SOVEREIGN FUTURES: INDIGENOUS AND SETTLER PROPHECIES IN
TWO NINETEENTH-CENTURY AMERICAN “NORTHWESTS”

by

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Abstract

This dissertation argues that settler colonialism unfolded in various North American Wests through a clash of prophetic visions, each of which expressed fundamentally different modes of relationality. Through two case studies—the “Old Northwest” of the early nineteenth-century Ohio Valley, and the “new” Northwest of the Columbia Plateau region later in the century—I explore how Indigenous prophecies and settler prophecies articulated divergent visions of the future in language that was declarative, often couched in future perfect tense: *what will have come to be.* Scholars have long framed Indigenous prophetic movements as either religious or political, traditionalist or innovative, as autochthonous or existing only in reaction to contact and colonialism. I move beyond these binary formations by reframing Indigenous prophecy through Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies. Through these frameworks, Indigenous prophecy can be seen as a diagnostic tool, a theoretical and critical apparatus, and a guide for either maintaining or refusing relations with humans and other-than-human beings. Accompanied by new prescriptions and ceremonies on how to live properly with other beings and thus renew a world of interdependent relationships, Indigenous prophecy may be seen as simultaneously legal, political, and religious even as it resists these categories. It is oriented toward a future on and with the land against, or despite, the presence of settler colonial jurisdictional claims. For their part, settlers prophesied a future free from vulnerability and dependences, of technological perfection and environmental mastery. For this future to come to pass, the interdependent relations carefully forged by generations of Indigenous communities on and with the land had to be severed and reoriented toward an ever-expanding market. Settlers confidently proclaimed the immanent fulfillment of a “manifest destiny,” yet they simultaneously expressed anxiety when a future of technological progress, flourishing republican
institutions, market connectivity and private land ownership seemed compromised. Settler prophecy was always in reaction to the continued presence of Indigenous peoples who professed their own temporal sovereignty. With the constant specter of Indigenous endurance, settler future imaginaries have always been fragile and doomed to fail.
Lay Summary

This dissertation considers the different ways in which settlers and Indigenous people thought about their futures and relationships toward the land in places where US territory extended onto traditional Indigenous homelands—in this case the Ohio Valley in the early nineteenth century and the Columbia Plateau in the second half of that century. I argue that these kinds of relationships and future-thinking can be considered prophecy, a future-orientation that has often been expressed through declarative statements: what will have come to be. A central objective of this study is to understand Indigenous prophecy through Indigenous worldviews and concepts. Indigenous communities drew on prophetic teachings to restore and maintain relationships—including relationships with other-than-human beings—which were under stress from settler colonial violence. Settler prophecy was reactive to Indigenous insistences of their own future and sought to defuse or absorb them. These conflicting prophecies demonstrate that the settler-colonial project can never be complete.
Preface

This dissertation is the original, unpublished, independent work by the author, Kaden Jelsing.
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Dedication

To Liins

I wouldn’t have it any other way
Introduction

[Pr]ephets and prophecies do not predict the future, nor are they mystical, ahistorical occurrences. They are simply diagnoses of the times in which we live, and visions of what must be done to get free...Indigenous notions of time consider the present to be structured entirely by our past and by our ancestors. There is no separation between past and present, meaning that an alternative future is also determined by our understanding of the past...Our history is the future.”

—Nick Estes, Our History is the Future

In the last decade before the turn of the nineteenth century, the volcano known by Sahaptin speakers as Lawilayt-łá (or Mount St. Helens to EuroamERICANS) erupted, sending a plume of ash eastward towards a Spokan village near the Columbia River in what is now Washington State. Villagers awoke to thunderclaps and an eerie “dry snow,” sparking prophecies of the “sun burning up,” of the coming of a “new people,” from the east, of epidemiological and ecological crisis, but also of coming abundance and world-renewal.¹ A continent and ocean away, another kind of ash fell from the burning coal powering the first steam engines, ultimately settling as a layer of carbon in the geologic record of the planet’s crust. As these steam engines roared to life, another set of prophetic visions were kindled: the conquering of time and space, of a “sun-engine”² that would “illuminate the present ‘darkness and the heart of chaos.’”³ The poet Percy Shelley, writing to civil engineer Henry Reveley in 1819, likened the

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² “The steam-engine, which we complacently call ours, and claim patents for, burns that coal into lever-force and steam hammer power, and is in truth a sun-engine.” George Wilson, “Prof. George Wilson on the Physical Sciences,” Edinburgh New Philosophical Journal (1857), 74.
“birth of the cylinder” to the unleashing of volcanism by a Promethean god, filling “millions of miles of void space.” He goes on to foretell the success of the steamboat he commissioned from Reveley in similar terms—human invention as a microcosm of God’s creative power: “Your boat will be to the Ocean of Water, what this earth is to the Ocean of Aether—a prosperous and swift voyager.”

These two prophetic visions emerged at the same time but express very different visions of the future and thus reflect very different values and metaphysical orientations. Shelley’s steamboat was prophesied to usher in a new world in which steam engines would banish once and for all the enemies of enlightenment that lingered in the world as the “darkness and heart of chaos.” Through the burning of fossil fuels (ancient stored solar energy), humans had finally harnessed the power of the sun itself. This would be accomplished through the expansion of resource frontiers of extraction, regardless and often at the expense of the various relations that compose these frontiers. Prophetic figures on the Columbia Plateau foresaw a future in which revolutionary change would drastically upend the world in terrible and wonderful ways. But instead of Shelley’s vision of a transcendent culmination of civilizational progress, Plateau prophets knew that the world was due to transform itself yet again in one of many cycles of destruction and renewal. This world-ending and world-inauguration would be accomplished through strengthening relationships between certain human and other-than-human beings, while resisting or refusing others. This dissertation argues that settler colonialism unfolded in various North American Wests through a clash of prophetic visions, each of which expressed

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fundamentally different modes of relationality. Drawing on two case studies—the “Old Northwest” of the early nineteenth-century Ohio Valley, and the “new” Northwest of the Columbia Plateau region later in the century—I explore how Indigenous prophecies and settler prophecies articulated divergent visions of the future in language that was declarative, couched in future perfect tense: *what will have come to be*.

Many scholars across disciplines point to the sudden expansion in the use of fossil fuels and the resulting spike in carbon emissions at the hands of humans during the Industrial Revolution as the inaugural moment of a new epoch, the Anthropocene. The Anthropocene implicates humans as a species for the most recent transformation of earth systems, the effects of which will extend into the future at inhuman scales. But for Shelley and many of his contemporaries, the use of steam power also signified a change in mentality, or at least an intensification of an older mentality, inaugurated by the first colonial forays onto the North American continent: the transformation and control of supposedly empty space with what Kyle Powys Whyte (Potawatomi) calls “industrial settler colonialism,” the infrastructure of which was to usher in a glorious new future of progress for humanity, unchained from the vagaries of God or nature.⁵ Although the designation of the Anthropocene as a new geological epoch has been disputed by scientists, many humanities scholars have found it a useful and evocative term, a way to name a shift in human experience with time, space, and agency, and above all, opening into a vexing new relationship to the past, present, and future. Yet many others have taken issue

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with the ways in which the Anthropocene concept masks the existence of differential power relations at work in human societies. So if these two explosive moments of prophecy seem unrelated, that is because historians are unaccustomed to thinking about the colonization of North America together with human-induced environmental change, and have tended to disappear Indigenous peoples in their narratives of environmental degradation, often portraying them as part of a shrinking or sullied “nature” themselves. This scale of anthropogenic change as it accelerated through the nineteenth century could not have occurred without the colonization of North America, the transformation of its lands into resources, and the dispossession of its original inhabitants. But Indigenous peoples survived even as they experienced the sharpest edge of these transformations. While Indigenous thinkers and political actors have long understood settler colonial violence and ecological change as part of the same process, academic historical scholarship has tended to separate them into discrete realms of study, especially those working in nineteenth-century US history.


Alfred Crosby’s highly influential work on the Columbian Exchange is a good example of this declension narrative. Alfred Crosby, The Columbian Exchange (New York: Greenwood Press, 1972). Simon Lewis and Mark Maslin have recently addressed the relation between climate change and colonial violence, arguing for a 1610 start to the Anthropocene as a significant change in global climate has been detected due to the mass death by disease, massacre and starvation in the initial century of colonization of North America, which led to a regrowth of flora and hence an appreciable uptick in atmospheric oxygen. Yet this account also disappears Indigenous people very early in the narrative. Simon L. Lewis and Mark A. Maslin, “Defining the Anthropocene,” Nature Vol. 519 (2015): 171-180.

There are important exceptions to this. Most are works that cover initial contact and colonial period and including the highly influential work of Alfred Crosby and William Cronon. Crosby, The Columbian Exchange and
While grappling with apocalyptic thinking has become a widespread concern in our current era of mass extinction and climate change, Indigenous peoples have already experienced as many ecological apocalypses as there are distinctive Indigenous peoples. Extractive capitalism, the introduction of new biota, the imposition of a private property regime backed by the violence of the state, networks of industrial[izing] infrastructure, and forced removal and migration, transformed landscapes of abundance into landscapes of scarcity. These hundreds of ecological apocalypses, spread out in space and time across the North American continent and beyond necessitated various new ways of relating to the myriad relations that composed Indigenous political and legal orders and had sustained life for thousands of years. Prophetic visioning, dreaming, dancing, drumming, and singing were technologies with which to identify, diagnose, theorize, and repair relations fragmented and under duress from these settler colonial impositions.

Throughout the nineteenth century, Indigenous prophets drew on ancient, normative practices of dreaming and vision-seeking to confront these new threats to their self-determination and worked to ensure the continuity of their networks of relations including

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10 I have chosen to call these visionary leaders and intellectuals “prophets” even though I recognize how much the term is freighted with historical baggage associated with Judeo-Christian tradition. I think that the term “prophets” captures, albeit in an imprecise way, the future-orientation of these figures—how they led followers forward with visions of a desirable future. When possible, I use more specific terms appropriate to the particular linguistic and political communities I am speaking about.
relations between humans, other-than-human beings, the land and water. Indigenous prophetic figures were not universally accepted among their people in their time. Their sometimes new and jarring prescriptions on how to be a good human being—a good relative—were sometimes unpopular. The novel teachings they brought back from the land of the dead were frequently controversial. They were also not the only individuals anticipating and working towards a future for their people beyond and despite the structures of settler colonialism tightening around them. But for the purposes of this dissertation, I focus on Indigenous prophecy because it is a site of convergence—a site where settler colonialism produced itself as reactive to the persistence of Indigenous sovereignty. Indigenous prophecy is a site from which to glimpse the inherent fragility of settler colonialism because it is here that a refusal of a settler colonial future and the insistence on an Indigenous one is the most explicit: a reminder that the settler colonial project could never be completed. US settler colonialism is fragile here because it has always staked itself on a future without Indigenous people—it has always required telling stories of the end of Indigenous North America to narrate itself into existence. Indigenous prophets resisted this “colonial narrative of prediction,”—of anticipating Indigenous decline—and insisted on their temporal sovereignty by “negotiat[ing] the complexities and ambiguities of the present through producing (and at times foreclosing) possible futures,” as Joseph Weiss has written in the context of contemporary Haida.\(^\text{11}\) While US settler colonialism has always relied on the presence/absence of Indigenous peoples, Indigenous prophets simultaneously critiqued settler

colonialism, but also (re)produced ways of being in time that did not rely on a negative relation to settler futurity.\textsuperscript{12}

Here I follow Manu Karuka in his understanding settler sovereignty as always necessarily a \textit{countersovereignty}, the prose of which “orients itself towards delegitimizing Indigenous modes of relationship and solidifying a colonial sovereignty unmoored from them.”\textsuperscript{13} This prose manifests in narratives of the disappearing Indian, visions of an inevitable future of endless progress, a political and economic order based on “improvement,” and a social order in the form of the white, Protestant, heteropatriarchal family unit. This prose of countersovereignty is anticipatory, future-oriented, and manifests in what I call \textit{settler prophecy}. Settler prophecy has worked by neutralizing the threat of the Indigenous futurity by using the figure of the Indian prophet as a foil to the smooth unfolding of settler time. Indigenous prophets and their visions had to be neutralized as criminally and pathologically resistant to the natural order: the supposedly natural progress of civilization as the United States, and the expansion of its republican institutions and market networks via the technological infrastructure of canal, railroad, and steamboat. While the figure of the Indian prophet was a settler colonial fiction, it derived from actual Indigenous prophetic figures whose refusal of subsumption into

\textsuperscript{12} I have been influenced here by work on Indigenous resurgence that demonstrates how Indigenous anti-colonial movements have built into them visions of future thriving and relationality that are based on Indigenous ethical frameworks rooted in specific languages and place and move beyond appeals for recognition by colonial states, exist alongside critiques of settler colonial governance, and exist regardless of the presence or absence of the colonial state. Audra Simpson, \textit{Mohawk Interruptus: Political Life Across the Borders of Settler States} (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014); Glen Coulthard, \textit{Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014); Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, \textit{As We Have Always Done: Indigenous Freedom Through Radical Resistance} (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2017).

settler visions of the future served as a constant, haunting reminder of the fragility of the colonial project and an obstacle to the fulfillment of settler prophecy.

Above all, Indigenous prophetic visionaries have insisted on temporal sovereignty, one way in which “Native peoples’ varied experiences of duration can remain nonidentical with respect to the dynamics of settler temporal formations, indicating ways of being-in-time that are not reducible to participation in a singular, given time—a unitary flow—largely contoured by non-native patterns and priorities,” as Mark Rifkin explains. For Nick Estes (Lower Brule Sioux), Indigenous prophecy has functioned as “diagnoses of the times in which we live, and visions of what must be done to get free.” It is a history of the future, not the endpoint on a linear timeline that imagines a “blank slate” of a radically open future, the sort of temporal terra nullius of modern, settler time. In contrast, Indigenous time, including prophetic time, is characterized by a continuous relationship with land and ancestors that tracks back and forth between past, present, and future, despite the distortions of settler colonial violence, in “less unbroken continuity than complex cross-temporal communications, impressions, and relations that exceed the unfolding of a timeline.” This “prophetic temporality” has acted “as a catalyzing force that punctuates and animates Native frames of reference.”

This is evident in the radically different ways in which the history of the Ghost Dance has been framed by non-Indigenous historians and Indigenous historians, respectively. In settler

16 This is why binaries of modern/traditional, conservative/progressive make little sense when understanding Indigenous prophetic movements as they rely on a rigid distinction between past and present, and understanding of the past as forever receding from access. Rifkin, Beyond Settler Time, 131.
histories of the Ghost Dance, the movement is a tragic final attempt to fulfill a prophecy of Indigenous renewal and restoration of power and authority despite the inevitable domination of the United States. The Wounded Knee Massacre is em plotted in these histories as the final moment of significant Indigenous resistance and the end of the frontier (authentic Indians being seen as synonymous with this westward-moving frontier). But in Oceti Sakowin temporal reckonings, the Indian Wars of the nineteenth-century never ended, and prophecy continues to unfold in the form of Zuzeca Sapa, a multi-headed Black Snake who was prophesied to arrive and slither across the land, imperiling all life and poisoning the water. Zuzeca Sapa is the Dakota Access pipeline and other oil and gas pipelines now existing or slated to be built and has necessitated a massive movement of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to protect the lands and waters from its life-destroying force: a manifestation of capitalism and colonialism. The #NoDAPL movement is an example of the enactment of Indigenous temporal sovereignty. Though it is responding to settler colonial violence, it is located on a different configuration of past, present, and future than that of settler time—recalling the tangled times of the ancestors, unborn generations, and importantly, the time of other-than-human relatives like Mni Sose (Missouri River), a member of the Mni Oyate, or Water Nation.

I follow Nick Estes’s insight throughout this dissertation that prophecies like that of Zuzeca Sapa are “revolutionary theory, a way to help us think about our relationship to the land, to other humans and other-than-humans, and to history and time.” In a similar vein, Karuka

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17 This is despite the fact that the Ghost Dance, in many forms and in many different Indigenous homelands, continued to be practiced well after the end of the nineteenth century and into the present. I chose not to use the Ghost Dance as a case study in this dissertation largely because the literature is so densely and heavily weighted with colonialis t histories of inevitable Indigenous disappearance, death, and trauma that I cannot do the topic justice here.

18 Nick Estes, Our History is the Future, 14-15.
understands Indigenous prophets and their followers past and present to be enacting a “militant commitment to self-determination, insisting upon their own power to be (to remain and become) as they wished, through an enactment and renewal of their relationships with their lands, and with each other.”

**Historiographical Background**

Most work on Indigenous prophetic movements (also known as “nativist” or “revitalization” movements) in North American history can be located within two historiographical silos. One of these silos contains work by early Americanists that bridges the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, encapsulating the struggle over the trans-Appalachian West, usually up to the War of 1812 and the demise of Tecumseh in the North, and the defeat of the Red Sticks in the South (but sometimes extending through the Black Hawk War of 1832). The second silo contains work that is more conversant with the historiography of the US West, focusing on the trans-Mississippi west in the second half of the nineteenth century. The former historiographical track has been heavily influenced by Richard White’s *Middle Ground* and has considered the ways in which the rise of Indigenous prophetic movements underpinned the forging of a pan-Indian consciousness and an anti-colonial resistance movement in response to the breakdown of inter-imperial trade relations and military alliances, and countering the onslaught of American colonialists in the lead up to, and in the aftermath of the American Revolution.

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19 Ibid., 14; Karuka, *Empire’s Tracks*, 147.
The other historiographical silo has been largely preoccupied with explaining the origins of the Ghost Dance, which historians of the US West have commonly narrated as the catalyst for the Wounded Knee Massacre, the event that has long served as the mythic end to the American frontier and the tragic demise of Indigenous people, who tend to disappear from the narrative after this point. The most recent scholarship on the Ghost Dance has framed it in the context of a more robust, systematic, and industrialized colonization by the US, especially after the Civil War, and has made efforts to characterize the ceremony as a thoroughly modern religion, “born of steam and steel,” as Louis Warren puts it. The Ghost Dance was not a tragic, last-ditch attempt at clinging to an unchanging tradition, Warren and others argue, but a pragmatic strategy to survive and adapt in a changing world. Other recent scholarship has looked more closely at the life of the Ghost Dance within particular Indigenous nations and homelands. Still others, indebted to the work of Leslie Spier—an early twentieth-century anthropologist who argued that the Great Basin emergence of the Ghost Dance was directly


influenced by Columbia Plateau Prophet Dance—placed their studies firmly within the context of the Columbia Plateau and the particular historical conditions experienced by Indigenous people there, regardless of the extent to which developments here influenced the emergence of the Ghost Dance much further south.24

   Across all these historiographical veins one can trace many of the same disputed questions, most of them swinging between two binary poles: were Indigenous prophetic movements traditionalist or assimilationist? Conservative or progressive? To what extent were they influenced by Christianity or Indigenous belief systems? Were they catalyzed by inside or outside forces? Scholars like Gregory Smoak have attempted to move beyond these binary frameworks by focusing on ethnic identity and ethnogenesis. While he argues that the Ghost Dance for Newe (Bannock and Shoshone) people was “functional, not delusional,” Smoak suggests that the religious import of the practice was epiphenomenal, that even as the Ghost Dance was about restoring the flow of “supernatural” power, “on another [level it was] a vehicle for the expression of meaningful social identities.”25 Though he also avoids traditional/progressive and accommodation/resistance binaries, Louis Warren tends to characterize the Ghost Dance as pragmatic or practical—that while it was packaged as religious belief, underneath it all, it was really a mechanism by which Indigenous followers could enter into modernity on their own terms.26 Warren has made an important intervention in demonstrating that Indigenous spiritual practices are not inherently antithetical to modernity,

25 Smoak, Ghost Dances and Identity, 3.
but he also downplays the ways in which the Ghost Dance was, at least for many of its practitioners, a critique of a particular form of settler colonial modernity and the modes of relationships inherent to it, and that these critiques and alternative modes of relationality were also practiced in a way that frustrates easy categorization as politics, law, or religion.

**Indigenous Prophetic Movements and the Category of Religion**

Many scholars argue that to truly understand Indigenous prophetic movements, we must take religious belief more seriously as a force shaping human action. Alfred Cave, following Elizabeth Viber, urges historians to focus on the “inner logic” that made prophetic movements make sense to their followers, a logic rooted in Indigenous cultural frameworks, but also putting to use tools incorporated from newcomers, including symbols, stories and ideas from Christianity. For Cave, religious movements are important, because they have been a way for oppressed people to “live revolts.” Although Cave unambiguously calls on historians to take religion seriously, and to foreground “spiritual beliefs and practices in shaping the lives and guiding the behavior of Native American people,” his framing tends to situate religion as epiphenomenal as well, that political resistance to colonial domination was a “mode of performance in religious themes.” Joel Martin sees this sidelining of religion as part of a more widespread interpretive problem. In a review of Cave’s book, Martin suggests that humanities scholars in general have “tended to view religion as a ‘weaker’ form of language and action,

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28 Ibid., 9-10. Italics mine.
derivative of and requiring translation into the ‘stronger’ realms of the economic, the political, and the social.”

In the spirit of Martin’s critique that scholars have sidelined religion in favor of allegedly more robust and rational categories, this dissertation takes Indigenous religious practices seriously and as co-extensive with Indigenous political and legal orders that resist separation into binaries of sacred and secular, material and spiritual. As Martin notes elsewhere, “[i]f you pull on the thread of ‘Native American religion,’ you end up pulling yourself into the study of Native American culture, art, history, economics, music, dance, dress, politics, and almost everything else.”

Embracing religion as an interpretive category wasn’t my original strategy. Early on in this project, my strategy was the opposite—I tried to extricate a religious framework from my analysis altogether because I was worried that the colonial baggage of the category of religion would hinder the attention I wanted to draw to the grounded, material aspects of Indigenous cosmologies, and the work that prophecy did as a political or legal technology. In order to take Indigenous law and politics seriously, I tried to eliminate religion as a category. But I eventually found that by doing this, I was simply replacing one colonial category with another—replacing religion with politics or law (just as Martin had criticized).

31 I’m drawing on Robin Ridington’s use of the concept of technology in his study of Northern Athapaskan narrative performance. Ridington sees technology not as a something that should be assessed in terms of its complexity as an artifact, but by its “overall strategic complexity.” Ridington himself draws on Marcia-Anne Dobres and Christopher Hoffman’s definition of “technological relations” as “the complex webs interconnecting the material with the social, political, economic, and symbolic experiences of human existence.” Ridington goes on to describe prophecy as “the way [Northern Athapaskans] contextualized a foreign material technology within the technology of their narrative tradition.” Robin Ridington and Jillian Ridington, When You Sing It Now, Just Like New: First Nations Poetics, Voices, and Representations (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 194-192-195.
began to feel that using the language of the “sacred” and even “religion” was more appropriate than relying only on the secularized categories of economy, politics, and law, because this language could at least get closer to the ways in which Indigenous relationships to place, and other-than-human beings have a “more-than-instrumental value, and [invoke] the real presence and subjectivity of spiritual others,” in the words of Michael McNally.32

Religion as a category has been used by colonialists to discredit and defuse Indigenous political initiatives and practices of law, by discrediting entire Indigenous political, legal, religious, and economic systems as superstitious and primitive forms of religion. Colonialists—secularist and Christian alike—defined Indigenous practices like prophetic dreaming and dancing as forms of bad religion in need of eradication in order for the civilization process to proceed. This dissertation argues that to better understand the “inner logic” of Indigenous prophetic movements, it would be wise to expand the category of religion to encapsulate Indigenous practices that cannot be contained within Western categorical distinctions.33 But it also means understanding the work that the category of religion has done, both in the historiography of Indigenous prophetic movements, and by the non-Indigenous historical actors who encountered and responded to them.34 While scholars thus far have characterized

33 I’m drawing on work in Indigenous studies that expand the concept of “sovereignty” beyond its function as a Western political concept to “encompass multiple forms of Indigenous social, political, and legal practices outside of the conventional purview of ‘sovereign power,’” Weiss, Shaping the Future, 185-186. Weiss is drawing on the work of Joanne Barker and Taiaiake Alfred here.
34 It becomes more difficult to do away with “religion” as a category when moving into the latter decades of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth, as Indigenous ceremonial practices, including the Ghost Dance, were increasingly regulated, and policed by assimilationist-minded governments in Canada and the US. Various Indigenous communities found ways of utilizing the term “religion” as well as “secular” to protect and sustain
Indigenous prophetic movements as religious movements sustaining a people in crisis, or a spiritualist window dressing from which a rational, politically-calculated response to colonialism was launched (some scholars swing between both), I argue that we should attempt to work within Indigenous ontological and epistemological frameworks, to avoid thinking in terms of “what Indigenous people believe[d]” but instead, how Indigenous peoples have understood the organization of the world, how power moves between entities, and how diverse beings relate to one another.  

Euro-Western scholars have hubristically positioned themselves as being uniquely capable of accessing the rational intentions underneath the scrim of spiritual belief (what Indigenous prophets were really thinking, whether they were aware of it or not). In doing so, many of these scholars implicitly claim that Indigenous people have always been post-Enlightenment Western subjects who make a separation between the material and the spiritual, the human-built world and nature, and act at a distance from the world. This has often been a way for non-Indigenous scholars to make an appeal for the humanity of Indigenous peoples, assuming that the only way to recognize Indigenous people as fully human is by proving that they meet the terms of the modern, secular, post-Enlightenment subject.  

_These practices._ See Tisa Wenger, _We Have a Religion:_ the 1920s Pueblo Indian Dance Controversy and American Religious Freedom (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009).  

35 Indigenous people, as well as other racialized people, and feminized people are often described as “believing” things, while the white male subject “knows” things.  

36 This is a similar move to the one Rifkin identifies in _Beyond Settler Time_ in which non-Indigenous scholars insist that Indigenous people should be recognized as existing within the same temporal frame as settler modernity in order to counter depictions of Indigenous peoples as anachronistic and of the past. Rifkin argues that instead, Indigenous peoples should be seen as experiencing their own sense of duration and temporal flow that may not be “contoured by non-native patterns and priorities,” a similar thing can be said in regard to Indigenous legal frameworks, religious practices, and political institutions. Rifkin, _Beyond Settler Time_, 3. For a great discussion of materiality/immateriality as it relates to Indigenous ontological frameworks See Kim TallBear, “Beyond the Life/Not-Life Binary: A Feminist-Indigenous Reading of Cryopreservation, Interspecies Thinking, and the New
ontologies that stem from the Christian “Great Chain of Being” and/or post-Enlightenment Cartesian mind/body separation are inappropriate to describe Indigenous worldviews which tend to be non-hierarchical and make no explicit separation between mind/body, matter/spirit, natural/supernatural. For most Indigenous people, the self emerges through, and is inextricable from, relationships to other humans and other-than-human beings, the land, and other multidimensional beings (what Euro-westerners tend to call “supernatural”). Indigenous people don’t “worship” gods or “nature”. They court the influence of powerful beings, but these beings aren’t necessarily all-knowing or omnipotent. They are, like human persons, capable of error, and their power is conditional. I follow David Delgado Shorter’s lead here, and prefer to think of Indigenous ontological frameworks and lived lives as “intersubjective” or based on “relatedness,” not necessarily as practices of “spirituality” or “religion” alone.

Over forty years ago, Calvin Martin published *Keepers of the Game*, an award-winning, yet controversial book that attempted to understand the historical actions of Indigenous people through their own concepts and worldviews, particularly through the lens of religion. He sought to explain the historical decimation of beaver by Mi’kmaq and Anishinaabe fur traders through the lens of Indigenous spiritual ideology. He argued that a spiritual crisis caused by epidemic disease led to Algonquian peoples declaring war on furbearing animals whom they blamed for

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37 I am not claiming here that Indigenous peoples have never made any categorical distinctions between different beings, that hierarchies never exist, and that bodies simply dissolve into other bodies—a “flat ontology”—just that the Indigenous world is not fundamentally separated into distinct realms of the human and “nature” or the material world and the world of spirits. The problem of applying such a “flat ontology” (a tendency of so-called “New Materialists”) to Indigenous ontological frameworks is discussed by Vanessa Watts, “Indigenous Place-Thought and Agency Amongst Humans and Non-Humans (First Woman and Sky Woman Go On a European World Tour!),” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society*, vol. 2, no. 1 (2013): 20-34.

the epidemic. Many critics panned Martin’s thesis as overly simplistic and ungrounded by evidence; an example of why “ideological,” or “romantic” approaches should be rejected in favor of more materialist or rationalist explanations that stress predominantly economic motivations.

I sympathize with Martin’s attempt to take Indigenous religious expression—as well as other cultural factors—seriously, but follow Kenneth Morrison’s critique of Martin’s work as inadvertently “reproduce[ing] uncritically an ethnographic tradition that has failed to recognize its own religious ethnocentrism.” In other words, Martin’s big problem is not that he argued that Indigenous religious views need to be taken seriously as causal factors in history, but that he was too uncritical about his own Western assumptions of what religion is and entails—particularly that religion is a realm of belief in supernatural forces that work beyond the material reality of the physical world—and this severely distorted his account of Algonquian history. Scholars need to approach Indigenous religious, political, legal, and economic systems from Indigenous ontological and epistemological premises, which don’t usually make the kind of distinctions between matter and spirit inherent to the Western theological categories that Martin unintentionally reproduced. Indigenous peoples, including prophetic visionaries do not “believe” so much as work from within their own understanding of reality.

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41 Martin’s work is rife with imprecise language like “mystical,” “magical,” and “fantasy”. Animals are also referred to as being “symbolic” of other things, or “personified”. If animals are “personified” as Martin claims, how can they also be persons to Indigenous people? Kenneth M. Morrison, *The Solidarity of Kin: Ethnohistory, Religious Studies, and the Algonkian-French Encounter* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), 29-30.
The categorical splitting between the spiritual/religious/private and the rational/political/public, as well as between nature/culture, has authorized the colonial violence fragmenting Indigenous forms of governance, social organization, political expression, and legal orders. Prophetic dreaming, dancing, and singing were long-established, normative practices to negotiate change or social imbalance, rooted in past traditions, yet open to innovation. Prophecy has been used as a technology employed to renegotiate relations with humans and other-than-human entities within Indigenous homelands, and to place these relations in a temporal framework that makes sense of the past in the context of the present and oriented towards the future. This approach to prophecy frustrates attempts to explain its practice in either materialist or idealist terms. The practice of Indigenous prophecy was simultaneously material and spiritual, discursive and grounded in the physical world.

It is in this sense—managing a myriad of shifting, networked relations—that Indigenous prophecy has always been political, not as the true secular core to be uncovered beneath a spiritual patina or the gloss of religious symbols, but an actual practice of a politics of the sacred that draws from the past, responds to the contingencies of the present, and reaches towards a vision of a more desirable future for subsequent generations—arguably the definition of politics par excellence, but not one that banishes the sacred to the realm of private belief.

Bringing back teachings from the land of the dead, or from the Creator through prophetic

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dreaming or visioning has been a normative technique drawn on by Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island/North America to address changing circumstances, to seek guidance on how to recompose relationships on and with the land, with human, and other-than-human beings, in a time of duress. Indigenous prophets theorized what settler colonialism and extractive capitalism were, and critiqued the mode of relationality these systems perpetuated while proposing new ways of conducting relations. Like all politics in action however, prophetic prescriptions on how to live were always contested, but these contestations did not track smoothly onto assimilationist/traditionalist or progressive/conservative binaries as I will show in the chapters that follow.

One way to rethink Indigenous prophetic movements as simultaneously religious, generative of theory/critique, and an ecological, legal, and political practice (and avoid both the reductive accounts of Calvin Martin and his materialist critics) is to follow the lead of scholars working in critical Indigenous studies (CIS) who have been calling scholars across disciplines to understand Indigenous political, legal, and spiritual orders through Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies. Glen Coulthard (Yellowknives Dene) introduces the term “grounded normativity” to express the ways in which Indigenous epistemologies, ontologies, and ethical frameworks are “deeply informed by what the land as a mode of reciprocal relationship…ought to teach us about living our lives in relation to one another and our surroundings in a respectful, nondominating and nonexploitative way.” In a similar fashion, Shiri Pasternak has described how Barriere Lake Algonquins have exercised sovereignty and legal jurisdiction through an

43 Coulthard, Red Skin, White Masks, 60.
“ontology of care”.\textsuperscript{44} Vanessa Watts (Anishinaabe/Haudenosaunee) speaks of Indigenous society as “habitats and ecosystems,” with “ethical structures, inter-species treaties and agreements,” which are in some places expressed politically through clan systems inextricably tied to the land. She calls this epistemological and ontological configuration “place-thought,” a “network in which humans and non-humans relate, translate, and articulate their agency.”\textsuperscript{45} Other scholars have drawn attention to the agency of other-than-human actors themselves as they are considered persons, important relatives, political agents, and historical actors for many Indigenous people. Zoe Todd (Métis/otipemisiw), for example, has argued in her research on northern Canada, that we should acknowledge how fish have been “actively involved—paradoxically in both fueling and resisting colonial incursions.”\textsuperscript{46} All of these scholars show how Indigenous legal, political, economic, and social orders, religious or spiritual practice, the land of the living and the dead, and human and other-than-human beings co-constitute each other and are interrelated in ways specific to each Indigenous people and homeland, in ways that frustrate binary thinking.

\section*{Theorizing Settler Prophecy}

Throughout this dissertation, I’ve endeavored to trace the outline of settler prophecy—that is, a particular kind of future imaginary expected and anticipated to occur, which continues

\textsuperscript{44} Pasternak, \textit{Grounded Authority}.

\textsuperscript{45} Watts is also critical of the ways in which Euro-Western scholars often, ironically, decontextualize Indigenous concepts in order to correct “the imperialistic tendencies of Euro-Western knowledge production.” Watts, “Indigenous Place-Thought,” 23, 27-28.

to be read back onto the past, rendering settler hegemony over the continent inevitable, even in highly critical accounts of US expansion.

By settler prophecy, I mean to draw attention to the ideology of manifest destiny, and its related expressions before and after it was coined by John Lewis O'Sullivan in 1845. The idea that those of white Anglo European descent were destined by God (or nature) to "overspread the continent" was self-consciously referred to as a prophecy, and like most prophetic teachings was constantly adjusted, assessed for its veracity by looking for signs, and contested. Moreover, understanding expansionist settler mentality as prophecy helps to remind us that the people that espoused it believed they were just and on the "right side of history". Technology like railroads and telegraphs—which would ironically serve as conduits of the Ghost Dance in the last quarter of the nineteenth century—were both bearers of and signs of seemingly inevitable settler hegemony across the trans-Mississippi West. This relied on a radically different mode of relationality than those inherent to Indigenous futurities. While the latter imagined a future of abundant relations—and the necessary forging and strengthening of human and other-than-human bonds in the present in order to work against the inherent vulnerability of living, the settler future imaginary entailed a world free of vulnerability, a hierarchical world of control and command governed from the core of the federal government and downwards to the patriarchal family home, and finally the self-contained individual subject. Relationships and the responsibilities they entail are seen as liabilities, or instrumentalized as means to an end. Ever striving towards the promise of settler prophecy fulfilled—this is a day that never truly arrives.

47 For an introduction to this discussion see Andrew C. Isenberg and Thomas Richards Jr., “Alternative Wests: Rethinking Manifest Destiny,” Pacific Historical Review 86, No. 1 (February 2017).
This future imaginary has often been imagined as more temporal than spatial. Literary historian Thomas Allen has been among several literary scholars drawing attention to the ways in which Americans have imagined themselves more as a nation in time than as a nation in space—that continental expansion was imagined as unfolding upon “a utopian horizon in the future when the nation’s contradictions would resolve themselves into a coherent republic.” But this temporal expansion reaching through blank space occurred in actual places with diverse peoples and ecologies already present. The socioecological relationships that composed these places existed prior to colonization and changed through it in ways distinct from one location to another in real ways that continue to matter today. *Settler terraforming* would be the process by which new territory would enter the space-time of the republic. An attempt to extend an imaginary European or Euroamerican ideal of landscape along with a patriarchal and anthropocentric orientation towards it across space and time, settler terraforming unleashed a myriad of unintended consequences that Indigenous peoples have been grappling with from within their own historical consciousness, and from their own visions of the future to this day. Terraforming was inherently a mode of warfare, Amitav Ghosh has pointed out, because it “weaponized the environment.” It “entailed the undermining and elimination of the ways of life of those who had inhabited those lands for many thousands of years.”

