

Decolonizing environmentalism in the Arctic? Greenpeace, complicity and negotiating the contradictions of solidarity in the Inuit Nunangat¹

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Abstract

Greenpeace has been evaluating and addressing its historic relationships with Indigenous peoples, especially as it attempts to re-establish relationships with Inuit communities and a presence in the Arctic. Because the organization has a troubled history in that region due to the impact of its anti-sealing campaigns on the Inuit, decolonization poses considerable challenges for this organization. Attempts to square Greenpeace's environmental agenda with the desire among many Inuit to enter the global economy through the development of large-scale resource extraction projects will demand that Greenpeace reflect on some of its most basic objectives on issues such as climate change and resource extraction. As one of the most prominent environmental NGOs aiming to shape its policies around those rights, Greenpeace will stand as a model for environmental organizations looking to take similar steps.

Keywords: Greenpeace; decolonization; environmentalism; solidarity

When the Community of Clyde River launched a Supreme Court challenge in November, 2016, many observers were surprised. The community did have a compelling case; despite years of community consultations rejecting a proposal by TGS-NOPEC to conduct Seismic testing for oil and gas off the coast of the community, the National Energy Board had nonetheless approved the application. What was surprising, however, was Clyde River's partner in the case: Greenpeace. Until Clyde River, Greenpeace had had little presence in the Arctic regions of Canada and was considered unwelcome in Inuit communities. The rebuff was owing to Greenpeace's role in the controversial anti-sealing campaigns of the 1970s and 80s. This had resulted in animosity that ran deep throughout Inuit communities, who commonly referred to Greenpeace as "Greenshit" and who saw it as responsible for the collapse of the sealing industry (Specia 2014). So, when Greenpeace released a slick YouTube video featuring Clyde River community members declaring "We do Not Consent" (to Seismic testing), it was clear that an important truce had been reached. That truce signals an historic shift in Greenpeace, from a past in which it held a

¹ I would like to acknowledge that the Inuit do not refer to the Canadian Arctic as the "Arctic" but rather as part of the Inuit Nunangat (Inuit homelands of Canada). See <https://www.itk.ca/maps-of-inuit-nunangat/>

reputation for prioritizing environmental concerns above the needs of Indigenous peoples to a present in which the organization has declared itself to be undergoing a process of *decolonization*.

We explore the history of this controversy and the ways in which the trajectory of Greenpeace's presence in the North has shaped its current approach to the intersection of environmental politics and Indigenous resurgence.² Examining Greenpeace's explicit project of decolonization, we examine their interpretation of the decolonization framework and highlight the "contradictions of solidarity" (Curnow and Helferty, 2018) and the tensions in relationships (Davis, 2010) that the organization will face as it attempts to negotiate the evolving (and sometimes conflicting) views of decolonization while maintaining the environmental vision that has come to define it during the past five decades. Drawing on the insights of Indigenous scholarship we shed light not only on Greenpeace, but also on the much broader context that is taking shape in the wake of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission as social movements (and others) grapple with the processes and debates surrounding allyship, solidarity, and decolonization. In the case of Greenpeace, we find space between its explicit discussion of decolonization and the more difficult realization of that agenda through changes to its environmental ideology or its approach to activism. In particular, we note the potentially insurmountable challenges it will face as it attempts to square its environmental agenda with the pragmatic desire among many Inuit to enter the contemporary global economy through the development of large-scale resource extraction projects on their territory. But we also note that such contradictions of solidarity are not unforeseen; decolonization, remains an emergent and undefined process, and one that is in many ways suited to the dynamics of contestation and change that define social movements. In this regard, Greenpeace's early engagement in this process will serve as a model to which other environmental organizations will inevitably turn. As such, it is important not only that Greenpeace engages in this process. Given the stakes for Indigenous groups, for Greenpeace, and for the future of environmental politics in general, it is equally important that it succeeds.

² The findings in this paper are developed from a content analysis of Greenpeace Canada and Greenpeace USA organizational documents on the topics of sealing, Indigenous policy and decolonization for the years 2014 through 2017. This is a case study of Greenpeace Canada's efforts to grapple with the overlap between their agenda and Indigenous concerns but we frequently contrast these with developments in the American branch of Greenpeace. In addition, the authors examined media coverage containing Indigenous leaders and activists' statements on these issues and consulted with two key informants, one current Greenpeace campaigner who worked extensively on the Clyde River campaign and one independent activist who continues to work alongside the Hamlet council in Clyde River. Searches for the documents and media statements were conducted between April 1, 2017 and November 1, 2017. The consultations with the key informants took place in June 2017 and December 2018.

Becoming an ally: decolonization and the reflexivity of social movements

This paper will illustrate that Greenpeace is attempting to make a clear and open commitment to improving its relationship with Indigenous peoples. But what is the correct path to rebuild relationships and re-establish trust? In other words, what does decolonization mean for an environmental organization that seeks to limit mining and fossil fuel extraction? Do the changes that Greenpeace has undergone amount to decolonization or is the use of this language part of a rhetorical strategy employed by an organization that has long demonstrated its skills in this arena? We believe the latter question is overly cynical but are attentive to the concerns of leading scholars in the field of Indigenous and decolonization studies that decolonization cannot simply be seen as “good intentions,” “empty metaphors” or “moves to innocence” (Tuck and Yang, 2012).

Projects of decolonization take place within the context explicated by Indigenous scholars (Alfred and Corntassel 2005; Coulthard 2014), who view colonialism not as a phenomenon relegated to history but as a continuing process in which “new faces” of colonialism involve ongoing “dispossession, contemporary deprivation, and poverty” that force Indigenous people “to cooperate individually and collectively with state authorities” (Alfred and Corntassel, 2005: 599). Processes of decolonization therefore, involve confronting all forms of power that continue to uphold inequalities within the institutions that structure the lives of Indigenous people (Coulthard 2014; Fellner, 2018) At the risk of blurring over many nuanced elements of decolonization, we begin with the statement, a starting point, that decolonization involves expanding spaces of indigeneity and promoting fundamental shifts in power relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples (De Leeuw et al 2013).

