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'Hell Holes': Unmapping Settler Colonial Geographies and Child Welfare in Manitoba.

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This paper examines the material and symbolic enactments of race and space that lend legitimacy to the removal of Indigenous children through the Canadian child welfare system in Manitoba. A discourse analysis and a process of spatial 'unmapping' reveal that the colonial relationship between white settlers and Indigenous peoples is relationally (re)produced as an encounter between 'dysfunctional aboriginal bodies' belonging to 'spaces of savagery' and 'modern citizen-subjects' belonging to 'spaces of bourgeois respectability'. The practice of Indigenous child removal is normalized, not merely by representing Indigenous peoples as bad parents, but also by creating spaces with certain material conditions that are then considered inadequate places to raise a child. It is through such racial-spatial constructs that white settler subjects come to know themselves as modern, morally superior, and rightful owners of the land, while the removal of Indigenous children is rendered as nothing out of the ordinary.

On August 17, 2014 the body of 15-year old Tina Fontaine was dragged out of the Red River in Winnipeg. Tina was murdered, wrapped in a plastic bag, and dumped in the river. Not much else is released of her slaying, except that she 'has been exploited and taken advantage of' (CBC 2014a) before she was killed. Tina had only been in Winnipeg for a month. She was also under the custody of Manitoba's Child and Family Services (CFS), which brought her to city. Tina grew up with her great-aunt in the reserve community of Sagkeeng First Nation. She was described as a 'happy girl' (cited in Commissio 2014). Then, in 2011, Tina's father was brutally murdered and the teenager was deeply distraught over his death. Seeking help for Tina, her great-aunt turned to various CFS agencies to get counseling services for the teenager. This she was refused each time. Instead, Tina ended up in a foster

home in Winnipeg. Tina ran away from her CFS placement and was reported missing on August 9th—a week before her body was found. Incidentally, the police were not looking for Tina that day. Her body was discovered by accident as they were searching for the body of Faron Hall, an Indigenous man who drowned in the river. Hall, who had saved two people from drowning in the river on two separate occasions, was an advocate for the city's homeless. He himself had been living on the streets of Winnipeg for the past 15 years, much of this time under the Provencher Bridge.

Unfortunately, in the Canadian settler state, these deaths are not something out of the ordinary. Indeed, Canada even has its own settler colonial phenomenon called Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW), a crude tag line that alludes to the thousandsⁱ of Indigenous women and girls that have been murdered or have 'disappeared' within the last three decades across the country without being of much concern to the state. The colonial contexts that resulted in two Indigenous bodies floating in the Red River on August 17 are also all too familiar.ⁱⁱ Hall was one of many Indigenous peoples living precariously on the streets of Winnipeg—in fact, this is a city in which the homeless population is primarily made up of Indigenous peoples (Belanger, Awosoga & Weasel Head 2013, p. 13).ⁱⁱⁱ Tina was one of the many Indigenous children under the 'care' of the settler state. As such, she was part of a system through which Indigenous children are not only removed en masse,^{iv} but in which they also die at staggering rates.^v What we can learn from activist initiatives (such as, Sisters in Spirit, No More Silence) and academics alike (Smith 2005; Razack 2002b; Weaver 2009) is that, within the Canadian settler colony, the fact that Tina Fontaine was Indigenous, female, and a child, marked her for sexual violence and death.

Yet, first and foremost, this is not a paper about Tina. This is a paper about the conditions of possibilities and probabilities that structure the relationship between Indigenous peoples and Manitoba's child welfare authorities that marked Tina for regulation, and that ultimately, render her death as nothing out of the ordinary. In this paper I turn to (re)productions of settler colonialism in Canada by examining some of the racial-spatial practices that inform Manitoba's child welfare system and its relation to the Indigenous peoples the province of Manitoba has formed around. This paper builds on socio-historic research and a discourse analysis which I conducted of 169 newspaper articles.^{vi} In its initial phase I examined the colonial constructions of Indigenous parents, and more specifically Indigenous mothers, that justify the wholesale removal of Indigenous children by child welfare services (see Landertinger 2015). I now build on this framework by engaging in a spatial analysis. Through a spatial analysis I investigate how, first, the making of *race* and *space* are intimately connected in the settler colonial imagination, and, second, how such racial-spatial enactments enable the removal of Indigenous children by child welfare authorities. I make the argument that contemporary child welfare practices in Manitoba are deeply invested in the daily affirmations of the settler colonial project. The child welfare system constitutes an

institutionalized form of settler colonial power over Indigenous peoples and the large-scale transfer of their children to settler institutions a manifestation of colonial violence. The practice of removing Indigenous children is normalized through various racial-spatial constructs. A process of 'unmapping' (Razack 2002a, p. 5) reveals the following. The colonial relationship between white settlers and Indigenous peoples is spatially and racially constructed as an encounter between 'dysfunctional aboriginal bodies' belonging to 'spaces of savagery', and 'modern citizen-subjects' belonging to 'spaces of bourgeois respectability'.^{vii} Through such constructs white settler subjects come to know themselves as dominant, morally superior, and rightful owners of the land. As will become evident, the removal of Indigenous children is justified by the very conditions settler colonialism created in the first place.

'Unmapping' Colonial Geographies

Following the theoretical and methodological trajectories of scholarship at the intersections of critical race theory and geography, this paper examines how spaces are organized to sustain white supremacist colonial relations and how these relations in turn shape spaces. To this end, I engage in a process of 'unmapping'. Building on Richard Phillips, Sherene Razack explains, that a process of unmapping requires not only the denaturalization of colonial geographies by inquiring how spaces came to be, but also a disruption of the normative world views that are built upon them (2002a, p. 5). Implied in such a task is a conception of space that sees its enactment as both material and symbolic (see Blomley 2003, p. 122). Space, Razack (2002a, p. 7) argues, is not innocent: It is not merely a void we fill with things (buildings, monuments, parks), nor something that evolves naturally. Instead, space is intimately tied to power. Radhika Mohanram similarly reminds us of the interconnectedness of race and space—in particular how the making of race is linked in a dialectical fashion to the making of space which it constructs and sustains, and through which race itself is imbued with meaning. According to Mohanram (1999), the making of race and space are intimately connected. Spatial enactments are also racial enactments, and vice versa. Racial hierarchies and colonial control are enacted and sustained through space, just as much as space is created and sustained by the former.