Indigenous prophets were threatening to settlers because they insisted on their own futures, futures that often had nothing to do with settlers, and had to do with maintaining their

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50 Ibid., 55, 57.
relations despite and against the settler terraforming process. Indians were supposed to recede into the background as history progressed into an American future. Settlers responded to this threat in a variety of ways. Settler elites—political figures, military brass, men who made their fortunes through railroads, land speculation, and other enterprises—defused Indigenous prophetic figures by incorporating them into their own settler colonial mythologies and timelines—largely as foils to the ideal of the secular republican subject. Popular narratives disseminated these views, which then traveled to new settler frontiers where ordinary settlers often made use of them or ignored them in favor of a view that collapsed all Indians into objects of bare life.  

Why the “Two Northwaters”?

I had originally conceived of this dissertation as a collection of multiple case studies—a sweeping look at Indigenous prophetic movements across the continent—as a way to demonstrate the diversity of these movements in all their place-based contingencies and complexities. I wanted to show how these visionary movements emerged in particular Indigenous homelands as a response to specific ecological changes brought about by settler-colonial incursions. I didn’t so much find myself in over my head with too many case studies as much as I found myself going deeper into the two case studies I had happened to begin with: the Ohio Valley and the Columbia Plateau. I soon identified an advantage in focusing on these two

51 By “bare life,” I’m drawing on Giorgio Agamben’s concept that sovereign states are constituted through their ability to declare a state of exception, rendering entire groups of people as outside the legal protections of the law, and “marked for elimination”. For an example of the application of this theory to settler colonial studies see Scott Lauria Morgensen, “The Biopolitics of Settler Colonialism: Right Here, Right Now,” Settler Colonial Studies Vol. 1, No. 1 (2011): 52-76.
places. While I still sought to emphasize the radical contingency of place in these very
distinctive Indigenous homelands, they were both settler northwests. Additionally, Americans
who had experienced settling in the Old Northwest in the first decades of the nineteenth century
were often the same families who settled the Pacific Northwest in the second half of the
century. These American settlers brought their family histories with them, as well as a particular
historical consciousness that had congealed with the rise of print culture in the 1820s and 1830s.
This historical consciousness tried to make sense of Indigenous presence and their supposedly
inevitable extinction, and contributed to the idea that settlers were destined to dispossess
Indigenous peoples as they fulfilled a historical destiny to “improve” the land, bring republican
institutions to new frontiers, or simply to own land fee simple as white Americans. The stories
they consumed and retold about Tenskwatawa, the “Shawnee Prophet” in the Ohio Valley
shaped the ways in which they would come to understand the Wanapum “Dreamer Prophet,”
Smohalla many decades later, and hundreds of miles away.

The active presence of the federal government also characterized both settler northwests.
The Old Northwest was the inaugural colony of an expanding United States and was the
proving ground for many of the techniques of infrastructure development and institution-
building that would be applied to other places across the continent and beyond. Yet, as Rachel
St. John has argued along with other scholars, “an active federal government was not
necessarily a powerful one.” The failures of the state to make good on treaty promises, maintain
a monopoly of violence, and extend legal jurisdiction also led to problems that would repeat
themselves elsewhere, including the “new” Northwest of Oregon Territory. This inability for the state to project its authority and jurisdictional power from the metropole to the peripheries is why I approach settler colonialism through Lorenzo Veracini’s model that sees a number of different settler collectives doing the actual work of settlement, sometimes at odds with each other, but all sharing the same goal of replacing Indigenous peoples on the land. Adam Barker and others have argued that a pattern began to emerge across North America in which a weak central state depended on the extralegal settlement of squatters and the violence of local citizen militias to do much of the violent work of dispossession and then tended to use the legal miasma that resulted to justify the existence of the state to bring order. In both northwesterns there existed a “dynamic interplay of forces that flow[ed] both down from the state to society up from society to the state.” Although the social, political, and legal orders pre-existing US colonial impositions shaped formations of settler colonialism as they congealed in diverse places, the settlement of the Pacific Northwest by Euroamericans from the US was shaped by their previous experience in the Old Northwest.

The main risk with the “two northwesterns” approach is that it might seem to suggest the teleological narrative I’m attempting to reject, that Indigenous homelands were destined to become US possessions as the nation moved its boundaries westward across the continent. Even if nothing was inevitable about the colonization of North America, many Americans believed—and continue to believe—in the inevitability of this future, and their investment in this future

had real consequences for Indigenous people. These ideas are still embedded in settler memory and are often taken for granted by those who are otherwise sympathetic to the injustices Indigenous people continue to face.\textsuperscript{55} The Pacific Northwest was settled very late, when the US government had already systematized many of the colonizing strategies that had been honed in other places, like the Ohio Valley. This is another reason why it is important to focus sustained attention on the very particular socioecological consequences of colonialism in these two very different places, and why understanding Indigenous ontologies, epistemologies, political and legal orders—emerging from these places and inextricable from them—is necessary for this project. As settlers worked to disembed Indigenous relationships on the land and replace them with relations oriented towards the market and the patriarchal household, they came up against resistant ecologies and the refusal of Indigenous people. These conflicts created unique historical landscapes and political configurations that mark different regions of settler colonial occupation today, despite settler attempts to create uniform spaces of agriculture, resource extraction, and private property ownership.

**Methods and Ethical Dilemmas**

Incommensurability exists between Indigenous and settler time. Yet both temporalities converge in the history of the territorial expansion of the United States at the site of settler colonial violence, including ecological violence. This has encouraged me to think of my dissertation as a history of settler colonialism, a history of settling the “northern bloc” of the

Anglosphere. At the same time, this is a dissertation about Indigenous peoples and their history(s). I have endeavored to trace the shape of Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies from a position outside of them to see what can be glimpsed from a respectful distance. As a settler scholar with no working relationships with Indigenous communities, I have no authority to speak from within an Indigenous historical consciousness—a Umatilla historical consciousness, a Wanapum one, a Lenape one, or a Shawnee one. But it is also preposterous to write Indigenous peoples out of the history of settler colonialism in North America, and irresponsible to continue to depict Indigenous peoples as either assimilating into Euroamerican/Euro-modern subjectivities on one hand, or on the other, simply resisting colonization through supposedly static, unchanging, timeless traditions. Acknowledging that I do not have the authority to speak from within the historical consciousness of particular Indigenous communities or nations, but also finding it necessary to address the density of Indigenous historical experience on the ground in order to resist essentialism and generalization, leaves me with an unresolvable dilemma and the inevitability of failure. Yet I believe that I must strive for balance between distance and proximity while accepting that I will never be able to “settle” the matter once and for all.

One of the biggest limitations to looking broadly at how Indigenous prophetic movements emerged through the onslaught of US settler colonialism is the impracticality of

56 I am following Adam Barker’s use of the “Northern bloc of settler colonialism” to describe the US and Canada. While both countries are unexceptional in many ways, especially as Anglo settler colonies, they do share many particular features and historical trajectories. This dissertation, however, is focused almost exclusively on the US, and the particular dynamics of settler colonialism as a series of local interfaces of ecological specificity, particular articulations of Indigenous sovereignty, settler expectations, and the particular ways in which different settler cohorts understood themselves vis-à-vis the US federal government, and the political culture of republicanism, democracy, and land rights which led to unique features of US settler colonialism. These unique features manifest in the historical palimpsests that compose various places and have real implications for decolonization and anti-colonial projects today. Barker, Making and Breaking Settler Space.
cultivating long-term reciprocal relationships with knowledge-keepers and historians from contemporary Indigenous communities—a much needed ethical imperative that has become an increasingly common practice (or aspiration). Instead, I have had to identify which work has been done by dozens of other historians, anthropologists, and linguists who have worked closely with these communities and select works produced through collaborative relationships. Much of this kind of work has helped me to contextualize the predominantly nineteenth-century archival sources that I draw on in this dissertation. Though most of the sources I use were created by Euroamerican colonists and shaped by their views, they are nevertheless rich with Indigenous voices, traces of their actual material presence and actions. Indigenous prophets were often vocal about their visions of the future, their admonishments of settler colonialism and extractive capitalism and the values, practices, and modes of relationality perpetuated by them. They often sought out US officials in order to explain to them their motivations and ideas. When interviewed by curious Euroamerican ethnographers and philologists, they often interspersed their accounts of “Indian traditions,” with incisive critiques of colonialism, anti-Indian racism and indictments of the hypocrisy of American Indian policy, law, and settler behavior, despite being directed towards other questions. I have purposefully omitted material when I have gotten a sense that an Indigenous informant is being pressed for information that they seem hesitant to share, but have moved closer when an Indigenous speaker directly addresses or confronts an anthropologist, Indian agent, or military leader within the text.

57 This includes works by Lisa Brooks, Shiri Pasternak, Eugene Hunn, and Virginia Beavert. A recent historical work written in collaboration between academics and Sahaptin intellectuals is a great example of what’s possible here: Jennifer Karson, ed, *Wiyaxayxt/Wiyaakaadown/As Days Go By: Our History, Our Land, our People—The Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2006).
Vulnerability and Climate Chaos

Why is this study important now? In the present moment of accelerating climate chaos, humans in the global north are being confronted with a sense of shared vulnerability, largely for the first time. As I stress in this dissertation, Indigenous peoples have always imagined futures in the midst of apocalypse and prophecy can be seen to be a direct response to the recognition of a sense of shared vulnerability made more dire in the teeth of settler colonialism. By attending to the site of Indigenous prophetic movements in particular times and places, it is possible to trace “robust archives of witness and repair,” what Melanie Benson Taylor, following recent work by Wai Chee Dimock on the shared vulnerability of climate crisis, sees as a site from which “we can perhaps more effectively apprehend Indigenous cultural knowledges and stories as neither incommensurable nor exceptional but as fractional, syncretic, and supplementary—part of both the oldest stories and the newest, and invitations to dialogue and intimacy rather than tragic foreclosures.”58 We all live within the wreckage of imperialism, colonialism, and extractive capitalism and experience it collectively on a species level, albeit unfolding at different speeds and intensities along geographically and historically arrayed differentials of social power. These histories of resilience and refusal, the insistence on remaining, of continuing to care for human and other-than-human relatives despite the traumas of dispossession and dislocation, can offer hope and perhaps even a blueprint for living in better relation, an alternative to the model forged by the logics of the market, which, more often than

not lead to failure of relationship, the destruction of life-sustaining ecologies, the refusal of coexistence.

There is, however, a temporal incommensurability between Indigenous and settler reckonings with ecological apocalypse, even as settler time is increasingly reoriented from a glorious, perpetually unfolding future of progress and mastery towards a more pessimistic apocalyptic time of impending climate catastrophe. Indigenous futurities, though shaped by the continual onslaught of settler colonial violence, do not always track with settler temporal frames in the latter’s linearity and detachment from any particular place. Indigenous future imaginaries often have nothing to do with settlers at all. There is also a likelihood of a nonreciprocal appropriation of Indigenous knowledges, and settler activists and scholars who have stressed the importance of establishing closer relationships of care and attention to place as an ethical imperative in the context of climate change have not adequately addressed the ways in which claiming these deep attachments to place risk a reassertion of settler possession of Indigenous lands. My hope is that the histories I trace out in this dissertation will give readers—many or most of whom I anticipate will be non-Indigenous but living in North America—a sense of the historical density of Indigenous relations to and with their lands and waters, a sense of how the land they are on has been shaped by thousands of years of Indigenous habitation but also global processes of capital accumulation, resource extraction, imperialism and colonialism. Wherever

59 Although settlers can find themselves within Indigenous temporalities when, for example, they join Indigenous land and water protectors on the frontlines of new extractive resource frontiers, which, as Nick Estes has pointed out, are struggles directly connected to nineteenth-century histories of extractive capitalism and colonialist violence on Lakota lands and are spurred forward by visions of Lakota futures on the land, Estes, Our History is the Future. 60 Stephanie LeMenager discusses this problem in the following article: Stephanie LeMenager, “Love and Theft; or, Provincializing the Anthropocene,” PMLA Vol. 136, No. 1 (2021): 108. On settler belonging see Joseph Weiss, Shaping the Future, ch 4.
you find yourself in North America, you cannot cultivate an ethical relationship to place without confronting these histories, which are continuous with an ongoing settler colonialism in the present.

**Chapter Overview**

In Chapter 1, I identify salt springs, salt traces, ungulates, and humans as a socioecological assemblage to understand how settler colonial impositions transformed life in the Ohio Valley and Lower Great Lakes in the early nineteenth century. At the heart of this chapter is a consideration of how in the initial years of US colonization in this region—the “Old Northwest”—regional Indigenous leaders sought to fulfill treaty responsibilities with the US in good faith while strengthening the bonds that held various peoples together in alliance with each other and their extended kin, human and other-than-human, especially ungulates like deer and to a lesser extent, bison. Drawing on dynamic and syncretic political and legal forms, these leaders looked towards a future in which Americans could be incorporated into regional society as they also began to rethink land ownership and control in more geographically bounded ways. Ultimately, I argue that in these first few years of the nineteenth century regional Indigenous leaders faced a crisis in which settler impositions like the control of the salt springs and the traces connecting them disrupted the socioecological relationships necessary to carry on life as Shawnee, Miami, Lenape, Potawatami, or Kickapoo people. Regional Indigenous leaders began to diverge in fundamental ways on how to respond to this crisis, setting the stage for the emergence of radically new future-building projects in the form of Indigenous prophetic figures in the ensuing years.
Salt was not an object that defined either American life or the lives of Indigenous peoples in the region in any essential way, yet drawing attention to the ways in which Americans transformed salt into a resource, isolated from its broader meshwork of relationships, can demonstrate how much removing one link from this chain set off a cascade of effects in the Indigenous Ohio Valley and lower Great Lakes. Another aim of this chapter is to expand histories of settler colonialism in the US from primarily histories of agricultural settlement towards histories that also include the centrality of resource extraction and infrastructure development to the control of Indigenous territory by the US.

This chapter contributes to the overall argument of the dissertation by showing how settler colonial incursions in the region led to a cascade of effects, and that Indigenous modes of relationality could not be maintained in the same way that they had been, even during the disruptive and violent years of inter-imperial warfare punctuating eighteenth-century life in the region. The nineteenth-century prophecies of Tenskwatawa and others was not simply a reaction to American settlement, but its broader environmental effects as well.

It was in this context laid out in Chapter 1 that visionary figures, or prophets, emerged to offer solutions to the relational crises spurred on by settler-colonial-induced environmental change. Chapter 2 looks at the rising influence of these "prophets," especially Tenskwatawa in the Ohio Valley in the years before the War of 1812. What was unique about Tenskwatawa, and similar “nativists” or “prophets” was that they rejected the legitimacy of a “middle ground” of legal and political negotiation. Tenskwatawa and other visionaries refused the legal pluralism that had existed for many generations in the region and insisted on the centrality of their own legal order—itself a novel innovation, but one emerging from the traditional source of Algonquian law: the “Master of Life” or the Creator. They worked within an Indigenous
ontological framework, which understood law as not a set of static codes or dogmatic creeds, but emerging through situated relations with other-than-human persons, and through encounters with supernatural beings, mediated through the conventional practices of dreaming and vision-seeking.

Ultimately, this chapter argues that prophetic, or revitalization movements in the early nineteenth-century Ohio Valley were generating theories and critiques of settler colonial modes of relationality. These theories also had a prescriptive dimension. Though varied in their vision of the future, these prescriptions had to do with perpetuating an ethics of responsibility and care that required high levels of mobility across land and waters. This mobility was a practice of multispecies politics and legal practice that gestured towards a future on the land in the longue durée, a future at odds with those imagined by settlers and federal officials. These settler futures would be materialized through fee-simple land ownership and the extraction and commodification of resources.

This chapter contributes to my overall argument by demonstrating how Indigenous prophetic responses were at the same time critical of settler modes of relationality and productive of new strategies to renew relationships with other-than-human beings, which I understand as a legal practice as well as a practice of multispecies politics. Additionally, Indigenous leaders were critical of claims made by settlers representing both Christian and secular institutions that they accessed a universal power derived from a centralized authority. Uncoupled from place-based relationships, Indigenous leaders found the legitimacy of these settlers, and their institutions, dubious.

Chapter 3 makes several interlocking arguments. First, I argue that settler prophecy should be seen as a relationship to the future that managed settler colonial anxieties about
Indigenous presence and the specter of Indigenous futurity. Second, that this settler prophecy foresaw a particular secular, republican form of governance and society that, though contested, became a highly influential and mobile discourse as the century wore on (the next two chapters will elaborate on settler prophecy’s portability, flexibility, and tenacity). Third, settler prophecy depended on actual Indigenous prophets as well as the fictive “Indian prophet”. This chapter shows how Tenskwatawa served this purpose, both as a flesh-and-blood person and as a didactic figure. Lewis Cass, while governor of Michigan Territory, sought out Tenskwatawa, largely to convince the latter to use his influence to persuade Ohio Shawnees and other Indigenous people to remove to Indian Territory. Although Cass sought to defuse or neutralize Tenskwatawa’s power as a visionary, the Shawnee Prophet continued to insist on a future for his people while remaining critical of US colonial power. Finally, while much scholarly work has been devoted to understanding the function of other settler stereotypes of Indigenous North Americans, these have been primarily focused on the binary and often dichotomous relationship between the “noble” and the “bloodthirsty” savage. During the Indian Removal era, literary representations of Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa did work to structure and define the boundaries of white republican virtue and provide a cautionary tale about its subversion through the opposing figures of the Indian prophet and the Indian statesman. These literary representations would prove to be enduring and would influence the ways in which white settlers would come to understand subsequent Indigenous visionaries in other colonial settings across North America, including in the “new” Northwest, the subject of the next section of this dissertation.

Not only does this chapter show how settler prophecy worked by drawing on the threat of Indigenous futurity in the greater Ohio Valley and Great Lakes region between the end of the War of 1812 and the Indian Removal Era, it also acts as a segue between my two case studies. It
shows how the figure of the Indian Prophet was developed in the settler imagination—especially through the literature of the Early Republic—in ways that would be drawn on in other times and places, including on the Columbia Plateau, where I turn next.

Through following the life and work of Smohalla, Chapter 4 argues that Indigenous leaders and thinkers on the Columbia Plateau made inquiries as to the source and legitimacy of settler law, continuously through the mid- to late-nineteenth century. At the same time, they consistently explained the source of their law to US Indian agents, religious figures, and military brass who would not, and perhaps could not reciprocate with an account of US, or settler law. Like Tenskwatawa and other prophetic visionaries in the Old Northwest, Smohalla’s account of Wanapum or middle-Columbia law was not universally accepted by all Sahaptin and Interior Salish people in the region. Yet it was a powerful elaboration of a dynamic, historically unfolding tradition of prophetic dreaming and dancing that first emerged in the late eighteenth-early nineteenth century as a response to crisis and change brought about by new pathogens, new technologies of power offered by Christianity and the nation-state, and the consequences of American colonialist attempts to transform the land and human relationships with it.

While an earlier wave of prophetic dreaming and dancing emerged in response to pathogens in the early nineteenth century, Indigenous prophetic activity surged again in response to increasing efforts by American colonizers to seize and transform the land in the second half of the century. The content of these prophecies and teachings became more pointedly about refusing settler capitalist modes of relationality and restoring relationships to other-than-human relatives that were compromised the most by impositions of American settlers during this time. Most at risk were activities that required high mobility across settler
space, especially root digging, berry picking, and medicine gathering—overlooked aspects of Indigenous practices of interspecies relationality.

Paying close attention to the long history of Indigenous prophecy and contact with settlers and other newcomers throughout the nineteenth century, I show how Indigenous leaders and intellectuals accumulated knowledge and experience of American settlers and settler modes of relationality that informed later interactions with American colonial officials in the last half of the nineteenth century. It also makes a more explicit connection between Indigenous prophetic movements and legal orders.

Chapter 5 focuses more intensely on a small window of time, from the 1860s through the 1880s, but specifically the short period of time between the Modoc War in 1873 and the 1878 Paiute-Bannock War, both fought on the immediate peripheries of the Columbia Plateau (also referred to as the Inland Northwest). It picks up the thread of settler prophecy introduced in Chapter 3 and considers the different and sometimes conflicting ways in which various settler collectives might have understood the future in ways that continue to shape the way they have remembered the past. Settlers thought about the future in prophetic kinds of ways—that they were a part of an inevitable unfolding of world history that legitimized their occupation and use of the land and the violent dispossession of Indigenous people. There was an ever-present anxiety that this settler prophecy would not come to pass. Although ordinary settlers and elites shared the view that Indigenous visionaries, specifically Smohalla, were a threat to the smooth unfolding of settler prophecy, they placed different emphases on the nature of this threat in ways that had real consequences for regional Indigenous people. The distribution of settler fear had consequences for the ways in which history was memorialized and violence was mobilized to forge an innocent settler entitled to Indigenous lands in ways that persist today.
Chapter 1: Salt Assemblages and Indigenous Modes of Relationality in the Early Nineteenth-Century Ohio Valley

In early 1801, shortly after the establishment of Indiana Territory, a delegation of Lenape and Shawnee leaders traveled to Washington to complain to the federal Government “of the white people hunting and killing game on their lands, and of having their horses stolen by white people.” As Secretary of War Henry Dearborn reported to Territorial Governor William Henry Harrison, the delegation asked President Jefferson to “prevent such abuses and punish the offenders.” More specifically, the Lenape and Shawnee asked the federal government to “aid them in leasing a salt spring on their lands near the mouth of the Wabash,” and to inquire “if said spring can be leased to some persons on whome [sic] you can confide on such terms as will be satisfactory and useful to the Indians.”¹ A year later, almost to the date, Shawnee and Lenape leaders repeated their demands in a council which included the Shawnee war leader, Catahecassa, known to the Anglophone world as Black Hoof. George Ash, an American who was captured and adopted as a child by Shawnees translated Catahecassa’s request “that you would give us under your hand a Deed that nobody shall take any advantage of us, likewise a salt lick below the mouth of the Wabash where the Shawnees formerly lived.”²

Salt serves as a good material anchor to illustrate aspects of American colonialism that are often missed. While most historical accounts that use the analytic lens of settler colonialism

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¹ Sec of War to Wm H. Harrison, Feb, 25, 1801 in Shawnee Box 8022 F05/019, Great Lakes and Ohio Valley Ethnohistory Collection (Hereafter GLOVE).
² “Conference held with the Delaware and Shawanoe Deputation,” February 5-10, 1802, Shawnee Box 8022 F06/006, GLOVE.
focus predominantly on land dispossession, the transforming of other-than-human beings or substances like salt into natural resources and market commodities were deeply imbricated and often appeared together in treaties, correspondences, petitions, and memorials between state officials, local settlers, and Indigenous leaders, including in the US’s first post-independence colonial endeavor: the organization and settlement of the Northwest Territory. The nationalization of salt deposits also eliminated another avenue through which Indigenous peoples could enter and participate in the market economy on their own terms. Crucially, the mutually-constituted processes of land dispossession, the extension of private property, and resource extraction—even at the small scale preceding the more industrialized form it would take later in the century—disrupted Indigenous social and political orders. These systems constituted themselves through ongoing practices of interspecies relationality, necessitating high levels of mobility across the traces and waterways colonialists sought to control and develop in the name of resource exploitation and settler agriculture.

At the heart of this chapter is a consideration of how in the initial years of US colonization in the Lower Great Lakes and Ohio Valley, regional Indigenous leaders like Catahecassa sought to fulfill treaty responsibilities with the US in good faith, while strengthening the bonds that held his people together in alliance with each other and their extended kin, human and other-than-human. Drawing on dynamic and syncretic political and

legal forms, these leaders looked towards a future in which Americans could be incorporated into regional society as they also began to rethink land ownership and control in more geographically bounded ways. Ultimately, I argue that in these first few years of the nineteenth century regional Indigenous leaders faced a crisis in which settler impositions like the control of the salt springs and the traces connecting them disrupted the socioecological relationships necessary to carry on life as Shawnee, Miami, Lenape, Potawatami, or Kickapoo people. Regional Indigenous leaders began to diverge in fundamental ways on how to respond to this crisis, setting the stage for the emergence of radically new future-building projects in the form of Indigenous prophetic figures in the ensuing years.4

Federal control of salt springs is also good place to see the new US government’s attempt to extend itself into its newly claimed territories. Salt, like other “resources” would fund the construction of roads, and other public works, while this infrastructure would in turn encourage settlement and market integration. Republican institutions would be established and the forests, prairies, and swamps would be transformed into farms. Both the minds of citizens and the land would be “improved” in the vision of human mastery over environment. This mode of relationality, which relied on a human operating outside of a “nature” to be exploited and instrumentalized was distinctive from the one practiced by regional Indigenous people which stressed reciprocity between humans and other-than-human beings. Salt was not an object that fundamentally defined either American life or the lives of Indigenous peoples in the region, but

4 Often bison and other animals themselves thwarted the agricultural projects of settlers, trampling and consuming crops before they could be harvested. The ways in which non-human animals responded to the colonization of North America remains understudied. For work in this vein see Smalley, *Wild By Nature*; “The Ingles Family, or an Incident in Border Life,” *The Southern Literary Messenger: Devoted to Every Department of Literature, and the Fine Arts*, 18 (Dec 1833), 724.
drawing attention to the ways in which Americans transformed salt into a resource, isolated from its broader meshwork of relationships, can demonstrate how much removing one link from this chain set off a cascade of effects in the Indigenous Ohio Valley and lower Great Lakes.

1.1 Salting the Frontier Process

The control of salt was central to the colonization of the Northwest Territory—the first settler colonial venture undertaken by the newly established United States. When Frederick Jackson Turner delivered his 1893 paper, “The Significance of the Frontier in American History,” he noted the key role that the humble mineral played in the transformation of Indigenous homelands into US national space: “The early settlers were tied to the coast by the need of salt, without which they could not preserve their meats or live in comfort…But when discovery was made of the salt springs of the Kanawha, and the Holston, and Kentucky, and central New York, the West began to be freed from dependence on the coast. It was in part the effect of finding these salt springs that enabled settlement to cross the mountains.” Turner’s assertion that the presence of salt on the frontier of US settlement acted as a primary determinant enabling colonization and facilitating the emergence of a unique national character has been largely ignored by historians. Instead, historians have focused their attention on another aspect of Turner’s thesis: the process by which Anglo-Americans transformed so-called “savage wilderness” into “civilized” space, shedding their old-world qualities and becoming uniquely American. In conceptualizing the frontier “process” as one that repeats itself at each

5 The Northwest Territory, also known as the Old Northwest was comprised of what are now the current states of Ohio, Indiana, Illinois, Michigan, Wisconsin and a northeast portion of Minnesota.
new frontier, the unique environmental features of places like the cis-Mississippi west which Turner argued drove this frontier process in the first place have largely been ignored by historians.\(^7\)

The most detailed work on the significance of salt on the trans-Appalachian American frontier post-Turner has been by geographer John Jackle. His 1967 dissertation and 1969 article addressed environmental determinants of settlement but pushed back against Turner’s exceptionalism. He argued that instead of rendering western settlers self-reliant and independent of the coast, salt traces—paths well-worn by migrating bison and other animals that linked together salt deposits—enabled overland transportation. This facilitated market integration and the development of infrastructure which sutured the west to the rest of the nation and its economy to the broader Atlantic.\(^8\) Although he doesn’t use these terms explicitly, Jackle points to the ways in which colonization always involves the harnessing of natural resources to provide its material foundation. Salt was a substance central to the imposition of the new US federal state in its colonization of the Northwest Territory. Like coal, lead, silver, copper, and other mineral resources that would gain importance as the nineteenth century progressed, salt was seized on as a potential source of revenue for the nascent federal government and spurred on


infrastructure projects that would more closely bind peripheral territories to urban metropoles, create new markets, and encourage settlement.⁹

Jackle’s corrective also hints implicitly at another thing Turner missed: the ways in which Ohio Valley salt deposits anchored a set of entangled relationships. One way Jackle accomplishes this is through his attention to the ways in which salt deposits attracted ungulates like bison and deer, who in migrating between them (most dramatically in the case of the former), cut deep pathways through the dense canebrakes and thickets that Louisiana governor Philippe de Rigaud, Marquis de Vaudreuil, remarked in 1718 were “as trodden and wide, as in the neighborhood of a populous city.”¹⁰ By the last third of the eighteenth century, one traveller “found everywhere abundance of wild beasts of all sorts through the vast forest. The buffaloes were more frequent than I have seen cattle in the settlements, browsing on the leaves of cane.”¹¹ In the Kentucky Bluegrass region south of the Ohio River, herds of bison could be found in numbers between one hundred and fifteen hundred, sometimes reaching a density of twenty per square kilometer—a figure comparable to the bison population on the tall grass prairies west of the Mississippi, according to one ecologist’s historical overview of this area.¹²

West of the Bluegrass region, Presbyterian minister and early settler John D. Shane reminisced in the 1840s that “buffalo would pass the station of Lexington every day, and

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sometimes all day long.”13 The bison herds that Shane observed may have traveled to Lexington by way of the Buffalo Trace, also known as the Vincennes Trace, which ran roughly from the predominantly francophone town of Vincennes on the Wabash in the west (the later capital of Indiana Territory), to the Falls of the Ohio, the site of present-day Louisville in the east—and beyond. This pathway, the major overland arterial westward of the Appalachians and north of the Ohio River, was shaped and maintained by humans and other-than-human animals alike. As one local history explained, “often the Indian and the buffalo availed themselves of each other’s paths and their routes became the same.”14 To maintain this ecology, to bend it towards human flourishing and the flourishing of other-than-human species, Indigenous peoples including the Miami, Potawatomi, Kickapoo, and Shawnee practiced intentional burning to encourage open spaces and browse at the edges of the “prairie peninsula”—or the lobes of grassland extending into the Ohio valley from the Great Plains.15

Scholars like Jackle have rightly pointed to the significant ecological connectivities radiating from salt, but singling out this mineral as the star player in this historical drama unwittingly mimics the process by which colonial capitalism and the state has worked in various times and places to mark as commodities and “dis-embed” things like salt, lead, or deer hides from their broader ecological enmeshments. The deeper history of these relationships, which included human and other-than-human relationships between the Indigenous peoples of the Ohio Valley, deer, bison, fire, francophone and creole traders, and, by the late eighteenth century, American newcomers, reveal sustained networks of communication, travel, warfare

13 Draper Manuscripts, 11CC128 (Hereafter Draper mss.).
15 Barr and Selvin, “Warrick County Prior to 1818,” 107-120.
and exchange along the buffalo traces, open prairies, canebrakes and waterways of the greater Ohio Valley for generations before a surge of American settlers set their sights on the lands west of the Appalachians and north of the Ohio River between the 1795 Treaty of Greenville—which ended warfare between the Indigenous Northwest Confederacy and the US—and the anxious years leading up to the War of 1812. Salt might not have been at the center of Indigenous ontology in the Ohio Valley, but by focusing on the mineral and its material connections, we can gain a remarkable sense of Indigenous modes of relationality in this time and place, the ways in which settlers sought to impose their own, and how Indigenous communities maintained and modified their political systems and economic structures in response to these settler impositions.

1.2 Webs of Socioecological Relationality—What Catahecassa Carried

Salt springs were important places to visit during seasonal rounds of hunting and the gathering of medicine and foods. Game was predictable at salt licks and springs, and women and others who accompanied hunting parties on their seasonal travels would encamp near springs to manufacture salt while men hunted deer and bison. Anglophone captivity narratives contain more than just a record of the trials and tribulations of captive settlers seized from their

16 This language of “disembedding” is taken from political philosopher James Tully’s discussion of Karl Polanyi’s “Great Transformation” thesis in which the latter extends the process of enclosure in early modern England to the colonization of the new world. James Tully, “Reconciliation Here on Earth,” 104-105. I’m also inspired by the work of Jason Moore, who draws attention to how colonial capitalism has always depended on harnessing the labor not only of human beings, but of other-than-human beings and earth systems, Jason W. Moore, Capitalism and the Web of Life: Ecology and the Accumulation of Capital (London: Verso, 2015).

17 Although settlers tended to think in terms of resources and commodities, disembedded from their ecological emeshment, and thought about the land in terms of control and improvement rather than reciprocity and cohabitation, they still made use of the existing ecological networks through which salt, ungulates, corn, wampum, and other things circulated.
domiciles and flung into the strange world of Indian “otherness,” they also bear the imprint of Indigenous presence and movements through their homelands. Mary Ingles, who was captured in 1755 by Shawnees raiding Draper’s Meadow in western Virginia during the Seven Years War was taken northward along the New River to the Kanawha and then to the mouth of the Scioto, where it emptied into the Ohio. The raiding party that had captured Ingles was only a part of a much larger contingent of Shawnee families, who were travelling along an intentional route with the express purpose of hunting, trading, and making salt. From the Scioto, the families moved west to Big Bone Lick, another large salt deposit. Here the party met with French traders, demonstrating that seasonal rounds, including exchanges with francophone or English traders were often oriented around travelling between salt springs. In other words, salt licks and salt springs bound together a dynamic social world revolving around groups of humans and also other-than-human beings.

It is thus unsurprising that Catahecassa asked Jefferson to assist him in leasing the salt spring at the Shawnee and Lenape council. The Shawnee leader was undoubtedly aware that there was money to be made in leasing the spring, as productive salt works in Kentucky—where US settlers had maintained a more continuous presence—could be leased at a profit for about three hundred dollars a year or “three to five hundred bushels of salt to the proprietors of the soil,” as one traveller observed in 1808. By centering on the salines near the mouth of the Wabash, near the location of Shawneetown, Catahecassa might have also been gesturing

18 “The Ingles Family”.
19 These had probably been in operation since the turn of the century, and as will be explained later in this chapter, represented an earlier, liberal and privatized vision of salt production and commodification, Reuben Gold Thwaites, ed., Early Western Travels 1748-1846, Vol. IV: Cuming’s Tour to the Western Country (1807-1809) (Cleveland: The Arthur H. Clark Company, 1904).
towards a longer history of Shawnee salt production and trade with the French in the mid-eighteenth century. When some from the Shawnee Mekoche division dispersed from the middle Ohio Valley between the 1680s and 1690s to avoid Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) violence, some moved westward, within the orbit of the Grand Village of the Kaskaskias, where they cultivated kinship ties with bison hunting peoples.\(^{20}\) It was here that they probably participated in salt production and trade with French fur traders and other Indigenous communities at Shawneetown.\(^{21}\) In his *Topographical Description of Virginia* (1778), Thomas Hutchins reported that the “Wabash abounds with Salt Springs, and any quantity of salt may be made from them, in the manner now done at the Saline in the Illinois county.”\(^{22}\) Some evidence suggests that the name Shawnee itself derived from an Algonquian word for salt.\(^{23}\) Whether or not this is true, the Shawnee world by the early nineteenth century was an extensive ecological meshwork in which salt played a significant role in binding together a coherent world of international and interspecies relationality throughout the Ohio Valley and Lower Great Lakes.

For central Algonquian-speaking peoples—and their Siouan and Iroquoian neighbors—bison and white-tailed deer were not simply resources or sources of caloric subsistence, but


\(^{21}\) “There are traditions that the salt springs, wells, and licks on the Saline River in Gallatin country [Illinois], were operated by the Indians and French for many years previous to the coming of the English about 1800. Certain it is that the French understood the salt making process; the Indians without doubt knew where the springs and licks were,” George Smith, “The Salines of Southern Illinois,” *Transactions of the Illinois State Historical Society* 9 (1904): 246.


members of other nations with whom members of human nations held responsibilities towards. This recognition of interspecies interrelatedness, a “matrix of social and ecological relationships” is a basic truth of existence for most Indigenous peoples across the world. Unlike the modern Western conceptualization in which humans exist outside of a “nature” to be exploited or dominated, Indigenous ontologies tend to situate humans, in the words of Christine Delucia, “relationally, in responsive engagement with dynamic webs of life and multi-species communities that are firmly interwoven with specific geographies, and have sacred dimensions bearing connections to multiple forms of power.” Because human and other-than-human needs are always shifting within this matrix as they respond to new situations, human actors must tend to their historical obligations to other beings, as well as cultivate a sensitivity to what these beings may be communicating in the present. This is never something that can be resolved into a static formula that can lead to an ecological balance in perpetuity—an idea that remains essential to the colonial fantasy of the “ecological Indian”—but is a constantly emerging practice of negotiation—of diplomacy—between human and other-than-human beings.