Seen in this way, the process of decolonization involves confronting the dynamics not only of states or of economic institutions, but also of the most well-meaning social movements (Sharma and Wright 2009; Chazan, 2016). Projects of decolonization involve not just the efforts of Indigenous people to confront forms of power that structure Indigenous lives but also those of “allies” (Davis 2010). Taiaiake Alfred (2005), for instance, writes that Indigenous movements require “the support and cooperation of allies in the Settler society” (p. 64). Recent scholarship from Indigenous and non-Indigenous authors (c.f. e.g. Davis, 2010; Snelgrove, Dhamoon, & Corntassel, 2014; Walia, 2012; Wallace, 2014) has begun to confront the question of such solidarity building through the lens of decolonization (Barker, 2010). Ultimately, Barker (2010) argues, “what it means to be an ally remains an open and dynamic concept” (p. 317). We contribute to these emerging perspectives on decolonization and solidarity but given our assertion that social movements are particularly well situated to accommodate these processes of contestation and change, we begin by drawing attention to some the ways that social movements have engaged in similar reflexive processes, many of which have found it necessary to account

for the politics of difference by introducing intersectional, anti-colonial, and anti-racist discourses.

Such dynamics have been particularly notable within global and national feminist movements which have been radically transformed in recent decades by Black, transnational and postcolonial feminisms. In the North American context Black Feminists mounted a radical challenge to the racialized foundations of second-wave feminism. And in the context of feminist movements outside of the Global North where western feminism had effectively silenced the perspectives of “third world women,” particularly those of colour, by glossing over the differences between western women of privilege and those outside of the west, authors such as Chandra Mohanty (1984) challenged these asymmetrical relationships. In her later work, Mohanty (2003) lays a roadmap for building non-colonizing feminist solidarity on a global scale.

Similar criticisms have been aimed at the environmental movement’s understanding of Indigenous peoples. In 1989, Ramachandra Guha (1989a) published an influential critique of what he referred to as “radical American environmentalism,” that he associated with the movement’s interpretation of deep ecology, of which Greenpeace is an exemplary practitioner. Having previously worked on tensions between Himalayan peasants and the industrial forest sector in India, Guha (1989b) pointed out that for many such communities in the Global South, the American agenda associated with preservation, biocentrism, and an idealized ‘wilderness’ free of humans, was an expression of western elitism and a new form of imperialism (Guha 1989a). Among its most powerful expressions, he argued, was the institution of national wilderness parks that now underpin wilderness preservation activities around the world. Given that so much of the world’s wilderness has in fact been populated for thousands of years by rural people who draw directly from their immediate surroundings to sustain themselves, and whose economic and cultural identities are embedded in those surroundings, Guha concluded that “the wholesale transfer of a movement culturally rooted in American conservation history can only result in the social uprooting of human populations in other parts of the globe” (p. 76).

In subsequent work, Guha and others demonstrate that environmentalism cannot be viewed via a single lens, and that the idealization of wilderness obscures other forms of environmental politics and power. In particular, it obscures those of the Global South, where tensions over control of resources often set localized rural communities aiming to retain small-scale, subsistence-oriented livelihoods against an industrial resource extraction sector that operates at national and global levels. Such conflicts, Guha observes in a later work with J. Martinez-Alier (1997, p. 12),

pit ‘ecosystem people’ – that is, those communities which depend very heavily on the natural resources of their own locality – against ‘omnivores’, individuals and groups with the social power to capture, transform and use natural

resources from a much wider catchment area; sometimes, indeed, the whole world.

While maintenance of forests and other ecosystems is essential to such people, their objective is not informed by notions of preservation, biocentrism, or deep ecology, but rather by an acute awareness of the need to maintain such environments in order to sustain their communities over the long term. From this perspective, which Guha and Martinez-Alier labeled “environmentalism of the poor” (1997, p. 3), international NGOs such as the WWF, the IUCN, or Greenpeace that seek to preserve large swathes of territory in the Global South and the charismatic megafauna that inhabit them might pose as great a threat as the latest large scale hydroelectric project to be promoted by the state, corporate developers, or the World Bank, given that both have assumed the removal of rural practices, and in some cases rural inhabitants themselves, to be an inevitable step on the path to progress.

That critique has since been levelled much more widely at the environmental movement. Indeed, Guha’s discussion fitted into a broader response during the 1980s to the globalization of the environmental movement through these vehicles and the increasingly intricate web of trans-national advocacy networks that connect them. Ranging widely across the political spectrum, critics of various stripes have converged on the concept of ‘eco-imperialism’ to describe the power relations that underpin these developments, be it with regard to the historical transfer of biota from Europe to temperate regions around the world, the impact of environmental policy on economic development in the Global South, or the recognition of new forms of marginalization that affect Indigenous peoples and practices (Dyer 2011).

Perhaps the most important response to this issue in the 1980s came from the United Nations’ Brundtland Report (1987), which articulated a path for the future if the world’s nations could come together in a global effort to balance economic, social, and environmental considerations through the carefully crafted concept of sustainable development. Contained within the Brundtland Report, however, is a sophisticated statement on the complexities faced by Indigenous peoples. As pointed out by Guha, it recognizes as “cultural extinction” the processes of marginalization that have impacted such groups (United Nations 1987, 3.3: 73). Yet while the Brundtland Report points clearly to the threat posed to Indigenous peoples by existing patterns of resource exploitation, it also underscores the need for economic and social development based on “the recognition and protection of their traditional rights to land and the other resources that sustain the way of life” and on “giv[ing] local communities a decisive voice in the decisions about resource use in their area” (3.3: 75).