The metonymic heaviness of race/space becomes especially pronounced in a settler colonial context. This is for the reason that settler colonialism is a project in which land is absolutely foundational (Wolfe 2006). This is a project that fundamentally rests on (re)articulations of land and space—as something that can be discovered, named, enclosed, developed, and owned. In this context, white settlers (and their descendants) are imagined as entitled to, and legally installed as, rightful owners of the land (Razack 2002b). As will be discussed below, for this power to stick, this entitlement has to be (re)enacted on a continuous basis.

Yet, why bring a spatial analysis to an examination of Indigenous child removal? This paper extends arguments that conceptualize the removal of Indigenous children by the Canadian settler society as a genocidal practice (Monture-Angus 1995, p. 193; LaDuke 2003, p. 10), one that can be traced back to the beginnings of the Indian residential school system (MacDonald & MacDonald 2007; Fournier & Crey 1998), and which is enabled through colonial narrative constructions of Indigenous parents as inadequate caretakers of their children (Kline 1992; Emberley 2007). It is by turning to a spatial analysis that we gain further insights into how this colonial practice is normalized in the present. Through such an analysis we learn that Indigenous child removal is legitimized not merely by representing Indigenous peoples as bad parents—although this is undoubtedly foundational—but also by creating spaces with certain material conditions that are then considered inadequate places to raise a child. These conditions can then be presented back to the settler society as 'proof' of the imagined inadequacy of Indigenous parents, or the dysfunction that is said to be intrinsic to aboriginal peoples as such, thereby dialectically reproducing racial/spatial imaginaries that sustain white colonial control.

In what is to follow, I turn to a discussion of some of the colonial practices that established Manitoba as a place belonging to the settler society, after which I examine the material and symbolic construction of 'aboriginal spaces' focusing on Indian reserves, and the remaking of the land around the reserves. Subsequently, I turn to the city of Winnipeg, Manitoba's capital, to examine its racial-spatial construction as a white settler space from which aboriginal bodies must be expunged. Finally, I bring these threads together and show how child removal practices are normalized and sustained by this web of racial-spatial enactments.

Racial Enactments of Space: Land Dispossession, Creation of Reserves, and Manitoba Hydro

In this section I address some of the ways through which white settler subjects re-made the land the province of Manitoba rests within. As will become evident, such racial-spatial enactments normalize colonial control and ensure the continued marginalization and dispossession of Indigenous peoples. It is also through these material and symbolic enactments that the very conditions are created that funnel Indigenous children into the child welfare system.

Most of the land that is now the province of Manitoba was taken by the settler society through signing Treaty No. 1 and Treaty No. 2 in 1871, which cover the southern part of the province, and Treaty No. 5 in 1875 and in 1908 (which was signed as an adhesion to Treaty 5), covering central Manitoba and the north of the province. According to colonial law, these treaties removed Indigenous peoples' title to the land and opened it up for European settlement, agricultural expansion to the west, and resource extraction to the north (Hill 2009, p. 47). As an excerpt of Treaty No. 5 proclaims:

... said Indians have been notified and informed by Her Majesty's said Commissioners that it is the desire of Her Majesty to open up for settlement, immigration and such other purposes ... The Saulteaux and Swampy Cree Tribes of Indians and all other the Indians [sic] inhabiting the district hereinafter described and defined, do hereby cede, release, surrender and yield up to the Government of the Dominion of Canada, for Her Majesty the Queen and Her successors forever, all their rights, titles and privileges whatsoever to the lands ... (*Treaty 5 1875*).

The treaties thus provided the Dominion Government with a legal framework with which to bestow upon itself title to the land. This does not mean, however, that Indigenous peoples' rights to the land were honoured before the treaties were signed. Settlement by Europeans began long before with the erection of forts by fur trade mercantilists and subsequent immigration waves. Treaty No. 1 and 2 were the first post-Confederation treaties, signed one year after Manitoba was formed as part of the Canadian Confederation. Settlers were already abundant at this time. Treaties were signed on the promise that the colonial government halt or at least divert the unlawful encroachment of settlers from Indigenous lands. Therefore, underlying the signing of the treaties on part of Indigenous peoples was partially the hope that the colonial society would set aside some land that was not to be settled by the encroaching settlers and to get at least some compensation for the land that had already been taken from them (Lawrence 2004, p. 34; Daschuk 2013). Yet, as Patrick Wolfe (2000) points out, such unlawful settlements (rather than running counter to the colonial administration) constitute the principle means of colonial expansion. Colonial expansion takes place 'behind the screen of the frontier, in the wake of which, once the dust has settled, the irregular acts that took place have been regularized and the boundaries of White settlement extended' (Wolfe 2000, p. 144).

It may be argued that the government had an interest in signing the treaties—not only to establish a legal base for land dispossession—but also because it was wary of future uprisings by Indigenous peoples (Milloy 2003, p. 31) and the treaties provided a way to pacify resistance. The terms set out in Treaty 1 and 2 signify the settlers' anxiety over Indigenous uprisings. These treaties proclaim that the 'Chippewa and Swampy Cree Tribes of Indians' were required to 'cede, release, surrender and yield' the lands as defined by the treaty, and agree to '*maintain perpetual peace between themselves and Her Majesty's white subjects*' (*Treaties 1 and 2 1871*, emphasis added).