Moving through the land within seasonally-prescribed tasks, Indigenous peoples of the Ohio Valley and Lower Great Lakes practiced a multispecies or multi-being politics that required a practiced attentiveness and responsiveness drawn from a well of generational knowledge explaining historically-based obligations to specific human and other-than-human polities—an ongoing process of making, improving, and taking care of the world in dialogue

with all relations, each of which have their own ever-shifting priorities, needs, and agendas.\textsuperscript{26} Michi Saagiig Nishaabeg intellectual Leanne Simpson explains these “series of radiating relationships” as the key to understanding Nishnaabeg internationalism and political practice and illustrates this through an account of their historic treaty with the Deer or Hoof Nation/Clan. This account relates how long ago, the Nishnaabeg people began to treat the Hoof Clan with disrespect—taking too much meat, not treating their bodies with proper reverence, and being wasteful with their gifts. Because of this lack of respect and reciprocity, the Hoof Clan withdrew from Nishnaabe territory and refused relationship with the Nishnaabeg. After a period of disastrous hunger befell the Nishnaabeg, they sent diplomats to the Hoof Clan to understand why the latter had withdrawn their support. The Nishnaabeg listened for days to “all the stories and teachings the Hoof Clan had to share…acknowledging, of discussing, and of negotiating,” in order to restore relationship. They came to agree that in exchange for the Hoof Clan returning to their territory, the Nishnaabeg would take care of their homes and habitat, to honor and respect their lives through special ceremonies and gifts of tobacco, and only take from them what they needed to feed their families.\textsuperscript{27}

Simpson emphasizes how this treaty agreement with an other-than-human nation should be seen as no different from a treaty between human polities. How would histories of colonialism in the Lower Great Lakes and Ohio Valley look different if historians took these multispecies politics seriously? American impositions in the form of private property, overhunting, and anti-Indigenous violence made it much harder for Indigenous people to fulfil

\textsuperscript{26} Chapter two will attend more closely to this multispecies politics in crisis.  
\textsuperscript{27} Simpson, \textit{As We Have Always Done}, 58-61.
treaty obligations towards their other-than-human kin like members of the Hoof Clan. But a singular focus on deer or other ungulates directs attention away from how these beings were themselves inextricably woven into a much broader socioecological tapestry. Disturbances in one area had consequences that extended outward across others. For example, the colonial suppression of intentional burning, a practice of care for deer habitat (a treaty responsibility towards the Deer nation), was also a practice that perpetuated the growth of important plant medicines—another practice of reciprocal care towards other-than-human beings. In turn, the activity of hunting or gathering was a site at which Shawnee, Miami, Potawatomi, Odawa, or Kickapoo personhood was reproduced, intergenerational knowledge passed down, and new knowledge acquired.

One way to make visible the networks of relations that bound together humans and other-than-humans in the Ohio Valley of the early nineteenth century—and what was at stake for Indigenous nations facing the impositions of the US state and the often competing interests of ordinary settlers—is by taking a closer look at the circulation and use of everyday objects. It’s likely that among the items Catahecassa carried with him as he traveled with his Shawnee-Lenape delegation through the traces, forests, marshes, and river bottoms were three objects indispensable to a Shawnee traveller and hokima (a civil leader): a wooden spoon, a bag of cornmeal, and a bundle containing both wampum and paper treaties. Each one of these items can help to orient us in the Indigenous world of the greater Ohio Valley as the nineteenth century opened. Each item speaks to a past, present, and a future on the land.

Ceremonial spoons, carved out of wood, horn, or shell, sutured together kin across great distances by guaranteeing those who carried them nourishment and care over a geographically
broad and diverse social terrain.\textsuperscript{28} By the eighteenth century, the Shawnees had earned their reputation as “the greatest travellers in America” through their response to disruptions of European colonial ventures.\textsuperscript{29} They had established an intricate network of kinship ties between clan, tribal division, and nations covering most of continent east of the Mississippi and south of the Great Lakes. They had dispersed from the Ohio Valley in all directions following Haudenosaunee raids in the late seventeenth-century Beaver Wars. To the west, the Pekowi and Mekoche divisions joined other Algonquian-speaking refugees in a powerful anti-Iroquois coalition, and cultivated ties with the plains people of the Illinois and Kaskaskia. To the south, the Thawikila division participated in the deer skin trade and slave economy while Kishpokos maintained close alliances with the Creek Confederacy. Still others moved from the Fort St. Louis vicinity to the east, where they were invited by the Lenape and Munsees to settle in their country along the Suquehanna and Delaware Rivers.\textsuperscript{30} By the Great Peace of Montreal in 1701, which ended the Beaver Wars and much of the violence between the Haudenosaunee and neighboring peoples, Shawnees began to return to the greater Ohio Valley, but continued to maintain their far-flung relations in what Sami Lakomäki calls a \textit{kinscape}, or “a landscape in which widespread groups of Shawnee relatives constituted anchorlike nodes, connected by networks of paths and rivers.”\textsuperscript{31}

\textsuperscript{29} This quote is attributed to the British Superintendent of Indian Affairs for the Southern Department, Edmond Atkin, 1757, in Spero, “Stout, Bold, Cunning,” 2.
\textsuperscript{31} Lakomäki, \textit{Gathering Together}, 33.
This broad movement over territory does not mean that Shawnee were aimless wanderers without a home. The importance of traveling with a ceremonial spoon attests to the existence of a networked homeland in which life-giving sustenance provided by kin could be found from the Gulf of Mexico to the Great Lakes, from the mouth of the Potomac to the Mississippi. Catahecassa, who strongly associated with a Shawnee homeland at Wapakoneta on the Auglaize River by the nineteenth century, recalled bathing in the Gulf of Mexico—then Spanish Florida—as a boy. Memories of being buoyed by those warm salt waters might have also figured into his broad conceptualization of home. With a spoon, Catahecassa would have been able to participate in the Green Corn ceremony in a Creek town on the Tallapoosa, or a Miami town on the Wabash. At either location, he would have been relieved to find familiar faces in a familiar landscape. Traveling with a spoon, Catahecassa could always locate himself within a vast, interconnected Algonquian world, what Abenaki scholar Lisa Brooks identifies as the “common pot.” This common pot provided the central metaphor stitching together the Indigenous northeast, as “the wigwam that feeds the family, the village that feeds the community, the networks that sustain the village.” Far from an empty vessel, the common pot was a space of transformation and “deeply situated social and ecological environments,” spaces of thanksgiving, reciprocity, and generosity between humans and other beings emerging from, but also stitching together distinctive places.

Also evocative of the tangle of relationships composing Indigenous homelands in the region—in this case the fertile river bottoms of the greater Ohio watershed—was the bag of

32 Draper mss, 2YY75.  
cornmeal most Shawnee and other central and southern Algonquian travellers carried with them on hunting, trading, and diplomatic journeys. Often overlooked by historians of the eighteenth century Ohio Valley, who have focused almost exclusively on military confederations and warring empires, the agricultural world of which this bag of cornmeal was a product was essential to the diplomatic, economic, and military success of the Shawnee and other Ohio Valley peoples in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. As Susan Sleeper-Smith has pointed out in her innovative study of this Indigenous agricultural world and the female leadership that sustained it in the eighteenth-century Ohio Valley, hunting and agriculture were complimentary activities. Corn, and the closely associated beans and squash was the basis of Indigenous prosperity in the Ohio Valley. This agricultural complex relied on the rich, periodically flooded river bottoms of the Ohio and its many north-south tributaries that drained the southern edges of the Great Lakes: the Wabash, the Great and Little Miami, Maumee, the Sandusky. This agriculture was highly productive yet depended on community mobility to allow for the soil to recuperate or for flooding to subside and also to allow for trips to gather nuts, fruits, nutritious plants and medicinal herbs.

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35 R. Douglas Hurt, *Indian Agriculture in America: Prehistory to the Present* (Lawrence: University of Kansas Press, 1987), 31; Daniel Richter demonstrates how predominant views held by Anglo Americans at the time relating to stages of civilization, gender, and agriculture, blinded them to the centrality of Indigenous women’s agricultural production within Ohio Valley Indigenous societies in the early nineteenth-century Northeast. Despite this, agricultural production was on display all around them and has left traces in the written record. Daniel K. Richter, “‘Believing that Many of the Red People Suffer Much for the Want of Food’: Hunting Agriculture and a Quaker Construction of Indianness in the Early Republic,” *Journal of the Early Republic* 19, No. 4 (Winter, 1999): 601-628.
In turn, agricultural production made possible the mobility of individuals like Catahecassa, providing calories on long journeys, including hunting trips and diplomatic errands. It also exemplifies the century-long history of Indigenous participation in the market economy. Cornmeal could be traded or given to others in need of nourishment on their own journeys. After the establishment of Indiana Territory in 1800, for example, lawyers and judges could often buy or trade for cornmeal to sustain their caloric needs on their overland journey across the Buffalo Trace to Vincennes. In other words, the agricultural production—predominantly directed and carried out by women—made possible this extensive world of diplomacy and kinship weaving together Indigenous peoples of the Ohio Valley and beyond. Ironically, this agricultural abundance also helped to facilitate the establishment of a more robust American presence in the years following the Treaty of Greenville.

Catahecassa carried with him a third item, a bundle of wampum and paper documents. Like the spoon and sack of cornmeal, wampum and paper would also assist the Shawnee leader in his diplomatic efforts and speaks to the material realities of a changing world. As I will demonstrate throughout the chapters of this dissertation, American settlement—through both direct and immediate violence and the slow violence of longer-term environmental effects—disrupted the seasonal mobility necessary to maintain a thriving economy and society, and functioning political systems for Indigenous North Americans the continent over. While the eighteenth century Ohio Valley is often portrayed by historians in broad brushstrokes as a

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37 Sleeper-Smith focuses particularly on the Wabash Valley, a north-south tributary of the Ohio. She also shows how this agricultural prosperity also made possible the conquest of the region by Americans, as they were able to exploit the caloric richness of the villages they plundered while putting an end to Indigenous abundance. Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity*. 
century of warfare, violence, and social disruption, prolonged moments of stability and peace also existed in which Indigenous inhabitants of the region were able to draw on their resilient networks of human and other-than-human kin to rebuild and re-establish thriving communities.\textsuperscript{38} As American settlers made aggressive forays into the region after the Treaty of Greenville, however, it became more difficult for Indigenous people to rebuild and maintain these relationships. Catahecassa was among those who sought to work with US government officials to negotiate new ways for his people to maintain their relations across their territories in an emerging world of Indigenous-American cohabitation. In other words, Catahecassa was among those who envisioned a future in which their people could remain autonomous and sovereign, while coexisting with the American republic.

1.3 The Treaty of Greenville and the Persistence Treaty Diplomacy

The bundle of paper documents and wampum Catahecassa carried from council to council attests to these political innovations, which had roots in eighteenth-century negotiations with the French, British, and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy. As a hokima of the Mekoche division—the Shawnee division associated with diplomacy—Catahecassa would have been expected to take care of wampum.\textsuperscript{39} Paper treaties had more recently joined wampum as a communicative and mnemonic technology. Though very different in their material production, wampum

\textsuperscript{38}Ibid. The work of Stephen Warren on the Shawnee also emphasizes long periods of recovery between wars with European imperial powers and Indigenous allies and enemies. Warren, \textit{The Worlds the Shawnees Made}.  
\textsuperscript{39} That Mekoches had begun to assert themselves as the political leaders of all Shawnee divisions by mid-century was hotly disputed, particularly war leaders of the Pekowi division. Lakomäki, \textit{Gathering Together}, 115, 124-125. Wampum itself, though used for centuries by Indigenous nations on the northeast coast, had been more recently adopted by central Algonquian peoples and by the Treaty of Greenville, was being transformed again as a medium of diplomacy and historical recordkeeping. For the innovative uses of Wampum at the Treaty of Greenville see, Daniel F. Harrison, “Change amid Continuity, Innovation within Tradition: Wampum Diplomacy at the Treaty of Greenville, 1795,” \textit{Ethnohistory} 64, No. 2 (April 2017): 191-215.
when unbundled and performed in council, wampum and paper documents acted together to
story a past and imagine a future for all parties involved. In doing so, they transformed
relationships, changed the instruments of war into objects of beauty, and outlined a future of
mutual responsibility, coexistence, and care for the land in binding agreements, the maintenance
of which was understood to be ongoing.\footnote{When Lenape leaders Tedpachsit and Buckongahelas visited the Moravian mission on the White River on June 27, 1801 they brought with them copies of treaties "which they carry with them wherever they go." Lawrence Henry Gipson, ed.,\textit{ The Moravian Mission on White River: Diaries and Letters, May 5, 1779 to November 12, 1806} (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau, 1938), 108. These were undoubtedly copies of the Treaty of Greenville which may have been the first mass-produced paper treaty in North America. Robert M. Owen points out that the Treaty was so well-disseminated, even the notorious British Indian agent Alexander McKee was able to obtain a copy just months after its ratification, Robert M. Owens, \textit{Mr. Jefferson’s Hammer: William Henry Harrison and the Origins of American Indian Policy} (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2007), 33.}

These kinds of transformations were made at the Greenville Treaty Council in 1795
utilizing an innovative hybrid of paper and wampum. This council ended the Northwest Indian
Wars that resulted from the US federal government’s failed diplomatic efforts towards
Indigenous nations coming out of the Revolutionary War. Although successful in many decisive
battles, the Northwest Confederacy, lead largely by Shawnee, Miami, and Lenape war leaders
faced a final defeat by the Americans at the Battle of Fallen Timbers in the summer of 1794.
The Greenville Treaty would not only establish peace in the manner of traditional treaties
between Indigenous nations and the British Empire, but also introduce new US Indian policy of
paying annuities to Indigenous polities in exchange for land cessions. For the federal
government, this would create “a politically subordinate client relationship with native leaders,”
and a form of political leverage over Indigenous leaders that US agents identified as desirable
candidates. Yet Indigenous leaders viewed the treaty within the conventions of inter-imperial diplomacy that had emerged through the eighteenth century.

Indigenous treaty-goers clearly articulated their legal jurisdiction and political sovereignty with the expectation that American newcomers would conform to their norms. At the Greenville council, for example, Ojibwe signatory Mashipinashiwish believed that Americans could “learn our title to that land [the Ojibwe homeland, Ojibwewaki]” and when they did so they “will then be convinced of my sincerity, and of the friendship and strength of our nations.” For Mashipinashiwish, “title,” was not to be found in a document representing abstract, alienable land-as-property, but to something that emerges through a process of forging and observing relations on the ground, with a living earth, between humans and other-than-humans. The Ojibwe leader suggested that the strength of nations should not be evaluated as it flows from a sovereign authority downwards, but instead apprehended through observing the strength of relationships—their density, flexibility, diversity, and extensiveness.

The obligations and responsibilities flowing from the Treaty of Greenville were always more-than-human and extended from Indigenous law—which itself emerged from the land.

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43 Asch, Borrows, and Tully, eds., *Resurgence and Reconciliation*.
44 In her article about the Greenville Treaty proceedings, Barbara Mann draws attention to the consensus logic at play behind the “speakerhood” of treaty representatives; that when leaders like the Odawa Egushawa spoke for peace but advocated for war elsewhere, he was not being duplicitous, he was speaking the consensus decision of the Three Fires Confederacy. Mann also points out that women leaders would have also been part of this consensus-building project, but their participation has been obscured through an exclusive focus by scholars on individual orators in the colonialist-produced treaty transcript. I’d also suggest that Indigenous leaders understood that they were speaking for their nonhuman relatives as well when they negotiated treaties, Barbara Alice Mann, “Greenville Treaty of 1795: Pen-and-Ink Witchcraft in the Struggle for the Old Northwest,” in *Enduring Legacies: Native American Treaties and Contemporary Controversies*, edited by Bruce E. Johansen (Westport, Conn: Praeger, 2004), 182-183.
As I explained above through the example of the Nishnaabeg treaty with the Hoof Clan, to Algonquian peoples, hunting was never only about subsistence. As a practice of a multispecies politics, accepting gifts of animal kin—meat to nourish bodies, and, by the eighteenth-century, skins and furs to enrich human communities through trade with outsiders—was a moral obligation. To refuse gifts of animal kin—or to take them for granted and waste them—risked the dissolution of alliances between hunters and the hunted, the refusal of animals to continue to give gifts, and their eventual disappearance from the landscape. But diplomatic relations between human polities and other-than-human polities like the Hoof Nation were also necessary for the smooth functioning between Indigenous polities and those of settler ones like the US.

When Indigenous leaders reminded American officials about their treaty rights to hunt, they were simultaneously observing their treaty responsibilities towards their animal kin who would provide their gifts in order for polities like the Shawnee to live and in turn act as generous kin towards neighboring polities like the US.45

These relations were woven together. When American colonists began to alter this landscape—this kinscape—new Indigenous articulations of the future—and the relationships

45 Thomas Rideout, a captive of the Shawnee in 1788 described eating chocolate and drinking tea out of manufactured cups and saucers, two imported items integrated into a local Indigenous diet of corn, venison, maple sugar, bear oil, edible roots, and dried herbs, in Howard, Shawnee!, 56-57. Participation in the deerskin and fur trade did not necessarily mean a complete conversion of Indigenous peoples to market capitalism, but rather new ways in which the lives of nonhumans could be transformed into the stuff from which human lives could be sustained and enriched: cloth, tea, chocolate, iron and copper implements, silver jewelry, alcohol, guns. Bathsheba Demuth shows how the Chukchi, Yupik, and Inupiat peoples of the Bering Strait participated in the market economy in these terms: “There were rules about killing foxes: their expiry could not be unthinking, or the animal’s soul might cause a death in the killer’s family. But changing a fox’s skin into something else useful was not considered waste, as the pelts became bread, ammunition, liquor.” Bathsheba Demuth, Floating Coast: An Environmental History of the Bering Strait (New York: Norton, 2019), 84-85. Stephen Aron, “Pigs and Hunters: ‘Rights in the Woods’ on the Trans-Appalachian Frontier,” in Contact Points: American Frontiers from the Mohawk Valley to the Mississippi, 1750-1830, edited by Andrew R. L. Cayton and Fredrika J. Teute, (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1998), 185-192.
necessary to effect it—began to proliferate. But for now, influential leaders like Catahecassa continued to attend, in good faith, to the treaty obligations laid out in the Treaty of Greenville. Following his request to federal agents to control the use of the Lower Wabash Salines, Catahecassa reminded federal officials of these obligations, emphasizing their obligation to help protect deer and other animals from destruction by American settlers as “the little game that remains is very dear to us.”

1.4 Salt and the Materialization of the State

With the path to the Ohio country ostensibly cleared as the war with the Western Confederacy ended and the signing of the Treaty of Greenville established peace and a new line of settlement, the new US federal government moved to implement its first federally-led territorial expansion policy, laid out by the 1787 Northwest Ordinance. Land speculators, farmers, and entrepreneurs rushed westward over the Appalachian divide and north from Kentucky, bringing their axes, plows, and livestock. Deforestation, overhunting, and the importation of non-native species followed, accompanied by violence and intimidation directed towards Indigenous inhabitants. Indiana territorial governor William Henry Harrison arrived in January of 1801, determined to mediate between settlers who believed it their right to live in a world without Indians and the Indigenous people for whom he had treaty obligations to protect from settler violence. This would prove to be an impossible task as Harrison quickly found that these two elements of his job description were at odds. Leaders like Catahecassa and

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46 “Conference held with the Delaware and Shawanoe Deputation,” February 5-10, 1802, Shawnee Box 8022 F06/006, GLOVE.
Mihšikinahkwa (Little Turtle) would act as persistent reminders of this dilemma, frequently making their voices heard in the territorial capital at Vincennes.

The settlement of the Ohio Valley after the 1787 Northwest Ordinance, and this settlement’s acceleration after 1795, were inaugural moments of US settler colonialism. A settlement contingent upon “the logic of elimination,” in which white landholding settlers replace Indigenous people on the land, settler colonialism is often juxtaposed with extractive colonialism in which colonial authorities harness the labor power of the colonized in order to wrest natural resources from imperial peripheries to enrich the metropole. These definitions can be misleading. In the Ohio Valley, as in locations across North America, settler colonialism has worked hand in hand with resource extraction. This terraforming of the earth through extraction (including Euroamerican agricultural practices), or, as Adam Waterman puts it, this “consecrating the earth for capital,” worked to write-over the Indigenous landscape (a mnemonic text, and a constantly unfolding product of Indigenous relationality) to “physically revise the landscape narratives that orient the historically dynamic terms of Indigenous kinship, sovereignty, and self-determination.” 47

Americans moving through the area during the Revolutionary War and the early days of the Republic observed this varied landscape shaped by waterways, fire, ungulate, and Indigenous agricultural activity, but did not recognize it as the product of multispecies relationality. To render this landscape legible, Americans imagined a land in passive repose, prepared either by God or Nature for a pastoral future. General Levi Todd, who traveled with

Daniel Boone on his 1776 expedition to the Ohio country offered a typical description: “the face of this country was...delightful beyond conception, nearly one-half of it covered with cane, but between the canebrakes, spaces of open ground, as if intended by nature for fields.” Where Indigenous peoples of the Ohio Valley sought to maintain an ecological meshwork of fire, canebrakes, open prairies, salt springs, and buffalo traces, American settlers tended to see each element in isolation, evaluating the market potential of land and resources. Canebrakes were read as portents of rich soil guaranteeing high crop yields, as well as fodder and shelter for wintering cattle, when they weren’t seen as impediments for travel. Open ground was providentially seen as a sign of God’s favor, and an invitation for rational improvement. Travelers also often noted the presence of certain animal species, such as the Carolina parakeet, because the gathering of large flocks of this bright and gregarious bird in the dark forest often signified the presence of salt resources.

Kentucky settlers hunted bison to extinction in the region by the turn of the nineteenth century and most of the canebrakes had been decimated by cattle grazing and land-clearing.

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49 Although Indigenous peoples in the region had participated in the market economy for a long time, they tended to enfold this participation into their seasonal rounds and probably understood new kinds of transformations like that of a deerskin into a silver gorget, for example, as another way in which deer gave themselves as gifts to hunters in order for human people to live well.
52 In his trip through Kentucky just before the War of 1812, Fortescue Cumings met a settler who reported that although “the whole country was...an entire canebrake, which sometimes grew to forty feet high...the domestic animals introduced by the settlers have eradicated the cane, except in some remote and unsettled parts of the state. He described that plant as ‘springing up with a tender shoot like asparagus, which cattle are very fond of.”’ In Thwaites, Early Western Travels Vol IV, 178. Canebrakes were more common North of the Ohio—which was still thinly settled by Americans before the War of 1812—and frequently frustrated land surveyors in Indiana Territory. See for example, Elias Rector to Jared Mansfield, January 13 & 18, 1807, in Clarence Edwin Carter, ed., The Territorial Papers of the United States, Vol. 7: The Territory of Indiana, 1800-1819 (United States Government Printing Office, 1939), 413-414, 419-422.
Even still, the traces and openings in the forest continued to be utilized and maintained by Indigenous peoples, and their other-than human relatives, especially white tailed deer. The traces continued to make possible the conducting of diplomacy and war, and the practice of seasonal gatherings of food and medicine for Indigenous peoples, but ironically, these same pathways also helped facilitate US expansion and white settler hegemony in the Ohio Valley, making possible economic exchange, communication (as post roads), military mobilization, and surveillance, as US officials set their sights on administering and bringing into their jurisdiction the Northwest Territory—an attempt to bring a projection of the future expressed on a two-dimensional map to reality on the ground.\textsuperscript{53}

Though modest compared to the extraction of fossil fuels and other minerals, especially after the Civil War, the early nineteenth-century attempt by the emerging US nation-state to federalize salt resources was intimately connected to early treaty making post-Greenville in Indiana—and later Illinois—territories. A departure from the Kentucky model, in which salt deposits were left to market forces and local practices, and emblematic of the federal government’s eagerness to assert jurisdiction over its newly-claimed territories, salt springs would be leased out by contract to private parties, and its product regulated. Ideally, salt prices would be kept low for frontier citizens, meat could be more adequately preserved and sold down the river, and tax revenue could be raised. As a result of the Louisiana Purchase and control of

\textsuperscript{53} Used to supply the west during George Rogers Clark’s “Illinois” campaign during the Revolutionary War, the Buffalo Trace was also vulnerable to attack by Indigenous warriors who knew the terrain intimately and also utilized nearby canebrakes for cover and escape throughout the last third of the eighteenth century as they sought to prevent American settlement north of the Ohio River. The Kentuckian John Filson—relying on the help of Lenape guides—used the trace on return trips in his tours of the Northwest, and in 1786, to escape from an ambush of Indigenous warriors as the Revolutionary War in the west continued on as a “twenty-year war” for Ohio Valley peoples after the various failures of the treaties of Ft Stanwix, Ft McIntosh and Ft Finney. The Ohio country continued to be an Indigenous geography. Thornbough, \textit{The Buffalo Trace}, 189-198; McHargue, “Canebrakes,” 7; Lakomäki, \textit{Gathering Together}, Ch 4.
the Mississippi flatboat trade, the productive salt deposits in the interior could also be linked to broader Atlantic economies. As soon as US agents were on the ground in the far northwest, they identified salt deposits like the one near Shawneetown as particularly strategic. Not only could they produce salt for the profitable trade, but the Wabash saline was located near access to river ports that flowed into the Mississippi.\textsuperscript{54} A young Andrew Jackson knew just how lucrative salt production could be, claiming that to control the resource would be a boon for the public good, but also that it would ensure personal financial stability, “plac[ing] me above the frowns or smiles of fortune.” Willing to move hundreds of miles to a distant outpost of American habitation to enter a government-regulated salt trade, the thirty-six year old Jackson proclaimed confidently to his wife Rachel in 1803, “We will I believe get the Wabash Saline.”\textsuperscript{55}

The presence of and demand for salt helped to create the roadways that, by the first half of 1800, it traveled over as a manufactured commodity. The paths connecting salt deposits, which bison and humans had worn into the land from the Falls of the Ohio to the Wabash country and beyond for hundreds of years, also happened to be the most accessible mode of overland travel for American colonists, traders, mail carriers, and militiamen. The Buffalo Trace, known also as the Vincennes Trace, was the main conduit of travel overland from Vincennes eastward to Louisville, Kentucky. From there, the “salt road” connected the old French settlement—now Indiana’s Territorial capital—to Shawneetown and the Illinois Saline, by far the largest salt deposit in the region. According to Jackle, the saline “became a focal point for roads leading to Vincennes, Kaskaskia, and Nashville,” and encouraged migration to the

\textsuperscript{54} Smith, “The Salines of Southern Illinois,” 247.
\textsuperscript{55} Jackson decided against going into the salt trade; quote in Bahde, “I Would Not Have a White,” 49.
Illinois country by settlers from Tennessee and Kentucky who had previously made the long journey to purchase salt.\textsuperscript{56}

This network of traces, roads, settlements, and commodity flows exemplify the settlement pattern of the Ohio Valley during the Early Republic more generally, especially in the context of the market revolution.\textsuperscript{57} Settlements sprung up to facilitate the production and movement of goods from rural areas to newly established towns that, in the words of Richard Wade, “were the spearheads of the frontier.”\textsuperscript{58} At least since Wade’s 1959 \textit{Urban Frontier}, scholars have pushed against Turner’s vision of self-sufficient pioneers, eking out lives and building institutions free from eastern ties and supposed European decadence and decay. These scholars have instead drawn attention to how much American settlers depended on, indeed \textit{demanded} markets for their produce and manufactures. This required federal intervention, especially in stronger transportation links across the Appalachian divide and to the major river landings, and eastern connections with merchants and loans from eastern banks. Rather than a line of settlement, pressing up against an advancing frontier, with only tenuous ties to distant eastern metropoles, this scholarship reimagined the Ohio Valley as a constellation of small regional centers connecting their own rural peripheries to larger markets: Marietta, Lexington, Vincennes, Kaskaskia, Cincinnati. Further networks connected these regional centers to the Atlantic coast and down the Mississippi to the Gulf of Mexico. American newcomers relied on


these commercial networks, recalibrating ancient infrastructure like buffalo traces—a co-creative product of Indigenous relationships with bison, deer, fire, and salt—towards new markets.

Early in his tenure, Governor Harrison identified the Buffalo, or Vincennes, Trace as a crucial facilitator of colonization. He used the trace—a product of historical, socioecological relationships—as a dividing line between Knox and the newly established Clark county—the imposition of a new geography of rational order and scientific management. Harrison had also proposed gaining consent of local Indigenous leaders to establish “small stations,” or public houses for traveler security and comfort at regular twenty-five or thirty-mile intervals along the route. By the first decade of the nineteenth century, the Trace already facilitated the main mail route from the east, and settlers continued to arrive, especially north from Kentucky in anticipation of the area’s development under US control. As of 1804 however, most of the land lying in proximity to the Vincennes Trace remained occupied by Indigenous people, and was guaranteed to them by treaty.

Indigenous demands to secure the salt springs were swiftly countered by federal agents. Harrison was already aware of the value and quantity of salt in the region and had his sights on developing salt springs upon his first tour of the Northwest Territory as a delegate in the winter of 1799/1800. Though early in the year, Secretary of War Henry Dearborn encouraged

60 Wilson and Thornbrough, The Buffalo Trace, 216-218, 220-221.
61 Smith, “The Salines of Southern Illinois,” 247. Perhaps more indicative of Harrison’s intentions is his assertion that “The leasing of this spring would probably produce a disagreement among the Indians themselves. Every tribe in the country would expect to partake in the benefits of the lease and the proportion which would fall to the lot of each would be so small, as to disgust those who really have a right to the land: the Delawares and Shawnese [sic]
Harrison to aid local Indigenous leaders in leasing salt springs, by April, 1802, he had changed his tune, no doubt encouraged by Harrison’s enthusiastic report that “The spring alluded to, is perhaps the very best in the whole extent of country from the Alleghany mountains to the Mississippi, and may, if the preservation of the wood in the neighborhood be properly attended to, give so large a supply of salt as very considerably to reduce the price of that indispensable article in all the settlements of the Ohio and the navigable branches of that river.” Recognizing the value that developing this resource would have on securing federal control over the new territory, Dearborn directed Harrison to decline Lenape and Shawnee requests to assist the latter with a lease and to instead “imbrace [sic] every favourable opportunity for sounding the Indians on the subject of ceding the springs.” By July, Jefferson pressed Harrison to “ascertain the smallest sum for which the Nations will convey the salt spring.”

On June 7, 1803, Harrison obliged the President by meeting with a council of Lenape, Miami, Shawnee, Piankeshaw, Potawatomi, and Kickapoo leaders, to clear US title to both the Vincennes Tract and Clark’s Grant. The Vincennes Tract, once a French possession acquired through treaty with the Piankeshaw, was ostensibly handed over by proxy to the English after the Seven Years War, and then to the Americans after the Revolution—an exception to the have none. The better plan appears to be to extinguish the title altogether,” and to give each tribe an annuity instead. Harrison made an appeal that the salt springs would be more efficiently exploited if wrested from Indians, whom he percieved to be mired in factional in-fighting. Harrison to Dearborn, March 25, 1802, in Esarey, Messages, 47.

Harrison’s belief that the leasing of the spring by the federal government—rather than an unregulated private marketplace had developed in Kentucky—would be beneficial to settlers complemented earlier efforts that seemed to harmonize Jeffersonian expansionism and Federalist restraint, especially his promotion of what became known as “Harrison’s Land Law”: a liberal land policy that made it easier for settlers to purchase government land, discourage speculators, while also enriching federal coffers, Owens, Mr. Jefferson’s Hammer, 47-48; Dearborn to Harrison, February 23, 1802 in Carter, ed., Territorial Papers, Vol. VII., 48-49; Harrison to Dearborn, March 25, 1802, Esarey, Messages and Letters, 47; Dearborn to Harrison, April 23, 1802, Territorial Papers, Vol. VII, 51; Jefferson to Harrison, July 3, 1802, Ibid., 56.
recognition of Indigenous title west of the Greenville Treaty line which fell in just west of the Ohio border. Another Revolutionary-era exception to the treaty line was Clark’s Grant, a 1781 grant made by the Virginia legislature to George Rogers Clark, setting aside 150,000 acres for war veterans, rewarding them for successes in the Illinois campaign. But usually unremarked upon by historians was the intention of the federal government to also secure the Wabash Saline near Shawneetown (also known as the Illinois Saline), over one hundred miles below the town of Vincennes and beyond the boundary of the Vincennes Tract. This was no mere addendum, but placed in the text alongside plans to “firm up the title” to the Vincennes Tract. In other words, land acquisition and the development of resources were interrelated colonial projects for federal and territorial government officials. By the end of the year, anticipating the easy acquisition of the salt deposit, the Territorial Assembly began to draw up conditions for potential American lessees. As the spring warmed into summer, newspaper advertisements began circulating in Ohio, Kentucky, and Tennessee—places where locals had been manufacturing salt privately for decades—to entice potential lease holders.63

By the end of the summer of 1803, only months after the Louisiana Purchase was finalized, the salt works were in full production and Shawneetown was beginning to resemble the boomtowns that would become a signature of nineteenth-century American frontier life. Largely overlooked by twentieth and twenty-first-century historians, this confluence of trade and transportation routes connecting the Ohio Valley to the Mississippi, and the head of a westward overland route to St. Louis via Kaskaskia, became a magnet for merchants who

rushed in to exploit the excitement of would-be entrepreneurs, land speculators, and would-be salt men. Especially after the War of 1812, Shawneetown would become a major hub for transportation, renting, selling, and servicing vehicles and animals for overland journeys. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, the town boasted a central land office as well as a stately neoclassical bank. But in the first years of the century, only a line of hastily erected cabins lined the riverfront, periodically evacuated and reoccupied as waters rose, spilled their banks, and receded.

Delaware Lawyer and Jeffersonian Republican Thomas Rodney, who travelled through Shawneetown just as it was taking-off as a western entrepôt to an expanding republic, reported that “instead of presenting anything like a Town or Houses is Nothing but a Ledge of Rocks forming a rising pavement. [sic] from the water to the hill shore which makes it a fine Landing Place and a new road is Cut from this place to the Great Salt Lake Spring.” Rodney walked this road with little more than an umbrella to protect him from the elements, about eight miles to the salt works which boasted “34 Kittle[sic] in their Furnace and Can make 15 bushells of Salt a day.” An estimated 300 gallons of salinated water to make a bushel of salt meant that 4,400 gallons of water were being siphoned off, or pumped out of the salt springs a day. The saltworks itself was covered by “a Large Shed…the Eve of which is at least 8 ft high and the Sides all open and only the ground to lie on and that very hard and uneven and filthy—this is the Situation of all the workmen.” Spending most of the night huddled around a campfire in a

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64 Shawneetown declined in importance after 1812 when salt prices fell and 1819 when the land speculation bubble burst, Rohrbough, The Trans-Appalachian Frontier, 357-359.
65 Ibid., 503-504.
Buffalo Skin alongside the proprietor, “Mr. Flaharty a robust backwoodsman,” Rodney soaked up as much information as he could about salt statistics, and where other local deposits might be found. This eagerness to amass a complete knowledge—well depth, gallons of water-to-salt ratio, speaks to the importance of the mineral as a lucrative resource at this time, and that the class of men to which Rodney belonged sought to enrich themselves by exploiting resources in new American territorial claims beyond agricultural “improvement.” Rodney acknowledged evidence of Indigenous salt use, but ascribes it to an ancient people, “antecedent to the Present race of Indians,” merely an interesting prehistory to the modern, rational expropriation of salt as natural resource.  

At the end of October, 1803, Harrison wrote to Jefferson, praising the success of the salt production plan and its benefit to Northwest settlers, reporting that “their being enabled to procure salt at the reduced price of 50 cents per bushel has diffused a general joy Amongst the Citizens of this Territory and the neighbouring states of Kentucky and Tennesse [sic].” Harrison boasted that the twenty to twenty-five kettles he observed in operation had produced a product “I think superior to any that is made in the Western Country.” Along with a sample of the lower Wabash salt, Harrison sent a chunk of rock salt and plaster of paris (gypsum) from the Missouri country, and a promise to send “a few Indian and natural Curiosities designed also for your Cabinet.”  

Artifacts attesting to an Indigenous past on the land and mineral deposits alike became resources for US colonialists to extract, to enter into circulation as commodities or

67 Ibid., 137.
hoarded wealth, locked into cabinets of curiosities, that to them stood as a testament to the forward march of American civilization on the continent.

Harrison hoped that the extraction, production, and marketing of salt itself would contribute towards "that liberal mode of thinking" foundational to the republican civilization project on a frontier still threatened by European imperial powers and the darkness of savagery, seen to be benighting Indigenous peoples and backcountry settlers alike with a haze of base self-interest. Harrison aimed to convince the territorial legislature to pass a tax on the salt to help fund the establishment of the public Vincennes University to encourage republican virtue.