While the critiques outlined above are shaped predominantly by North-South power imbalances, they have also been brought to bear on those nations of the industrialized north with Indigenous populations. There, environmental historians have uprooted the very basis of ‘radical’ American environmentalism

by exposing both the mythic and the very real power dimensions of an idealized North American wilderness that could only be realized by challenging, ignoring, and finally forgetting the longstanding presence of that continent's Indigenous peoples, while simultaneously losing track of the considerable level of human-induced environmental change that has unfolded. Again, North America's wilderness parks stand as an excellent example, inasmuch as the wilderness ideal they represent came about in numerous instances only after the removal of Indigenous peoples from those spaces (Cronon 1996, Spence 1999). In exposing the historical context of such contestations, these and other scholars affirm the longstanding similarities around the world of Guha's 'ecosystem people,' and their experience of eco-imperialism.

Those developments are essential to understanding Greenpeace's relationship to the Inuit and the Arctic. To its credit, Greenpeace has never lost sight of the longstanding presence of Indigenous peoples, in Canada or anywhere else. It has, however, been informed by a complex and at times problematic characterization of indigeneity that traces its roots to the beginnings of the European encounter with North America, and that found its own unique expression in the context of the counterculture movement of the 1960s and 1970s. Philip J. Deloria (1998) has pointed to the long history in the United States of "Playing Indian," by which he observes the paradoxical ways in which non-Indigenous Americans, in particular white American men, have repeatedly co-opted Indigenous identities as a means to work through issues of national identity, rebellion, and authenticity in the context of modernity (p. 8). Within the counterculture of 1960s and 1970s America, Deloria argues, "playing Indian" was a means by which anti-establishment baby boomers expressed their disillusion with mainstream American society, from its rampant consumerism and lack of authenticity to its neo-imperialist endeavours in the Global South and its nuclear military program. The counterculture embrace of Indian-ness flowed easily across the US border into Canada. For many so-inclined, North America's Indigenous peoples presented the antithesis to their own experience of modernity: an authentic, pre-modern culture threatened to the point of vanishing, but that nevertheless seemed to offer an alternative. That identification with Indigenous cultures came to inform a wide-ranging process of appropriation by which Indigenous emblems, tools, practices, customs, beliefs, stories from across the continent were taken up within the counterculture and reformulated in what amounted to a generalized and often thoroughly decontextualized pastiche of indigeneity.

Unlike most baby boomers, however, the individuals who ended up forming Greenpeace had direct experience of at least part of that Indigenous world. Traveling up the west coast of British Columbia to Alaska during Greenpeace's very first campaign to prevent American nuclear testing on the island of Amchitka, the crew stopped at a number of communities along the way, where they encountered peoples of the Kwakwaka'wakw and other First Nations (Hunter 1979, Wexler 2004). Hammered by modernity in the form of western imperialism, capitalism, and industrial resource extraction that left them witnesses to the collapse of salmon fisheries and the devastation of commercial

forestry in their ancestral lands, those communities fitted neatly into the counterculture narrative as the battered strongholds of an authentic, pre-modern world that was disappearing rapidly in the face of a cold, alienating modernity that had just entered the nuclear era, and Greenpeace's stalwarts readily identified them as such (Hunter 1979). Indeed, what twenty-something member of the late-1960s early 1970s counterculture disillusioned with the direction the world was going wouldn't make this link? Embedded in the counterculture's search through Indigenous practices and beliefs for meaning in the modern world, that experience would inform from Greenpeace's early days forward an understanding of common cause with Indigenous peoples, with whom environmentalists presumably shared an interest in the protection of the environment against the ravages of modernity. Within days of embarking from Vancouver on that first campaign, Greenpeace co-founder Robert Hunter identified the group's mission as the fulfillment of what had been mistakenly identified as an ancient Cree legend, the Warriors of the Rainbow:

It's a prophecy. When the air is blackened, the rivers poisoned, the land tortured by human ignorance, citizens from all nations of the world will come together to save the Earth. Man, it's like we're helping to fulfill the prophecy, We're the Warriors of the Rainbow (Weyler 2005, p. 101-02).

That name would later grace Greenpeace's first ship, the *Rainbow Warrior*, a 165-foot trawler it purchased in 1978 with funds the organization raised through the success of its anti-sealing and anti-whaling campaigns (Weyler 2005).

The tension in that relationship, of course, rests in the assumption that the interests of western environmentalists line up neatly with those of all Indigenous peoples. In some cases, particularly those involving peoples stripped of control over lands and resources who are confronting large-scale resource extraction activities, alliances with environmental organizations including Greenpeace have proved beneficial to both groups. In other cases, though, the idealization of Indigenous peoples as representatives of a pre-modern world has led to the assumption that Indigenous use of that environment fits into the parameters of western environmentalism. From that perspective, Indigenous peoples are interpreted as seeking to remain within the confines of a highly isolated and localized subsistence economy, from which they reflect what amounts to a romanticized identity that can be traced to the longstanding conception of the noble savage of European intellectual debate. Such views, it is important to note, summarize far too simplistically the diverse range of environmental attitudes and practices among North America's Indigenous cultures. That Greenpeace's co-founders and key figures in its anti-sealing campaign saw fit to self-identify as Rainbow-Warrior heroes within a supposed Indigenous legend is a telling example of the ease with which the organization collapsed those worlds together.