Such anxieties were not ill-founded. Westward expansion of course did not come without resistance by those whose lands were being taken. Cree resistance was mounting to increased colonial settlements in the West (Lawrence 2004, p. 34; see, for example, Daschuk 2013, p. 94ff; Daugherty 1983). Especially after the Dominion Government acquired the land from the Hudson's Bay Company in 1869,^{viii} and their refusal to acknowledge the claims of the plains communities, resistance intensified (Lawrence 2004, p. 34; Daschuk 2013, p. 91). The same

year, armed Métis seized Fort Garry and declared sovereignty over the Red River colony, which was subsequently crushed by the Dominion government. In 1885, (what came to be known as the North-West Rebellion or second Riel Rebellion) hundreds of Métis and Cree warriors engaged in widespread armed struggle against thousands of government troops (which could now be easily transported to Manitoba after the newly-built Canadian Pacific Railway) (Hill 2009, p. 48). After the Métis leadership was arrested and Louis Riel hung, the colonial authorities starved out Cree communities, hung their leaders, and incarcerated dozens (Lawrence 2004, p. 34). As a result of the insurgence, changes to the *Indian Act* were undertaken codifying measures to suppress dissent in First Nation communities. Each Plains band was classified as 'loyal' or 'disloyal', leading to harassment and persecution of those who were considered to belong to a 'disloyal' band (ibid).

Hence, these treaty negotiations also have to be understood within the wider context of settler colonial violence that propelled Canada's white nation-building efforts. Attempts to annihilate Indigenous peoples came in a range of tactics, for example, outright slaughter (Stevenson 1999, p. 2), the spread of disease epidemics such as smallpox or tuberculosis (Milloy 2003, p. 31; Daschuk 2013), imposed starvation (Franks 2000, p. 8; Lawrence 2004, p. 31; Daschuk 2013), and sexual violence (Weaver 2009; see also Bourgeault 1989, p. 93). Bonita Lawrence further points out that the repression of Indigenous peoples in Canada was also made possible through the genocide of Indigenous peoples south of (what became) the border to the United States. She writes, 'Canada piggybacked off of American Manifest Destiny' (2004, p. 30). This systemic and systematic genocide constituted the backdrop to the treaty negotiations, a violent threat strategically employed by colonial authorities. This is exemplified by the fact that when Lieutenant Governor Archibald and Commissioner Simpson met with Indigenous peoples to sign the first treaty, they did so under military presence. As Archibald explained 'Military display has always a great effect on savages, and the presence, even of a few troops, will have a good tendency' (Department of Indian Affairs 1871, p. 14). In this sense, the threat of warfare made large-scale bloodshed unnecessary, allowing the colonizers to preserve an image for themselves as more benevolent than the United States regarding the treatment of 'their' Indian subjects, all while disavowing the enormous violence upon which their dominant status necessarily rests.

The treaties also provided the terms for the establishment of the reserve system in Manitoba and thus allowed for the confinement of Indigenous peoples to zoned-off tracts of land. The creation of reserves (administered under the *Indian Act*) often divided ancestral homelands, nations, and clans that had lived and hunted together for centuries (Harris 2002). This colonial practice was pursued so vigorously that by 1883 only a few hundred individuals were not yet confined to a reserve and thus under the control of the colonial government (Daschuk 2013, p. xxi). Absolute power over reserve activities (down to issues, such as, who lives where, and who gets to eat what) remained with the Minister

of Indian Affairs and the local Indian Agents. As Cole Harris (2002) puts it, 'if one were a Native person, the reserves bore on what one could and could not do. They were fixed geographical points of reference, surrounded by clusters of permissions and inhibitions that affected most Native opportunities and movements' (p. xxi).

While Indigenous peoples were relegated to reserves, the land around them was (literally and symbolically) remade. Perhaps the most dramatic spatial reorganizations can be ascribed to hydro-electric power projects, beginning in the early 1900s and continuing to this day. Whereas in the south land had largely been remade through urban settlement, large-scale hydro-electric projects were initiated in northern Manitoba that utterly refashioned the landscape. One of the biggest projects of this kind (the Nelson River development) was completed in the 1970s, which resulted in the building of multiple dams, the rerouting of the Churchill river, and the flooding of huge tracts of land. These large-scale hydro-electric projects resulted in massive environmental destruction. They remade the land to such an extent, that many Indigenous peoples in northern Manitoba were ultimately forced to give up their self-sufficient way of life and become dependent on the colonial state (Waldram 1993). These projects devastated Indigenous lands by decimating fish resources, flooding wildlife habitats, destroying hunting grounds and traplines. Sacred burial grounds and homes were similarly washed away (Aboriginal Justice Implementation Commission 1999). Many reserves are currently located adjacent to flood areas, which means that Manitoba Hydro periodically floods these lands, which makes it very difficult, if not impossible (and certainly dangerous), to trap in these areas. Moreover, because the water continually ebbs and floods as hydro dams control water levels, ice roads never properly form. Those reserves who have to rely on ice roads in the winter find themselves cut off from their hunting grounds and the outside world (Krotz 1990, p. 22). In addition, the provincial government assumed the authority to map out and impose a grid of traplines over those lands in which hunting/trapping is still possible, forcing Indigenous peoples to seek permission from the colonial state to hunt/trap on their territories.