"The Only Safeguard and secure shield against the dark Cunning of individuals and foreign governments," extolled Harrison in a petition to the Territorial Congress, “is the blaze of science which will reach the mind of the plowboy, as well as the most wealthy citizen."

Harrison’s petition for a salt tax, however, was eventually rejected by the committee of commerce and manufactures. Regardless, salt was imagined by men like Harrison as a vehicle with which to fulfill a settler colonial future in the Northwest Territories. Just as the periphery enlightened the metropole, enriching it with knowledge of the previously unknown, the periphery itself would also be transformed through the march of history as progress and civilization. Salt, extracted from Indigenous lands, increasingly produced through the labor of enslaved people of African descent, and spirited away on transportation networks to distant markets would be one way to accomplish this transformation.  


70 Though this was the vision expressed by Harrison and other territorial officials, there was a range of attitudes among settlers regarding access to resources. Many settlers undoubtedly saw the salt springs as a commons—although Kentucky salt springs had been monopolized by private companies, many who harkened from south of the Ohio believed that everyone should have access to the resource, to be able to produce it themselves. Stephen Aron,
1.5 Cracks in the Norms of Treaty Diplomacy

Fleeing the challenges arising from the breakdown of treaty promises—both those with the “seventeen fires” of the United States, and with other-than-human beings—a large contingent of émigrés, from many different Indigenous nations, headed westward, towards the Mississippi, where they found new economic opportunities. Saint-Domingue creole and refugee planter from the Haitian revolution, Pierre-Louis Berquin-Duvallon observed that the depopulation of game led to new economic activities in Louisiana (now southeast Missouri):

“On the river St. Francis, in the neighborhood of New Madrid, Cap Girardeau, Riviere a la Pomme, and the environs, are settled a number of vagabonds, emigrants from the Delawares, Shawnees, Miamis, Chickasaws, Cherokees, Peorias, and supposed to consist in all of 500 families; they are at times troublesome to the boats descending the river and have even plundered some of them and committed [sic] a few murders.”

These western émigrés participated in more licit economic activities as well. According to tejas empresario Stephen Austin’s childhood memories, some of these Ohio Valley émigrés entered the wage economy working in the lead mines on the Missouri, where, like salt, it was extracted and shipped down the Mississippi River to New Orleans and the markets of the Atlantic World.

How the West Was Lost: The Transformation of Kentucky from Daniel Boone to Henry Clay (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 103-104. For the use of enslaved peoples’ labor in Northwest salt works and territorial Indiana’s exception to the prohibition of slavery north of the Ohio River see Bahde, “I Would Not Have a White.”

Berquin-Duvallon also marveled that “many of them speak English, all understand it, and there are some who even read it,” suggesting that they had been living among Anglo settlers for some time until it became undesirable or dangerous. Pierre-Louis Berquin-Duvallon, Travels in Louisiana and the Floridas in 1802 (New York, 1806), 98; Foreman (translator?), I&P, p. 31, fn 5, Shawnee box 8022 F06/002, GLOVE. Biographical information can be found in Anne Malena, “Louisiana: A Colonial Space of Translation,” Forum for Modern Language Studies 40, Issue 2: 204-213.

Shawnee Box 8023 F01/003, GLOVE.
But many, including the villages led by Buckongahelas, Catahecassa, and Mihšikinaahkwaw resolved to remain in the Ohio Valley. Despite these assaults on Indigenous practices of relationality, many Indigenous leaders still held out hope that, with the direction of US federal officials who were bound by their Greenville Treaty obligations, American settlers could still learn their law. Black Beard, a Mekoche Shawnee, expressed such a sentiment to President Jefferson in 1806. After addressing the binding agreements of the Treaty of Greenville, Black Beard reminded Jefferson that "If your people wish to live with us, or near where our Game is, they ought to do like us." That is, to exercise restraint in the killing of game by following the law as it emerged from historic treaties with animal nations. Americans—brothers, “the seventeen fires”—were also expected to demonstrate generosity to their treaty kin. Black Beard and his people indeed “deemed it very astonishing indeed that our brothers should ask us for payment for a mouthful of Victuals when we are hungry, particularly, our neighbors”. Importantly, Black Beard’s language—assuming an adequate translation—expressed confidence in the belief that it was still be possible for American settlers to live by Shawnee law.

Black Beard was speaking from a position that insisted on a future for his people. Knowing that as a good leader he had to think and act with the wellbeing of at least three future generations in mind, he admonished Jefferson to “listen and have pity on the Mothers who nurse our children to come, who will take care of all these things after us…these children will take

73 Black Beard, “To the Great Man of the United States,” 1806, Shawnee Box 8023 F05/010, GLOVE.
care of all our business after us, and these children will have four more three times after them. We shall instruct them that they may live in peace and friendship with all our brothers of this Island [Turtle Island]. We likewise beg on your side that our brothers will not tramp on our heart, the first put on this Island, who wishes to Keep all things right."

As a leader within a decentralized political structure, Black Beard had no ultimate authority to enforce any law or code of conduct, rather, he exerted the influence of a kindly father whose deeds and allyship with certain manetowi (spirit beings) and hopawaaka (a guardian spirit), had earned him respect over the course of his life. He expected the same of Jefferson whom he believed should have a similar influence over his own American children.

Jefferson, however, did not wish to imagine or work to ensure a trans-Appalachian west peopled by successive generations of Shawnees. But he did comprehend the danger of a Shawnee future imaginary, advising Harrison in a private letter that "for their interests and their tranquility it is best that [the Indians] should see only the present [state] of their history." In this same letter, Jefferson also alludes to his strategy of land acquisition, which expressed an emergent strand of American Indian policy post-independence. Instead of the scorched earth policy of destroying entire villages and croplands that had prevailed through the Revolutionary War years, the federal government would endeavor to assimilate Indigenous peoples into the US body politic through a “civilization” campaign, emphasizing, above all, sedentary agriculture (conducted by male heads of household) and the acquisition of private property. Through treaty-making, Jefferson sought to render Indigenous people dependent on annuities and the market, in

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75 Black Beard, “To the Great Man”.
76 Lakomäki, Gathering Together, 31-32.
77 Thomas Jefferson to William Henry Harrison, February 27, 1803 in Esarey, Messages and Letters, 73.
order to encourage them into debt so that they would sell more land. Salt would also be a part of this scheme where appropriate, “indeed it [salt] would be the most proper and acceptable form in which the annuity could be paid which we propose to give them for the cession” of the lands around the Illinois Saline.78

Harrison, and the Jefferson administration in general, knew that from a strict textual reading of the Greenville Treaty, Indigenous ownership was an unambiguous legal fact. For Indigenous signatories, it is unlikely that the majority had understood themselves to have ceded any land in perpetuity in the first place. Evidence suggests that they believed themselves to be entering into mutual agreements of land sharing in which the US would provide ongoing gifts for use and occupation of the land. Federal agents would act as generous fathers, and prevent or discipline attacks on Indigenous people and their other-than-human kin by their other children, white settlers, as Catahecassa’s speech that opened this chapter implored them to do. The August 1804 Vincennes Treaty, conducted with village leaders from the Lenape, Shawnee, Miami, Piankeshaw, Kickapoo, and others was, unlike previous treaties that emphasized peace and the establishment or maintenance of a “line” of settlement, more plainly about land cessions. This shift was not lost on Indigenous treaty-goers, and would prove to be the breaking point for many of the Indigenous leaders involved. Years later, Ohio Indian agent John Johnston remembered the treaty attendees to have been “in the worst humour I had ever witnessed,” the bad feelings spilling far beyond the council.79 In particular, intertribal discord hinged on

78 Thomas Jefferson to Congress, Jan. 18, 1803, William Henry Harrison Manuscripts, Lilly Library, Indiana University (Hereafter Harrison mss). Though Jefferson stressed assimilation, he didn’t discount the possibility of Indian removal, which was expressed by his administration long before it became the official policy of Andrew Jackson. For an example of this see Dearborn to Harrison, June 21, 1804, in Carter, Territorial Papers Vol. 7, 186. 79 John Johnston to Lyman Draper, September 24, 1840, Draper MSS., 11YY.
disputes over the right for any one tribal representative to sell land on behalf of others. While this wasn’t a new problem for Indigenous North Americans under the strain of expanding European/Euroamerican settlement, it had become especially acute in the Ohio Valley in the years after the Treaty of Greenville and would be a main precipitator of the emergence of new leaders who recognized the need for new approaches to counter US colonialism in the longer term. In the coming years, visionary leaders like Tenskwatawa would emerge, joining others in debates about how to either reform or refuse relations—between humans and between humans and other-than-human—within an ecological network increasingly compromised by settler colonial incursions. These new prophetic figures would—like the Hoof Clan towards the Nishnaabe—identify breaches in treaty promises and refuse relations with one party of treaty kin, the US.

In the short term, the Miami leader Mihšikinaahkwa had been particularly vocal in opposition to Lenape leaders who purportedly sold Miami land without the latter’s permission. The Lenape, whom the Miami considered to be their grandfathers, had lost land on the Muskingum River in present-day eastern Ohio through the Treaty of Greenville. Miami leaders had generously invited them to move west into their territory, to join them in taking care of the land. For their part, Lenape leaders responded to Mihšikinaahkwa’s charge defensively, insisting that they had not believed that they had been selling land in the first place. Upon their return to their villages on Sept 9, 1804, Buckongahelas, Tedpachsit, and Hockingpomska—three Lenape treaty signatories—reported to the Moravians living near their villages that they had "renewed and confirmed their peace and friendship with the white people and that they had
received presents in the form of articles of clothing." To these Lenape leaders, the 1804 Vincennes Treaty council was simply an appropriate occasion to remember and reaffirm the mutual obligations between the US government and Indigenous signatories laid out by the Treaty of Greenville. The Lenape leaders and the US federal officials all knew that the former had no ultimate authority to make decisions about who could occupy Miami lands. As Dearborn reassured William Wells, the adopted son-in-law of the Eel River Miami Leader Mihšikinaahkwa, giving Lenape presents at the Treaty of Vincennes did not mean that the US was acknowledging Lenape title and that it "ought not to give any uneasiness to the Miamis & Pattawattamas [sic], for neither of the latter nations, can have any pretensions to the lands ceded by the Piankashaws on the Ohio, nor do I conceive the Delawares have any just claim to the said lands; but as they made some pretensions to a claim it was thought adviseable, to give them a small sum to quit there [sic] pretended [sic] right & Title".

The Lenape claimed the land because they took care of it, not because they believed they held any title over and above either the Piankeshaw or the Eel River Miami bands. They did, however, accept gifts in exchange for use of the land because they understood Americans as paying to use and occupy it. Where American officials and Indigenous leaders misunderstood each other was the nature of land ownership itself, including the existence of overlapping claims and usufruct rights held by the Algonquian people of the middle Ohio Valley. Wells and

80 Gipson, Moravian Mission, 303, 312
81 Henry Dearborn to William Wells, October 20, 1804, Shawnee Box 8023 F02/008, GLOVE.
82 The concept of usufruct rights is an inexact and even inappropriate way to view this in the context of Algonquian law because the legal term assumes the legal possession of property to begin with. Christine Delucia points out that Indigenous land law transcend anthropocentric notions of “land” as an alienable commodity that can exist apart from a “matrix of social and ecological relations,” Delucia, “Terrapolitics,” 558. While he doesn’t explicitly engage with the idea of usufruct rights specifically, Robert Nichols’s work frequently draws attention to the limitations of Western legal terminology—which often assume a universal conception of land ownership—to describe
Mihšikinaahkwa may have implicitly recognized the limits of the Greenville Treaty. The aim to uphold what they saw as a new vision of treaty obligations that involved bounded territory, including exclusive Miami territory, came up against older land use practices including the understanding that they had invited other nations to live and care for their territory. What was emerging in the years after Greenville was a crisis in theorizing relationality within an Indigenous legal tradition in flux at least since the 7 Years War. Both the Eel River Miami and the Lenape pointed to the Greenville Treaty to make their cases, but their understandings of what land claims were—and what treaties guaranteed—was beginning to diverge.

1.6 Fire and the Impossibility of Legal Pluralism

To US officials, however, the land between the Vincennes Tract and Clark’s Grant had been ceded in perpetuity and a new “treaty line” was drawn at the northernmost reach of the meandering Vincennes Trace. The next step was to survey the ceded land at once according to the guidelines laid out by the Northwest Ordinance. This task was given to Jared Mansfield as Jefferson-appointed surveyor general. Mansfield began his job in earnest, though late in the season. On a cautiously optimistic note Mansfield reported that "The business of surveying the Vincennes Territory proceeds successfully, though not rapidly. The nature of the country opposes many obstacles to the surveyor, such as swamps, ponds, briars, cane breaks [sic], and different kinds of bushes."  

83 Carter, Territorial Papers Vol. 7, 239.
But Mansfield faced other problems. Survey markers were moved or destroyed either intentionally or unintentionally. One Indigenous polity from northwest of the territorial frontier, which Mansfield identified as Sioux, disputed the boundary lines, prompting Mansfield to suggest that the survey of that section be postponed. It became clear to Mansfield however, that the biggest obstacle to surveying the Vincennes Tract, at least the section between the White and Wabash Rivers, was “the nature of the country” itself, which would “hardly admit of the establishment of permanent boundaries” as “it is generally a Prairie covered with a thicket of brush, briers, & course grass, which when fired, as is the case almost every year, destroys every vestige of wood upon it.” These fires were almost assuredly human-caused and a perpetuation of an ancient fire ecology maintained by Ohio Valley peoples especially in the “prairie peninsula” of the western reaches of the Ohio Valley. This fire ecology was composed of an assemblage of human and other-than-human beings, and an ecology that resisted government land survey. “The usual monuments of a Surveyor, viz. a post, or stake, disappear very soon after they have been set,” complained Mansfield. In the places where these markers of territorial possession briefly stood, sprouted green shoots of prairie grasses and brush, enticing deer, bison, and other ungulates, and encouraging the growth of plant medicines.84

As I alluded to earlier, intentionally-set fire was an instrument of multispecies care and reciprocity between Indigenous people and their other-than-human kin. Staking out and fencing off individual plots of land to be used by each individual owner as they saw fit worked against the perpetuation of these relationships. As Kari Norgaard has argued in the context of the

84 Ibid., 223-225; Gordon G. Whitney, From Coastal Wilderness to Fruited Plain: A History of Environmental Change in Temperate North America, 1500 to the Present (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 108-121
Klamath Basin, fire suppression was a form of colonial violence. As a threat to the integrity of settler private property, intentional burning was seen by colonialists as an act of Indian aggression. Indigenous peoples, however, continued to use fire. This practice of intentional burning, particularly in the western edges of US territorial claims, had been exacerbating tensions between local settlers, Indigenous peoples, and US officials, speaking to the ways in which Indigenous mobility, jurisdiction, and ecological relations—the very conditions of Indigenous political sovereignty itself—were threatened by US settler presence, the imposition of a regime of private property and its policing, and the extension of federal legal jurisdiction.

Kickapoo relations with Americans were on rocky ground half a decade into the nineteenth century. Their neighbors, the Kaskaskias had just signed away a large portion of what would become Illinois in exchange for “the same protection as other citizens.” As part of this agreement, the American government made a model “chief” of the pro-American Jean Baptiste Doucoigne by recognizing him as leader of the Kaskaskias and pledging assistance to build him a model farm. Following this, Kickapoo leaders warmed to renewed British attempts to court their allyship. This put Harrison in a difficult position. In an attempt to stabilize the borderlands, he sought to maintain legal parity, an attempt to extend settler jurisdictional sovereignty over the new US territory, by emphasizing the need to punish settler and Indigenous transgressions as equal citizens under the law. This sentiment did little to bolster Kickapoo

86 Dearborn to Harrison, June 20, 1807, in Carter, Territorial Papers Vol. 7, 462-3.
88 This was also the official Indian policy under Secretary of War Dearborn. There were many instances in which Territorial officials sought equal justice under US criminal law for Indigenous victims of settler violence, but at the same time, also often followed Indigenous practices of remediation, such as gift-giving to the aggrieved party. See the response to murder of Indian hunters by John Williams and his party in Dearborn to Harrison, Dec. 22, 1801, in
trust in the US government’s treaty responsibility to help ensure the thriving of Kickapoo communities (and was probably perceived as a direct affront to Kickapoo legal jurisdiction). Yet federal officials knew that they could not afford to alienate Kickapoo lest they collude with the British against American presence in the region.  

On July 2, 1804, Dearborn wrote to Harrison regarding a recent dispute between a Kickapoo man who had been accused of stealing a settler's horse. Although the settler, Purcell, was of high social standing (he was attorney general), Dearborn believed that the evidence was insufficient and that it was dubious that the value of the horse was as high as reported. Dearborn ended his letter to Harrison with caution that "we ought to be as careful of the rights and property of the Indians as we are of our own citizens: they have in many instances too much reason to complain of injustices on the part of our citizens, and even of our public tribunals in cases of Indians being murdered by white persons we ought therefore to be cautious how we give them any new cause of Complaint." Dearborn knew that to extend US legal jurisdiction over new territories, legal parity between settlers and Indigenous peoples within its boundaries was essential to maintain.

Settler aggression was directed towards Indigenous individuals and families as they conducted seasonal migrations across their territories: collecting food and medicines, visiting kin. In late 1805, Kickapoo leader Pawatamo expressed goodwill towards the US government

89 Timothy D. Willig, Restoring the Chain of Friendship: British Policy and the Indians of the Great Lakes, 1783-1815 (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2008), Ch. 6.
90 Settler attempts to use remuneration for Indian depredations real or imagined to skim money from the federal government was a common practice of settlers living on US frontiers.
91 Dearborn to Harrison, July 2, 1804, in Carter, Territorial Papers VII, 204-205.
but complained about American settlers constraining this mobility and intimidating them with violence. Settlers felt emboldened to steal "two Bells from off his horses' necks, whilst he was at the Maumelles [hills on the east side of the Wabash near mouth of the Embarrass River]".\(^{92}\) American settlers approached Pawatamo’s son while the latter was on a hunting trip, threatening his life, and the life of his father. Pawatamo and son took precautions and fled the area. Near Goshen (Madison County, Illinois), Americans drove away a group of Kickapoo gathering "Pipyminnt," or persimmons, which were encouraged to grow in groves by Indigenous peoples of the greater Mississippi basin.\(^{93}\)

In response to these settler-Kickapoo tensions in Illinois country in the fall of 1805, Pawatamo and two other Kickapoo leaders, Chasso and Oulaqua, sent Governor Harrison the following message, making an explicit connection between fire and their responsibilities to human and animal kin, also drawing attention to the hypocrisy of settlers who enjoyed the lucrative deerskin trade but decried Indigenous relational practices that made the trade possible in the first place:

> The Deer was put on the Earth by the Master of Life, and we endeavour to make our wives and children live, and if we are not permitted to set fire we cannot live. You then want us to die… You the whites would be very angry if we were to die with hunger, for the want of hunting, and that we should go and kill your cattle to eat… In all Counsels we have been we are desired to hunt and not go to war, now we are quiet and hunting, and we believe to do right; it is impossible to hunt without setting fire. The whites arrive every day, they settle, we know nothing of it, and if they suffer in the fall, it is rather their fault than ours because we do not know where they are. The master of Life gave us this land it is to live on and our wives and children…we strive to hunt in such places, as will be of no injury to

them, and whilst we are endeavoring to do good, we find ourselves near the Long Knives who complains immediately, now that we think to do well, we are exposed to reproaches, which renders our Life, a hard one, if we set fire to the weeds or grass, it is to live on the game, we have no other means to subsist... Why do you reproach us of setting fire? You are glad to receive our skins, without which we would have none.  

Settlers and US officials could have listened to Pawatamo, Chasso, and Oulaqua, and learned Kickapoo title to the land, as Mashipinashiwish had invited newcomers to Anishinaabewaki to do in his speech at the Treaty of Greenville. Instead of acknowledging the importance of fire to the perpetuation of Kickapoos and other Indigenous nations, to the perpetuation of their treaty responsibilities towards other-than-humans, and to exhort settlers to live by Indigenous law—in effect, to allow for legal plurality—federal officials sought to extend what Lisa Ford has described as “perfect settler sovereignty”. In the first several decades of the nineteenth century, an expanding United States sought to extend its legal jurisdiction—and thus, its sovereignty—over newly acquired territories, and the peoples residing there. This meant that federal officials would attempt to exercise criminal jurisdiction in a uniform way over “tenacious [legal] pluralities,” including those of Indigenous nations, and other customary local legal practices. This conflation of sovereignty, territory, and jurisdiction came to define Harrison’s colonization strategy and claims to its legitimacy. It was easier for Harrison and

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94 “The Answer of Pawatamo, Chasso and Oulaqua, the Speech Pronounced by the Latter” in Esarey, Messages, 178-179.
95 Mashipinashiwish encouraged newcomers to “learn our title to that land; you will then be convinced of my sincerity, and of the friendship and strength of our nations” It is significant that Mashipinashiwish hailed from a village in the Great Lakes, far north of the Ohio Valley and the most acute pressures of American settlement. Mashipinashiwish Quoted in “Treaty of Greenville,” American State Papers, 577.
other territorial officials to write the Kickapoo conflagration off as an accident, a natural occurrence, “that the extensiveness of the mischief they have occasioned is to be attributed to the unusual drought of the season.”

In the context of an American private property regime, burning could only be seen as destructive, not life-giving and life-sustaining.

Two major Indigenous threats to American power in the region existed in the minds of federal officials, in the years before the emergence of Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh. One was the rise in anti-American political organizing resulting from the burgeoning unease in the West, and from the growing dissatisfaction of so-called annuity chiefs in the east. In the west, leaders of the Kickapoo, Potawatomi, Sauk, Dakota, and Ho-Chunk people, resenting the violence and intimidation by Americans settlers who disrupted trade and mobility, word of the Louisiana Purchase, and increasing American trade down the Mississippi, began to formulate a defense strategy. Though Tenskwatawa was, to some extent, innovative in his vision of multiethnic or “pan-tribal” villages (rather than confederacies of individual nations, villages, divisions, or clans), a coalition of these multiple western groups predated his call for political reforms. As American-Indigenous relations in the Ohio Valley began to deteriorate in the decade after the Treaty of Greenville, this new western coalition sought British support in a series of councils between 1805 and 1806 at Amherstburg. Though unsuccessful in gaining an allegiance with the British—who urged them to instead keep the peace with their American neighbors—Tenskwatawa’s message would become especially appealing to those from these western villages in the years to come. New prophets would emerge from within this anti-American

97 Harrison to Secretary of War, Dec 24, 1805 in Esarey, Messages, 180.
98 Lakomäki, Gathering Together, ch. 6.
milieu as well, attesting to the fact that Tenskwatawa was not a solitary or unprecedented figure amongst his peers, and was not the sole orchestrator of anti-American sentiment as Americans tended to believe.99

Although historians of the Ohio Valley in the Early Republic have traditionally painted Tenskwatawa as Harrison’s arch enemy, Catahecassa and Mihšikinaahkwa were really the biggest thorns in the Governor’s side in the first few years of the nineteenth century. Long depicted by scholars and memorialists in direct opposition to militant prophets and their followers—accommodationists, assimilationists, progressives, or “annuity chiefs” like Catahecassa and Mihšikinaahkwa have been understood as wholeheartedly embracing Euroamerican agriculture, dress, and lifestyle and thus testaments to the success of the civilization mission, the predominant Indian policy of the time. Yet, these men, by willingly working with Americans to fulfill the responsibilities laid out by the Greenville Treaty, stood as uncomfortable reminders that Americans could not, or were not willing to, be held responsible for their end of the agreement. Their insistence that treaty boundaries be adhered to, that US officials make good on their promises to act as providers, that white squatters be kept off their lands, and that they could hunt in their regular territories were too much for a weak federal government to live up to, as it sought to carry out its own territorial ambitions, and strained to enact its so-called benevolent policies through the extension of a uniform criminal jurisdiction, against a wall of settler pressure.

99 Ironically, American officials were always anticipating collusion between the British and Indigenous nations, even at this time, when it was clear that the British did not want to commit to any new Indian alliances, Willig, Restoring the Chain of Friendship, 205; White, The Middle Ground, 511-513.
1.7 Conclusion: Salt and Spatial Control

The situation of the Illinois Salines exemplifies the changing power dynamics in the middle of the first decade of the nineteenth century—growing Indigenous unrest, settler paranoia, and government willingness to respond to settler appeals for increased security. In the spring of 1805, as prophetic visions began to emerge from Lenape and Shawnee villages on the White River, the Illinois salt works passed out of the hands of its previous leaseholder, Captain Bell, who had been, an early twentieth century historian speculated, “working the salt springs on the Saline river by permission of the Indians,” suggesting that Indigenous power and influence continued to be normative, at least in pockets in the region.\textsuperscript{100} It would be leased next to Isaac White, a slaveholding Virginia aristocrat, who would be shortly thereafter appointed captain of the Knox County militia by Governor Harrison. Five years later, White would lead his division to fight against the multinational Indigenous warriors at Tenskwatawa’s village of Prophetstown on the Tippecanoe River.\textsuperscript{101} After the high profile killing and kidnapping of the Larkin family in 1807 by Shawnee warriors, with a general sense of unease growing among Ohio Valley settlers, the salt works itself would be put on twenty-four hour watch, the roads twisting away in all directions from its rows of kettles kept perpetually boiling through the labor of enslaved people, now closely patrolled by Harrison’s newly established Territorial Rangers.\textsuperscript{102} But even as measures were taken by federal officials and deputized locals to protect

\textsuperscript{100} Smith, “The Salines of Southern Illinois,” 248.
\textsuperscript{101} George Fauntleroy White, “Memoir of Colonel Isaac White,” \textit{Indiana Magazine of History} 15, No 4 (December, 1919), 330-331, 335.
\textsuperscript{102} Harrison to Hargrove, April 21, 1807 in Esarey, \textit{Messages}, 209-210; Settlers petitioned to have the salt roads patrolled. Harrison to Hargrove, Sept. 12, 1807. Ibid., 252, Harrison to Hargrove, Sept 27, 1807; Ibid., 260.
settlers and salt, Indigenous peoples continued to travel the traces, even to visit the vicinity of the Illinois salt springs during fall hunts.

In a speech to the Territorial Assembly in July of 1805, Harrison boasted that “the Indians” had become “subdued and entire[ly] dependent,” and that the United States had been exceptional in their humane treatment. He prophesied that the Louisiana Purchase and the control of the Mississippi would “prove the bond of our nation, and will convey upon its bosom, in a course of many thousand miles, the produce of our great and united empire.”\(^{103}\) But as summer turned to fall and an uncommonly cold winter set in, new challenges emerged that would compromise the fulfilment of Harrison’s prophecy. Indigenous prophets would articulate new visions of an Indigenous future in the greater Ohio Valley, put forward new theories and critiques of settler colonial power, and propose new sets of relationships in response to changes in the land.

Chapter 2: Prophets of the Ohio Valley

At corn planting time, as they had done for countless generations, several Lenape and Cherokee women began tending to their fields, paying no heed to the split rail fences dividing their land from the Moravians who had been living over five years amongst them. But this year, young Indigenous men galloped drunk through the Moravian settlement, killing livestock and threatening the inhabitants: Brothers John Peter Kludge and Abraham Luckenbach, their families, and Indigenous converts. Strings black of wampum appeared silently, in ominous response to Moravian bids for peace. As the unusually harsh winter of 1805-1806 warmed into spring, two individuals, the Munsee woman Beata and the Shawnee man Tenskwatawa, who would later be known simply among Anglophones as “the Prophet,” (and Tecumseh’s infamous brother), each received visions that provided new instructions on how to live a good life—a blueprint of relationality that challenged what had become the status quo for Indigenous peoples of the greater Ohio Valley by the opening years of the nineteenth-century.

Kludge, Luckenbach, and their families had been invited in 1800 by Lenape leaders from their cluster of villages near the headwaters of the White River to live among them as “teachers,” at “Woapicamikunk” (Wapicomekoke), the place “where the chestnut trees grow.”¹ For their part, Kludge and Luckenbach sought to establish a village to promote the gospel, industry, and sobriety.² Both parties—Lenape and Moravian—shared a past of intersecting lives across the colonial northeast and trans-Appalachian west yet never came together in a fully-

¹ Gipson, ed., The Moravian Indian Mission, 56.
² Ibid., 109-110.
integrated weave. To the two experienced missionaries, this was the perfect opportunity as “the present is a time of profound peace among all the Indian nations.”

3 To their surprise, however, the missionaries quickly wore out their welcome. The Moravians had unwittingly found themselves in the midst of a political and intellectual crisis that quickly clouded their optimistic forecast. In the upheaval that ensued, Kludge and Luckenbach’s long-term associate, the Mohigan convert Joshua was accused of “witchcraft” by Beata and Tenskwataya, tomahawked, and burned to death. Without fanfare, an Indigenous family took up residence in his cabin. “We have now found something new,” Indigenous residents told the Moravians. The Moravians spent one last fitful winter at Woapicamikunk before negotiating an exit the following summer.

4 Kludge and Luckenbach had made a final attempt to remain in the region. They appealed to nearby Miami leaders—whose land the Lenape were also residing on—for a marginally suitable place northward, on the Mississinewa, a tributary of the Wabash River. The Miami—who happened to be preoccupied at the time with a diplomatic issue concerning neighboring Kickapoo—declined, telling Luckenbach that should they relocate to the Mississinewa, they will “settle on our hunting grounds and scatter our game still more. We will not allow it…If they will not remain where the [Lenape] chiefs put them, they will have to go where they came from.”

5 Meanwhile, back at the White River villages, Lenape leaders consulted with Miami leaders on how best to reclaim the land, livestock, and dwellings from the departing Moravians. Hockingpomska, one of the Lenape village chiefs, argued that half of the mission property belonged to them because the Moravians had “gotten [these items] on our land.” The trees, for

3 Ibid., 46
4 Ibid., 411-412.
5 Ibid., 410, 424.
example, grew and were felled there, and so the dwellings constructed with them could not properly belong to the missionaries. Citing the Treaty of Greenville, the chiefs concluded that they were merely satisfying “the will of the President of the United States, who was anxious that the Indians should rob the white people among them of all they had and drive them away.” That is, that Indians residing on their side of the treaty line would be protected from white squatters, or anyone residing on their lands without permission. Anderson, a young Lenape chief who had been gaining influence in the region following the Treaty of Greenville, agreed with Hockingpomska: Kludge and Luckenbach would not be selling their cattle and other belongings to French traders, or anyone else. Anderson reminded the pair that “You got everything on our land and now you want to take your people the money. We cannot allow it.”

Tenskwatawa, the rising visionary and “prophet” had also made his own exit from the White River in 1806. But instead of affirming and defending the Greenville Treaty line as Hockingpomska and Anderson had done, Tenskwatawa crossed it, and on the American side, established a new village on the site of the Treaty signing. This would be a multiethnic village of Indigenous peoples, expanding and contracting with those coming and going, mostly from nations to the north and to the west. This was a time of increasing settler colonial pressure from the United States, manifesting in direct violence and intimidation at the hands of ordinary settlers, environmental change that compromised relationships on the land, and a handful of misleading land cession treaties that when backed by force, constrained the mobility necessary

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6 Ibid., 452; “If any citizen of the United States, or any other white person or persons, shall presume to settle upon the lands, now relinquished by the United States, such citizen or other person shall be out of the protection of the United States; and the Indian tribe, on whose land the settlement shall be made, may drive off the settler, or punish him in such manner as they shall think fit,” Article 6, “Treaty of Greenville,” American State Papers, Indian Affairs, I, 564.

7 Ibid., 454.
to conduct these proper relationships. In this context, many individuals determined that new teachings were necessary to ensure a future for Indigenous people in the Ohio Valley and lower Great Lakes. Tenskwatawa achieved notoriety for his ability to receive new instructions from what his English translators have called “the Master of Life,” on how to conduct good relations with both human beings and other-than-human beings, to ensure a future of prosperity on the land.

The conditions surrounding the flight of the Moravians tells us some important things about the state of Ohio Valley Indigenous politics in the opening decade of the nineteenth century. Hockingpomska, Anderson, Tenskwatawa, and Beata all insisted on a future for Indigenous people, and they all debated among themselves what kinds of relations should be maintained, forged, or refused. All had adopted some aspects of Christian imagery and technique.  

All had histories of participation in transregional and transatlantic markets. All were heirs to long genealogies of political negotiation with European powers. What was

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unique about Tenskwatawa, and similar “nativists” or “prophets” was that they rejected the legitimacy of a “middle ground” of legal and political negotiation. Tenskwatawa and other visionaries refused the legal pluralism that had existed for many generations in the region and insisted on the centrality of their own legal order—its own novel innovation, but one emerging from the traditional source of Algonquian law: the “Master of Life” or the Creator. They worked within an Indigenous ontological framework, which understood law as not a set of static codes or dogmatic creeds, but emerging through situated relations with other-than-human persons, and through encounters with supernatural beings, mediated through the conventional practices of dreaming and vision-seeking.11

This refusal of US hegemony and legal jurisdiction was seen by US federal officials and settlers as a “religious madness,” superstition, as evidence of the credulity of the Indian mind, which, as the logic went, would become dangerously vulnerable to British manipulations and thwart the republican political project. It would also pose a threat to US expansionists, who held their own prophetic visions of the future as a teleological arc of progress, unfolding upon an expanding and transcendent horizon.12 Chapter 3 will look at the work that had to be done to fashion a usable story out of the US encounter with Tenskwatawa and his brother Tecumseh—and how this story, like the settler colonial imaginary in general, was imported to new places and times throughout the nineteenth century. For now, this chapter will get closer to the ground,

to the time between the establishment of Indiana Territory and the War of 1812, to better understand what was innovative about Tenskwatawa’s project and why this project should be understood as one emerging through Indigenous ontological and epistemological frameworks, putting aside binaries that are still operational in otherwise sensitive ethnohistorical accounts: the sacred versus secular, spiritual versus material, nativist versus accommodationist.

These years of prophetic unrest emerged from a dynamic field of Indigenous theorization about power, tameness, and the practice of a more-than-human politics. Often framed by historians as factionalism or a polarization between a mostly older cohort of “annuity chiefs,” and those forced to pursue other paths to power and influence, this chapter argues that the prophetic unrest that emerged first at the White River and then spread across the region and beyond through the influence of Tenskwatawa and other figures, were among many diverse responses to a taxonomical struggle. In question was the extent to which relations should be maintained, rejected, or forged between Indigenous people and the shifting ecological meshwork in which they were embedded, including more recent additions of cattle, hogs, invasive plant species, and Euro-American settlers themselves, whose ways of relating to the land challenged Indigenous modes of relationality. Ultimately, this chapter argues that prophetic, or revitalization movements in the early nineteenth-century Ohio Valley were generating theories and critiques of settler colonial modes of relationality. These theories had a prescriptive dimension. Though varied in their vision of the future, these prescriptions had to do with perpetuating an ethics of responsibility and care that required high levels of mobility across land and waters. This mobility was a practice of multispecies politics and legal practice that gestured towards a future on the land in the longue durée, a future at odds with those imagined
by settlers and federal officials, the latter of which was materialized through fee-simple land
ownership and the extraction and commodification of resources.

Just as the Moravian missionaries prepared to flee back to Ohio in the summer of 1806, Quakers arrived in the region to set up demonstration farms. Approved of and partially funded by the US federal government—but not entirely within federal oversight—these agricultural installations aimed to assimilate and civilize Indigenous peoples through sedentary agriculture and a division of labor that placed men outside the home as farmers and women as domestic laborers, managed by patriarchal heads-of-household. Leaders like Catahecassa (Mecoche Shawnee) and Mihšikinaahkwá (or Little Turtle, Eel River Miami) welcomed these demonstration farms but scholars have overemphasized the extent to which these leaders adopted wholesale the social relations undergirding European agricultural practices, stressing their move to accommodate Americans as a way to shore-up personal power at the cost of community cohesion.13 Alternately, scholars have interpreted the work of prophetic, or “nativist” figures like Tenskwatawa, as forging new community ties around a shared pan-Indian identity, often by taking advantage of the political disunity caused by self-interested “annuity chiefs.” While so-called nativists were indeed forging innovative new social arrangements across traditional tribal, clan, division, or national lines, central to their project was the formation of a theory and a critique of settler colonialism which they understood as a particular mode of relationality. Crucially, this theory and critique emerged from and insisted on an

Indigenous temporality untethered to the temporality of the US settler state, particularly the insistence on a futurity on their land.14

For their part, so-called annuity chiefs (those who had signed treaties with the United States as recognized representatives of their various tribes and were thus the recipients and distributive conduits of material compensation for land cessions) were also interested in a future for their people. Their adherence to the obligations and responsibilities laid out in the 1795 Treaty of Greenville, flowed from their commitment to being good kin. That they experimented with more recently introduced objects and technologies like plows, replaced their deerskin with linen, and forged new interspecies relationships with cattle and hogs simply exemplified the long-standing cultural dynamism of the Indigenous peoples of North America, and was not necessarily evidence of a capitulation to settler modes of relationality. New visions of futurity were diverse and circulated widely across the Ohio Valley and Lower Great Lakes.