'We do not consent': Greenpeace and the anti-sealing backfire³

While the dynamics of decolonization and allyship may be “open and dynamic,” there is a consensus that for solidarity to be possible non-Indigenous peoples must “look inward at their own role within colonization, and confront themselves” (Davis and Shapuniarsky, 2010, p. 343). In the case of Greenpeace, doing so requires confronting their contentious history in the Arctic. This now legendary intervention began in 1975 when Greenpeace took a lead role in the *Save the Seals* campaign to end the Canadian seal hunt. Given Greenpeace’s focus on employing tactics that would draw media coverage, saving seals was ideal, and the images that emerged of blood-stained coats of young seals and brave activists putting themselves in harm’s way to protect them from the horrors of industrialized barbarism cemented the organization’s image as a group of heroes and saviors (Wenzel 1991, Harter 2004, Marland, 2014). Anti-sealing campaigns had been underway since the 1950s, but for an organization that intentionally used “mind bombs” to force moral positions on environmental issues, seals were the perfect poster-animal. Paul Watson, co-founder of Greenpeace made it clear in a 1978 interview with CBC radio that this was no mistake: “Greenpeace has always managed to raised more money on the seal issue than has actually been spent on the campaign itself. The seal issue has always turned profit for the organization...the seal is very easy to exploit as an image” (CBC Radio, 1978).

The immediate target of the *Save the Seals* campaign was the commercial sealing activities on the coast of Newfoundland and Labrador. To this end, animal rights organizations convincingly framed the issue as an act of ruthless, unnecessary cruelty, and persuaded the European public to support a complete ban on the sale of seal pup skins, which led directly to the 1983 European Economic Community ban on seal pup skins and products. While it and a later EU ban in 2009 both held exemptions for Inuit-produced pelts and other products, the anti-sealing campaign’s successful targeting of the European market for pelts made any distinction between a commercial and Indigenous hunt irrelevant. The demand for seal skin disappeared almost immediately, and with it the livelihoods of many Inuit people and communities that depended on these revenues (Royal Commission, 1986; see also Rodgers and Scobie, 2015).

That collapse created the foundation for the animosity toward Greenpeace that persists today. From the perspective of Inuit communities, activists were wholly responsible for the destruction of their livelihood, and it takes little effort to map the eco-imperial criticisms outlined above onto those events. For impoverished Inuit communities engaged in a market for seal fur that suddenly collapsed due to the activities of a multi-national environmental NGO well entrenched in the ethos of biocentrism and deep ecology, there was little question that environmentalism expressed in this form cut across both their

³ Many of the themes developed in this section have been elaborated on in a previous paper by Rodgers (Rodgers and Scobie, 2015).

immediate economic interests and their capacity to maintain control over their use of the land and the resources it offered them. Given the expectation in environmental circles of authenticity in the form of traditional hunting practices conducted within a subsistence-based economy, there remained virtually no space for the Inuit to negotiate their relationship to contemporary economic forces. In effect, the need for authenticity implied that in order to be respected in environmental circles, the Inuit, and Indigenous peoples in general, had to stand outside modernity. In the case of the Inuit, the European trade of seal fur to the European market was relatively new, but it was nonetheless an important and largely self-controlled economy. What is more, it had developed in the face of failed relocations and other unsuccessful efforts on the part of the Canadian state during the twentieth century to build viable economies and livelihoods for Indigenous communities in the Arctic (Kulchysky and Tester 2008). Viewed from a broader perspective, assumptions such as these around the centrality of authenticity and tradition flew in the face of a commercial market in furs that had linked Indigenous peoples in North America to Europe for more than three centuries.

Perhaps worst of all for critics was the fact that the *Save the Seals* campaign was a huge success, both in terms of the campaign itself and the growth of the organization worldwide (Zelko 2013, Dale 1996). In 1972, just before it embarked on its anti-sealing operations, Rex Weyler (2004, p. 139) recalls that Greenpeace had one office and “\$9000 in the bank.” By 1977, two years after its first anti-sealing campaign, Greenpeace had nine offices in Canada, five in the US, and one each in Paris, London and Tokyo (Weyler 2005, p. 442). That year, the organization was reaching a million dollars in annual revenues globally, and any previous financial woes were nonexistent (Weyler 2005). And while the organization’s economic fortunes have fluctuated over the decades, it continues bring in millions of dollars in revenue. In 2015, Greenpeace Canada alone raised close to thirteen million dollars from donors (Greenpeace Annual Report, 2015). In this same period many Inuit communities have continued to face problems of hunger, joblessness and a range of social problems and it is perhaps understandable that the Inuit communities economically devastated by the loss of the seal industry would lay responsibility for their fate with the organization that had used seals to advance its own economic interests.

The animosity that emerged from these events continues to run deep in Inuit politics. Even Greenpeace’s effort to distinguish between the commercial hunt and the Inuit one is viewed dismissively as a form of environmental colonialism that presents Inuit people in romantic and monolithic terms. As Anthony Speca (2014: np) argues, Greenpeace “reckoned that a hunt involving rifles, motorboats and snowmobiles, and generating money as well as food and clothing, didn’t qualify as traditional... Appropriating Inuit tradition from the Inuit themselves, they redefined it to agree with their own preconceptions of harpoons, kayaks and dog teams. By ruling out any necessary adaptations to contemporary colonial conditions, they implied that Inuit could only hunt seal justifiably in something like a pre-colonial manner”.

Exploring contradictions in the politics and practice of solidarity

For Greenpeace to advance a project of decolonization the organization needed to take on the legacy of these historical relationships and going forward, to carefully contemplate what solidarity with Inuit communities could look like. This, however, is more easily said than done because while the language of decolonization may be relatively easy to adopt, the pragmatics of such a commitment are far from straightforward. As Adam Barker (2010, p. 327) laments, “one of the frustrating implications of the decolonizing, unsettling, and ultimately, respectful approach to becoming a Settler ally...is that there is no ‘plan,’ no universally applicable model, no clear set of friends and enemies.” And as Tuck and Yang (2012, p. 3) insist, decolonization cannot be “a metaphor,” a novel discourse to replace other social justice agendas, meaning that Greenpeace needed to ensure that “Indigenous issues” did not become add-ons to, or subsumed within, their prevailing environmental platforms. In negotiating this path, therefore, Greenpeace was well aware of the need to avoid the contradictions of solidarity work such as “speaking for,” and ensuring they “follow the lead” of Indigenous peoples. And yet even such tried and true principles do not ensure a more certain trajectory as the organization found themselves confronted by competing understandings of the relationship between economic development and Inuit self-determination.