In short, for many northern First Nations the loss of their resource base and, hence, self-sustained existence was a direct result of the enormous spatial impacts of these hydro-electric projects (Hoffman 2008, p.104; Waldram 1993). John Bonner, resident of South Indian Lake, provides the following account:

Everything changed when Manitoba Hydro built a dam and forced us to relocate. ... we had enough fish and caribou to feed everyone. We would also have a surplus for sale so we could buy gear and other things to make our life more comfortable. ... We were definitely a happy community, with few social and economic problems. And we didn't have to rely on welfare assistance, like today. ... Losing our way of life is the first consequence of the dam. ... Before, nature was pristine, intact, our environment was natural, and animals were healthy. Now, everywhere it is a spectacle of desolation. ... What

they did to us is indeed a cultural and economic genocide ... (2008, pp. 15-18)

When these large-scale hydro-electric projects were initiated, Indigenous peoples were not consulted (Slowey 2008, p. 48), nor even informed of what would happen to their homelands (Wera and Martin 2008, p. 59). In 1977, and after much lobbying, the government of Manitoba and Manitoba Hydro signed a so-called 'modern treaty'—the *Northern Flood Agreement* (NFA)—with those First Nations (Cross Lake, Nelson House, Norway House, Split Lake and York Factory) whose reserve lands were being flooded. Yet, the agreement has proved meaningless thus far for its terms have never been fulfilled (Kulchyski 2008, p. 129). Further, those bands who signed the NFA claimed that they were never told of the massive environmental destruction that would occur. Thus, while First Nations have not benefited from the NFA, this treaty once again benefited the colonial settler society for the agreement constitutes another legal basis for the renewed dispossession of Indigenous lands and enormous wealth generation for the settler state. As James Waldram (1993) argues, the NFA constituted a modern-day land grab ripe with deceit and false promises.

How can we understand the building of these dams? More than mere material enactments of space, these large-scale undertakings to re-make the land are also imbued with symbolic meaning. These enactments speak to the most foundational principle of settler colonialism, namely the question of who is entitled to the land. Patrick Wolfe reminds us that a colonial settler society is constituted through the double need to 'destroy to replace' (2006, p. 390). The white settler society must not only strive for the displacement of Indigenous peoples, but—to ensure its proliferation—must simultaneously establish a new body politic on the land that was seized (Wolfe 2006, p. 390; Hall 2004, p. 67). Hence, a colonial settler society is constituted through the double need to *displace* and *emplace*. The simultaneous 'emplacement' (Blomley 2004, p. 109) of white settlers as original and legitimate inhabitants is as important as the dispossession of Indigenous peoples. As Razack writes, 'the settler's crisis of identity is an ongoing one, born of a psychic and material need to emplace himself. Where the land is stolen, when entitlement to it must be performed over and over again in anxious repression of those indigenous to it, emplacement is the most urgent of tasks' (2011a, p. 266). Creating this emplacement as natural and normal, and hence having to forget or repress its creation, is a difficult task. Another relationship needs to be established between the colonizer and the land that is claimed to be 'settled', different from the relationship between the colonizer and the land in an imperial project that is for the most part of an 'extractive' kind. In the settler colonial context, the white colonizer not only stays to extract resources and govern the racial Other, but s/he also stays to 'settle' and claim the land as rightfully theirs—as their 'home and native land' (as the Canadian national anthem proclaims). Settler colonialism becomes an expression of white Western subjects 'recreating and reworlding non-Western regions of the world'

(Mohanram 1999, p. xiii) as already always Western. Through such spatial enactments, the colonizer emerges as someone who 'discovers' the land, who 'maps' the land, who 'marks' the land, and who 'develops' the land. This is part of an all too familiar story about enterprising settlers who are portrayed as chief developers of the land and who, in this process, become the rightful owners of the land (Razack 2002a, p. 2). These material and symbolic enactments of space are the creationist marks of a colonial society. It is such acts that consolidate the white settler mythology and naturalize settler colonialism. As pointed out, this requires a lot of violence. It requires the forceful relocation of communities, it requires the flooding of hunting grounds, trap lines, sacred burial sites, the destruction of Indigenous homelands. It entails a literal remaking of the land. As Joseph Massad illustrates, colonizers always imagine themselves as the embodiment of modernity, the bearers of culture and civilization (2000, p. 316). The modern settler subject expresses his power on the landscape. In contrast to the colonizer's imaginary self-perception as modernity incarnate, aboriginal bodies are imagined as trapped in a state of pre-civilization and pre-modernity (Razack 2002a, p. 2; Razack 2015, p. 5; McClintock 1995, p. 130). This signifies a relationship that is constructed as one between modern white subjects and pre-modern aboriginal bodies who must be 'assisted into modernity' (Razack 2012, p. 910), securing a sovereign and civilized subject status for white colonizers—as Meyda Yeğenoğlu so eloquently puts it—'by way of a detour through the other' (1999, p. 1).

Reserves Today: The Making of Racialized Space

The material construction of reserves similarly follows a recipe for settler colonial control. Because a self-sufficient land-based existence has become virtually impossible for many Indigenous peoples in Manitoba—a direct result of the dispossession of their lands, their confinement to reserves, the settler society's destruction of the land around the reserves—many Indigenous peoples are relegated to a life of poverty and state dependence (Hallett et al 2006). In addition, the houses on most reserves were poorly designed, cheaply built, and are not kept up by the province. Almost 60% of people on reserves live in homes that are considered unsuitable or inadequate (ibid, p. 75) and for decades there has been a constant shortage of houses (AJIC 1999). Currently, according to the Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs, there is an urgent shortage of 17,000 homes (CBC 2011). For example, in Tina's reserve community (signatories to Treaty 1) over four hundred people are on a housing waiting list and stories abound of houses that were so poorly built (indeed, partially held together by staples) that they are falling apart within the first year. Sagkeeng's chief Fontaine explains that

... we just do the best we can ... but the fact of the matter is we're First Nations, we're Indians. You think they're gonna give us the best? I don't think so. We've never got the best from the government. We get the bare bone essential package. (APTN 2014)

Possibly most disturbing is the fact that many reserves do not even have access to plumbing and sewage disposal facilities (Hallett et al 2006, p. 77), meaning that these homes have no tap water, showers, or toilets.

