience of flourishing and its correlating logical systems offer different possibilities. From a logic of place, this memory of flourishing is a gift. Can your research and experiences in your place return that gift?

5. Conclusions

This manuscript sought to address issues of Indigenous connections to submerged landscapes/heritage and discuss how underwater archaeology can incorporate settler colonialism as a method of understanding. Underwater archaeology as a field has largely focused on methods and conservation, how do we do this? How can it be accomplished? What technologies and approaches can archaeologists adapt to submerged settings? How do we conserve materials retrieved from the water? Furthermore, in order to develop and improve methods, underwater archaeologists have focused on funding: how can we fund the research and how can we justify that it is worth the cost and effort? Other focuses have been on student training and employment, in sum, the business of performing archaeology. Overall, there has been a rapid pace of development, as archaeologists explore areas that were not accessible before. But while the ocean is often referred to as the world's largest

museum, extraction from it is not considered museum theft [59–61]. While we can explore further, we often do not consider if we should. It is time for naandamo, pause.

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