2.1 Finding “Something New” in the Intellectual Milieu of the White River World

The detailed diary and letters produced by the Moravian missionaries John Peter Kluge and Abraham Luckenbach at their village on the White River near Wapicomekoke, provide a rich six-year window into rapidly shifting Indigenous politics of the region between the pivotal years of 1801-1806.15 What the Moravians unintentionally recorded was a growing epistemological and ontological debate between Lenape, Shawnee, Cherokee and others who inhabited White River villages centered on questions regarding sources of power in a changing

14 Mark Rifkin, Beyond Settler Time.
15 Gipson, Moravian Mission, 56.
social world. Theories emerging from genealogies stretching back towards the last half of the eighteenth century addressed the concept of domesticity, the origin of Europeans, and the introduction of new power-conducting technologies like baptism and paper documents. Though the Moravians seemed incapable of or unwilling to comprehend the logic behind Indigenous grievances, the mission diaries nevertheless can be read as a sounding board for growing critiques by the Lenape, Miami, Shawnee, and others living along the watershed.

The Moravian settlement—like the officially-sanctioned Quaker settlements—played a role for local Indigenous people as a kind of demonstration farm—just not in the way that assimilationist missionaries and federal officials envisioned. Instead, Wapicomekoke was a place where local Indigenous people could observe white technologies of power in action as they went about their daily lives. The Moravians were not an influential presence as bearers of the Christian word of God in the ways that they had hoped, but their presence did help crystallize emergent Indigenous theories of settler colonial power and influence that would be debated—often violently so—in the ensuing years. Those formulating critiques of the modern and Western social and political order as it was practiced on-the-ground based these critiques on Indigenous understandings of law as grounded and emergent and drew on experiences of violence in the recent past to debate the meaning of the domestic and tame. These critiques were accompanied by behavioral prescriptions oriented towards the future.

For Lenape and other villagers around the White River, this wasn't simply a decision between converting to Christianity or adhering to Indigenous spiritual practices. To the chagrin of Kludge and Luchenbach, visitors to the White River mission who stayed to hear the liturgy, to sing hymns, study Christian imagery, and to debate theological ideas, had motivations beyond seeking "religious truth," at least in the way Moravians understood it. Indigenous
visitors had many motivations, but among them was an intention to gather new tools with which to harness the power that flowed through the living world, especially in a time full of new crises in which old modes of accessing power seemed to be failing. Influenza and smallpox, a series of harsh winters, alcohol-related violence, and the decline in the fur trade compromised social harmony. But perhaps the most damaging to social relations was the process (outlined in chapter 1) by which colonial actors sought to disembed various beings from their broader networks of relations, reorient them towards the market as commodities, and the simultaneous constraint to Indigenous mobility resulting from the imposition of a private property regime backed by violence. Influential war leader Buckonhahelas, for one, had been offended by the Moravian's arrogance and lack of generosity and had rejected Christian conversion, but allowed his grandchildren to stay at the mission to learn to read. In a world in which paper copies of treaties circulated alongside wampum belts, literacy had become an essential tool in which to negotiate mutually beneficial relationships with other polities.¹⁶

Indigenous religious practice has long been described by anthropologists and ethnohistorians as syncretic, exhibiting a dynamic openness to new ideas and technique—a resistance to dogmatism. Yet understanding practices of prophetic dreaming and vision-seeking as religion has its own limitations.¹⁷ An ongoing adherence by scholars to binary frameworks of sacred versus secular or natural versus supernatural, has worked to obscure the general

¹⁶ The confusion surrounding the Vincennes Treaty may have influenced Buckongahelas’s decision as it was made around the same time as Lenape chiefs sent a "servant" with a copy of the Treaty for Moravians to translate because they did not trust their interpreters. Gipson, Moravian Mission, 318, 328.
¹⁷ For religious syncretism see Irwin, Coming Down from Above, 3-11; For some of the problems inherent in understanding Indigenous ontologies, cosmologies, and epistemologies as “religious” or “spiritual” see Morrison, The Solidarity of Kin; Shorter, “Spirituality.”; David Posthumus, All My Relatives: Exploring Lakota Ontology, Belief, and Ritual (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2018).
ontological orientation of Indigenous peoples across time and place—as anthropologist David Posthumus puts it, “the deep and persistent ways in which [Indigenous North Americans] schematize and classify experience, conceptualize personhood, distribute resemblances and differences between existing entities, and structure relations between and among themselves, other humans, non-humans, and the environment.” Recent interventions by Indigenous scholars, particularly Kim TallBear (Sisseton-Wahpeton Oyate), Zoe Todd (Métis/otipemisiw), and Vanessa Watts (Anishnaabe/Haudenosaunee) have similarly interrogated how Western ontological frameworks continue to work to enforce a supposedly neutral, universal settler colonial worldview, obscuring and denying Indigenous ways of being and becoming. In addition, relying on the category of religion, especially as belief instead of a fundamental understanding or knowledge of the world, obscures the ways in which Indigenous politics and expressions of law have operated through time and colonial encounter.

As they would any newly introduced body of knowledge or technology of power, the Lenape observed Moravian religious tenets in practice, and noted their efficacy. The Moravians did not find ready converts among the villagers but did offer local Indigenous people a living model of colonial logics—purportedly universal tenants—that differed from their own of grounded normativity. Lenape individuals, especially women, attended Moravian sermons and

18 Posthumus, All My Relatives, 5.
20 Shorter, “Spirituality”. For a consideration of how the modern, Western categories of “religion” and “spirituality” have been negotiated by Pueblo people in the early twentieth century see Wenger, We Have a Religion.
feasts, asked to study the many printed images that were in circulation throughout the early nineteenth-century Moravian diaspora, and engaged Brothers Luckenbach and Kluge in debates about power, personhood, and place. Tenskwatawa gained notoriety as a prophetic leader well after this political and intellectual milieu had been established, in large part building off the initial intellectual work of the predominantly Lenape people—especially Lenape women—who orbited around Wapicomekoke and nearby villages on the White River, of which there were nine by the end of the first decade of the nineteenth century.  

Although the Moravian settlement on the White River was small, never gaining a significant number of converts, it appears in the mission diaries as a nodal point in the vast network of inter-connected villages along the watersheds north of the Ohio and south of the great Lakes. Travelers passed through in war parties, to go to ceremonials, gatherings, to diplomatic councils, or to visit relatives. Women lingered to plant corn nearby in well-known locations of rich river-bottom soil, to return to the forest sugar bush, or to select sites for hunting camps. Traders peddled household provisions, whiskey, cloth, kettles, and brooms in exchange for furs. Messengers carried news to and from Philadelphia and Detroit, and the more localized string of American forts and settlements from Fort Wayne to Vincennes. White captives who had been adopted by local Indigenous peoples would often be among those who chose to stay and hear the word of God. Although the Moravians complained about being

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isolated among “heathen,” the picture they paint is of a dynamic and familiar world to the Lenape, Miami, Shawnee, and Cherokee peoples inhabiting the White River region.\textsuperscript{22}

Kluge observed that the string of mostly Lenape villages along this section of the White River was a magnet for Indigenous peoples escaping American violence, and that “The [village] Chiefs sent messengers to the Indians everywhere inviting them to come here so that they might settle in the Indian land on this river and be far away from the white people.”\textsuperscript{23} But even as these villages acted as havens, fear of white violence permeated the White River watershed. In 1803, as a wet and buggy spring and early summer gave way to an August of “general famine,”\textsuperscript{24} Indigenous hunters returned from the Kentucky border reporting that militia (Long Knives) were on their way to the White River “with the purpose of carrying away captive the women and children and killing the men.” Exemplifying the quick and efficient channels of communication between villages of extended kin, the response was immediate. Whole villages evacuated into the surrounding forests, abandoning their crops despite a season of hunger. Memories of white brutality were so immediate and visceral and provoked such an urgent flight

\begin{itemize}
  \item The string of Moravian settlements throughout the Ohio region were themselves well known and had been incorporated into Indigenous geographical consciousness. For example, two women, probably Munsee, came to the White River mission in March of 1803 to trade baskets and brooms for salt. They could speak both English and German fluently and one had been baptized in New Jersey by the Presbyterian Church and given the name Peggy. She had also spent time in Fairfield and knew the influential clergyman David Zeisberger. Gipson, \textit{Moravian Mission}, 281; For former “white captives” see Ibid., 309-210. For a network of villages see Brooks, \textit{The Common Pot}. For a perspective from around the eastern Ohio Moravian settlement of Goshen see, Amy C. Schutt, "Delawares in Eastern Ohio after the Treaty Of Greenville: The Goshen Mission in Context," in Charles Beatty Medina, ed., \textit{Contested Territories: Native Americans and Non-natives in the Lower Great Lakes, 1700-1850} (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2012).
  \item Lenape people, relatives of the Miami, had been invited by the latter to settle in their territory. Gipson, \textit{Moravian Mission}, 133.
  \item Ibid., 252, 238-239.
\end{itemize}
that a daughter of a bedridden Moravian convert tried, without success, to lash her mother—still lying in repose—to the back of a horse. The rumors were dispelled three days later.\textsuperscript{25} This constant fear of surprise attack was tied specifically to the memory of the Gnadenhütten massacre of 1782. By the nineteenth century, Gnadenhütten had become a well-known story, not just among Lenape, but had moved westward, circulating through the Ohio Valley and lower Great Lakes. Tecumseh himself, not Lenape, but Shawnee, would evoke it in a speech to Governor Harrison near the end of the decade almost thirty years and over four hundred miles from the event’s site.\textsuperscript{26} The traumatic memories rippling out from Gnadenhütten—where, during the American Revolution, ninety-six Munsee and Unami-speaking Moravian Lenape were systematically murdered by American militiamen—directly shaped emerging critiques of US colonial power by Indigenous peoples of the Northeast.\textsuperscript{27} These critiques were centered on the question of proper relations—how society should be organized—within the changing environment of people, ideas, and things. The English word used to describe and critique this American way of relating was “tameness,” and from the beginning of their tenure on the White River, Kluge and Luckenbach were constantly reminded by local Indigenous inhabitants of the dangers inherent in this concept.\textsuperscript{28}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Ibid., 249-251.
\item Tecumseh cited the massacre to explain why regional Indigenous people had little reason to trust Americans, who had repeated several acts of treachery since the attack. See “Tecumseh’s Speech to Governor Harrison 20h August 1810” in Esarey, \textit{Messages and Letters}, 464-465.
\item Richard White briefly explores the possible meanings of this concept in White, \textit{The Middle Ground}, 507.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
For those developing these critiques—critiques which appeared to be as widespread among so-called “annuity chiefs” like Buckongahelas, as they were among elderly former converts and female prophets or visionaries—Gnadenhütten became a cautionary tale of what could happen when “white” teachings of proper ways to relate were carried to their logical conclusion. If political and social cohesiveness depended on the quality of mutual relations of reciprocity and respect between human and other-than-human kin, Euroamerican practices of livestock husbandry produced a vexing problem. The constant allusion to biblical metaphors of shepherding and flocks in Moravian sermons and imagery, the (constantly failing) ceremonies of containment through fencing and stabling, and the systematic slaughter of hogs and cattle, were a hard sell to local Indigenous peoples who consistently reminded the Moravians that “all the Indians believe, that the teachers [Moravians] have been the cause of [the Gnadenhütten massacre], for they called the white people to do it and they will do the same thing here when they have tamed many Indians. Then they will write to the white people to come and kill them. I shall get away therefore before I, too, have been tamed.”

If these ways of relating were to be adopted, the massacre at Gnadenhütten was guaranteed to happen again. Rather than rejecting Euroamerican livestock as symbols, as accoutrements of white “civilization,” critics of Moravian teachings were rejecting relationship ways that were deemed dangerous to their constitution as a people. Thus the tameness of livestock was not a metaphor. If all living

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29 Moravian converts were referred to by Lenape as “grindover” or suckling pigs, Gipson, *Moravian Mission*, 275; quotation in Ibid., 155. For Buckongahelas’s critique and theory of separate teachings as it related to the memory of Gnadenhütten, see 255-257. For other visitors to the mission see, 131, 140-141, 278.

30 Buckongahelas, echoed these critiques, even though he planned on keeping his cattle and horses, another example of diversity of thought and practice, Ibid., 262.
beings shared a similar interiority, personhood, and a capacity to act, then domestic animals corralled and systematically killed would have raised disturbing questions.

By the late winter of 1805, Indigenous peoples in greater Ohio River Valley wanted “something new”. The Moravians had offered one option, and they continued to host those interested in “hearing the Word of God,” who continued to visit the mission in large numbers. But soon, a more desirable alternative emerged in the prophetic leadership of a Munsee woman and former Moravian convert named Beata.31 Beata’s vision was so provocative that it “made the chiefs active at once,” prompting them to send messengers through the region, inviting them to come hear her speak. An endless stream of interested people passed through the Moravian village to the “Monsy town” near Woapicamikunk where she resided. By March, the Moravians exclaimed that “Never in all the time that we are here, have the Indians been in such a state of revolution as they are at present…For the present, they do not want to hear anything at all except what they learn through the extravagant visions.”32

Not everyone was won over by the new prophet. In early April, visiting relatives of the Mohican interpreter Joshua expressed ambivalence in regards to “the directions of the Indian woman teacher,” and were skeptical of the novelty of her teachings, complaining that “it is always the same old thing, but they claim they have found ‘something new.’”33 An unnamed Miami man expressed concern that should they be baptized by the Moravians, they would have to give up their medicine bags. Interestingly, this was also one of the most controversial aspects of Tenskwatawa’s teachings, suggesting that many saw new Prophetic movements and the

31 Beata had been baptized by Moravians earlier in her life at Friedenshütten, now present-day Wyalusing, Pennsylvania. Beata was a common name bestowed to female converts, Beatus for male.
32 Ibid., 340.
33 Ibid., 345.
Moravian Christianity as similarly unprecedented in their shirking of traditional practices of transmitting personal power.\textsuperscript{34} This demonstrates that there were multiple and competing discourses: Moravian and Indigenous teachers and thinkers were each offering new ways to conduct relations, to repair kinship ties and reconstitute the distribution of power during a time of impasse and sociopolitical uncertainty.

Beata was not the first individual to come forward with prophetic visions to ameliorate fraying social relations, in fact, this was a common practice.\textsuperscript{35} In October 1803, an old woman accompanying a hunting party related her vision in which a grandfather explained to her that game animals were scarce because of the adoption of livestock. She suggested that if proper relations were restored with the deer people as before the arrival of Europeans, the deer would return from where they resided—and had initially originated—under the earth.\textsuperscript{36} While Beata agreed with the old woman that the social and political order was being compromised by the keeping of domesticated animals, she offered a different kind of vision, drawn from the immediate milieu of ideas and circumstance. In the account recorded by the Moravians, two men, unrecognizable in the evening light appeared in front of Beata’s house, proclaiming that they had been sent by God to tell her that “You Indians will have to live again as in olden times, and love one another sincerely,” and if they did not do this, that “a terrible storm will arise and break down all the trees in the woods, and all Indians shall lose their lives in it.” Teachers would arrive bearing lessons on how to live properly, and the two men went on to argue between them who would appear first: a child, “one who died in olden times,” or a more

\textsuperscript{34} Ibid., 426.
\textsuperscript{35} Miller, “Every Dream.”
\textsuperscript{36} Gipson, \textit{Moravian Mission}, 262.
recently departed but familiar leader named Schaponque. By the following year, Beata had become a conduit to God herself. God and an angel appeared, inducing her to swallow a luminous object, a “little white thing,” that would determine her cleanliness. It was not easy, but after a few tries, she was able to completely swallow the glowing object “so that she would only speak the word of God.” Understanding that Beata’s rising popularity directly challenged the legitimacy of their evangelizing, Brothers Kluge and Luckenbach spoke disdainfully of this “greatest lying prophet” and the “Indians” who “flocked through our village on their way to the appointed house of sacrifice [ceremony], and spoke with the greatest wonder and respect about these lies.”

The popularity of Beata’s new paradigm—one that differed both from both status quo Lenape practices and Moravian Christianity—makes sense in the context of growing critiques of the Moravian mission that were growing to a fever pitch by the spring of 1805 and lasted into the final year of the Moravian presence on the White River, culminating with the Beata-directed Tenskwatawa-implemented “witch hunts”. During their tenure on the White River, Kluge and Luckenbach had hosted many people from the local villages and travellers from across the region. They expressed that most of the Indigenous visitors to the mission were genuinely interested in learning Moravian teachings, but as time went on, a growing skepticism became apparent.

There was a resurgence in the theory that had emerged earlier in the eighteenth century that alongside separate creations, “white” people were also given different teachings by their

37 Ibid., 333-334.
38 Gipson, Moravian Mission, 402-403.
39 Ibid., 402-403.
Lenape leader Tedpachsit, who had perhaps been the most accommodating towards the Moravians shocked the Brothers when he decided that Christian teachings were only for white people, that they “led straight to hell,” and that an Indian who had died and come back had “visited hell and had only seen white people there.” An unconverted relative of Lenape convert Sister Mary debated Luckenbach on this point. While Luckenbach insisted on a single creation, this woman insisted on three separate creations and three corresponding teachings in the following order, implying an emerging racial taxonomy: black people, Indigenous people, white people. An older black man, possibly Cherokee, named Tom who had moved with his Indigenous family to the Moravian town, also believed that “all other nationalities had received a distinctive teaching from God,” and that Moravian teachings were made exclusively for white people. Alongside his Indigenous son-in-law, Tom gained notoriety by “prep[ar]ing a concoction which throws them into a sweat when they drink it,” thus enabling them to “look into the future. Consequently they know more than the other Indians.” Young people were especially attracted to his abilities to prophesy, Tom’s sister related to the missionaries.

Whether or not Tom believed in separate creations between people of African descent and the Indigenous nation within which he had become a member remains unknown.

It’s tempting to assume that Ohio Valley Indigenous peoples were adopting white discourses of racial hierarchy. Yet the growing sense that the “white” teachings of Christ were irrelevant in Lenape/Miami/Shawnee territory, seemed to derive less from European racial thinking and more from the fact that these teachings were imported from elsewhere, that they

40 For the origins of polygenesis in the Indigenous Northeast see Dowd, A Spirited Resistance, 30-31, 41-42.
41 Ibid., 406.
42 Ibid., 345.
43 Ibid., 445-446.
did not emerge from the land, or from the experience of relations upon it. Although the Christ story may be true, an “Indian teacher at Woapicamikunk” suggested, Christ “did not die in Indian land” and was therefore unimportant to Lenape people.\textsuperscript{44} An unnamed woman visiting the Moravians debated Kluge and Luckenbach over whether humans (Lenape) or God could make it rain and expressed incredulity over the idea that Christ was put to death by everyone, and that it must have been white people who carried out this deed far away from Indigenous North America.\textsuperscript{45} This attitude was also reflected by those who lived on the mission itself. One older Lenape man explained crop failures at the mission on the Moravian’s ignorance on how to live on the land, proclaiming that God loves Indians better because he provides them with more bountiful crops, and that this was the reason more generally for the settler land rush, as Americans “would have to move to the borders of the Indian land so that they might not starve.”\textsuperscript{46} Moravians were thus taken to task for the presumed universality of Christian teachings.

Critiques of Euroamerican ways of relating were also articulated through action. One of the mission’s most devoted followers, Sister Mary, soured on Moravian teachings as her health declined in the spring of 1805, not long after Beata received her first vision. Concluding that the “Word of God does not heal my body,” Mary decided to remove to Woapikamikunk and seek out Indigenous healers. This greatly perturbed the Moravians, who sought to compel her to stay.

\textsuperscript{44} Ibid., 438. These theories that understood Moravians as articulating a religion not properly of the land had emerged much earlier, in the years prior to the American Revolution, in part through the work of Lenape prophet Wangomend, but they were gaining renewed attention, popularity, and relevance at this time. Dowd, \textit{A Spirited Resistance}, 37-39.

\textsuperscript{45} Moravians often shared biblical images with Indigenous visitors to the mission, often at the latter’s request. These often included scenes of the crucifixion, and also of shepherded flocks, Gipson, \textit{Moravian Mission}, 308, 437-438.

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 448.
but could not, as they depended on the good will of the influential leader Buckongahelas who pledged his support of Mary. If the Moravians restrained her against her will, they would risk the diplomatic harmony necessary for their continued presence on the White River. Desperate to retain one of their most successful converts, Kluge and Luckenbach sent their interpreter Joshua to Woapikamikunk to retrieve the backsliding sister. Once there, Mary “went so far as to call [Joshua] bad names.” For his part, Buckongahelas “showed himself very unfriendly” to the Mohigan, who was intimidated enough to sleep in the woods on the outskirts of the village.47

By the second half of May, a Cherokee woman living near the Moravian village reported to Kluge and Luckenbach that Mary and her husband Jacob quietly returned to their little “hut” in their corn field bordering the Moravian town, but did not appear in the village or announce their presence. Soon thereafter, Mary died. Mary’s return to her cornfield suggests an acknowledgement of the mutually constitutive relationship between the land and the human body as well as the centrality of corn to human life in the greater Ohio Valley. Mary’s relatives requested that the Moravians assist in her burial at the site of her death, but Kludge and Luckenbach were dissuaded when these relatives insisted on their own funerary practices, “beg[inning] their antics after the custom of the heathen.” No longer tolerant of Moravian disrespect, Mary’s kinfolk “became wrathful and abusive,” reminding the Moravians that no one had invited them and that they should “better go where [they] came from.” The Moravians backed off.48

47 Again, this is noteworthy because it complicates the accommodationist/traditionalist binary as Buckongahelas has usually been framed by historians as an accommodationist “annuity chief”. This view is also complicated by Buckongahelas’s support of Beata, Ibid., 346, 351-352.
48 Ibid., 357.
Like most previous eastern Algonquian Indigenous visionaries, Beata’s instructions were specific to her Lenape people, one of the most consequential manifestations being the restoration of the Gamwing or “Big House Ceremony,” which continues today in contemporary Lenape communities. Soon though, another prophet, a Shawnee named Tenskwatawa would join Beata, eventually gaining more widespread notoriety that recalled the earlier pan-Indigenous movements of Handsome Lake and Neolin. He drew on a theory of polygenesis—the separate creation of “whites” and “Indians”—to advocate for multiethnic cohabitation between Indigenous peoples regardless of differences in nation, clan, or division affiliation, and regardless of any historic conflict or kinship. In contrast to Beata, who seemed to have directed her message towards a predominantly Lenape audience, Tenskwatawa’s approach was novel in that it imparted teachings for all Indigenous peoples who would hear his message, not only fellow Shawnees or members of his Kishpoko division.49

2.2 The Shawnee Prophet

Tenskwatwa, like Beata became able to reveal law from the creator through dreams and visions. For Shawnee people, the creator, Kokothena, “Our Grandmother,” or Cloud Woman (often through her grandson Cloud Boy) were beings who provided individuals with guidance. In rare cases, individual Shawnee were gifted with the ability to speak to Kokothena, to “translate her thoughts,” and through visionary experiences, travel to her land “across the western ocean,” to receive instructions on how to live well. Youth would pass into adulthood

49 Jay Miller argues that Beata made the Gamwing “the communal basis of Delaware tribal identity,” and helped to consolidate the Turtle, Wolf, and Turkey clans as well as the Unami and Monsi divisions of the tribe. Jay Miller, “The 1806 Purge Among the Indiana Delaware,” Ethnohistory 41, No. 2 (Spring, 1994), 246-247.
through dream-seeking experiences in which they would travel to Kokothena’s realm to receive special knowledge of healing herbs or receive agricultural or hunting medicine. Kokothena’s mediators were everywhere present. Tipwiwe, or “truth bearers,” were “witnesses and coworkers with Kokothena,” and consisted of sun, moon, stars, meteors, four winds (and four serpents) of the cardinal directions, as well as eagle, tobacco, fire, water, earth, and many others including corn and pumpkin, cedar, thunderbird, and cyclone person. By learning how to conduct proper relations with various Tipwiwe, and by listening to the ongoing guidance of Kokothena, humans could “earn the right to the earth.”

By the early spring of 1805, Tenskwatawa, then known as Lalawethika or “The Rattle,” (supposedly due to his reputation as a loudmouth), was entering into his middle years with a mixed reputation. He had been a healer who had trained under the highly respected Penagashea (“Changing Feathers”) and had received special medicine through dreams to “overcome illness and thus ‘stop death.’” However, he had met with little success tamping down the influenza that spread through the White River villages that winter. He was not well-liked. He was known to be a braggart, an alcoholic, and quick to react with violence with little provocation. He wore a special belt that he had been taught to construct through one dream vision that he often took off in a fit of rage. As he would throw it to the ground, it would be transformed into a yellow rattlesnake. His biographer David Edmunds suggests that a childhood sense of precarity—the

50 Irwin, Coming Down from Above, 180; Howard, Shawnee!, 173-174.
51 C.F. Voegelin, John Yegerlehner, and Florence Robinett quoted in Irwin, Coming Down from Above, 182. Also see C.F. Voegelin and E.W. Voegelin, “The Shawnee Female Deity in Historical Perspective,” American Anthropologist, 46 (1944): 370-75
violence of the American Revolution as it spilled into the Northwest and smoldered for decades, his father’s death and mother’s abandonment, the favoritism his older sister and brother expressed towards his brother Tecumseh as they helped to raise the family—all led to a feeling of resentment and insecurity, which manifested in his violent behavior and displays of ostentation. 

So when Tenskwatawa collapsed in his house after lighting his pipe one evening, his wife and the neighbors that rushed to the scene assumed he had once again drunk himself into a stupor. When attempts at resuscitating Lalawethika failed, villagers prepared him for burial. To the surprise of everyone, during the two-day period of funerary preparations, Lalawethika awakened from his death state with a new vision he had received from the realm of Kokothena and Cloud Boy, or, as existing translations of his visions call the Master of Life or the Great Spirit. He was lead down a road until a fork appeared and was told that this fork “represented

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53 Tenskwataw’s biography illustrates the dense and extensive ties between Shawnee divisions and neighboring nations across the cis-Mississippi west and south sketched out in Ch. 1. Tenskwatawa was born ca 1775 on the Mad River in the Shawnee village of Old Piqua to a Creek mother named Methoataske (“Turtle Laying Its Eggs”) and his father, the prominent Kishpoko war leader Puckeshinwa who died in the 1774 Battle of Point Pleasant. Methoataske fled the violence of the Revolution either by moving south to Creek villages or towards the western Shawnee villages on the Mississippi. There is also reason to doubt Edmund’s emphasis on his mother’s departure as an explanation for Tenskwatawa’s antisocial behavior, as Algonquian families exceeded the nuclear family unit, providing a robust support system for children, R. David Edmunds, The Shawnee Prophet, (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 28-29, 30-31. At the time of his vision, Tenskwatawa was living among Lenape on the White River. Shawnee had always considered Lenape as their grandfathers, and had always maintained peace with them. Vernon Kinietz and Erminie W. Voegelin, Shawanese Traditions: C.C. Trowbridge’s Account (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1939), 9.

54 Ibid., 33. In his dissertation, Lyn Jacobs claims that of the two primary accounts of Tenskwatawa’s initial visions, the one attributed to Samuel Drake published in his Book of the Indians of North America (Boston: Josiah Drake, 1832) is adapted from an obituary run on the Seneca prophet Handsome Lake in The Buffalo Gazette and Niagara Intelligencer, October 3, 1815 and was confused with Tenskwatawa’s account. This telling was later picked up by James Mooney and repeated by countless historians and biographers since. Lyn Richard Jacobs, “Native American Prophetic Movements of the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries,” PhD Diss., Syracuse University, 1994, 164-165. I use the account of Tenskwatawa himself, translated through George Bluejacket, a close confidant of the Prophet and recorded by Shaker missionaries upon their visit to Greenville in the spring of 1807 and recounted in McNemar, The Kentucky Revival. The Shaker account is significant in that, unlike most Christian denominations, who denounced Tenskwatawa as a superstitious heathen, Shakers believed the Prophet to be a pure, authentic conduit to the Holy Spirit.
that stage of life in which people were convicted of sin.” The left hand road led to “eternity” in which there were three houses, each one with “different degrees of judgment and misery.” A considerable number of people swiftly filed along the road, and into each house. In one of these dwellings whisky drinkers were forced to consume melted lead, and in the last, the peoples’ “torment appeared inexpressible; under which [Lalawethika] heard them scream, cry pitiful, and roar like the falls of a river.” In contrast, when taken down the right-hand path, Lalawethika was presented with a land “all interspersed with flowers of delicious smell, and showed a house at the end of it where was everything beautiful, sweet and pleasant, and still went on learning more and more…” Awakening from his vision, Lalawethika resolved to teach his people how to avoid the danger of the left road, “to put away their sins, and be good.”

He changed his name to Tenskwatawa, or the “Open Door” and began receiving guidelines of proper comportment on how to be a good relative, “not merely in a new faith or doctrines,” Shaker observers reported after visiting the Prophet, “but in newness of life and good works.”

The vision of forked path was not only a warning about punishment in a transcendent afterlife, but a warning to shock people out of complacency of living a life on earth unamenable to living in good relation with each other on the land. Though it’s tempting to read Christian influence of purgatory and hell into Tenskwatawa’s vision—and syncretic elements of Christian imagery and ideas are indeed present—the figure that led Tenskwatawa down the forked path was probably an allusion to the trickster Motshi Manitou and not a supreme being that directs punishments and rewards from on high.

56 Ibid., 132.
57 Trowbridge, *Shawanese Traditions*, 42. There is significant debate over the extent to which Tenskwatawa, among other late 18th and early 19th-century Algonquian and Haudenosaunee prophets, was proposing a novel
travelled through the White River villages in 1803, Tenskwatawa was offering a solution to material, worldly problems, and this involved modifying behavior to “relate constructively with cosmic persons,” as a normative, immanent, and grounded practice, as Indigenous politics in the Ohio Valley “emerg[ed] in the dialogical give-and-take of personality, power and persuasion,” not through the appeasement of deities, or through the “subservience to supernatural others,” as anthropologist Kenneth Morrison has argued about scholarly misinterpretations of Algonquian cosmology.  

As historian Nick Estes reminds us in the context of the late nineteenth-century Ghost Dance, Indigenous prophetic visions were not escapist retreats to an imagined past, but “part of a growing anticolonial theory and movement”. When Tenskwatawa visited Woapicamikunk to relate a vision in which deer are "half a tree's length under the ground" and prophesied that they “will appear again if Indians give up cattle, shave heads, not strike children, etc,” he was identifying a crisis in relation that linked proper behavior of humans towards other-than-human beings. He also directly related this crisis of relation to settler colonialism and its power to transform the earth. The White River Moravians reported that Tenskwatawa assured the Lenape villagers that the deer would return if respectful behavior was practiced, explaining that “God had shown him a crab whose claws were quite full of seaweeds; that the spirit had told him ‘Look! this crab is from Boston and has brought with it something of the land there. If you

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syncretic vision that paired Indigenous animistic understandings of spiritual power with a Christian-inspired afterlife and economy of sin and punishment. See Dowd, Spirited Resistance. I’m less focused on those debates here and more concerned about the ways in which Tenskwatawa and others theorized settler colonialism, imagined the future, and acted upon these ideas and visions.

58 Morrison, The Solidarity of Kin, 40-43.
59 Estes, Our History is the Future, 124.
60 Gipson, Moravian Mission, 392.
Indians will do everything I tell you I will turn over the land so that the white people are covered and you alone shall possess the land.”

That Moravians interpreted Tenskwatawa’s vision through their language of God as a supreme agential being, enacting divine punishment on behalf of Indians says more about their own understandings of power and hierarchy, and their contention that Indigenous people were susceptible to the machinations of false prophets. Yet also present within this account is an emerging Shawnee theoretical insight that recognized settler colonialism as a monster capable of transforming the land and all relations upon it. This understanding made sensible settler-colonial-induced environmental change—literally, the importation of biota from the eastern seaboard and across the Atlantic—here conveyed across the Appalachian divide in the pincers of a giant crustacean. A hyperobject—an object too big and distributed for an individual human to observe or sense in time or space—climate change, capitalism, race, colonialism—requires a theoretical apparatus. The Boston crab served just this purpose for Tenskwatawa and others in the greater Ohio Valley of the early nineteenth-century, and likely predates any non-Indigenous attempt at theorizing settler colonialism as a system. The genius of Tenskwatawa’s theorization is that it understands settler colonialism as a non-local agent that transforms local ecologies in ways that are actionable on the ground through renewed and sustained attention to what other-than-human kin require to re-established frayed relations of respect and reciprocity.

61 Ibid., 392.
62 Timothy Morton coined the term hyperobject to grapple with global warming, but he demonstrates how the term can also be applied to any large object/structure that exceeds the empirical capacities of the sensing human. Timothy Morton, Hyperobjects: Philosophy and Ecology after the End of the World (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2013).
These kinds of theorizations of settler colonialism were elaborated on by others who had visited Tenskwatawa at Greenville. Le Maigouis, or the Trout, the brother of an Odawa leader from L’Arbe Croche, spent several weeks with the Prophet at Greenville in the spring of 1807. He returned to give a speech at Le Maiouitinong—the entrance of Lake Michigan—that reiterated many of Tenskwatawa’s teaching, but with his own insight. For Le Maigouis, the creator indeed made different groups of people at different times,

“But the Americans I did not make--They are not my Children. But the Children of the Evil Spirit--They grew from the Scum of the great water, when it was troubled by the Evil Spirit--And the froth was driven into the Woods by a strong east wind--They are numerous--But I hate them--They are unjust--They have taken away your Lands which were not made for them...If you hearken to my Counsel, and follow my instructions for four years, there will then be two days of darkness; during which I shall travel unseen through the land and cause the Animals such as they were formerly when I created them, to come forth out of the Earth.”

In Le Maigouis’s theorization, Americans are quickly multiplying, unrooted, and adrift, yet also the specific agents of land dispossession, whose activities were the source of the languishing relations between regional Indigenous people and their other-than-human relatives.

2.3 Prophecy as Critique, Prophecy as Theory

As in the wake of any theoretical insight that resonates broadly, the question of what should be done was up for debate within Indigenous communities of the Ohio Valley, the Great Lakes and beyond. Despite claiming the legitimacy of being able to receive messages from “the

63 “Speech of Le Maigouis (the Trout) at Le Maiouitinong,” Michigan Historical Collections Vol. 40, 128-129.
Master of Life,” and “dream to God,”\textsuperscript{64} many of Tenskwatawa’s prescriptions were highly controversial. Almost unthinkable to many, was his admonishment to give up personal medicine bundles—the source of individual power that could be used for good or ill. A significant debate over this occurred among the Miami as Tenskwatawa began to gain notoriety more widely in the region in the spring of 1806. Sauk warriors who gave up their bags, for example, faced “heavy calamities” against Americans.\textsuperscript{65} One of these Sauk men, Wennebea Namoeta, explained to William H. Keating in the 1820s that medicine bags, which the Sauk received “at the hands of the Great Master of Life himself,” gave them “the faculty of beholding, in the heavens, great fires passing from one cloud to another.” The intensity and frequency of these sky fires helped Sauk warriors determine whether an enemy was strong or weak. “These are not visions, but realities,” Wennebea Namoeta insisted, likely anticipating the skepticism of EuroAmericans who insisted on a strict distinction between matter and spirit, “we do not dream that we see these fires, but we actually behold them in the heavens; for this reason do we value our medicine bags so highly that we would not part with them while life endures.” But many were convinced of Tenskwatawa’s claim that medicine bags were obsolete, ineffective, and “vitiated through age,” only to be “fell[ed] in battle.”\textsuperscript{66}

Behind this exhortation to give up the medicine bundles was the fear that some individuals were harboring poison, or bad medicine, wrapped inside them, and that this was the

\textsuperscript{64} When asked by a Shaker missionary whether or not Greenville villagers “believe in him [the Prophet],” one villager answered, “yes, we all believe—he can dream to God,” deflecting the Shaker’s understanding that Tenskwatawa himself was worshipped and redirecting it towards the latter’s ability to communicate the desires and intentions of other-than-human beings, including the Creator. McNemar, \textit{Kentucky Revival}, 125.