These colonial realities are exemplified well in the case of an Ojibwa community who was confined to the reserve, Shoal Lake 40. To supply Winnipeg with clean drinking water, government officials decided to build an aqueduct to bring water directly to the city from Shoal Lake, a project that was completed in 1919. For this purpose, the federal government expropriated the community's land (which was then given to the City of Winnipeg), flooded it (the aqueduct, in fact, was built over their ancestral burial ground) and moved the Indigenous population from their original location (the mouth of the Falcon River) onto the adjacent peninsula. Over and around this peninsula, the colonial government then decided to build the diversion canal, artificially creating a tiny island onto which the First Nation community was relegated. Enclosed on this island, the community has no land base to live off, no job opportunities, and perhaps the most sinister fact of all, no clean drinking water. Despite being located at the mouth of the aqueduct that supplies Winnipeg with most of its clean drinking water, the community has thus far been denied a water treatment plant, and thus cannot drink the water that flows around them. As chief Erwin Redsky puts it,

At the settlers' end of the water pipe there's economic prosperity, [and] clean drinking water ... At our end of the pipe, we have 17 years of boil-water order, no job opportunities and we are forced to risk our lives for basic necessities. (cited in Hale 2014)

By mentioning 'risk', Redsky alludes to the fact that the colonial state never built a bridge or permanent road to Shoal Lake 40, which can only be accessed by boat in the summer and, if cold enough, over the ice in the winter. Residents have to leave the island to buy groceries and haul in drinking water from Kenora, a trip that is treacherous year-round, but particularly in Fall and Spring when the ice is not properly formed and which has taken the lives of many Shoal Lake 40 residents. As David Goldberg reminds us, '[r]acisms become institutionally normalized in and through spatial configuration' (1993, p. 185). The racial-spatial practices required to bring about, sustain, and normalize this deadly colonial violence—a situation in which settlers simply turn on the tap and receive clean water from resources that were stolen, and where those from whom it was taken must risk their lives to survive—is staggering.

Symbolic Enactments of Racialized Space: 'Aboriginal Bodies' on Reserves

Just as the construction of the modern colonial citizen rests on its imaginary opposite—the pre-modern aboriginal body, so does the construction of respectable settler space depend on its binary construct—degenerate aboriginal space (see Razack 2002a, p. 11). An

analysis of news media in Manitoba shows that media discourses in this province circulate powerful colonial images of the 'Aboriginal-as-Other' that uphold this dichotomy. News accounts from, both, the *Winnipeg Free Press* and the *Brandon Sun* represent First Nation reserves as spaces of savagery and degeneracy. Newspaper articles describe reserves as sites of modern-day chaos—riddled with social problems such as physical and sexual violence, homicides, rampant substance abuse, suicides, unemployment, disease epidemics, and family breakdown. Graphic imagery of filth, wild dogs, and neglected houses abound.

Aboriginal bodies in such a space are imagined as 'spectacles of debauchery' (Cannon 2011)—they are described as inebriated, lazy, neglectful, and irresponsible. They are further constructed as welfare-leeches, 'too lazy to work' while taking advantage of 'Canadian taxpayers'. For example, Joseph Quesnel, the author of a newspaper article entitled 'Some Reserves Just Aren't Viable', explains that Canadian taxpayers are paying Indigenous peoples on reserves 'to do nothing' (2010, H11). In their role as caregivers, the 'aboriginal father' is represented as physically and sexually abusive and 'the aboriginal mother' as promiscuous, neglectful, abusive, and drunk. Overall, the aboriginal mother emerges as the archetype of an unfit mother in the settler colonial imagination (Landertinger 2015). Such discursive constructs justify and indeed necessitate the intervention of child welfare services.

Indeed, specifically related to the welfare of Indigenous children, what is implicitly understood and often explicitly stated in the newspaper articles, is that the wholesale removal of Indigenous children is the result of the inadequacy of Indigenous parents, rather than a result of settler colonial violence. Ahistorical newspaper accounts, for example, cite aboriginal 'family breakdown' (Lambert and Preprost 2010, A3; Kusch 2010, A4; *Brandon Sun* 2010a) as the most common reasons for the disproportionately high number of Indigenous children in the child welfare system. Indigenous families are either explicitly referred to as 'dysfunctional' (McIntyre 2010a; Simard 2010a, A18, 2010b, A16) or presented as such. The word 'dysfunction' is not only used to describe individual families, but indeed entire reserve communities. As Quesnel puts it, 'Dysfunction ... is common on First Nations. ... Consider the high proportion of First Nation children under foster care' (2010, H11). One article quotes then Aboriginal and Northern Affairs Minister Eric Robison expressing a similar sentiment, in that Indigenous peoples 'are marred by all forms of dysfunction', having 'the highest proportion of the province's population in conflict with the justice system, the highest proportion in prisons, and tragically high numbers of children in the child-welfare system' (in *Brandon Sun* 2010b). Overall, newspaper articles provide commonsensical accounts of what is 'wrong' with Indigenous peoples. The aboriginal body is marked as deviant, intrinsically pathological, and as standing outside definitions of normality and bourgeois respectability. These accounts blame Indigenous peoples for their social ills and portray their marginalization as an outcome of their imagined inadequacy. Indeed, the 'dysfunctional

aboriginal family' (McIntyre 2010a) emerges as an emblem of child neglect.