While Greenpeace continued to be an active critic of the seal hunt in the 1970s and 80s, the trajectory toward a new relationship between Inuit communities and Greenpeace nevertheless goes back to that same period, when the organization began to recognize the complex relationship between the Inuit seal hunt and the organization’s animal rights position. As outlined above, Greenpeace began with a staunch anti-sealing stance and continued participating in campaigns into the 1980s. Greenpeace co-founder Robert Hunter wrote in his 1979 memoir that early on “Greenpeace’s official policy was...absolutely rigid: no seals were to be killed by anyone, not even by Eskimo or Indians” (p. 368). By the 1980s, however, the organization was acknowledging the campaign’s impact on Inuit communities and through their well-honed position that their complaint had only ever been with commercial sealers, not Indigenous ones, attempted to refine their agenda in ways that reflected a commitment to solidarity with Inuit communities. As a representative of Greenpeace International stated in 1986: “in no way was our campaign ever aimed against natives,...we have never opposed subsistence seal hunting by natives. We were only opposed to the commercial harp-seal hunt. But what happened was that as a result of the campaign the whole market dried up. The reality is the market for all furs is going down because it is no longer socially acceptable to wear them” (Fisher 1986). To this end, many frontline activists had tried to make a distinction between the commercial and Indigenous hunts – a distinction, they argue, that was never made clear in the media. In spite of this more careful positioning, Greenpeace’s involvement in the anti-sealing campaigns did not come to an end, and Inuit communities were not convinced by the expression of concern, firing back that by destroying the

market for seal pelts Greenpeace had gutted the market for Indigenous and non-Indigenous sealers alike (Wenzel 1991). As a result, “Greenpeace” remained a “dirty word” in Inuit communities throughout the 1980s and 90s (Pritchard 1993: np).

Greenpeace’s unease over its complicity became more apparent in 2004 when Canada’s decision to increase the quota for the seal hunt galvanized the animal rights community. While that event led to the largest anti-sealing campaign in history, Greenpeace chose not to be part of it. Citing greater concerns about climate change, the ozone layer and genetically-modified organisms, a representative explained that “our role is to work on issues that are particularly urgent” (‘More Urgent Things to Do’, 2004). At that point it became clear: Greenpeace was officially moving on from sealing. As the previous discussion outlined, for Indigenous scholars, confronting complicity with colonialism is the first step of decolonization. Greenpeace’s decision to move on from sealing in favour of more “urgent” concerns was an example of Fellows and Razack’s (1998) “race to innocence” in that Greenpeace removed themselves from the ongoing marginalization of Inuit concerns in favour of their own agenda but importantly, did so without directly confronting the organization’s historic complicity in the colonial implications of mainstream environmentalism. As Curnow and Helferty (2018: 154) argue, races to innocence are not intended as “cynical strategies but rather agentic and imperfect attempts to prefigure other social relations” and in 2004 Greenpeace understood their withdrawal from sealing as an act of solidarity.

But Greenpeace’s failure to directly address their complicity meant that the legacy of Greenpeace’s anti-sealing activism remained strong in the North, preventing Greenpeace from working in solidarity with the people of the Inuit Nunangat, a reality that prohibited the organization from engaging in increasingly pressing issues of climate change and resource development in the Arctic. By 2014 the organization took on its historical legacy directly, declaring itself to be undergoing decolonization, but the way forward for Greenpeace involved negotiating complex visions of Inuit independence and often competing understandings of solidarity and decolonization. Greenpeace began by issuing a formal apology. Executive Director of Greenpeace Canada Joanna Kerr (2014: np) wrote:

Our campaign against commercial sealing did hurt many, both economically and culturally. The time has come to set the record straight. In the eight months since I took on the challenging role of executive director for Greenpeace Canada, one thing has come up again and again in discussions with staff across the country: a deep desire to make amends with Canada’s Indigenous Peoples for past mistakes, to decolonize ourselves, and to better communicate our policies and practices going forward.

Recognizing now that even a formal apology would be insufficient to make amends, Greenpeace’s pathway to decolonization also included the development

of organizational policies that would provide a foundation for changing its relationship with Indigenous communities. Following the apology, Greenpeace chapters around North America launched a series of decolonization workshops (Greenpeace USA, 2016), and both Greenpeace Canada and the US chapter developed 'Indigenous Peoples policies' in which they outline their commitment to protecting Indigenous rights and to ensuring that their own actions do not contribute to the erosion of these rights (Greenpeace, 2014). This 2014 policy acknowledged "the historic role that environmental and conservation groups like Greenpeace have played in undermining Indigenous Peoples' Rights and Title to their lands and waters and their ability to economically thrive" (Greenpeace, 2014). Greenpeace Canada further strengthened this commitment by hiring three Indigenous women to consult on issues affecting their communities, and the organization's 2015 Annual Report placed its relationship with Indigenous communities at the forefront of its campaigns (Greenpeace Canada, 2016).