\textsuperscript{65} Gipson, \textit{Moravian Mission}, 426; Draper mss 1YY31.

\textsuperscript{66} Wennebea Namota’s narrative also contains good evidence against a common historiographical assumption that Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh were in conflict over the former’s “spiritual” instructions, William H. Keating, \textit{Narrative of an Expedition of the Source of St. Peter’s river, Lake Wennepeek, Lake of the Woods, Under the Command of Stephen H. Long}, transcript in Shawnee Box 8029, Folder 2, 025, GLOVE.
source of the illness, alcoholism, lack of game animals, and social disorder widespread in the region post-Greenville. Beata also believed medicine bundles had become a liability to the White River Lenape villages and invited Tenskwatawa to return to the villages from Greenville and identify the “witches” among them. As historians have long pointed out, those targeted as witches tended to be older leaders who had signed the Treaty of Greenville, had participated in more recent land cession treaties, or had close ties to the Moravians. Those associated with the transformation of Indigenous lands into the public domain of the United States, and the private property of land speculators and settlers—were understood to have worked some sort of bad medicine, through the “pen and ink witchcraft” of treaties.

After the Treaty of Greenville in 1795, and especially following the Louisiana Purchase in 1803, treaties became more blatant instruments of land dispossession (in addition to, or rather than, “peace and friendship” treaties). Land cession treaties did the work of transforming Indigenous lands through a temporal sleight of hand that Robert Nichols has termed “recursive dispossession…a form of property-generating theft.” This process has been the means by which settler futurity, as its own prophetic telos, imagines land as a commodifiable, alienable, and exchangeable: a blank slate upon which to write an agricultural, republican nation to come rather than the product of densely layered historical relationships between humans and their other-than-human relatives. If this transformation was slow to take effect on the ground—if it

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69 Nichols, Theft is Property, 9.
was impartial, or incomplete—the notion that it would be a total transformation in the future became an enforceable certainty through state-backed violence or the threat of it. In other words, the technology of pen, ink, paper—the material assemblage of the treaty, effected the transformation of Indigenous relationship to land (as a dense weave of ecological relations) into a universal regime of private property backed by the federal state and put into action locally by land speculators and settlers effecting material transformations that were intended or not. This settler terraforming project, energized by a faith in the inevitability of its eventual completion, constrained or interrupted Indigenous practices of law, politics, and sociality, practices that emerge continuously, “from the ground up”70

Witchcraft was a practice of antisocial behavior in the extreme. In an animate world in which humans and other-than-human beings have agency to intervene in the flow of power, the threat that this agency can be used by individuals in pernicious ways is always present. Beyond the extreme cases of witches, ordinary people in general were exhibiting antisocial behavior that threatened the collective well-being of Indigenous communities in the region. In Beata’s visions, the two men, or “angels,” who warn of impending destruction emphasize the dangers of disregarding social protocol, pointing out that villagers “do not keep separate spoons with which to stir the sacrificial [ceremonial] meat and to dip it out.” Throwing down seven spoons, the angels demanded that the Lenape “will have to live again as in old times, and love one another sincerely”71 As I explained in Chapter 1, spoons made manifest the responsibility of each individuals within collective life—they facilitated kinship between humans, and perpetuated the

70 “Settler futurity” will be examined at length in Chapter 3. Mann, “Greenville Treaty of 1795,” 197. For “jurisdiction from the ground up” see Pasternak, Grounded Authority.
71 Gipson, Moravian Mission, 333.
embedding of humans in relationships with other-than-human beings, processes of life, death, and rebirth, and the land which feeds and nurtures, an ethic of mutual dependence beautifully articulated by Lisa Brooks through the concept of the common pot. If relations with, on, and through the land subtend Indigenous politics, sociality, and law, then the observed effects of early nineteenth-century land cession treaties with the US government would have looked disturbingly and dangerously antisocial and a threat to the integrity of Indigenous political and legal systems.\textsuperscript{72}

### 2.4 Refusing the Treaty Line

As the Moravians devised their exit strategy in the Spring of 1806, Tenskwatawa, his brother, the successful warrior and rising political leader Tecumseh, and their growing retinue of followers were on the move, northeast of the White River Lenape villages. They were heading towards Ohio, to Greenville, “the big ford where the peace was concluded with the Americans; and there make provisions to receive and instruct all from the different tribes that were willing to be good.”\textsuperscript{73} The selection of this location, the actual site at which the 1795 treaty “witchcraft” was conducted speaks to the ways in which Tenskwatawa’s revelations were not the ramblings of a “religious fanatic” or a doomed utopian, but an act of political refusal and resurgence. Tenskwatawa was carrying out the dictates of the Master of Life as they were revealed to him, explaining to federal commissioners who visited Greenville in September, 1807, that “They did not remove to this place because it was a pretty place, or very valuable, for

\textsuperscript{72} Brooks, \textit{The Common Pot}, Chapter 1.
\textsuperscript{73} McNemar, \textit{The Kentucky Revival}, 127.
it was neither; but because it was revealed to him that the place was a proper one to establish his
doctrines; that he meant to adhere to them while he lived; they were not his own, nor were they
taught him by man, but by the Supreme Ruler of the universe; that his future life should prove
to his white brethren the sincerity of his professions.”

Tecumseh followed Tenskwatawa’s lead by giving an exhaustive review of “all the
treaties made with the western tribes [by the US]; reviewed them in their order, and with the
most intense bitterness and scorn, denounced them as null and void.” But even as “he fearlessly
denied the validity of these pretended treaties, and openly avowed his intention to resist the
further extension of the white settlements upon the Indian lands, he disclaimed all intention of
making war upon the United States.” Both brothers had successfully reassured the federal
commissioners at least in the short term that their intentions were peaceful and they posed no
threat to neighboring settlers or were in collusion with British agents. They had refused the
legitimacy of the Treaty of Greenville, and by establishing their council fire at the site of the
treaty signing—on the American side of the treaty boundary—declared that they followed a
more legitimate law than either the law of the United States and what had become the status quo
of treaty diplomacy characterizing Anglo-Indigenous relations up to the Treaty of Greenville.

Tenskwatawa’s followers would learn this law through the Prophet’s ability to “dream to
God.” As a Greenville villager told a Shaker missionary through an interpreter, Tenskwatawa
“converses with the Good Spirit and tells us how to be good,” that is, how to conduct proper
relations with human and other-than-human beings through a continually emerging law that

74 Drake, Life of Tecumseh, 96.
75 Ibid., 97.
Tenskwatawa had a special ability to receive and translate from the “Master of Life” or Creator.\(^{76}\) This was in contrast to Catahecassa and Mihšikinaahkwa’s strategy of demanding that US federal officials and Ohio Valley/Lower Great Lakes Indigenous peoples adhere to their mutually-held treaty obligations agreed to at the Treaty of Greenville. However, both strategies—reformulating law through prophetic visioning and maintaining historic treaty obligations—were articulations of Indigenous legal practice.

While the existence of Tenskwatawa’s Greenville village did not initially raise alarm among federal agents either in Washington or Indiana’s territorial capital of Vincennes, the news was immediately perturbing to Fort Wayne Indian agent William Wells. In the first several years of Tenskwatawa’s pan-Indigenous project, Wells was by far the most vocal Indian agent in expressing trepidation about the Prophet’s motivations, and the loudest advocate for the latter’s removal from Greenville. This was undoubtedly motivated by Wells’s familial obligation as the husband of Mihšikinaahkwa’s daughter, Sweet Breeze, to defend the territorial integrity of Miami lands.\(^{77}\) The flouting of the treaty line by Tenskwatawa threatened to delegitimize the treaty-guaranteed boundary that protected Miami land from US settlement—a boundary that was in part, secured by Mihšikinaahkwa himself at the Treaty of Greenville. Mihšikinaahkwa and Wells were not capitulating to US hegemony but were pledging to uphold their treaty responsibilities to the republic, to acknowledge and defend the treaty line, and

\(^{76}\) McNemar, *The Kentucky Revival*, 124.
\(^{77}\) For an explanation of the “family compact” between Mihšikinaahkwa and Wells see Harvey Lewis Carter, *The Life and Times of Little Turtle: First Sagamore of the Wabash* (Urbana: University of Chicago Press, 1987).
ensure peace between the “children of the 17 fires” and the Indigenous nations of the greater Ohio Valley and Lower Great Lakes.78

Wells took action, sending, the “mixed-blood” Shawnee translator Anthony Shane to Greenville to deliver an invitation to Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh to attend a speech at Fort Wayne, delivered by the War Department, “the substance of which” demanded that they “remove to some point beyond the general boundaries stipulated in the treaty of Greenville.” Tecumseh purportedly “arose and said to the messenger: ‘go back to Fort Wayne, and tell Capt. Wells that my fire is kindled on the spot appointed by the great Spirit above; and if he has any communication to make to me, he must come here.’”79 Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh insisted that the US federal government and their representatives adhere to their law, one that was rooted in specific places and legitimized by the Creator. In doing so, they rejected the terms and geographic reorientations of the Treaty of Greenville, and the diplomatic status quo that treaty had represented for regional Indigenous nations.

Wells and Mihšikinaahkwa seemed less concerned about Tenskwatawa’s anti-American intentions (which Wells downplayed or exaggerated depending on the circumstance) and more concerned with how American settlers would respond to the perceived threat of the Prophet’s presence. The fear of an “Indian threat,” regional Indigenous people knew, could cause settlers to lash out with unpredictable and often brutal violence. In December of 1806, Wells wrote to Dearborn, informing him that the “band of Shawneys [sic] that had settled at greenvill [sic], threatened [sic] to be trouble some neighbour to the white people in that quarter.” He urged

78 Daniel Harrison argues that Mihšikinaahkwa made an innovation in the use of wampum, transforming it from its performance of a shared road to a land boundary at the Greenville Treaty council. Harrison, “Change amid Continuity.”
79 Beckwith, “Fort Wayne Manuscript,” Shawnee Box 8023, F05/007, GLOVE.
that they be “removed from that place,” adding that “the chiefs of this agency offen [sic] say to me they are sirprised [sic] that they white people would suffer such a band of bad Indians to reside so near them.” By the spring of 1807, Wells added the caveat that Tenskwatawa was not in “any ways dangoureous [sic] to the white people except His keeping them in constant alarm.”

Settler fear was based predominantly upon the threat that Indigenous mobility posed to the integrity of their private property. There was nothing so threatening to settlers than the free movement of Indigenous people through their lands. This fear was heightened as a constant stream of visitors made their way through Fort Wayne to and from Greenville. Among the first to visit were Kickapoos who journeyed from the headwaters of the Sangamon River to Greenville shortly after the village was established. The following spring, as soon as the grass was high enough the feed their horses, Potawatomi also made the eastward journey to visit the Prophet, spending several weeks at Greenville and then holding a large council on Crow Prairie on the Illinois River with Sauk, Ho-chunk, and Menominee. Odawa and Ojibwe, including the prophetic leader Le Maigouis (the Trout) also travelled south from the Great Lakes that spring, returning to their respective villages with Tenskwatawa’s teachings.

If Wells was accurate in his report (it was often in his interest to exaggerate), during the spring of 1807, upwards of 1500 Indigenous people passed through Fort Wayne to “shake hands with the Prophet”. And according to “those familiar with the state of Indian affairs…living in the north and western parts of the Indiana Territory,” estimated that 700-800 men were living at

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80 Wells to Dearborn, March 31, 1807, Shawnee Box 8024 F01/117, GLOVE; Wells to Harrison, April 19, 1807, Beckwith, “Fort Wayne Manuscript,” Shawnee Box 8024 F01/019, GLOVE.
81 Edmunds, Shawnee Prophet, 49-52.
Tenskwatawa’s Greenville village, “most of whom were armed with new rifles, and well provided with ammunition, supplied from Canada.” While the threat of British intrigue would pique the interest of federal officials, especially in the years immediately prior to the War of 1812, local settlers were more concerned about the integrity of their private property as “the Indians that visits him will destroy the stock belonging to the whites that come in their way,” and “commit depredations on the property of the white people…who are dayly [sic] complaining to me of the mischief these Indians are doing to them.” Although he continued to believe that the Prophet harbored no hostile intentions, Wells was worried that settlers would flee their farms at a crucial time of year to put their crops in and go hungry as a result. Wells tried to appeal to Greenville villagers on this point in his attempt to persuade them to return to the other side of the treaty boundary.⁸²

2.5 Imperfect Settler Sovereignty

The shadow of British collusion with Indigenous nations looming on the northern shores of the Great Lakes consumed Governor Harrison’s thoughts. But the governor was also preoccupied with the problem of extending legal jurisdiction over a messy plurality of customary law practiced by American settlers, older francophone inhabitants, and an array of distinctive Indigenous polities. By the end of 1806, Harrison fretted to the Indiana territorial legislature that local Indigenous people were well aware of the bias shown towards white

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⁸² Wells to Dearborn, April 25, 1807 in Shawnee Box 8024 F02/002, GLOVE. Wells addressed Greenville Villagers, “Brothers you are at this time endeavouring to assemble large numbers of Indians at that place. The appearance of whom will be apt to cause some of your white Brothers to leave their farms, consequently their children must go without bread or any thing to eat.” William Wells, “Speech to the Shawnees residing at Greenville,” in Shawnee Box 8024 F01/021, GLOVE.
settlers in the American implementation of criminal justice and could easily use this fact to take
the moral high ground against settlers, and worse, foment anti-American attitudes in Indiana
Territory and beyond. “I am sorry to say that their complaints are far from being groundless,”
Harrison admitted, “The Indian always suffers, and the white man never. This partiality has not
escaped their penetration, and has afforded them an opportunity of making the proudest
comparisons between their own observance of treaties and that of their boasted superiors.”
Harrison followed by advocating for a review of the territorial penal code and to make
modifications that may “promise more impartiality in the execution of the laws in favor of this
unhappy people [Indians],” as a matter of personal honor and patriotic duty.83 Harrison knew
that keeping the peace in the Northwest was contingent on upholding treaties, including
protecting signatories from attack by settlers. But in order to achieve a monopoly on violence,
Harrison also had to answer to demands of local settlers. Two incidents, occurring within the
same weeks in 1807, illustrate this dilemma.

First, in April, the kidnapping of the Larkin family by a party of Lenape men on the
“Indian trail” that ran from Vincennes to Clarkesville, prompted Harrison to call together a
militia force of territorial “rangers” to patrol the traces and roads, build and maintain
blockhouses, and circulate supplies of salt, cornmeal, arms and ammunition, as mentioned in the
previous chapter.84 This was a drastic response to the perceived threat of Indigenous-on-settler
violence in which Harrison called for men with “experience as hunters or in Indian fighting,”
the very demographic that tended to be most responsible for settler-on-Indigenous violence.

84 Harrison to Hargrove, April 16, 1807, in Esarey, Messages and Letters, 208-209.
“The roving bands of Indians prowling over this unprotected country in the warm season aim to murder helpless people for their scalps and the capturing of prisoners for what they can realize from the sale of them for servants to the British posts on the lakes.” Using a much different rhetoric in this official order than in his message to the territorial legislature the previous fall, Harrison stressed the danger Indigenous people posed towards settler families and their property rather than sympathy towards Indians who were regularly preyed upon by white settlers.85

That next month, the brother in law of Kaskaskia leader John Baptiste Ducoigne, a man named Gabriel, was killed, scalped, and left on the side of the road seven miles from the town of Kaskaskia with “[t]wo old blankets, an old blue Cappeau and a Jole [jowl] of bacon” left by his side as well as an ominous “Indian war sign”.86 Believing Kickapoo or Potawatomi men responsible, as they had recently shot Kaskaskia horses, Ducoigne reminded the US of their treaty responsibility under Article 2 of the 1803 Treaty with the Kaskaskias (that he had signed), that the US would “take the Kaskaskias under their immediate care and patronage and…afford them a protection as effectual against the other Indian tribes and against all other persons whatever as enjoyed by their own citizens.” Recognizing that Article 2 also required Kaskaskia leaders to “refrain from making war,” on any other Indigenous polity or “any foreign nation, without having first obtained the approbation and consent of the United States,”87 Ducoigne asked that, in light of the failure of the US to extend their protection, that Kaskaskias should be able to exercise their power to dispense their own justice: “I have had ample protection promised to me by the United States and yet the officers do not interest themselves in my

86 Jones to Harrison, May 4, 1807 in Esarey, Messages and Letters, 211-212. 
behalf…I ought at least to be placed on a footing with my enemies.” Ducoigne recognized the absurdity of surrendering his people’s ability to exercise their own legal jurisdiction, or to simply defend themselves from attack, remarking acerbically, “Yes When I meet an Indian I must stand until he shoots me down, and then make a defence, and thus lose my life and the lives of my people.” Kaskaskias, Ducoigne reported, were unable to leave their village for any activity for fear that they would be attacked and unable to defend themselves. Harrison responded by ordering the militia of the settlement of Kaskaskia to muster to protect Ducoigne and his people and to closely surveil the movements of “every party of Indians who may come into [the] vicinity.” Harrison also issued a statement addressed both to Kaskaskias and Kickapoos, affirming the US’s commitment to protecting the former and an appeal to the latter to reveal the perpetrator of Gabriel’s murder.

The treaty stipulation conjured by Ducoigne, that the US would “take the Kaskaskias under their immediate care and patronage and…afford them a protection as effectual against the other Indian tribes and against all other persons whatever as enjoyed by their own citizens,” reflected an attempt by the US government to shore up their jurisdictional reach into the land they claimed on US territorial peripheries—some of which had been ceded by Indigenous nations by treaty, and some of which had not, but all of which was only haphazardly within the actual jurisdictional control of the federal/territorial government. As Lisa Ford has shown in the case of Georgia, extending criminal jurisdiction into Indigenous lands while bringing Indigenous peoples into the purview of US criminal law became a priority for federal officials.

88 Jones to Harrison, May 4, 1807 in Esarey, Messages and Letters, 211-212.
in the peripheries of an expanding early nineteenth-century nation-state. In this region, in the first decade of the nineteenth century, however, a legal plurality prevailed, and federal officials were required to make ad hoc adjustments in order to maintain any semblance of order.

This tenuous grasp on legal authority on the part of the US in Indiana Territory is apparent in the intelligence Harrison received via William Clark in St. Louis that Kickapoos had already made a diplomatic overture to the aggrieved Kaskaskias, sending a delegation of Shawnee and Lenape with Gabriel’s stolen property, presents, and wampum to Ducoigne. Refusing this gesture, Ducoigne affirmed his treaty commitments to the US and sent the Shawnee/Lenape delegation on to Harrison at Vincennes. Harrison was aware that Ducoigne was an outlier among regional Indigenous people in his willingness to recognize US legal jurisdiction. While treaties had been and continued to be diplomatic instruments for most regional Indigenous people they were not necessarily seen as capitulations to settler legal authority (even Ducoigne’s reaction to US failure to protect his people suggests that his refrain from carrying out his own punitive justice was conditional on the US making good on their treaty responsibilities). Harrison admitted this when he asserted “that no consideration on earth could induce” the Kickapoos to surrender the murderer as “it is so contrary to their ideas of propriety and to the universal practice of all the tribes on the Continent.” Various Indigenous polities continued to exercise their own systems of justice and legal jurisdiction across their lands. Yet the escalating tensions following the Harrison treaties, an influx of new settlers, and the emergence of new prophetic visionaries who challenged this fragile diplomatic détente made

\[90\] Ford, *Settler Sovereignty*.

\[91\] Harrison to Dearborn, July 11, 1807 in Esarey, *Messages and Letters*, 223.
every new act of violence—between Americans and Indigenous people, and between
Indigenous peoples—a possible sign of impending Indian War to settlers. The murder of an
American near Urbana, Ohio on the Mad River in the late spring in that same year stirred local
settlers into a panic. Many of them, assuming the murder was “in connection with the
assembling of the Indians under Tecumseh and the Prophet” or the deed of the supposedly pro-
American Catahecassa—and despite consistent declarations of peace by both Shawnee
leaders—“removed back to Ky.—the place from which they had emigrated.”

To quell this settler panic, “to control the firey spirits of the frontier from going forth to
incite indiscriminate murder of our savage neighbors,” the “oldest and best men” in the
vicinity—jurors, businessmen, and clergy—were summoned by tavern owner General Benjamin
Whiteman and others to hold a multi-day council near Springfield, with Tecumseh,
Catahecassa, and other local Indigenous leaders including the influential Wyandot, Roundhead.
A “peacemaking force” consisting of the Old Champaign Rifle Co. lead by Capt. James
Robinson were called upon by Harrison to quell hostilities should any break out. Shawnee and
Lenape—an estimated 400 of them, however, were ordered to disarm. Tecumseh and
Catahecassa each made their case, both pledging their peaceful intentions as neighbors to
settlers, and assured their audience they had nothing to do with the murder. Roundhead, an ally
of Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa blamed Catahecassa for the murder, claiming that he could

92 This is according to Isaac Zane and William McCulloch’s account, Draper mss., 3YY 134-136. Joseph Vance’s
account claims that settlers wanted to pin the murder on Catahecassa. There are significant discrepancies in detail
in the several accounts of this council, which are recalled in the Draper manuscript collection by several informants
whom Draper interviewed many decades after the event. The murder subject is identified as John Boyer in one
account and Meyers in another. The Joseph Vance account dates the event to 1806, but all others date it in the
spring or summer of 1807. Most of the main features of the story are consistent between accounts, such as the
murder location, the location of the council, the tension between Tecumseh and Catahecassa, and the pipe incident.
93 Draper mss, 2YY 110-113.
commit any act of violence he wished because he knew he could use Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa as scapegoats. Eventually it was found that the murder was perpetrated by an individual man and unrelated to the stirrings of any incipient military campaign. The council adjourned without much fanfare, but had staunched, for the time being, the flow of blood in the region.

The Springfield council illustrates the ad hoc nature of legal practice and governance in the US’s colonial peripheries, but also a breakdown of what had been conventional practices of diplomacy between Indigenous nations and European powers for over a century. A particular illustrative moment in accounts of the council, related by their nineteenth-century tellers as a colorful or even comedic anecdote, illustrates this breakdown of these diplomatic norms. Although the Lenape and Shawnee council-goers followed orders to disarm, Tecumseh initially refused to give up his “large pipe tomahawk,” claiming (in the words of Joseph Vance) that “it was the first time in his life that this humiliating demand had ever been made and he had better withdraw from the council if he could not be permitted to smoke in brotherly kindness that calumet of peace which had been used as an emblem of friendship and kindly feeling by all their warriors and sachems from the earliest traditions of their nations.” Finally, after much dispute with General Whiteman, Tecumseh relented and “handed [the pipe] to one of his followers, who took it away.” Then, “an old Methodist clergyman by the name of Pinkard in the

94 Draper mss, 3YY 72-73.
95 Joseph Vance attended this council and was a salt peddler, farmer, and local politician who would in 1836 be elected Governor of Ohio. He related this episode to Draper in the 1840s. Draper mss, 9BB 112-113; 2YY 114. Series BB contains the Simon Kenton papers. Kenton, a Revolutionary War veteran, Ohio Valley settler, and former captive of the Shawnee, could not read or write so these archives are from a variety of sources detailing his life for a biography Draper hoped to someday write. The authorship of this account is unknown. Harper, Guide to the Draper Manuscripts, 145-146
kindness of his heart stepped forward and offered the great Chieftan the use of his pipe of clay
[in other accounts, corn cob] with a stem about 2 and a half inches long.” Showing contempt for
both man and pipe, Tecumseh “took it between his thumb and finger and without any apparent
effort sent it over the heads of the multitudes into the midst of a thicket of underbrush at some
50 yards distance and then whilst the poor old preacher appeared to be perfectly astounded at
this savage insult offered to his friendly disposition and kindness.”

The refusal by American negotiators of Tecumseh’s pipe tomahawk was a refusal of
relationship. Pipes for Algonquian peoples, as well as Siouan, Haudenosaunee and other
Indigenous peoples on Turtle Island have been technologies of “uniting disparate interiorities,”
of forging relations and practicing being in good relation. The pipe tomahawk was a novel
variation on the ceremonial pipes used throughout the Ohio Valley, Great Lakes, and the upper
Mississippi Valley, introduced by inter-imperial trade in the eighteenth century and prominent
in treaty councils through the Treaty of Greenville as a mark of prestige, and a medium with
which to perform intentions of peace or war. Pipe tomahawks were the material manifestation
of and a means by which a diplomatic middle ground in the Ohio Valley and lower Great Lakes
was maintained between European and Indigenous powers, a middle ground being challenged
by a new kind of colonial expansion by the US in the late-eighteenth and early nineteenth
century.

96 Draper mss, 2YY 115-116.
97 David Posthumus discusses the significance of the pipe as a technology of relationship and kin-making between
humans and other-than-human beings in the Lakota context in Posthumus, All My Relatives, 37-38.
98 For an excellent in-depth analysis of the origins and changing role of the pipe tomahawk in eighteenth and
nineteenth century North America see Timothy J. Shannon, “Queequeg’s Tomahawk: A Cultural Biography, 1750-
1900,” Ethnohistory 52, No. 3 (Summer 2005): 589-633. Also see Richard A. Pohrt, “Pipe Tomahawks from
Middle Ground.
The notion that an ordinary clay or corncob pipe, the personal smoking device of one settler could do the work necessary to forge ties of kinship and obligation must have struck Tecumseh and the other Shawnee leaders as preposterous, offensive, and undoubtedly affirmed to many the need to—as the Lenape told the Moravians—“find something new” in the context of settler refusal of relation: new theories, new political commitments, new relationships between humans and other-than-human beings, new visions of the future. Tenskwatawa and other prophetic visionaries offered this alternative. Soon after this incident, Tenskwatawa and his followers would establish, upon the invitation of Potawatomi leader Main Poc, a new village on the confluence of the Tippecanoe and Wabash rivers which would be known as Prophetstown—a move that can itself be seen as a refusal of settler colonial jurisdiction through a practice of Indigenous mobility as well as an insistence on Indigenous futurity within an Indigenous temporal framework.99

For the white protestant settlers assembled at the council—republican-minded and committed to a particular understanding of “reason”—a pipe was only a pipe and interchangeable with any other. To think otherwise would be flirting with superstition. Cloaking their own ceremonial practices in the guise of a universal, objective manifestation of natural law, the governing settler elite in the Ohio Valley could only laugh at Tecumseh, a petulant Indian, clinging sadly to tradition. Yet these settlers adhered to their own prophetic vision, one that required great leaps of faith, engaging in particular practices of reading the landscape, of investing material objects with powers, and recursively narrating the past in order to make a

99 This was a highly contentious move to many Indigenous polities in the region, especially the Miami who saw Main Poc as disregarding Miami authority to decide who could and could not inhabit their lands.
certain future come into being. The following chapter considers how these settler prophecies metabolized prophetic figures like Tenskwatawa, perversely transforming the threat they posed of an Indigenous future in the Ohio Valley and lower Great Lakes into a component of a settler origin story from which would burst forth a golden age of worldwide civilizational progress centered within an expanding New Republic.

And yet, Indigenous peoples in the region continued to travel through their territories, conducting the relations that constituted their peoplehood, including the planting of corn in the places they had always planted corn. In the St. Charles District, at the confluence of the Missouri and Mississippi rivers, for example, settlers complained to federal agents that Kickapoos “sometimes come within their enclosures, and insist on planting corn.”100 This insistence on the conducting of relations-in-place had in part led the flight of the Moravians from Woapicamikunk on the White River. But now, American settlers, “disregarding their complicity in the subversion of local social norms and social order, while seeking to forego the intimacies of Indigenous sovereignty and the ‘actual history of our plural existence,’” called upon the state, its infrastructure, and capacity to enact violence against what they considered to be Indigenous belligerence. In the words of Adam Waterman, in this calling on relatively distant authorities to act as arbiters of local social relations, these settlers were committing “a representational violence, translating the forms of stewardship that sustained [Indigenous] sovereignty into an idiom of assault.”101 In other words, the thick weave of ecological relations

100 Frederick Bates to Merriweather Lewis, May 15, 1807, in Kickapoo Box 1806-1807, Folder 1, GLOVE.
101 “The actual history of our plural existence” is a constant refrain in Waterman’s book and is borrowed from the Mohawk scholar Taiaiake Alfred. Waterman, The Corpse in the Kitchen, 100-101.
that sustained Indigenous lives and communities was an impediment to the fulfillment of a settler futurity that, in its poverty, in its refusal of relation, was always doomed to fail.
Chapter 3: Settler Prophecy and Divining a Republican Future

By the late eighteenth century, a new conceptualization of time began to compete with the cyclical time of “nature” as well as the eschatological Biblical time that had prevailed for millennia in the Anglophone world. Historian Jason Philips has identified this temporality as anticipatory time, a modern temporality driven by human agency in contrast to the expectant time of eternal cycles of nature or divine providence. Anticipatory time was seen by many Americans, as well as Europeans, as having a special valance in the expanding United States. G.W.F. Hegel famously proclaimed that America was “the land of the future,” and prophesied in a tone that no doubt reflected the utopian optimism of many settler-colonists, that “In the time to come, the center of world-historical importance will be revealed there.”¹

A vast territory to the west lay in potential as the raw material from which this future would come to be. “Americans equated the western horizon with an open, national destiny,” literary scholar Thomas Allen has observed. This destiny would emerge through the process of bringing supposedly empty, timeless land—the eternal land of “primitive” people—into the time of history. That society would be perfected, and a new history of civilization written upon the land as empty time to be made historical through the agency of humans, was an optimistic vision, and gave Americans—especially white men—a sense of world-historical purpose: they could play a special part in ushering in this new world. American colonialists anticipated the transformation of raw land, in its primordial state, into the time of history, “the wholeness of a

future utopia in which the ‘united states’ would constitute one republic, propelled into the future”. ²

This would happen not only through a Jeffersonian landscape of small family farms, but also through the building of infrastructure like roads and canals, and institutions like banks and schools.

In the years following the War of 1812, especially in the feverish years of infrastructure development made manifest by the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825, the idea that the US was the future, and that this future could be seized by any enterprising white man, seemed everywhere apparent on a landscape increasingly shaped by new technologies and market connectivity. Lewis Cass, in a speech given to celebrate the completion of the Wabash-Erie Canal in 1843 echoed Hegel’s notion that America was the future. As the former governor of Michigan Territory, Cass had long fought against eastern attitudes that painted the Northwest as an intellectual or economic backwater. Cass placed the eastern seaboard, and Europe preceding it, in the past: “There, [in Europe], hope is extinct, and history has closed its record. Time has done its work. Hence we have no past; all has been done within the memory of man. Our province of action is the present, of contemplation, the future.” This future was preordained, but also necessitated human action to consummate: "Onward, is the great word of our age and country. Never in the history of man, has human exertion been more displayed and rewarded, than in the miracles of improvement which start up around us,” emerging not through “the magician’s lamp,” but from the “purer origin” of “industry and enterprise”.³

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² Allen, A Republic in Time, 44-46.
³ “General Cass’s Oration,” Niles’ National Register, August 12, 1843, 378-380.
As exhilarating as it was, this temporal schema also produced much anxiety. Because men could now make their own history, they alone were responsible for ushering in this great new American civilization. Philips explores this anxiety in the context of the sectional crisis preceding the Civil War. A looming sense of uncertainty “sparked apocalyptic and millennial prophecies”—a renewed attention to Biblical exegesis—but it also brought to the fore “clashing anticipations” that “threatened perpetual conflicts.”

In the hopes and fears Americans expressed during the building sectional crisis, Philips reads an anticipatory time interpenetrated by a sense of the older, expectant time, a temporality that ensured a future that would unfold regardless of the actions of human beings. Because individuals could now be agents of the future themselves, divergent visions of what American could or should become created new political tensions always on the verge of erupting into violence.

I want to linger on the ways in which the coexistence of anticipatory and expectant time in Philips’s account also shaped settler colonial future-thinking in terms of the anxiety he argues was built into anticipatory time. If “generations of politicians, scholars, and clergy had not invested the American frontier with such ominous responsibility for the fate of civilization,”

then struggles on the frontier over slavery—whether the new states carved out of Indigenous lands would be admitted as free or slave states—would not have seemed as consequential, Philips argues. The same could be said about American struggles to control its wests, not only with the real and anticipated violence of Indigenous resistance to colonization in these places, but also the mere presence of Indigenous peoples and their refusal to disappear. Would they

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5 Ibid., 25.
vanish on their own, the realization of a supposedly natural historical process, or would Americans need to act to facilitate and/or hasten their disappearance? Settler prophecy emerged from these anxious questions. Anticipating the disappearance of Indigenous people and foreseeing a future of technological progress unfolding on western frontiers, prophetic discourse encouraged active engagement with the world-building project of settler terraforming and institution-building. Exposed to this roiling and surging settler anxiety as it overspilled its edge, Indigenous peoples remained on their lands.

Indigenous communities intended to continue caring for all their relations—the dense interrelated matrix of beings that had composed their lands for countless generations—with future generations in mind. For American settlers, Indigenous people moving through their territories, caring for kin, raising families, conducting diplomacy and war, were impediments to the stadial unfolding of history as the unfolding of American civilization—and its corresponding modes of relationality—in a space imagined as uniform, empty territory. Indigenous futurities and the practice of Indigenous modes of relationality were thus a direct threat to American settler ones. Indigenous prophetic figures embodied this resistance to the unfolding of settler time both expected and anticipated and had to be contained, defused, absorbed. As this chapter will demonstrate, this occurred both in discursive ways—especially through print media—as well as in material ways, through the attempted management of actual Indigenous prophetic figures in time and space.

Attempting to trace the shape of settler prophecy in early nineteenth-century America, this chapter makes several interlocking arguments. First, I argue that settler prophecy should be seen as a relationship to the future that managed settler colonial anxieties about Indigenous presence and the specter of Indigenous futurity. Second, that this settler prophecy foresaw a
particular secular, republican form of governance and society that, though contested, became a highly influential and mobile discourse as the century wore on (the next two chapters will elaborate on settler prophecy’s portability, flexibility, and tenacity). Third, settler prophecy depended on actual Indigenous prophets as well as the fictive “Indian prophet”. This chapter shows how Tenskwatawa served this purpose, both as a flesh-and-blood person and as a didactic figure. Lewis Cass, while governor of Michigan Territory, sought out Tenskwatawa, largely to convince the latter to use his influence to persuade Ohio Shawnees and other Indigenous people to remove to Indian Territory. Although Cass sought to defuse or neutralize Tenskwatawa’s power as a visionary, the Shawnee Prophet continued to insist on a future for his people while remaining critical of US colonial power. Finally, while much scholarly work has been devoted to understanding the function of other settler stereotypes of Indigenous North Americans, these have been primarily focused on the binary and often dichotomous relationship between the “noble” and the “bloodthirsty” savage. During the Indian Removal era, literary representations of Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa did work to structure and define the boundaries of white republican virtue and provide a cautionary tale about its subversion through the opposing figures of the Indian prophet and the Indian statesman. These literary representations would prove to be enduring and would influence the ways in which white settlers would come to understand subsequent Indigenous visionaries in other colonial settings across North America, including in the “new” Northwest, the subject of the next section of this dissertation.
3.1 **American Prophets of Improvement**

Partway through the August 1828 council proceedings that ended the Winnebago Revolt, Cass delivered a curious speech, recalling a dream vision he had received portending US control of the lead mining region around the Fever River, at the heart of the Fox-Wisconsin watersheds:

Spotted arm was about to tell us his dream; I will now tell him mine: I dreamed I was going along by the Prairie and I saw a great many shining things on the ground. I did not know what they were, as I travelled along I came to the foot of a hill where I met a old man on a fine horse. I asked him where he came from, he said he came from the Great Spirit. I was glad to hear it, for I was lost, and he would put me right. I asked him what country that was, he said it belonged to the red men. I told him I wondered [?], for I saw no game; he said the red men had killed it all. I asked what that shining stuff was that I saw. He said it was what the white people called lead. I asked him if that was made for the Red people. He said no; I asked him what the Great Spirit did make for the red men. He said game, corn, and wild rice, but this he made for the white people. I asked him why he put that stuff on the land of the red men for? He said it was put there, that when the red men had killed all the game, they might sell the land to the whites and buy themselves clothes, and whatever else they wanted. I said that I was very glad that he told me, for I would tell my red children the first time I saw them. This is my dream. You see by this that the Great Spirit did not make the land for you, but for us & you must ask a good price for it. 