In a sense, such colonial imaginings are nothing new. Colonial discourses have always presented Indigenous peoples as inferior to justify colonial rule and the usurpation of Indigenous lands (see, for example, Smith 2005; Said 1978). Indeed, colonial control is inseparable from the inferiorization and dehumanization of Indigenous populations. As Aimé Césaire puts it, 'colonization = "thingification"' (1994, p. 177). Borrowing Foucault's terminology, such a framework constitutes a discursive 'regime of truth', within which we find a reduction of diverse subject peoples to a monolithic form (Said 1978), a perception of certain practices as indicative of innate or inherent traits, and a relegation of Indigenous peoples to particular relations of inferiority, which are subsequently naturalized (Jiwani 2005, p. 3). Such narratives are of vital importance to the colonial state, for when settlers are able to imagine aboriginal bodies as too dysfunctional to take care of their own homes, too dysfunctional to take care of themselves, too dysfunctional to raise their offspring, then we are also able to imagine aboriginal bodies as too dysfunctional to live self-determined lives, and most importantly, too dysfunctional to own the land (Razack 2011b, p. 88; Landertinger 2015, p. 75). Thus, through the creation of the reserve system and the 'slum-like' conditions it instilled, the colonial state created for itself 'aboriginal spaces' that can then be presented back to the settler society as emblems of degeneracy and dysfunction. Such constructions naturalize colonial control and normalize the removal of Indigenous children by the settler society. These stories also rest on the disavowal of the colonial violence that directly created these material conditions.

Winnipeg: Construction of a Colonial City

Winnipeg, despite being home to many racialized communities as well as having the largest urban Indigenous population in the country, was historically constructed and continues to be imagined as a space for white settlers (Razack 2002b). The first fur trading post on the site that is now Winnipeg was established in 1738 by French fur traders. In 1822, the fort was taken over by the Hudson's Bay Company which renamed the site Fort Garry. Fort Garry was planted in the midst of Indigenous lands, settlements, and a strategic trading route belonging to the Cree, Assiniboine, Saulteaux, and Dakota.

In 1873, the city of Winnipeg was formally established, shortly after the establishment of the newly formed province of Manitoba. It was also at this time that waves of settlers arrived to expand Canadian industry. With the turn towards agricultural expansion and the massive influx of European immigrants (Welsted, Everitt & Stadel 1997, p. 164), Indigenous peoples needed to make room for the settlers and be expelled from the city. It was at this time that the southern reserves were created and Indigenous peoples were quite literally moved to the outskirts of the city.^{ix}

When Indigenous peoples were pushed off the land and relegated to reserves, the flow of aboriginal bodies to the colonial city had to be managed and regulated. For this purpose, in 1889 the Indian Agent was given the power as justice of the peace to enforce anti-vagrancy laws (Moss & Gardner-O'Toole 1991). There also existed a 'pass system' which prohibited Indigenous peoples from leaving their reserves unless they obtained a pass from the Indian agent, laying out when they could leave, where they could go, and when they had to return. Moreover, the same year that the city of Winnipeg was formed, and the southern reserves were created, an act was passed that established the North-West Mounted Police (what would later become the Royal Canadian Mounted Police), remembered by the settler society as bringing order and stability to 'the rugged plains' (Parks Canada 2010). Thus, after confining Indigenous peoples to reserves, the *Vagrancy Act*, pass system, and the newly formed police force, ensured the expulsion of aboriginal bodies from the colonial city.

Yet, rather than a thing of the past, aboriginal bodies in Winnipeg are still considered out of place, as illegitimate. They are considered not to belong. As my research data indicates, urban spaces that are home to a high number of Indigenous peoples become synonymous with (and expressed as caricatures of) racialized space. Rather than conceived of as a result of settler colonial violence in the past and present, segregated racialized spaces are considered manifestations of the degeneracy that is considered inherent to aboriginal culture. Newspaper articles in the *Winnipeg Free Press* and the *Brandon Sun* portray urban aboriginal spaces as full of alcohol abuse, prostitution, child neglect, crime and violence. Just as First Nation reserves are imagined as aboriginal spaces of savagery, Winnipeg's and Brandon's 'Aboriginal spaces' are similarly constructed as an urban wilderness, a space of savagery and chaos in the city (see, for example, McIntyre 2010b): In this social chaos, the colonial story goes, and due to the inadequacy of dysfunctional parents, many Indigenous children are 'in and out of foster homes' (Welch 2010, A8), thus forced to live life in a 'hell hole' (cited in *ibid*).

Aboriginal bodies in this urban space are not considered part of 'the public'. Rather, they are imagined as a *'threat* to the public'. This symbolic eviction from the public is reminiscent of Samira Kawash's (1998) analysis of the homeless body. Kawash explains that the violence directed at the homeless body, a body forced into perpetual movement while rendered placeless, is an enactment that gives meaning to and indeed constitutes 'the public'. Aboriginal bodies are similarly expunged from 'the public', a term applicable only to those residents who are considered to belong, those who legitimately inhabit the space. In this vein, newspaper articles in Manitoba predominantly describe aboriginal males in the city as drunks and violent criminals. As such, they are portrayed as thieves, gang members, violent offenders, and/or sexual predators. Articles tell stories of violent aboriginal men 'preying' on 'unsuspecting' settlers. For example, it is said that the victims 'didn't know [their] attacker' (Giroday 2010; see also McIntyre 2010a). They were attacked 'in broad daylight' (Hitchen 2010), while

jogging, going for a walk (Giroday 2010), or merely passing them on the street (McIntyre 2010a). The male 'aboriginal body' is also imagined as a bestial body, as some-*thing* to be feared. It is in this vein that newspaper articles proclaim that 'police are on the *hunt*' (Hitchen 2010; emphasis added) or that the public has to be aware of these '*predators*' (Giroday 2010; emphasis added). Articles also proclaim that 'aboriginal youth gang crime' is a 'subculture' that '*breeds violence*' (Owen 2010; emphasis added). Winnipeg Police Services spokesman Const. Jason Michalyshen warns the public that the 'warm weather can draw out predators', and women, in particular, should be aware of their surroundings and 'more cognizant of their own personal safety' (cited in Giroday 2010). Andrea Smith (2005) points to the usefulness of such accounts. Through the portrayal of Indigenous men as inherently violent and threatening to the safety of the settler society—in particular the purity and safety of white women—the colonizer is able to demonize Indigenous men (Smith 2005, p. 21). This instils the belief in white women that they are in need of protection by white men, while simultaneously misleading them into believing that 'the white men's' treatment of women is superior to the treatment of women by 'the savages' (ibid, pp. 22-23). Such a narrative not only justifies the marginalization of Indigenous men, but also normalizes white-heteropatriarchal control.