Responses to the apology were mixed and ultimately, highlight a central tension in pathways to decolonization. Beginning in the 1990s, there was a notable shift amongst Inuit leadership in Nunavut, toward the view that there is a direct link between resource extraction and the goal of Inuit self-determination and cultural survival (Bernauer, 2018). As Bernauer writes, "instead of understanding energy extraction as a colonial endeavour, [Inuit] organizations increasingly see it as an integral part of regional development and Inuit self-determination" (p. 3). The negotiation of the 1993 Nunavut Land Claim Agreement placed resource development, particularly mining, at the strategic forefront to create employment, promote self-sufficiency and generally lift communities out of poverty (McPherson 2003). The ITK itself emerged out of concerns over the lack of influence that Inuit people had in decisions about resources (Obed, 2016) and the Qikiqtaaluk Corporation, a pro-development institution created by the Qikiqtani Inuit Association (QIA), was explicitly designed to "promote and protect Inuit rights" while striving to "be a major contributor to all sectors of the Nunavut economy... in servicing the emerging mining and resource development sector" (Qikiqtaaluk Corporation, 2017). From this vantage point, Greenpeace's role in the destruction of the commercial sealing industry became a symbolic representation of the threat of environmentalism to Inuit self-determination. Accordingly, Many Inuit individuals and leaders remained skeptical of Greenpeace's apology. Terry Audla, National Inuit Leader and President of Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami (ITK), in his speech to Earth Day participants in 2015 reminded the audience of Greenpeace's history in the North: "You need to remember that while the world may be worried about oil and gas development in the Arctic and impact by oil companies, it was organizations such as Greenpeace who impacted us negatively, and we still recall this" (Bell, 2015). And Chair of the Arctic Council and former Conservative MP for Nunavut, Leona Aglukkaq, commented: "When you look around the world often times it is easy to get caught up in the agendas that some environmental groups like to push without considering the human dimension...there are lots of environmental groups who say that they speak for

and represent Inuit or Aboriginal people while at the same time they campaign against traditional ways of life like the seal hunt” (Aglukkaq slams Greenpeace’s attempts, 2014). This legacy also resulted in the repeated rejection of Greenpeace applications to hold observer status with the Arctic Council, the world’s main international forum on northern issues, even when the applications of organizations such as Oceana and the World Wide Fund for Nature have been approved.

Greenpeace’s efforts to renew their relationships with Inuit communities in the North meant navigating the dominant view of Inuit self-determination, one that directly conflicts with their own opposition to resource development. One of the central pillars of Indigenous scholarship on decolonization is the idea that any effort to undo the harms of colonialism begins by following the lead of Indigenous leadership. Writing as an ally, Harsha Walia writes (2012:3), “one of the basic principles of indigenous solidarity organizing is the notion of taking leadership. According to the principle, non-natives must be accountable and responsive to the experiences, voices, needs and political perspectives of indigenous people themselves.” From this perspective, to demonstrate a genuine commitment to decolonize, Greenpeace would have to work from a framework that privileges Indigenous perspectives (Sium et al., 2012, p. 3). In this regard, Greenpeace’s apparent rejection of resource development puts it at odds with many leading Inuit organizations whose goal is to create sustainable communities through the integration of contemporary resource extraction operations, primarily mining. If decolonization projects are, as de Leeuw et al (2013, p. 392) argue, fundamentally about prioritizing “Indigenous peoples, presences, and voices” this places Greenpeace in a position where it must choose between prioritizing its environmental agenda over the voices of the most prominent leaders in the region. As Arctic expert Anthony Speca argues, “Greenpeace must accord that wish the same respect that they now accord Clyde River’s wish to withhold support” (McGwin, 2014: np).

For many Indigenous scholars, however, decolonization represents a particular relationship to land, one which opposes large-scale industrial development and sees Indigenous people reconnecting with their “land and land-based practices” (Coulthard, 2014: 71). Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg scholar and artist Leanne Betasamosake Simpson has criticized industry and government’s exploitation of natural resources on Indigenous territories even when the community may support the industry. Simpson argues that Indigenous communities choose resource extraction because

it is presented as the only way out of crushing economic poverty... These communities are under tremendous pressure from provincial governments, federal governments, and industry to partner in the destruction of natural resources. Industry and government have no problem with presenting large-scale environmental destruction by corporations as the only way out of poverty because it is in their best interest to do so...The hyper-exploitation of natural resources is not the only approach (Klein, 2013).

From this perspective, Greenpeace, with its explicit rejection of resource extraction in the Arctic, could step forward to express genuine solidarity with the people of Clyde River who were opposed to the development of oil and gas off the coast of their community. In a recent report entitled *Beyond Fossil Fuels*, Greenpeace Canada expresses its hope that the territory will be able to “leap frog” beyond fossil fuels and resource extraction where, they caution, “multinational corporations and extractive industries [will] lead Nunavut and its people down the road of broken promises and false hopes” (Talberth and Wysham 2016, p.17). This common ground means that some expressions of solidarity and alliances between Greenpeace and Indigenous groups may be more straightforward than others. For instance, the alliance between environmental organizations including Greenpeace and several Indigenous groups opposed to the Kinder Morgan pipeline in British Columbia and Alberta is based on overlapping concerns that fuel pipelines support the detrimental impacts of the oil industry on climate change *and* potentially infringe on the rights of Indigenous people by threatening their traditional territories, diet and economic activities. Similarly, in the case of Clyde River Greenpeace became part of the Clyde River Solidarity Network along with the Mining Injustice Solidarity Network, the Council of Canadians, and Idle No More to coordinate southern activist support for Clyde River’s campaign (Bernauer 2018).

The apparent contradiction between Greenpeace’s commitment to decolonization and its inability to follow the lead of Inuit leadership therefore reflects Harsha Walia’s (2012) observation that recognizing the diversity of perspectives within Indigenous communities, decolonization is also about choosing allies with whom values are aligned. In this regard, it is worthwhile to note that Greenpeace’s *Beyond Fossils Fuels* is not a wholesale rejection of commercial activities in Nunavut. Rather, it promotes local development around renewable energy, Indigenous tourism and sustainable fisheries. In other instances, however, alliances will require Greenpeace to measure closely the degree to which its principled commitment to sustainability conflicts with its commitment to decolonization. Ultimately, it should come as no surprise that Greenpeace prioritizes environmental sustainability. In its own core values the organization states that “Greenpeace has No Permanent Friends or Foes” and the priority of Greenpeace is its commitment to “one standard...: The environment has to benefit” (Greenpeace International, 2017). In this regard, Greenpeace can only commit to acting in solidarity insofar as the choices Indigenous communities make are in keeping with their own environmental values.