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6 The Winnebago Revolt, or Winnebago War was a short conflict in the summer of 1827 that had begun with the murder of a white family by Ho-Chunk warriors near Prairie du Chien. Settlers had been encroaching on Ho-Chunk territory. The US government had also been exacerbating anti-American sentiments among local Indigenous people by prohibiting Ho-Chunk lead sales to white traders. The US government sought to cut off this profitable trade because they worried that Ho-Chunks would be less amenable to ceding their lands in the future. For a more extensive history of Indigenous participation in mining and trade in this region see Lucy Eldersveld Murphy, *A Gathering of Rivers: Indians, Metis, and Mining in the Western Great Lakes, 1737-1832* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2000).

American federal agents, like the British before them, had long drawn on Indigenous linguistic and ceremonial conventions while negotiating with them—indeed they had to in order to exert any influence and project any power. But assuming prophetic language and the authority of dreams was a novel rhetorical technique for an American agent to employ. The Ho-Chunk, Sauk, Meskwaki, Potawatomi, Ojibwe, and Odawa representatives at the 1828 council undoubtedly found Cass’s speech unconvincing. For example, Little Priest, a Ho-Chunk leader responded to Cass’s claim, not by proffering a separate creation theory that placed whites and Indians in different lands but expressing doubt that the Great Spirit made any land for white settlers in the first place. Settlers had no land, only the abstract drawings on maps: “You think nothing of the land because the Great Spirit made you with paper in one hand & pen in the other; and altho’ he made us at the same time; he did not make us like you. We think of nothing but what is on the land.”

The resolve with which Little Priest and other Indigenous council-goers insisted that the Great Spirit intentionally placed them on the land around the Rock and Fever Rivers, made any assertion by Cass to the contrary seem ludicrous. But the contents of Cass’s dream narrative express much about the future Cass envisioned for the United States, and the gap between his understanding of Indigenous ontologies of time and his own. Importantly, Cass’s attitudes, decisions, and actions implementing Indian policy as Michigan’s Territorial governor (1813-1831) and later as Secretary of War under Andrew Jackson (1831-

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8 Little Priest began by acknowledging that there weren’t enough representatives present at the council to form a consensus decision over ceding the lead district in the first place, Ratified treaty no. 153, 30-31.
1836), were informed by a burgeoning American sense of time that may be called settler prophecy.⁹

Unlike Thomas Jefferson, who believed Indigenous North Americans could be assimilated and absorbed into the body politic, Cass was convinced that Indigenous people were destined to be stationary in their evolutionary position, already too degraded by the vices of modern civilization, and only existing in the present as an impediment to settler expansion. Jefferson and Cass also differed in their perceptions of Indigenous historical consciousness. Jefferson tacitly acknowledged the possibility of an Indigenous past and future and posed it as a liability to American interests. Recall his recommendation to William Henry Harrison that “for their interests and their tranquility it is best that [Indians] should see only the present [stat]e of their history.”¹⁰ Cass, on the other hand, believed that Indigenous North Americans had no such capacity to think across time as “[t]hey soon forget the past, improvidently disregard the future, and waste their thoughts, when they do think, upon the present.”¹¹ Because of their stubborn timelessness, and refusal to change—or even their inability to do so, Indians “could not, therefore, become an integral part of the people who began to press upon them, as time and circumstances have elsewhere generally united the conquerors and the conquered.” According to Cass it was in their best interest—and the humane thing to do—to remove Indians to a place far from American settlements where they could live out their lives in sobriety and slowly

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⁹ Though it had always existed in the United States as one possible approach, Indian removal began to eclipse assimilation as the dominant Indian policy and Cass would be one of its major proponents and later an architect of the Indian removal policy of the Jackson administration.

¹⁰ Esarey, Messages and Letters, 73.

disappear as a doomed race.\textsuperscript{12} Importantly, this sentimentality, this settler benevolence could exist hand-in-hand with the genocidal implications of Indigenous extermination: settlers could remain morally pure and innocent of wrongdoing while the course of history swept away the original inhabitants of the continent. Cass’s attitude was part of a more general shift from a cultural evolution model of difference to one of racial essentialism. This emerging understanding of race not only facilitated pro-Indian removal attitudes, but also shaped the way Americans thought of their future vis-à-vis the necessary past and present of disappearing Indians.

Cass believed that Indigenous peoples were by nature credulous and prone to superstition and viewed their practices of prophetic dreaming as expressions of these racial qualities. Cass’s parroting of Indigenous prophetic dream testimony was thus cynical and manipulative, and his cosmological allusions insincere. According to the dream vision he shared at the 1828 treaty council, the Great Spirit had informed him that lead was made for the “white people” and “game, corn, and wild rice” for the “Red people,” echoing the popular Indigenous theory of separate creation. But in a near contemporaneous essay for the \textit{North American Review}, Cass expressed a more Lockean view, maintaining that “Providence…has distributed these productions through the country with an impartial hand,” and that Indians had not made the most productive use of these natural gifts and therefore had no legitimate claim to the land.\textsuperscript{13} Yet Cass was also expressing, with great conviction, a settler temporal imaginary, a future in

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\textsuperscript{12} Cass’s thinking on this evolved during his years as Governor of Michigan Territory. He initially believed, along with Jefferson, that some Indigenous individuals could be assimilated as farmers and live among white Americans, but later became a stauncher advocate of wholesale removal. William Carl Klunder, \textit{Lewis Cass and the Politics of Moderation} (Kent, OH: Kent State University Press, 2013).


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which Indians, as part of the natural landscape, would fade with its passing, eclipsed by the progress of republican institutions, which would be augmented in a material way by expansion into new territories where wealth could be properly exploited. From the perspective of Americans like Cass, the Ho-Chunk, Sauk, Meskwaki, and others, held territorial claims only so far as they were attached to the game they hunted. Their only recourse would be to enter the market economy or perish, as a “barbarous people, depending for subsistence upon the scanty and precarious supplies furnished by the chase cannot live in contact with a civilized community.” For Cass, it was the inherent inferiority of Indigenous people as a race that led to poverty and social disorder, not the reality of the often catastrophic changes wrought by settler colonialism. It seemed lost on Cass that removing the lead region from Indigenous control through the 1828 treaty eliminated an important avenue of Indigenous market participation, as Ho-Chunk, Sauk, and Meskwaki peoples largely controlled the mines up to this point.

Cass’s convictions rested on assumptions that were misleading to say the least, and surprising considering the governor’s familiarity with the greater Lower Great Lakes region, its history and its peoples. As chapters one and two demonstrated, Indigenous peoples of the Ohio Valley and Lower Great Lakes had participated in a trans-regional market economy for decades, if not centuries, before Americans arrived in the region in any substantial number. They had cultivated immense corn crops, in excess of “mere subsistence” and practiced a complex matrix of relations not only with the nonhuman animals they hunted, but a myriad of other beings; a matrix of relations that constituted the land and the social and political systems that made them

14 Andrea Smalley draws attention to this connection in her book Wild By Nature.
16 Murphy, A Gathering of Rivers, Ch 4.
variously Shawnee, Miami, or Potawatomi.\(^\text{17}\) This region, encapsulating the northwestern reaches of American claims—which included most of Michigan Territory through the 1820s—was only sparsely settled by Americans, and the US government had almost no control over the powerful Indigenous polities that continued to exercise political self-determination within their territories. Some nations, like the Ojibwe, were even in the process of expanding their influence during this time.\(^\text{18}\)

Cass prided himself in having a superior knowledge of Indigenous language and cultural attributes and made it his project to collect a definitive body of data on the Indigenous peoples of the Lower Great Lakes as Michigan Territorial Governor. He would then draw on his reputation as a local Indian expert to legitimize his arguments for Indian removal across the Northwest and later, as a major proponent for removal as official policy as Secretary of War under Andrew Jackson. Although Cass’s intimate proximity to Indigenous peoples and his simultaneous dismissal of their continued presence may seem perplexing, Cass drew on a powerful future imaginary that prophesied civilizational progress as an expansionary American republicanism that would improve the land through cultivation and improve white men through democratic institutions (cultivation of the mind). This was a secular prophecy with a religious inflection and genealogy, legitimized either through natural law, or seen to be handed down from God, depending on individual conviction. This settler vision projected as inevitable the end of Indigenous presence either as assimilated citizens (Jefferson’s vision), or as literally dead

\(^{17}\) Sleeper-Smith, *Indigenous Prosperity and American Conquest.*  
\(^{18}\) Michael Witgen’s two books, *Infinity of Nations* and *Seeing Red* both emphasize the tenacity of Anishinaabeg power and influence well into the nineteenth century.
or dying out beyond the pale of American settlement (present in Jefferson but with greater emphasis in Cass’s vision).

Through his writings and speeches, Cass projected a vision of the future, not the reality on the ground, which continued to be one of Indigenous power and influence, especially in so-called “Michigan Territory,” which was imposed primarily on top of Anishinaabewaki (Anishinaabe homelands). The futures projected by men like Cass shaped the decisions American leaders made and had real material consequences, although American colonizing projects often resulted in unintended consequences including outright failure. The Wabash and Erie canal project, for example, which compelled the expulsion of Miami people from their lands along its planned course, quickly became too expensive to maintain, plagued by flooding, bank erosion, and muskrat activity. Settler projects that had been spurred on by the conviction that fulfillment of settler prophecy was inevitable often resulted in failure, but not before their implementation led to violence and upheaval for Indigenous people. The canal system, the very infrastructure which carried Miami out of their homelands in Indiana towards Kansas, was overshadowed by railroads by mid-century, swiftly forgotten as “one of the noblest works of man in the improvement of that great highway of nature…whose full moral and physical effects it were vain to seek, even to conjecture.

19 Witgen describes Cass’s tenure as governor as characterized by “a largely failed attempt to extend American sovereignty onto the peoples and territory of Anishinaabewaki,” and points out that by the early 1820s, only 8,675 Americans resided in Michigan Territory. At least 60,000 white male citizens were required for a territory to become a state. This is not to say that Indigenous polities further south in the Ohio Valley were not, in these same years, suffering under the constricting force of increased Euroamerican settlement and environmental change related to this demographic influx. Ultimately, I follow Witgen’s contention that a smooth, consistent process of settler colonialism did not inevitably and single-handedly work as a steamroller across the continent, and Indigenous peoples often had no reason to believe that the US would exercise power over their communities and Nations in the future. Ibid., 339, 348.

20 “General Cass’s Oration,” Niles’ National Register, 378. Railroads became dominant in the region soon after the Wabash and Erie Canal completion, drawing attention away from the canal’s failures. The canal was successful in
Historians have often exaggerated the popularity of expansionism in the Early Republic, but recent scholarship has complicated this picture, noting that while Euroamerican settlers often hungered for western lands, and acted on this hunger with or without the assistance of the federal government (and with or without any sort of nationalistic motivations), political leaders tended to be more circumspect, often arguing that territorial expansion would only weaken an already fragile federal unity. When federal officials did express expansionist desires, it was often as a rationale to buffer the US from other imperial powers. Thomas Jefferson was among those who shared this concern, and his expansionism was as much a strategy to counter French and Spanish imperial designs as it was to cultivate a nation of virtuous yeoman farmers. In the years following the Treaty of Ghent, which ended the War of 1812, Cass continued along this Jeffersonian vein, emphasizing the threat of foreign powers, especially as British loyalties persisted among many Indigenous communities around the Great Lakes. However, Cass also anticipated the more fervent and nationalist expansionism expressed by those like Thomas Hart Benton and John O’Sullivan later in the century. Cass saw territorial expansion as a fulfillment of historical progress, the spreading of democratic institutions and civilization across the land, largely through technological networks of road and canal. He championed local self-government and made the exploitation of natural resources and the expansion of transportation

infrastructure a priority and a cornerstone of local development. He was also a promoter of free land grants to white settlers, a relatively rare position to take at the time.\textsuperscript{21}

One way to understand Cass’s particular brand of American expansionism as a prophetic future imaginary is to frame it through recent accounts of both secularism and time in antebellum America. As postsecularist scholars have argued, secularism did not entail the eradication of religion from public life, but the regulation of “good” and “bad” expressions of it. It relegated religion to the private sphere, the domain of the feminine, the emotional, the intuitive, in contrast to the rational, dispassionate, masculine public sphere. Religion’s influence on the public sphere continued to play a complementary role, however, as it would temper the harsh instrumentality of the market and maintain a civil society steered by the virtues of “mild religion” or a “nonspecific Protestantism”—including those mainstream Protestant denominations that were not deemed overly excessive in their religiosity and gendered behavior—albeit a perpetually contested and fuzzy line.\textsuperscript{22} In this account, secularism was a modern metaphysics in that secularists considered themselves to have transcended the ideological and tapped into the underlying reality of things. Such men trafficked in universal truths, in the revealed essences of nature—what John Modern describes as “a reasonable approach to the ambient energies of modernity as legible, liberating, and potentially salvific.”\textsuperscript{23} This was the time of history, of transformation and improvement, guided by reason; a departure

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\textsuperscript{21} Klunder, \textit{Lewis Cass}, Ch. 2. For a detailed history of free land policy in Antebellum America as a “cost-effective method of conquest” and an “innovative governmental tool” to ensure white American frontiers, see Julius Wilm, \textit{Settlers as Conquerors: Free Land Policy in Antebellum America} (Stuttgart: Frnaz Steiner Verlag, 2018), 15.
\end{flushright}
from the past of timeless superstition, which was associated with the feminine, the primitive, the excessively emotional.

In this scheme, Indian prophets were characterized as religious fanatics. They were orientalised as “Mohamadans,” and “false” prophets, duping their credulous followers into doing their bidding. This was often imagined as fomenting a general race war against white people. Along with their followers they demonstrated the emotional excess attached to more charismatic evangelicals. Like Catholics, they were inherently un-republican in their adherence to a worldly spiritual leader—too materialistic in their supposed worship of objects they mistakenly invested with presence. And like Mormons, Indian prophets were seen to express queer sexualities beyond the monogamous heteropatriarchal private home, and subverted rational relationships to the land (such as exploiting it for resources, possessing it as transferrable private property). Indigenous visionaries, then, were imagined by secularist, republican-minded colonialists as exemplars of an anti-civilizational “bad religion.” Indian prophets were dangerous to the modern secular project especially, because they refused settler time and settler prophecies of inevitable technological progress and territorial expansion which were understood by their adherents to be natural processes, what James Monroe expressed in his First Annual Message as US president, as a “progress, which the rights of nature demand and nothing can prevent.”

Beyond serving as a racist stereotype or a symptom of anti-Indian racism, the Indian prophet posed an actual material threat to settler power in their perceived refusal of civilizational progress and their ability to manipulate the credulous minds of their followers.

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Indian prophets thus played a role in an emerging biopolitics that cast Indians as expendable, and unworthy of the benefits of citizenship as anti-republicans in that they were “incapable of appreciating the metaphysical order behind the surface of things” and their “deviat[ion] from an understanding of the real as a reasonable, coherent, and legible enterprise.” American colonialists believed that prophets like Tenskwatawa were thwarting federal civilization policy, encouraging their followers to remain shackled to timeless superstition. At worst, American settlers feared that Indian prophets were manipulating the supposedly base instincts that their followers possessed for savage, unprincipled warfare, which could be directed towards American settlers at the prophet’s whim. In the settler imaginary more generally, Indian prophets and their followers were against nature and the natural unfolding of time as an exceptional project of secular American republicanism.

As Michael Witgen, John Bowes, Joel Martin, Bethel Saler, Ginette Aley, and many others have emphasized, Indian policy, the on-the-ground actions of federal and state agents, the development of resources and infrastructure, the expansion of US settlements, and even the rise of professional history and anthropology were intertwined processes that were understood by many Americans as emerging through an adherence to anticipatory time. Indeed, “‘the gaze of development,’ drove government-appointed treaty commissioners and the interests they

25 Modern, Secularism in Antebellum America, 87. Modern, like other postsecularist scholars, point out that secularism was not in opposition to religion, nor did not signify the absence of religion, but regulated proper forms of religiosity.
26 This settler prophetic framework, which anticipated a certain future through observing technological developments and the terraforming of the land through agrarian improvements, became a preoccupation of American historians by the late 1820s. In their contemporary context of social disorder, technological momentum, and rabid political partisanship, these historians looked back towards the founding of the country for clues to explain the origins of the republic, project their visions of the future, but also to identify threats to the progress of the nation. Indigenous prophetic figures played a role in this national storytelling which defused and absorbed their own anti-colonial futurities and cast them as a threat to the national body as its constitutive outside.
represented at every council session with American Indians from the 1780s forward.”

This predestined future could unfold only on the condition that one must know how to identify signs of and accept historical progress, and then act on this knowledge to implement it. Cass, and other men of letters involved in the colonization of the Old Northwest, built an epistemological edifice that was self-referential, building up what Travis Wysote and Erin Morton call “white settler tautologies,” narratives that seem true by the “very nature of their repetition and their logical irrefutability under settler colonialism.”

As I sketched out in Chapters 1 and 2, this future was commonly articulated by American colonialists through the discourse of “improvement”. In practice, this was an attempt to transform heterogeneous, ecologically complex landscapes—essentially terraform them—into productive land in the Anglo pastoral tradition as parcels of private property held by individual patriarchs and their families. It would render landscapes divisible, their constitutive parts alienated into exploitable units: mines, farms, forests, lead, copper, corn, hogs, and timber. Improvements could also be technological: steam power—propelling boats and locomotives—would whisk these resources away and onto the market in the most efficient manner, the machines themselves serving as material signs of imminent prophetic fulfillment. As David Walker has pointed out, technology (especially railroad), morality, and religion were bundled together in the popular imagination. While these associations were often drawn on by specific religious groups for their own denominational ends, they were also “phrased often in nonspecifically Protestant terms of divine mechanics and the ideal correspondence between

27 “Gaze of development,” is Joel Martin quoted in Bowes, Land too Good, 51.
private reason and public systems.”  

For ordinary and elite settlers whose interests lay in western lands, this became a practice of *divinatory hermeneutics*, a practice of foretelling a future of white settler hegemony on the land through the providential signs of technological progress, which was seen as inevitable and natural but also under constant threat.

Progress and civilization would unfold into the future as more knowledge was revealed about natural systems, which would then be expressed through new technologies like steam engines and technological infrastructure like canal locks. This was not seen as simply subduing or controlling the natural environment but working in concert with it. “The wiser men become, the more they are disposed to follow the simplicity and the wisdom of the teaching of nature, and she has here found for the projectors of this great work a beautiful, easy, and secluded path quite through the line of the central mountains,” one traveler exclaimed about the canal about to connect Philadelphia with Pittsburgh. This project wasn’t seen as a work of human artifice triumphing over the natural world, but an improvement of the latter. Indeed, this traveler “can imagine no higher treat for the tourist and lover of nature.”

Republicanism would serve both as a handmaiden to, and effect of, this process. According to John Modern, American colonialists understood republicanism to be nothing less than “a systematic reflection of moral law. It was that which regulated reasoned exchange and

30 I am repurposing poet Selah Saterstrom’s concept of divinatory hermeneutics here. Saterstrom uses this concept in a much different way, as a mode of engagement and a narrative-building technique that anticipates emancipatory futures to come and is probably more in line with Nick Estes’s contention that "prophets and prophecies do not predict the future, nor are they mystical, ahistorical occurrences. They are simply diagnoses of the times in which we live, and visions of what might be done to get free." Selah Saterstrom, “Notes for The Divinatory as a Mode of Engagement,” *Bombay Gin* Vol. 38, No. 2: 157-166; Nick Estes, *Our History is the Future*, 14.
democratic dialogue. It was, for all intents and purposes, a mediating principle that guaranteed epistemological immediacy,” that is, access to the hidden systematicity of the world which was understood to be ultimately legible.  

This knowledge would then be disseminated through print networks and lyceums to cultivate and improve a rational citizenry. One writer for the Cincinnati-based *Western Monthly Review* expressed these connections thusly:

“Primary schools are the levers, that move the intellectual world; and canals, rail-ways and steam navigable waters, in the modern plans of municipal calculation and national improvement, are becoming what the former are to the *empire* of science and thought. The application of steam power, the making of canals and the construction of rail-ways, their utility, the changes they have already wrought, and are continually working on the face of society, these are the great features, by which the present age will be marked in history.”

Technological progress as a republican project was understood to be a process unprecedented in the world that would help bind together a nation threatened with the poison of partisanship. Canals were necessary because they create “that desirable state of mutual dependence and common feeling.” They were links in a “grand chain” that “will have no inconsiderable tendency to promote the happiness and prosperity of the country, and to secure the harmony and permanence of the Union,” in ways that were both material and spiritual.

The explosion of canal building after the War of 1812 encouraged Euroamerican and Black migration—free and coerced—to the far western territories claimed, but not yet fully

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34 “Canals,” *Western Monthly Review* (June 1827). Interestingly, the rhetoric of canals mirrored calls for a regional literature to bind the region to the nation as a whole; to cultivate national feeling while creating a unique regional literary culture.
controlled, by the US. This exacerbated conflict with Indigenous peoples who were rebuilding their communities yet again after the War of 1812. But a settler future—expressed through improvement, the transformation of the land through technological innovation, transportation and communication infrastructure, and scientific agriculture—was seemingly everywhere apparent. The same canal traveler quoted above concludes his article in a prophetic voice, exhorting his readers to “live on, if possible, et sis beatus, until these great works are completed,” to connect east and west markets, “[t]hen, if not before, the Atlantic people will begin to be instructed by their senses what has been going on in these wide, shaded and fertile valleys. Then they will have the elements of calculation before them, what our number and power are one day to become.”

From the 1820s onward, newspaper and journal writers filled their narratives with testimonials of this kind of future, glimmering just over the horizon. “Our Utopia should abound in canals,” one reviewer in the *Western Monthly Review* exclaimed.

Through these narratives, expansionist writers simultaneously reinforced the idea of history as natural progress and taught their readers, as fellow citizens of the republic, how to read the landscape for signs of this inevitable transformation. “We have seen our long lines of canal, weddin our interior lakes and inland seas with the ocean, not only discussed, but actually completed. We have seen many hundred miles of canal excavated, and in full navigation, within a few years, and as if by the magic production of enchantment,” a writer for the *Western Monthly Review* exclaimed optimistically.

Although Indigenous people rarely, if

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35 “A Tour (Concluded from our Last),” *Western Monthly Review* (Oct 1828).
37 “Topographical and other Memoranda,” “Sketch of the geographical rout of a great Railway,” *Western Monthly Review* (July 1829)
ever, appeared in these texts, the future imaginary projected on their pages necessitated their actual dispossession as a component of unimproved nature, and legitimized this dispossession as a necessary, if tragic step in fulfilling the American republican project as a civilization expanding through and into an increasingly networked future, a future which “may be delayed, but cannot be prevented.”

When these improvement projects failed, as they often did, they were understood to be nothing less than setbacks to the natural unfolding of history. When *Walk-in-the-Water*, the first steamboat to run from Buffalo, New York, to points along Lake Erie, Lake Huron, and Lake Michigan, and finally to Detroit, broke apart in a gale in the fall of 1821, the event was described by juror and land speculator James Doty in a letter to Henry Rowe Schoolcraft as “one of the greatest misfortunes which has ever befallen Michigan; for, in addition to its having deprived us of all certain and speedy communication with the civilized world, I am fearful it will greatly check the progress of emigration of improvement.” Though it is tempting to dismiss this as hyperbole, Doty was probably being sincere in his convictions: perceived setbacks to civilizational progress did appear to colonialists as nothing less than malfunctions in the natural order of time.

The practical and symbolic importance of this event bleed into each other. The wreck of *Walk-in-the-Water* spelled the breakdown of communication networks that were crucial to the functioning of modern republicanism, as the means by which public sentiment would be circulated, civic bonds strengthened, and ignorance banished. Communication networks were

39 That this was an official correspondence and not a sensational news story also makes intentional hyperbole unlikely. James Doty to Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, November 17, 1821, Carter, *Territorial Papers Vol. 11*, 175.
not only important to facilitate the exchange of knowledge but were themselves understood to be expressions of natural law made manifest through human agency. For Modern, steam technology was understood by antebellum Americans as a liberatory force, unlocking human potential, revealing a natural order, and freeing people from superstition and “priestcraft”.\textsuperscript{40} That the steamboat was named \textit{Walk-in-the-Water}, supposedly after a Wyandot chief, served not only as an index of the disappearance of original inhabitants of the Great Lakes and their replacement with new “natives” (white settlers), but also the supplanting of supposed Indigenous superstition with rational thought. In other words, that the seemingly miraculous way the boat appeared to “walk on the water” was not beyond reasonable explication. It was not actually a miracle but an expression of the epistemological accessibility of universal natural law expressed through technological innovation. Steam technology was both a harbinger and an expression of natural law and the unfolding of progressive time.\textsuperscript{41}

\textbf{3.2 An Indian Prophet in Settler Time}

In the years before Cass adopted an Indigenous prophetic voice at the 1828 treaty council, he began cultivating a relationship with an actual Indigenous prophet, Tenskwatawa. In doing so, Cass attempted to rein in a temporally dangerous figure of Indigenous futurity and harness him to a settler project that would usher in American civilization as secular progress to Michigan and the greater northwest. As the British threat began to wane (albeit slowly) in the years following the Treaty of Ghent, Cass turned more of his attention towards building and

\textsuperscript{40} Modern, \textit{Secularism}, 66-67.
\textsuperscript{41} A consideration of how the weather of the Great Lakes frequently resisted systematization in a way that has potentially thwarted colonialist projects, would fit in well with recent scholarship on the role of climate and weather in North American history.
strengthening republican institutions as well as the transportation and communications infrastructure that would ostensibly facilitate it. This required a more thorough possession and control of Indigenous land that had heretofore remained tenuous, especially around the Great Lakes and the more northern reaches of the Mississippi watershed. Perversely, Cass saw in Tenskwatawa one means to achieve this goal of fulfilling settler prophecy as both a preordained event and one necessitating human action.

Cass, who continued to be concerned about British aggression, especially through the latter’s cultivation of Indian allies, was at first tentative about reaching out to the Shawnee Prophet. At the 1815 Treaty of Spring Wells, which acted as a sort of vetting process for former British-allied Indigenous nations to pledge peace and support of the United States, Tenskwatawa requested that he be able to leave Canada and return permanently to the Wabash where he would re-establish Prophetstown. William Henry Harrison would not recognize Tenskwatawa’s authority as a leader and would not allow him to return to the confluence of the Wabash and the Tippecanoe, but was willing to compromise, suggesting that the Prophet come live amongst Catahecassa’s band of Mekoche Shawnees at Wapakoneta. Tenskwatawa refused and “[a]fter attending Some days,” the Prophet and his band “precipitately repassed to the Canadian Shore, before any thing was concluded, and under circumstances and in a manner indicative of determined hostility to the United States.”42 Tenskwatawa continued to be viewed with suspicion by American officials even as he had begun to sour toward his former British allies and express this antipathy quite publicly.

42 Governor Cass to the Secretary of War, April 24, 1816 in Carter, Territorial Papers Vol. 10, 629.
Many historians and biographers have claimed that Tenskwatawa’s influence had been irreparably damaged after Tippecanoe, and that Tecumseh’s death at the Battle of the Thames in the autumn of 1813 was the final blow to the Prophet’s authority. But in the years after the Treaty of Spring Wells, letters circulated relentlessly among Indian agents reporting that Tenskwatwa was resuming his project to confederate Indians and return again to the Tippecanoe River. And as they had done upon the first establishment of Prophetstown almost ten years prior, Miami leaders expressed outrage, complaining to the US government that “since December last, part of the Shawanoe Prophets band consisting of seven camps, had made a location on their lands on the Wabash, which settlement was decidedly contrary to the wish of the Miami Nation.” These groups were awaiting Tenskwatawa’s return from Canada and rekindled the sacred fire in preparation, “determined not to put it out at the risk of our lives!” Fort Wayne Indian agent George Turner anticipated Tenskwatawa’s followers being joined in the spring by “eight hundred well tried warriors composed of Ioh-ways, Milomanies, Chippaways, and Wynebagoes, who are determined to possess this country or perish in the attempt.” US Indian agents appeared perturbed and sympathetic to the Miami’s concerns but stressed a peaceful resolution and “requesting [Tenskwatawa’s band] to leave their soil in peace and friendship, and let it not be said again that their ground has been stained with unhallowed blood.”

43 The agitation expressed by Miami leaders came from two sources. At the original establishment of Prophetstown, Potawatomi leader Main Poc had invited Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh to settle on the Wabash in defiance of Miami authority to determine land use and occupation. By the end of the War of 1812, which had embroiled much of Miami lands in violence, Miami leaders were concerned that the reestablishment of Prophetstown would lead to more of the same, that “as much as the Tomhawk [sic] has recently been buryed [sic] by all parties, they felt it their duty to surpass all means or efforts that might tend to produce a similar [sic] distressing event!” The Miami then sent a speech to Tenskwatawa expressing “that least a second kindling of your fire should be the cause of another difference between our Nation and the Seventeen fires, it is our earnest
followers and aroused consternation among American agents and Miami leadership alike. But he remained in exile outside Fort Malden, near Amherstburg, where he continued to maintain a tenuous relationship with Canadian officials, who were proving to be ungenerous fathers to Tenskwatawa’s band.\textsuperscript{44}

In March 1816, Tenskwatawa appealed to Cass in person for permission to cross into Michigan to establish a village. Travelling to Detroit with a retinue of men, women, and children, he dressed in his finest clothing, demonstrating that he continued to project power and authority as a leader. “Over a calico shirt and leather leggings he wore a brown coat, whose right sleeve trailed tassels of painted horsehair. He adorned each arm with a silver clasp and two silver bracelets, while a large silver gorget hung around his neck and heavy silver rings dangled from his earlobes. His face was painted in red and black, and a large crest of painted feathers was attached to his turban.” Tenskwatawa continued to hold out hope that his people would return to the Wabash and establish his “house of peace,” proclaiming to Cass, “My eye is now upon the place where the sun sets! It is the place which my old chiefs have pointed out, the Wabash; it is there I wish to go.”\textsuperscript{45} However, in possible anticipation that Cass would rebuff his solicitation that your fire will be put out, and that you leave our soil unpolluted.” William Turner to George Graham, April 3, 1817, Shawnee Box 8028, Folder 1, Item 022, GLOVE.

\textsuperscript{44} Tenskwatawa and his band survived several harrowing winters of near starvation in Canada. They continued to receive supplies from the British but because they were no longer needed as allies, this support was paltry. American officials, on the other hand, were concerned that the distribution of presents by British agents at Malden fomenting anti-American sentiment, both in the form of a pro-British conspiracy and of “reviving the plans and policy of Tecumseh and uniting them in a general confederacy.” American officials were also concerned that Indigenous people were destabilizing frontiers of settlement, as Indigenous people were allegedly committing depredations on white settlements as they passed back and forth across the Canadian border. In other words, the threat of British and Indigenous power did not disappear with the end of the War of 1812. See for example, Lewis Cass to John Calhoun, Aug 3, 1819 in Schoolcraft, Narrative, 287-288; Lewis Cass to John Calhoun, Oct 8, 1819, ibid, 291-292; Edmunds, The Shawnee Prophet, ch 7; Willig, Restoring the Chain of Friendship, epilogue.

\textsuperscript{45} Cass was also appalled at this request as it was the site of a major defeat for Americans during the War of 1812. Quote in Edmunds, Shawnee Prophet, 158.
request, Tenskwatawa instead asked Cass for permission to establish a temporary village on the Raisin River in southern Michigan. Tenskwatawa’s request for return was part of an effort to recuperate from wartime losses and strengthen his community. Cass did not understand it this way. Dismissive of Indigenous historical consciousness and political authority, Cass had instead suspected Tenskwatawa’s request as part of a British design, as “the principal instrument in their hands for acquiring and preserving their influence over the Indians.”46 In the years to come however, Cass began to see the Prophet as his own conduit to manipulate supposedly credulous Indians within his jurisdiction as Superintendent of Indian affairs.

Indeed, by the 1820s, Cass was changing his mind about the threat that Tenskwatawa posed as a British ally and architect of a pan-Indigenous anti-American confederacy. This coincided with Tenskwatawa’s disillusionment with British officials after the War of 1812. The Prophet complained that local agent John Askin had been selling goods earmarked for his village to white settlers. This trust was further eroded after the appointment of George Ironside, Tenskwatawa’s relative by marriage, to replace Askin upon his death in 1819. Expecting that Ironside, through his kinship responsibilities, would help augment his own prestige as a leader, Tenskwatawa was instead offended by Ironside’s lack of generosity and disappointed at the perpetuation of the corruption that had characterized Askin’s tenure. At the same time, the white population in this region of Upper Canada, around Amherstburg and Fort Malden—most of them uninvited squatters on unceded land—had doubled between 1815 and 1825. After 1821, Tenskwatawa refused to meet with British Indian agents.47

In this break between Tenskwatawa and the British Indian agency Cass recognized an opportunity. The Governor began to take “great pains to cultivate Tenskwatawa’s friendship,” now convinced that the latter was “radically cured, if we may credit his own declarations, of his Anglo-mania.” Cass reflected the view of the federal government following the Treaty of Ghent (and remaining central to US Indian policy thereafter), that Indians should be managed through tribal governments loyal to the United States on lands set aside for them upon which their activities could be monitored, “so that we might know to whom we could look in the event of any difficulties.” In other words, Indigenous governance should be centralized following the terms laid out by the US, and their mobility constrained to prevent any future Indian confederation or collusion with the British. Cass was also adamant about the utility of centralizing the federal administration of Indian affairs, that “Indian Agencies established in the Same Country are unified by a general Superintending power,” to enhance the flow of intelligence between agents over “the designs and movements of the Indians, and information of important events passing in the Indian Country would not as they now frequently do post reach us through the medium of a newspaper by means of letters published by the Agents.” Traders could be more properly vetted before granted licenses, and a more rational “System of treating the Indians could be adopted and enforced.”

Cass reiterated that should Tenskwatawa return, he must make a home with Catahecassa and the Mekoche Shawnee at Wapakoneta and discontinue his political strategy of pan-Indigenous organizing and agree to recognize the village autonomy of Kishpoko and Pekowi

49 Cass to Crawford, April 26, 1816, Shawnee Box 8027, Folder 05, Item 022, GLOVE.
Shawnees. Catahecassa himself echoed this federal strategy in rhetoric and action, though he did so for his own political purposes, primarily to remain in his homeland at Wapakoneta. When Tenskwatawa’s followers met at Prophetstown in 1815, Catahecassa and other allied leaders warned US officials of their presence on the Wabash. Catahecassa assured the US that “The Gold Chain that ties our hands [the Mekoche Shawnee and the United States] is bright never was stain nor broke we have it Safe with us.” With such declarations, Catahecassa and other allied leaders reminded the US of their commitment to aid them in times of scarcity, a commitment first made by Jefferson who subsequently “put our hand in to the present President hand, saying he would take care of us.” The allied Mekoche chiefs also continued to assert authority over all Shawnee divisions and, in a nod to Tenskwatawa’s band, implored that all Shawnee should “come back to their own people and settle in a place Near of us that we might look over their behavior.”

   Tenskwatawa’s residence at Wapakoneta would make him easier to surveil. But Cass, who had been developing an Indian removal strategy since at least 1818, also hoped that should Tenskwatawa settle among the Catahecassa’s Wapakoneta Shawnee his influence could be harnessed to break Catahecassa’s staunch anti-removal stance. This would be just one component of a broader project. In an early attempt to govern through data, Cass was also interested in systematically collecting ethnographic and linguistic information about Indigenous nations around the region in order to manage disputes between Indigenous polities, maintain more favorable diplomatic relations between Indigenous polities and the US, and to “arrest their

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50 Shawnee Chiefs Speech to the Secretary of War, December 29, 1815, Box 8027, Folder 05, Item 050, GLOVE; Catahecassa quoted in Sami Lakomäki, Gathering Together, 152 (“come back to their own people”).
51 For an early articulation of Cass’s removal policy, see Cass to Johnston, Jan. 1, 1818, Shawnee Box 8029, File 3, GLOVE.
fate” as people supposedly on the road to extinction. He circulated questionnaires to all traders and Indian agents in the region and tasked his secretary and long-time confidant Charles Christopher Trowbridge with collecting ethnographic materials from Miami, Wyandot, and Shawnee informants. Cass would also use this data to articulate a highly pessimistic view regarding the possibility of civilizing Indians by transforming them into citizens of the republic, a view he would elaborate in his Indian removal arguments in years to come. In a long treatise in the *North American Review*, Cass disparaged the philological claims of Moravian missionary John Heckewelder and Franco-American scholar Perter S. Du Ponceau as (in the words of historian Sean Harvey) “little more than falsely philanthropic fiction,” and that, according to his own voluminous research, Indigenous North American languages expressed an inferior range of emotion and complexity, and therefore reflected an inferior intellectual capacity, lack of reason, and absence of historical consciousness.