While the vast majority of newspaper articles concern themselves with Indigenous men, in those cases that the female aboriginal body appears in urban space, she is represented as a prostitute. In both newspapers, Indigenous women are either explicitly or implicitly named in connection with prostitution. Penelope Edmonds argues that, historically, Indigenous peoples were not only constructed as an anomaly to the urban settler space, but became marked in very specific ways. For example, the aboriginal body in urban space became a 'nuisance', a 'vagrant', a 'prostitute' (2010, p. 6). Both constructs, the 'aboriginal male' as threat to the public's safety and the 'aboriginal woman/prostitute' as a threat to the colonial city's moral character, signify their otherness to the modern bourgeois settler citizen. Blomley writes that 'Western notions of property are deeply invested in a colonial geography, a white mythology, in which the racialized figure of the savage plays a central role' (2003, p. 124). The construction of white settler space, or spaces of bourgeois respectability, rest on the definition of its imagined opposite—a violent world of disorder—or the 'space of the savage' (ibid). The reserve as imagined space of savagery and degeneracy stands in contrast to the respectable, modern, and superior urban space of the white settler subject. Canada's colonial city came to represent the space of modernity, progress, and civilization (Edmonds 2010, p. 8), in which the aboriginal body is not only considered out of place, but also out of time. In this context, the aboriginal body is a construct that embodies its exclusion from the public, as 'the public' dialectically emerges as a white settler space. Newspaper articles reiterate this notion, for example, by reporting that 'ordinary' women were simply out 'enjoying *their community*' (Giroday 2010; emphasis added) when they were blitz-attacked by an aboriginal male. Aboriginal bodies are not part of this 'community'. Instead the

colonial city must continue to cleanse itself of those bodies considered not to belong (Razack 2012, p. 911). This colonial logic, for example, manifests through so-called 'starlight tours'—the practice of police driving Indigenous peoples outside city limits during the winter, dropping them off in the middle of the night during sub-zero temperatures (oftentimes taking their jackets and shoes), and leaving them to walk back/freeze to death (Hubbard & Razack 2011). This logic is also apparent in Faron Hall's life on the streets of Winnipeg, and Tina Fontaine's body floating in the Red River only a month after the CFS brought her to the city.

Colonial Geographies and the Normalization of Indigenous Child Removal

It is through the racial-spatial enactments discussed thus far that conditions are created that normalize, and indeed call for, the removal of Indigenous children from their parents and communities. It should be noted that while Indigenous children are disproportionately removed through the child welfare system in each province and territory across Canada, in no other province is the removal of Indigenous children as pronounced as in the province of Manitoba. Manitoba is the province with the highest number of Indigenous children in provincial custody. While in 1997, at least 70% of children in the system were Indigenous (Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs 2000), they made up almost 80% in the year 2000 (Gough et al 2005). The most recent numbers can be found in the 2010 report by the Manitoba Office of the Children's Advocate (OCA) to the legislative assembly, which indicates that currently 86% of children in Manitoba's custody are Indigenous (OCA 2010, p. 11). Indeed, apprehensions through child welfare authorities constitute the number one reason why a First Nation child in Manitoba may no longer be living with their parents (Manitoba Aboriginal and Northern Affairs 2000).

The continuation and normalization of this genocidal practice is enabled in the following ways. For one, as we have seen, Indigenous peoples' abilities to raise their own offspring are rendered suspect in the colonial imagination. When Indigenous peoples are imagined as inadequate mothers and fathers, then intervention by child welfare authorities becomes a necessity. Similarly, when aboriginal space becomes savage space in the colonial imaginary, it is easy to infer that such spaces are no place to raise a child. Amidst the social chaos and debauchery that is said to be emblematic of the space of the savage, the aboriginal child emerges as the innocent victim yearning to be 'saved' from their destructive environments by the settler subject. Manitoba's *Child and Family Services Act* provides a rather broad definition of what it means for a child to be in need of protection by child welfare authorities. As Section 17(1) puts forth, '...a child is in need of protection where the life, health or emotional well-being of the child is endangered ...' Given the colonial imaginary that informs our perception of, both, Indigenous peoples' (in)aptitude for child care, and aboriginal home environments which we understand to be dysfunctional, such a

broad definition certainly does not speak in favor of Indigenous caregivers. Since aboriginal fathers and mothers are imagined as degenerate and too dysfunctional to look after their own children, removing their offspring is nothing that is considered 'out of the ordinary'. Yet, the normalization of this practice disavows the enormity of its violence and the colonial relations of power it sustains.

Moreover, the settler society created and sustains the very material conditions that funnel Indigenous children into the child welfare system. Child welfare statutes lay out specific criteria with which child welfare workers have to assess a child's family situation. Upon entering a family's home, the case worker has to rank the child's environment and his/her guardians in terms of 'risk factors'. Yet the very criteria that are used to assess and classify, and upon which the removal of Indigenous children rests, are outcomes of settler colonial violence. Research data indicates that Indigenous children, as opposed to non-Indigenous children, are removed at disproportionate rates because of what child welfare statutes classify as 'neglect' (Blackstock, Trocmé & Bennett 2004). Indeed, 'neglect' is the number one reason for Indigenous children to be taken from their homes (MacLaurin et al 2008). Yet, when the child welfare statutes' meaning of 'neglect' is unpacked, the racial and classist undertones become evident. According to the Canadian Child Welfare Research Portal, 'neglect' applies

to situations in which a child's caregiver fails to provide adequate clothing, food or shelter, deliberately or otherwise. The term 'neglect' can also apply to the abandonment of a child or the omission of basic care such as medical or dental care. (CECW 2011; see also Child and Family Services Act, Section 17(2)b, subsection (iii))