In this regard, the pathway to decolonization requires organizations like Greenpeace to evaluate the sometimes-competing paradigms of Indigenous self-determination and their environmental critique of capitalism. As Greenpeace organizer Alex Speers-Roesch acknowledges,

we have to respect human rights, we have to respect Indigenous rights and sometimes that means supporting people’s right to choose things that we

wouldn't agree with and we reserve the right to disagree sometimes...there might be a situation where Greenpeace, because it is a predominantly settler organization in Canada, might not be the most appropriate voice to voice certain criticisms. In this regard, projects of decolonization for social movement organizations may not necessarily be a blanket embrace of Indigenous sovereignty and support for leadership but rather, the willingness to strategically engage with communities who are like-minded (personal communication, 1 June 2017).

For environmental advocates it may not always be possible to “follow the lead” and indeed a blind commitment to such a principle would amount to essentializing all Indigenous communities. Instead, making such decisions explicit becomes part of successfully negotiating the uncertain territory of decolonizing social movements.

Untangling the tensions in relationships of solidarity

Lynn Davis (2010) contends that “the relationships between Indigenous peoples and social movement organizations...” (p. 2) remain an under-explored area of research and that such work is required to explore the tensions in these often asymmetrical relationships and especially, how power functions within them. Greenpeace has made a clear and open commitment to improving its relationship with Indigenous peoples, a commitment which is likely to better enable Greenpeace to build alliances with Indigenous communities including Inuit communities. But as Davis contends, relationships such as these are frequently fraught because of the variety of different understandings of the roles that Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups play in a relationship and the different power formations embedded in them. Thus by apologizing for its role in the collapse of the fur industry and acknowledging that the Arctic region is not just habitat for animals but is also Inuit land, Greenpeace has taken important steps toward mending broken relationships, but as the organization moves forward to identify the parameters of its solidarity, the terrain becomes more difficult to negotiate.

One of the tensions in this path forward surrounds the strategic activities in which social movement organizations engage. For Greenpeace's efforts toward decolonization to be seen as a genuine attempt to transform its relationship with Indigenous people, its solidarity must also be perceived as authentic. Given the importance of fundraising, attracting media attention and rhetorical persuasion for the organization, this may prove a considerable challenge. Through this lens, Greenpeace's apology, its awareness of Indigenous concerns, and its new relationship with an Arctic community can be seen as a set of tactical moves aimed at producing substantive political outcomes, raising the profile of the organization, and increasing financial support, reasonable assumptions given the history of the sealing conflict outlined above. Inuit leaders have openly expressed such concerns, linking Greenpeace's activism in the North and the organization's strategic agenda. “Greenpeace needs an icy, sparkly backdrop for

their fundraising pantomime and has appropriated an entire region,” observed prominent activist and former mayor of Iqaluit Madeleine Redfern. “Who cares about Inuit education, housing, health, when Greenpeace and starlets are going to ‘Save the Arctic?’” (Hopper, 2014). Inuit activist and filmmaker Althea Arnaquq-Baril shares this view, stating that the ‘Save the Arctic’ campaign “is what anti-sealing was thirty years ago, a very lucrative fundraising tactic” (Finlay, 2017).

In the case of Clyde River, Warren Bernauer, a volunteer with the Hamlet of Clyde River who worked closely with mayor Jerry Natanine on the Supreme Court challenge, similarly reflected on the necessity of authenticity for establishing lasting relationships, noting that when the pipeline conflicts of Western Canada emerged Greenpeace’s presence in Clyde River effectively vanished. Such observations underscore the concern that when Indigenous communities are no longer the basis for dramatic campaigns, their utility to activist organizations may wane, evidence not of solidarity but of strategy (Personal Communication, November 29, 2018). Eric Ritskes (2012: np) eloquently summarizes this risk:

In Northern Canada, many white eco-activists and Canadians have joined with Indigenous communities to protest a proposed Enbridge oil pipeline. What is overlooked for many, who see their involvement as an important environmental cause or even as anti-capitalist, is that Indigenous communities have life and livelihood at stake. This is not an adventure, another cause, or even just about the environment – in fact, due to their struggle the Canadian government has branded Indigenous groups as eco-terrorists. There is no ‘going home’ when this is done because it is never done and communities will always be seen as a threat. There is no thrill of taking on a mega corporation, just a continued fight for survival – one that white Canadians cannot fully understand.

While it may now be imbued with new discourses of settler solidarity and anti-capitalism (or at least anti-resource extraction), Ritskes cautions that the risk of “Playing Indian” remains. Fundraising and public appeals are realities for social movement organizations that need to occupy the political space outside of governments and corporations but so is their risk to inauthenticity. The World Wildlife Fund (WWF) is an example of an organization that is carefully managing strategy and solidarity in ways that differ from Greenpeace. The WWF has consistently maintained its work in the Arctic but has balanced its agenda of wilderness protection with the economic agendas of the Arctic communities in which they work. In its statement on Indigenous people, the WWF observes that “our policy reflects our dedication to respecting Indigenous and traditional peoples’ human and development rights” (WWF 2008). In this respect the WWF collaborates with Indigenous peoples on a variety of issues, including the “sustainable use of natural resources, and influencing relevant policy and decision-making” (WWF 2008). As an example of this commitment WWF chose not to support an international ban on polar bear hunting, despite

the public outcry, because the ban was not in the interest of Indigenous people. They stated: “we are working closely with Indigenous people in polar bear range states, as they're the people who live and work most closely with the bears, and the ones who can help us ensure the long-term survival of this iconic species” (WWF, 2013). Such an approach has allowed the WWF to quietly participate in the regulatory systems that govern the use of natural resources in the Arctic, as observers in the Nunavut Impact Review Board’s community consultations and on the Arctic Council. The WWF invokes this influence at the expense of its ability to be outspoken and visible critics of resource extraction projects but it also permits them a respectful working relationship with the Indigenous people who live in the territory. But as Wallace et al (2010) emphasize, this should not be seen as an either/or dilemma because there is “no template” for relationships between Indigenous and non-indigenous groups. Explicit conversations, they argue, about “identity, interests and location, both internal to the organization and between allies, could provide a structure upon which to negotiate differences...” (p. 102) and therefore, what is seen as strategic maneuvering could instead be conceived of as part of a division of responsibilities.

Davis (2010) writes that another frequent relationship tension revolves around paternalism. As Wallace et al (2010, p. 103) explain, “when Indigenous and non-Indigenous people come together in alliances and coalitions, paternalism may be mobilized, subtly or overtly.” Echoing our discussion of “Playing Indian” above, paternalism can be detected in a homogenous view of how Indigenous people relate to the land. In the Australian context, Clare Land (2015: 13) explains, there is frequently a tendency for allies to promote traditional aboriginal economic activities as somehow more “authentic, homogenous and stable” than the economic development projects they oppose. Even following their commitment to decolonize, this perspective was still promoted in the Indigenous Policy of Greenpeace’s American office, which states that it “recognizes the right of Indigenous Peoples to carry out traditional activities, such as sustainably fishing, hunting, trapping, gathering first foods and medicine, on their traditional territories and waters...” (Greenpeace USA, 2017). Such a statement reflects an ongoing romanticization of Indigenous identity that continues to envision and to glorify an Indigenous economy and community based solely on traditional subsistence activities. Until very recently Greenpeace Canada shared the language found in the American policy in its own statement (Greenpeace Canada, 2014a). But recent changes to the Canadian statement point to a conscious departure from this romanticized perspective as the organization incorporates the reality that Indigenous groups are increasingly taking control of market-based activities. As stated in its most recently updated Policy on Indigenous Rights: “Greenpeace Canada recognizes the rights of Indigenous Peoples to make decisions regarding activities on their traditional territories, such as fishing, hunting, trapping, gathering, *revenue generation and development activities*” (Greenpeace Canada, 2014b). Alex Speers-Roesch admits that these historical patterns of romanticism are something of which the organization needs to “remind itself” and explains that:

[Decolonization] is more of a direction that we go in and try to figure out the issues of colonialism that seem most immediate but there will probably be more that become clear as we address the ones that are most clear today... It's about taking direction from those communities, centering their voices and their perspectives and bringing those to a wider audience. It's about using the power and the reach that we have as an organization to do all of those things and it's also about bringing along our supporters (personal communication, 1 June 2017).

Greenpeace members and leadership have expressed a genuine desire to not only move past their troubled history in the Arctic, but also to recognize the asymmetry in their past relationships and to make amends for these. Some activists and scholars have suggested that righting these asymmetries requires restitution (Alfred, 2005). In the wake of Greenpeace's apology one prominent sealing advocate, Aaju Peter, argued that if Greenpeace really wanted to decolonize they need to compensate Inuit: "After all the money that was generated by Greenpeace over the years that they [should] compensate each Inuit \$1 million" (Oudshoorn, 2016). Given that Greenpeace built its early reputation and what is now a multi-million dollar international budget on the success of its early sealing campaigns, such a call is not unexpected. In this view, if Greenpeace is truly committed to decolonization, one of the key challenges it will face will be to find ways of compensating Inuit communities for the damage the anti-sealing projects inflicted. Greenpeace has not yet taken the step of compensating communities or individuals, but such an action would represent an unprecedented expression of solidarity. Alex Speers-Roesch, an Arctic campaigner for Greenpeace who worked closely with Clyde River on their Supreme Court challenge, commented: "that is a conversation that Greenpeace would be open to having. There are all sorts of complexities and questions about what that would look like and how that would go but there is definitely openness on Greenpeace's part and amongst leadership to talk about that" (personal communication, 1 June 2017). Greenpeace is a global environmental organization that faces a formidable struggle against the human activities that create and sustain climate change but its' openness to discussing restitution reflects its ongoing and parallel commitment to making amends. Contradictions exist at the nexus of these objectives but as Curnow and Helferty emphasize, solidarity "is an imperfect strategy" and even while efforts toward solidarity may reveal tensions and embody contradictions, they create a space within which this can be achieved (2018: 155).

Conclusion

Global warming is transforming the Arctic in ways that will continue to pit corporate and state interests keen on exploiting new resource and transportation opportunities against environmentalists who oppose such activities. Together issues of marginalization, culture, economics, law, self-determination, and sovereignty, rooted in a complex historical relationship

between Inuit and non-Indigenous peoples with stakes in Arctic North America, present a political landscape that challenges contemporary environmentalism in new ways. As part of its efforts to address the fallout from its previous work in the Arctic as it re-engages in the region, Greenpeace Canada has taken on the important task of accounting for its historical impact on Inuit communities, a process complicated by divergent understandings of decolonization. Greenpeace's historic and contemporary negotiations of solidarity in the Arctic demonstrate that for activists and allies *decolonizing* cannot be a one-size-fits-all concept, not a label one applies to a series of prescriptive tasks, but rather, a process involving the ongoing negotiation of relationships. Willie Ermine (2007, p. 203) proposed the concept of "Ethical Space" to describe spaces that "can become a refuge of possibility in cross-cultural relations... for the effect of shifting the status quo of an asymmetrical social order to a partnership model between world communities. The new partnership model of the ethical space, in a cooperative spirit between Indigenous peoples and Western institutions, will create new currents of thought that flow in different directions and overrun the old ways of thinking." Extending Ermine's concept to the social movement context Tanya Fook (2010: 306) argues that these spaces become "political and politically strategic for Indigenous peoples and their allies." The case of Greenpeace in the Arctic demonstrates that because these spaces have no beginning or end and that there are potentially insurmountable differences in agendas, relationships need to be carefully curated and understandings of solidarity need to be explicit.

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