Such classifications have powerful consequences. As one Winnipeg inner-city high-school teacher—who had a number of aboriginal children apprehended through CFS—explains in a newspaper article, she sees a lot of 'kids in need'—'kids with bedbug bites, trying to get them the health care they need, rotten teeth, they need glasses' (cited in Sanders 2010, A5). Child welfare workers also have to assess the adequacy or safety of a home based on the number of people living in the same household, that is, whether the house is considered 'too crowded' and whether every member has an 'adequate' sleeping space. Given the fact that there is a constant shortage of houses on reserves—a shortage created by the government—people have little choice but share the resources they have (including their homes) as best as possible. The outcome then is a living situation that according to Canadian notions of private property and spatial configurations is considered 'overcrowded'. Thus, given that many Indigenous peoples on reserves or in urban areas live in abject poverty, where adequate clothing is a luxury, their shelter often consists of falling apart and overcrowded houses, where they may not even have access to running water, and the next health care facilities may be hundreds of miles from the reserve as is the case for many northern reserves (and hence yearly dental check-ups or trips to the optometrist are simply impossible or too expensive), virtually every child living in such circumstances can be

classified as 'neglected'. Just as the *Vagrancy Act* created the 'vagrant', so do child welfare statutes create the category of the 'neglected child'. It is the very racial-spatial conditions the settler society created for Indigenous peoples that are then used to justify the removal of their 'neglected' children.

It needs pointing out that the removal of Indigenous children by the Canadian child welfare system is a fundamentally racial-spatial practice in and of itself; it involves the literal transfer of Indigenous peoples' offspring from their families and communities to settler institutions or (predominately) white foster families—a practice that simultaneously undermines Indigenous sovereignty while normalizing settler colonial control. The child welfare system thus acts as a framework through which white settler colonial power over Indigenous peoples is lawfully institutionalized and enacted. This institutional framework normalizes relations of coloniality in that the settler society authorizes itself to enter Indigenous communities, assess and classify the parenting conduct of Indigenous caregivers, and remove their children if they so desire. The literal act of removing Indigenous children from their communities and placing them in settler institutions is part of the daily affirmation of settler colonial violence. In these enactments, child welfare workers may be imagined as crossing over the 'frontier' (Blomley 2003), momentarily leaving their 'spaces of bourgeois respectability' and descending into 'savage space' to 'save' Indigenous children from their degenerate environments. Through all these constructs white settler subjects come to know themselves as dominant and morally superior. It is the white settler subject who emerges as the modern citizen and rightful owner of the land. Combined with stories of 'national goodness' and 'Canadian benevolence' (see Razack 2004, p. 144) these racial-spatial enactments are part of a white mythology that naturalizes colonial control, while obfuscating its very existence.

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Notes

ⁱ Depending on who is asked, this number varies. The Canadian police force places the MMIW around 1200 (RCMP 2014), while the Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) and Patricia Hajdu, Canada's minister for the status of women, believe the number to be over 4000 (Tasker 2016).

ⁱⁱ It is a logic that Indigenous peoples are also well aware of. Following the *accidental* discovery of Tina's body, emblematic of the indifference towards the disappearance and murder of Indigenous women on part of the settler society, Indigenous activists in Winnipeg took it upon themselves (under the

initiative 'Drag the Red') to literally rake the Red River for the bodies of their loved ones (CBC 2014b).

ⁱⁱⁱ On any given night 6.97% of the urban Indigenous population in Canada is homeless, as compared to 0.78% of the settler population. In Winnipeg, Indigenous peoples make up a staggering 62% of the city's homeless (Belanger, Awosoga & Weasel Head 2013, p. 13).

^{iv} In 2011, approximately half (48.1%) of the children aged 14 and under who were in foster care across Canada were of Indigenous ancestry, despite constituting only 7% of the child population (NHS 2013, p. 5).

^v Many Indigenous children die while in the custody of the Canadian child welfare system. In the last three years, 34 children died while in the custody of the CFS in Manitoba alone. Almost all of these children were of Indigenous ancestry (Rabson 2014).

^{vi} These articles were published between January 1 and December 31, 2010 in the *Winnipeg Free Press* and the *Brandon Sun*. This year was not chosen for a particular reason nor because something out of the ordinary had occurred during this time frame. Quite the opposite—this year was chosen precisely *because* nothing extraordinary had happened. As such, this year gives us an insight into 'business as usual'.

^{vii} Throughout this paper, 'aboriginal space' and 'aboriginal body' refer to social constructs—these categories are part of a colonial imagery and mythology that create a world according to its own logic. I do not wish to imply that such constructs exist 'out there' in a positivistic sense.

^{viii} Britain, Upper Canada, and the Hudson's Bay Company assumed for themselves the legal authority to negotiate the title to the land that is now Manitoba (see Daugherty 1983). While the Hudson's Bay Company Charter never formally extinguished Indigenous titles to the land, the settlers did not question their self-proclaimed authority to negotiate ownership over land that did not belong to them (the Hudson's Bay Company was only considered in possession of the land because it was 'given' to them by King Charles II in 1670—land that was not his to give). Nor did they consult or inform the Indigenous populations that their homelands were about to be handed over to a different colonial authority (Daugherty 1983). After transfer of the land from the Hudson's Bay Company to the Dominion Government, the government passed the Manitoba Act, formally creating the province of Manitoba.

^{ix} When one examines a map of southern Manitoba and pays attention to the location of the southern reserves, one can see that the reserves encircle Manitoba's major urban centres, such as Winnipeg and Brandon (Manitoba's second largest city).

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