Cass leveraged his relationship with Tenskwatawa to bolster the legitimacy of these claims. He was sure to let readers know that sitting next to him as he penned his words was Tenskwatawa himself, as well as Tecumseh’s son who had been acting as Tenskwatawa’s translator. Since the summer of the year 1824, Tenskwatawa had been travelling to Detroit to meet with Cass and Trowbridge who aimed to collect Shawnee origin stories, linguistic data,

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cultural practices, and other ethnographic data. Cass wined and dined Tenskwatawa, offering him food, lodging, and cash, as well as a “handsome white gelding, equipped with a new saddle and bridle.” In December of 1824, Tenskwatawa sat for portrait artist James Otto Lewis. The painting was subsequently sent to Washington and used by Charles Bird King for his own rendition. The lithograph form of King’s painting was published as part of Thomas L. McKenney and James Hall’s History of the Indian Tribes of North America and became one of the most reproduced images of the Prophet. Tenskwatawa had his own reasons for cultivating a relationship with Cass, utilizing this connection to negotiate his return to the Ohio Valley from Canada and establish a new village in the west.

Figure 1.1

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57 This would become published as Vernon Kinietz and Erminie W. Voegelin, Shawanese Traditions: C.C. Trowbridge’s Account (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1939). This volume would become another major source for historians and biographers of Tenskwatawa, Tecumseh, and the Shawnee people.

Cass underestimated, if not entirely misunderstood the very old political disputes that had simply resumed among Shawnee leaders and intellectuals after the end of the War of 1812. These were disputes over the location of political authority, the organization of villages, and strategies to maintain autonomy under colonial pressures from the United States. The Mekoches at Wapakoneta believed that they could exist as a sovereign nation within US political boundaries, that they could re-strengthen their economy through agriculture and market participation on their own terms, and that they should be the political center of a unified
Shawnee nation. Tenskwatawa and many of the younger leaders, as well as leaders from other Shawnee divisions, continued to advocate for a decentralized political system that emphasized village autonomy, largely along division and clan lines. Ultimately, and unsurprisingly, Tenskwatawa did not convince a large number of Mekoche Shawnee to join him west of the Mississippi, but did assemble a band of over 270 predominantly Kishpoko and Pekowi Shawnee who agreed to help him establish a new village free from American settler violence.

Tenskwatawa’s reasons for establishing a new village on the Kansas River had little to do with Cass’s project of Indian removal. But for Cass, the departure of the Prophet and his band to Indian territory was a success, albeit a limited one.

3.3 A Shawnee Prophet in Indigenous Time

When Tenskwatawa’s band of Shawnee departed Wapakoneta in the early fall of 1826, they had no idea how arduous their journey would become. Piqua Indian agent John Johnston had appointed two agents, Joseph Park and William Broderick, to lead the party west, but instead of crossing the more open prairies across northern Indiana (perhaps to avoid

59 Lakomäki stresses the ways in which Catahecassa and other Mekoche leaders defied the civilization project of Quaker missionaries and the federal government even as they took up market agriculture. Lakomäki, Gathering Together, 153-156.

60 At this time, Tenskwatawa seems to have moved away from his focus on assembling a pan-Indigenous or pan-ethnic village and back to a focus on leading his own band of Kishpoko and Pekowi Shawnee. This might have been a result of his failure to return to the Wabash to meet his followers who had assembled there to await his return in the fall/winter of 1816. Presumably, and plausibly, Tenskwatawa feared death at the hands of American agents or settlers if he crossed the border at this time. Some historians have flagged this as the death knell to Tenskwatawa’s power, but his influence may have simply shifted to those in his own Shawnee division, where he remained a powerful man until his death.

61 Shortly before Tenskwatawa’s migration, in 1825, Lewiston Shawnee leader Quitewepea also led a band of Shawnee and Senecas to the Missouri-Arkansas borderlands to avoid white settler encroachment. While both leaders wanted to assert autonomy over Mekoche leadership, Quitewepea was more interested in adopting European-style market agriculture. Lakomäki, Gathering Together, 162.
Tenskwatawa’s desired location at the old site of Prophetstown), the two men chose a much more difficult route over the broken and heavily forested terrain of the White River country, towards Vincennes. In the two months it took them to travel less than 300 miles, they ran out of provisions and funds. Park and Broderick, who were paid per diem, found themselves at the end of their contract and simply deserted the Shawnees. By December, Tenskwatawa’s band were on their own, impoverished and selling clothes for bacon and vegetables. They reached Kaskaskia in the last week of the year, where they were received by Illinois lieutenant governor Pierre Menard, who found their situation “distressing in the extreme.” Menard had no funds available for the Shawnee but provided what he could: blankets, blacksmiths to fix guns and axes, cornmeal, pork, salt, and tobacco. In no condition to continue travel across the Mississippi, which was choked with ice, the Shawnees took Menard’s advice to winter at the “Big Bottom” south of Kaskaskia where forage was available for their horses and presumably, far enough away from the US town so that they would not perturb or be harassed by settlers.62

In April of 1827, in the context of growing unrest and low morale in the Kaskaskia encampment (a growing faction wanted to return to Ohio), Tenskwatawa gave a speech to visiting Missouri Indian agent Richard Graham, who was sent to inspect the conditions of the emigrating Shawnee. Tenskwatawa was probably speaking both to fellow Shawnees and to the

62 The white gelding gifted to Tenskwatawa by Gov. Cass perished during this harsh winter. Menard to Clark, Feb. 22, 1827, M234, roll 748; Edmunds, The Shawnee Prophet, 174-175. One newspaper article from that spring suggests that settlers weren’t aware of the Prophet’s proximity to Kaskaskia until winter’s end, and worried that giving the Prophet a material base would ignite a new Indian confederacy: “He has yet great influence over the minds of this tribe, and though he has promised to behave himself and be true to this Government, it may be apprehended, in the new theatre on which he is now to be placed, with all his faculties yet apparently unimpaired, and feeling, as he must, the same hostility to us he formerly entertained, that with the materials there placed to his hand, he will work out something by the assistance of which he can obtain his former unbounded influence, and, when opportunity may offer, to give it same direction,” “Kaskaskia, Illinois, April 4,” New York Spectator, May 4, 1827.
federal government, but implicated the latter, particularly agent Johnston, for dishonoring promises that Shawnee resettlement would be fully supported by the US federal government. Tenskwatawa had extended his trust—despite years of evidence that leaders of the US were incapable of being good fathers. At the same time, there was no reason for Tenskwatawa to believe that he could not participate in rebuilding a world for his people—Shawnees and other Algonquian peoples had done so multiple times since contact with European colonizers, traders, and explorers, often flourishing for generations before their worlds were upended again. Importantly, Tenskwatawa’s speech demonstrates the extent to which Tenskwatawa did not perceive Shawnee emigration to the Kansas River as a simple “removal,” but a conscious choice made under constraining circumstances, and a decision made on the condition that the US would assist his band of Shawnees become a strong people again—on Shawnee terms.

Tenskwatawa did not use a passive voice in his speech to Graham, naming the individuals responsible for the deplorable condition of the emigrating Shawnees. He listed the promises the Secretary of War made through Johnston. He reminded his audience that the former “wished to give them Lands that would be always their own, where they would never be molested and would live on it forever & grow to be a big & happy nation.” He listed all the items and quantities promised to the travelers by Johnston before they departed from Wapakoneta: “See how poor we are. It is Johnson’s [sic] fault; if we had enough to eat: Our Clothes would not have been sold.” He also mentioned the annuity promised to the band, as well as compensation for the properties they had left in Ohio. Tenskwatawa didn’t stop with an

63 Federal government agents themselves were surprised at the Prophet’s arrival in Illinois, suggesting that the federal government did not take their commitments to Indigenous leaders seriously enough to circulate information about their relocation and its itinerary.
excoriation of Johnston and the federal government’s reneging of their promises to support the westward emigration, he also pushed back on the idea held by many American colonialists that Indians were in dire straits because of their own inferior position in history and the course of civilization. Several times during the speech, Tenskwatawa pointed out how American settlers dispossessed Ohio Valley Indigenous peoples of their lands and kin. “[Johnston] said that the Secty of War wrote to him that the Indians were poor & miserable & in want of every thing. And what made them so? It was because they were surrounded by Whites & they were the cause of it.” He reminded Graham and other American agents that they had an obligation to Shawnees and other Indigenous peoples to make restitutions for settler violence.  

Tenskwatwa pursued “removal” as a strategy to ensure the strength and political self-determination of his people into the future. This differed both from settler future imaginaries and the future imaginaries of other Indigenous peoples, including other Shawnees. While Cass believed Indians were inevitably fading away, and that removal would protect the crumbling remnants of a dying race, Tenskwatwa saw emigration to the Kansas River as an unfortunate but necessary move—perhaps even a move filled with hope. Though he could not re-establish a new Prophetstown on the Wabash at the time, he believed that a homeland away from white settlements would provide an environment in which Shawnee people could exercise their own political authority, regain strength, “and grow again a great Nation.” He trusted that US

64 “Copy of Talk of Emigrating Shawnees to R. Graham,” April 2, 1827, M234, Roll 300, RG75, NARA.
65 Most of the Wapakoneta area Shawnees, made up predominantly of Mekoche Shawnees and lead by Catahecass remained staunchly opposed to moving and continued to envision a centralized Shawnee nation in Ohio, until they were finally pressured into removing to Indian Territory after Catahecassa’s death in 1831. They had also established relatively good relations with many of their settler farmer neighbors in contrast to Tenskwatawa who envisioned an Indigenous world separated from white settlements. See Lakomäki, Gathering Together.
66 “Copy of Talk of Emigrating Shawnees to R. Graham,” April 2, 1827, M234, Roll 300, RG75, NARA.
government officials shared this sentiment and held them accountable when they did not back
up their promises in material ways. Through the course of their relationship, Cass and
Tenskwatawa drew out of each other future imaginaries that were distinct and incommensurable
from each other, yet each man saw in the other a means to fulfill their respective visions.

3.4 Regionalism, Republicanism, and False Prophets

While Tenskwatawa and his people made their long and arduous journey to the Kansas
River and the Shawnee of Ohio continued to sustain pressure by Indian agents and American
settlers to remove west of the Mississippi, a particular regional literature began to emerge
dedicated to the historical study and cultural improvement of the Old Northwest not only as a
region, but also as part of an unfolding history of national progress. Writers and promoters of
this literature were frequently the same individuals who argued for the removal of Ohio Valley
Indigenous peoples. This new generation of scholars and writers was, in the words of
intellectual historian Dorothy Ross, “anxious about its ability to sustain the virtuous republic of
the founders,” but also optimistic about the ability for America to “perpetually renew their
virtue,” through improving on nature and the cause of liberty in the west. This involved “a new
burst of evangelical piety and nationalism that sealed America’s millennial identity.”67 This was
expressed through new forms of writing history-as-prologue to a future of continual progress
materially sustained in perpetuity through an endless supply of land. These scholars of history

67 Dorothy Ross, “Historical Consciousness in Nineteenth-Century America,” American Historical Review 89, No.
time, specifically the future, was at least as important as space in the national imaginary. Here he is pushing back
on the emphasis on land that has preoccupied Americanists across various disciplines and subfields since Frederick
Jackson Turner.
noted changes in the land, especially the radical transformations wrought by canal-building and steam-powered transportation. Biographies and histories involving Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh began to appear before the former’s death in 1836 and situated the United States as a republic of the future, using Indians as markers of antiquity, not only as impediments to, and/or measures of, American progress, but also as proto-republican precursors to an American empire.

The Tecumseh/Tenskwatawa dyad reflected national conversations about secularism, republicanism, and settler futurity as the nation expanded into the trans-Appalachian West. In this formulation, Tecumseh was imagined as a virtuous statesman and warrior, while Tenskwatawa represented Indigenous despotism, irrationality, and superstition. The future imaginary expressed by Tenskwatawa toward his people and explained by him and other Indigenous leaders to US officials was absorbed into a settler temporal frame that reinterpreted this future imaginary as stubborn resistance to the progressive time of settler civilization which foresaw a future without Indians. For settler colonialists, Tenskwatawa activated the credulity-prone minds of his fellow Indians, arresting their civilizational advancement, and legitimizing their removal and dispossession. In other cases, writers telling the story of Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh told stories that didn’t really have to do with Indians at all, but with the perils of republican governance as it spread over the land, toward projected new frontiers.

Moses Dawson was an Irish political writer and early member of the United Irishmen who had moved to Cincinnati in the 1820s. His writing reflected the idea that the settlement of the trans-Appalachian West was a grand world-historical experiment in republican civilization,
endowed by its natural gifts to be an “asylum for mankind”. He involved himself in Lancasterian school reform and was the editor and later owner of the *Cincinnati Advertiser*. In 1825 he published the first book-length work that detailed the history of the early nineteenth-century Ohio Valley with Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa at the center. Dawson’s book, *The Historical Narrative of the Civil and Military Services of Major-General William H. Harrison, and a Vindication of his Character and Conduct as a Statesman, a Citizen, and a Soldier. With a detail of his negotiations and wars with the Indians, until the final overthrow of the celebrated Chief Tecumseh and his brother The Prophet*, appeared in 1824, the year Cass and Trowbridge began meeting with Tenskwatawa in Detroit. The book’s primary purpose was, according to Dawson’s appeal to subscribers, to fulfill the need for “open and free discussion on the character and conduct of their public functionaries.” “One of the glorious privileges of Republicans,” Dawson argued, was the ability to vet their leaders and historical figures as worthy of their stations as “the character of a meritorious public servant is the property of the people and should by them be held sacred.” Dawson’s publication exemplifies how the print media would contribute to this reasoned evaluation. Dawson’s Harrison is depicted as following a “liberal and humane policy towards the Indians,” demonstrated by his conduct towards Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa. Dawson provides ample primary documents drawn largely from Harrison’s papers, not only to provide evidence to support his claims, but to assemble the

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relevant documentation to readers who could then make their own evaluation of Harrison’s true
correct themselves.

A great deal of Dawson’s text uses the Shawnee brothers as foils for the emergence of
Harrison as a virtuous republican leader. Like most accounts that would follow throughout the
nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the real villains were a combination force of British agents
spreading anti-American sentiment among Indians from their perch above the Great Lakes, and
“bad whites,”—often characterized by American officials as “white savages”—who made
securing legal jurisdiction over US territorial claims difficult or impossible. Indians would not
respect US jurisdiction when the federal government seemed impotent in bringing white men to
justice for settler-on-Indigenous violence.70 In Dawson’s estimation, Tenskwatawa and
Tecumseh exploited the grievances of Indians stirred by anti-American British and
unscrupulous frontiersmen. Dawson’s Tenskwatawa is characterized as a master manipulator
and his Indigenous followers as credulous disciples, not only because their supposed racial
inferiority made them naturally so, but because they had been “deluded” and “had no
opportunity of testing the truth of those fabulous reports” of the Prophet’s miracles. In his
treatment of the 1806 Lenape “witch trials,” Dawson includes the entire speech Harrison
delivered to the perpetrators (which was published again in its entirety in a review of Dawson’s
book in the Western Monthly Review) as demonstrating Harrison’s role as a light of reason,
imploring the Lenape to “[e]xamine him [the Prophet]. Is he more wise or virtuous than you are

70 Dawson draws on accounts of the murder of a Lenape man named James Red near Vincennes in 1807. Harrison
expresses this anxiety in his papers relating to this and other incidences of settler violence. Dawson calls Red a
“savage, capable of any atrocity.” Dawson, Historical Narrative, 86
yourselves, that he should be selected to convey to you the orders of your God?" 71 Presumably, had the Lenape had available to them a book-length vindication of Tenskwatawa, they could make up their own mind about the veracity of his claims.

Most intriguingly, Dawson stories the swift spread of “delusions” perpetuated by the Shawnee brothers as a cautionary tale about the dangers of tyranny, particularly the tyranny of the British government. He admits that a primary reason why Indigenous peoples of the Ohio Valley and Great Lakes were susceptible to Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa’s project to form a pan-Indian confederacy against the US was because of their long absorption into a British fur trade in decline and, in a remarkable contextualization, “had felt their full share of the misfortunes which the European war had brought upon the greater part of the world.” He suggests that even “[white settler] men of education, talents, and intelligence” could be “thus deceived,” and had been deceived by the British Government at the time of the Revolution, when the latter had convinced colonists that “the embarrassments the country labored under, had grown out of the measures of its [own] government, rather than from the unjust and iniquitous decrees of the British Government.” In this case, Dawson concludes, “it could not be wondered at, that ignorant half starved savages were seduced by those who so well understood the arts of deception.” 72 White savages, Indian savages, deceived Indians, deceived Americans, British despotism and American freedom. Dawson’s book is really a parable about the dangers of tyranny and the triumph of republican virtue—the importance of epistemological immediacy.

71 Harrison quoted in Dawson, Historical Narrative, 84. The speech by Harrison to the Lenape is also found in Esarey, Messages and Letters, 182-184. Review of Historical Narrative in The Western Monthly Review Vol. 1, No. 9 (January 1828). The reviewer also depicts Tecumseh as a proto-republican in that he rose from a lowly station by his talents through his “genius, eloquence, courage, and policy.”

72 Dawson, Historical Narrative, 142.
and the circulation of knowledge as politically efficacious to a future American civilization. Despite their shared vulnerability to the delusions of tyrants, however, Indians, in Dawson’s estimation, were inherently more susceptible than Americans to irrationality, as “even the gallant Tecumseh himself, had been more acted upon by the gleaming and clangor of arms…than by the arguments of the Governor [Harrison].”

That Indians were more susceptible to superstition was a very common idea held by American colonialists in the nineteenth century, but opinions differed on whether this was an inherent trait, something learned, or a combination of both. Cass appeared to lean towards the theory that Indian superstition was a learned trait and that Indigenous peoples tended to encourage it through their cultural institutions. Tenskwatawa was an example par excellence of its malign extent, as a “fanatic who has ‘seen visions and dreamed dreams.’” But while “This practical conquest of the imagination over the reason is not very rare, even in civilized life,” the cultural (and as I’ve argued, political and legal) practice of systematic dream visioning “is a singular feature in the system of Indian education by which its occurrence is encouraged and promoted.” For Cass, Tenskwatawa believed what he said to his followers: “It is probably, that the opinions of the Shawnee Prophet, in mature age, were materially affected by this hallucination, and that when he began his career, he was as much the dupe of his own feelings, as were any of his hearers.”

73 Dawson, Historical Narrative, 194. In contrast to Tecumseh, “The prophet was a very different character; he was arrogant and audacious, but was deficient in talent, judgement, and firmness,” Ibid., 186. Importantly, Dawson helps to inaugurate a narrative placing Tecumseh ahead of the Prophet in influence, even as the primary sources he cites often don’t mention Tecumseh by name, often referring to him only as the “Prophet’s brother,” if he is mentioned at all before the War of 1812.

Virginia lawyer James Strange French disagreed that Tenskwatawa “believed the doctrines he professed and inculcated,” and portrays the Prophet in his two-volume hybrid of historical narrative and romantic fiction, as the mastermind behind a scheme to exploit Ohio Valley Indigenous peoples’ real grievances—which were “like a secret volcano, consuming itself with its own fires, and accumulating the power to burst forth”—and unite them into a confederacy against Americans, the latter of whom were inevitably filling up their homelands, triumphantly bringing progress and improvement but tragically ignoring treaty responsibilities and perpetrating unnecessary violence. Elkswatawa; or, The Prophet of the West, which was written in the last years of Tenskwatawa’s life (yet makes no mention of his presence on the Kansas River), echoes Dawson’s construction of the Shawnee brothers as a study of republicanism in a natural state as well as an attempt to situate Indigenous North Americans as part of an inherited antiquity for the settler nation, akin to Greece or Rome “in their best estate, before luxury had paved the way for despotism.” As in other texts, French depicts Tecumseh as “one of nature’s nobles,” a patriot, and a virtuous warrior and Tenskwatawa as a loner, despot, and reactionary, “cowardly, cruel, and treacherous.”

In an imagined dialogue between the Shawnee brothers, French envisions Tenskwatawa sharing his secret plans in a meeting with Tecumseh in which the Prophet convinces Tecumseh that “Superstition must do our work…and by it we must master them [the other Indians].

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75 Ibid., 99.
76 The fictional component is driven by a classic captivity narrative of a young, virginal white woman, her Virginian beau who is seeking his fortune in the West and is attempting her rescue with the help of a colorful frontiersman and later the enlisted help of an Indigenous woman with ties to the Shawnee brothers, James Strange French, Elkswatawa; or, The Prophet of the West: A Tale of the Frontier, Vol. 1 (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1836), 18.
77 French, Elkswatawa, Vol 1, vi.
78 Ibid., Vol 2, 229.
must excite their fears. We must seem to work miracles. We must see into the future, and the red men must be troubled until they say, ‘behold the agents of the Great Spirit!’ When we have done this, we lead them as we please.” Tenskwatawa then convinces Tecumseh that the latter should take on the persona of the wise leader since his “words flow sweet as honey. But you cannot dissemble. I can.” Tecumseh’s honesty of feeling, then, was a liability to Tenskwatawa’s plans to unite Indians across nation and tribal division, but the former’s eloquence would do the work of disseminating the Prophet’s message. Tenskwatawa’s allure was produced not “by a fanatic believing what he preached, and led on by a bigoted zeal; but by one who knew that it must be founded in deception, and supported by trick, cunning, and treachery…a mastery over the uncultivated minds of the aborigines.” 79

In a sense, French was more accurate than other nineteenth-century American writers in placing Tenskwatawa at the intellectual center of the Shawnee brother’s pan-Indigenous project, but like others, the author used the story as an index of national time: an inevitable march of progress, superseding both European stagnation and Indigenous timelessness. It was also a cautionary tale, reminding readers of the fragility of republican virtue, and threats to it by individuals with manipulative designs. In both cases, Tenskwatawa’s anti-colonial intellectual ferment was defused and rechanneled into visions of American settler futurity superimposed upon Indigenous homelands. This was a self-evident truth with which French had breathlessly prefaced his book. The quote below is but a small sample:

“[I]ooking through the vista of futurity, it required no seer to foretell, that the Valley of the Mississippi, which, from its physical appearance, may well be regarded as the cradle of our

79 French, Elkswatawa, 194-199, 203.
continent, was soon destined to become the chosen home of the exile from every clime, and to contain a population, brave, hardy, and industrious; not one to whom ignoble thoughts were boon companions, but a people elevated in sentiment by the immunities received under a Republican government, and stimulated to acts of noble daring and enterprise, by the reflection, that their fortunes were cast in a land where nature had been more lavish of her bounties, than in any other part of the world.”

French’s book garnered mixed reviews. One called it “crude and irregular,” others pointed to its “air of rawness” and its “rather constrained style,” that at least three reviews attributed to the Virginian’s status as a younger, less experienced writer. A twenty-year-old woman from South Carolina wrote in her diary that Elkswatawa suffered from its messy hybridity of fictional romance and historical narrative concluding that “the union of truth with fiction never did agree; for the one is sure to be weaken’d & the other spoil’d—thus our author has the wing of his imagination chained to the car of circumstances, and his strength is spent in the idle flappings of a discontented prisoner.” She nevertheless recommended it. But in general, the critical chorus found little fault with Elkswatawa’s historical content. For example, Edgar Allen Poe commented that, while the romance plot was clichéd, and the character of the heroine offensively one-dimensional, that, “as forming a portion of our Indian history…Mr. French has been very successful. The characters of Tecumseh and of Tenskwatawa appear to us well drawn, and the manoeuvres skillfully detailed by means of which the vast power of the

80 French, Elkswatawa, 15-16.
Prophet was attained.” A popular and scholarly consensus had thus begun to coalesce around the legitimate historical narrative of the post-Greenville Treaty Ohio Valley, the history of settler colonial violence, and Indigenous resistance one that, as the next chapters will demonstrate, served as a model for other colonial encounters in very different times and places.

The books of Dawson and French were exemplars of an emerging regional literature that a contemporary reviewer of Dawson situated in one of three categories observed to predominate regarding books about the past. This anonymous reviewer, possibly Timothy Flint of the *Western Monthly Review*, imagined these categories to be: (1) eulogies about heroes and poetic narratives, (2) disinterested histories characterized by a “classic elegance of style, that purity of dictation, that calm investigation of facts, and that steady, unbroken chain of narrative and thought, and (3) works that rest somewhere in a middle ground—works that “collect, arrange, and preserve the materials of history,” who compile facts usually about “single states within the union, and whose labors, not only lie within a narrow compass, but in general are destitute of the” style characterizing category two. The reviewer places Dawson in the third, hybrid category, and one might speculate that he would place French’s work in category one. Yet one book appearing in 1841 might have warranted placement in the vaunted second category, if not coming very close. This book, *Life of Tecumseh*, by historian and newspaper editor Benjamin Drake, reiterated the familiar Tenskwatawa/Tecumseh dyad but approached his book with the kind of attention to research and historical narrative that adheres more closely to the professional standards that would emerge later in the nineteenth century. Indeed, this book

84 *Western Monthly Review* Vol 1, No. 9 (January 1828).
would become the standard account of the Shawnee brothers in print until much later in the twentieth century and is still utilized as an authoritative source today.

Drake had travelled extensively around the Old Northwest, collecting anecdotes and experiences of early settlers, traders, and Indian agents like Stephen Ruddell, John Johnston, and Anthony Shane. He also utilized the papers of William Henry Harrison much to the same effect as Dawson, but unlike Dawson, Drake wove them into the narrative instead of simply presenting the documents. He drew on the work of ethnologists, philologists, and archaeologists to attempt a definitive history of the Shawnee nation. Not only did Drake’s work cement earlier depictions of the Shawnee brothers as a case study in opposites—the noble, eloquent, virtuous statesman Tecumseh and the crafty, cruel, tyrannical Tenskwatawa—but it also reversed the roles of primary influencer between the brothers, granting Tecumseh an outsized prominence due to his necessary role as a worthy and virtuous foe for the American Republic—an icon worthy of the pantheon of American mythology. These narrative choices would reverberate through the archives, through biography and history for decades to come.

85 It wasn’t until the 1980s, with the arrival of David Edmund’s The Shawnee Prophet that Tenskwatawa was given priority as the intellectual and spiritual wellspring behind the formation of a new pan-Indigenous confederacy in the Ohio Valley-Lower Great Lakes. However, Edmunds does not entirely escape these stereotypes. For the tenacity of stereotypes about the Shawnee brothers see Alfred A. Cave, “The Shawnee Prophet, Tecumseh, and Tippecanoe: A Case Study of Historical Myth-Making,” Journal of the Early Republic 22, No. 4 (Winter 2002): 637-673.

86 This reversal—the Prophet being the “spiritual” leader that provided guidance to the public-facing political genius of Tecumseh continues to persist in popular histories and scholarly syntheses that draw on Drake and his derivatives. Even if Tenskwatawa has come to be understood by scholars as giving meaningful heft to Tecumseh’s political, martial, and diplomatic project, the Prophet’s ideas are seen as more supplemental to the more realpolitik approach of Tecumseh. This is another result of a binary separation between the material/spiritual and political/religious that is inappropriate to the worldview of nineteenth-century Algonquian peoples who made no such distinctions.
Drake was writing at a time in which local historical societies were springing up all over the trans-Appalachian West. Like participation in the regional and national presses, active membership in historical societies, delivering historical speeches, and writing historical texts were seen to be, in the words of historian Terry Barnhart, “ennobling pursuit[s] that instilled moral and intellectual character among its devotees. Awareness of the past was more than an enlightened and rewarding pastime: it was a civic duty.” Men who devoted their leisure to studying the past were not simply engaging in a self-gratifying exercise, but were “serv[ing] society” and “connect[ing] their lives to something larger and nobler than ambition and self-interest.” Historical production was also seen to provide future historians with the raw materials to create even more comprehensive histories far into the future, “to collect…a copious store, from which some future Tacitus or Gibbon may weave the strong and elegant web of historic narrative.” Men of letters in the Old Northwest imagined their cultural production as assisting future historians of the Republic seeking to understand the special place of their region in the trajectory of mankind’s progress towards perfection.

Strong and elegant webs of historical narrative, strong and elegant webs of technological infrastructure. Men like Drake were almost always also participants in the promotion of western

87 The first viable state historical society in the Old Northwest was the Antiquarian and Historical Society of Illinois, established 1827. The Historical Society of Michigan, established by Lewis Cass and Henry Rowe Schoolcraft, soon followed in 1828. Although William Henry Harrison had established the Vincennes Historical and Antiquarian Society in 1808, it was not until the 1831 establishment of the Indiana Historical Society that a viable historical society was established in that location. Ohio first established a historical society in 1822 but kept no records and disbanded until a much more successful society was founded in 1831. Terry A. Barnhart, ‘‘A Common Feeling’: Regional Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Old Northwest,” *Michigan Historical Review* 29, No. 1 (Spring 2003): 52, 55, 61.

88 I agree with Barnhart more generally that regional identity was not antithetical to national identity but was seen by nineteenth-century contemporaries as playing a complementary and even edifying role to it, Barnhart, ‘‘A Common Feeling’’, 59-60.

settlement—cities, states, and territories—and the means by which to connect them to markets through canals, roads, and increasingly, by railroad. Narratives of inevitable Indigenous dispossession, removal, and disappearance circulated on the same routes that helped to facilitate this dispossession, processes deemed natural, the signs of which signaled a fulfilment of settler prophecy by republican agents of improvement. “Cincinnati is to be the future metropolis of the Ohio,” proclaimed Drake and E.D. Mansfield in their guide to the Northwest. “[I]f improved with a spirit, corresponding to [the magnitude of natural advantages], its inhabitants cannot fail to realize their most glowing anticipations of future greatness.” To Drake and Mansfield, these were not mere speculations about the future, emerging through superstition or intuition, but were empirically founded on the ability to properly read the landscape for exploitable resources, current and future market connectivity, and appropriate moral institutions. “However sanguine our expectations may at first appear, respecting the future destinies of our favourite city,” Drake and Mansfield gushed about Cincinnati, “if the grounds on which they are made be impartially examined, they will be found, we think, to warrant our anticipations.”

Drake’s two bodies of work: Indian biography and booster literature/emigrant guides operate on two different temporal registers. The former relates the past at the moment settlers imagined Indians to bow out of the frame as Americans inaugurated historical time, while the latter texts are directed towards a settler future imaginary that entirely evacuates Indigenous peoples.

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92 Drake is also responsible for a biography of Black Hawk. Benjamin Drake, The Life and Adventures of Black Hawk with Sketches of Keokuk, the Sac and Fox Indians, and the Late Black Hawk War (Cincinnati: George Conclin, 1846).
3.5 The Archival Lives of Prophets

Occasionally, if rarely, such connections between settler prophecy (and its divinatory hermeneutics), state and market infrastructure, and Indigenous dispossession may be glimpsed together in the archive. The research materials assembled by Drake to write Life of Tecumseh found a final home in the Draper manuscript collection—one of the premier repositories of archival material relating to the history of the Old Northwest and South. Lyman Copeland Draper, creator of the collection, decided to dedicate his life to the study of the early trans-Appalachian West and its colonization by Americans after a short stint at Granville College in Ohio. Funded through various occupations, including literary journal editor, land agent, speculator, clerk in the Erie Canal office in Buffalo, New York, and patronage from his cousin’s wealthy husband, Draper laid the foundation for almost all subsequent historical work that would be done on this region. Between the 1840s and his death in 1891, Draper would write hundreds of letters soliciting original manuscripts (including those of Daniel Boone and George Rogers Clark), anecdotes, and other ephemera, including Benjamin Drake’s research notes on Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa. Although he had ambitions to publish a multivolume compendium on the history of the trans-Appalachian west, Draper only managed to publish one book (King’s Mountain and its Heroes on the Revolutionary War battle). Instead of publishing, he left for future researchers 500 volumes of archival materials that reference some 1,200 individuals.93

93 Additionally, beginning in 1854, Draper would be instrumental in the reorganizing and systematizing the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, which would draw a membership far beyond the immediate region, and collect a large body of books, manuscripts, and other materials. Draper willed his papers to the Society upon his death where they were further organized for public use by Reuben G. Thwaites. Josephine L. Harper, Guide to the Draper Manuscripts (Madison: The State Historical Society of Wisconsin, 1983), 11-17, 20.
The Tecumseh papers, or series YY, contains thirteen volumes, one of which comprises the correspondences of John Johnston, the long-time Indian agent who helped orchestrate the removal of the remaining Shawnee, Lenape, and Wyandot from Ohio shortly after the signing of the Indian Removal Act in 1830.\(^4\) In his letters to Draper, Johnston wrote extensively about his tenure as factor/Indian agent at Fort Wayne/Piqua, his relationship with Catahecassa (whom he admired and considered a confidant), Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh (collecting together a band “of all the vagabond Indians in this country” and frustrating efforts to stabilize Indigenous-settler relations), Indigenous treatment of women (expressing the familiar “drudge” trope), the recent history of government-Indian relations in the years prior to the War of 1812, and criticism of the Jackson administration and their mismanagement of Indian affairs.\(^5\) Curiously though, many of Johnston’s letters do not mention Indigenous people at all. Instead, they speak in the vein of settler prophecy and the divinatory hermeneutics of technological futurity.\(^6\)

**Figure 1.2**

\(^4\) Over the years, Johnston began to believe that it was “sacred debt due to the primitive inhabitants of the land,” for federal agents to assist in “civilizing” them by “gradually introduce[ing] among [them] a knowledge of civil government and its blessings,” in their own country forever set aside from settler encroachment. Johnston appeared a great deal more optimistic than Cass about the effectiveness of the civilizing mission approach to Indian policy. While the latter tended to believe that Indians should simply be left to disappear west of the Mississippi, with some protection from settler violence, Johnston continued to hold out hope that US Indian policy would finally be able to escape the corruption of self-interested and unqualified agents and administer an even-handed, paternalistic governance with gradual Indigenous political representation. If the US government should shirk this responsibility, “the judgements of Heaven must fall over our Country for the wrongs the red man has received at our hands.” Johnston quoted in Leonard U. Hill, *John Johnston and the Indians in the Land of the Three Miamis* (Piqua, Ohio: 1957), 159; Johnston to Draper, Dec. 14, 1831, Draper mss., 11YY.

\(^5\) Johnston was removed as Indian agent without cause upon the election of Jackson. Johnston to Draper, Dec. 18, 1838, 11YY, Draper mss.

\(^6\) In this, he must have been very passionate, as the tightness of his handwriting around the page, the use of every blank space on the sheet expresses frugality—Johnston does not seem like one who would spill unnecessary ink!
“There is no part of the business of this great imperium that interests me so much as the steam boat landing in front of the city [Cincinnati]. I often go there as a looker on...sometimes forty steamboats at once discharging and receiving freight. Every conceivable article of foreign and domestic product will be found piled on the landing,” Johnston wrote to Draper at the approach of autumn, 1840. In a sense, the waterfront was a kind of spiritual sanctuary for Johnston, a place where the blessings of republican liberty were inscribed on the landscape, where the prophecy of improvement and market connectivity was everywhere palpable. The US
was an exceptional nation of futurity: “The history of man upon the earth furnishes no parallel case. What is this owing to? Undoubtedly the inventive untiring genius of the Free man of this land acting under a wise and beneficent government.” Nowhere in his letters does Johnston wax poetic about the usual heroes of frontier mythology—the Crocketts and Boones already celebrated in popular literature—but instead appealed to Draper to lionize the prophets of steam technology, specifically James Rumsey, who had made a major contribution to the development of steamboat jet propulsion technology, as the true “benefactor,” not only of the West, but “of his race.”

Johnston encouraged Draper to write a history of an American settler future.

### 3.6 Prophets in Transit

Also contained in the Draper Tecumseh files is a newspaper clipping from the March 6, 1886 edition of the *Chicago Tribune*. Profiling William Henry Harrison’s estate “Grouseland”—his residence while serving as Indiana’s territorial governor—author G. Walter Barr positioned the location within US national time. From this vantage point on the Wabash River, Barr recounted the “Indian troubles” of the Ohio Valley during the War of 1812—emphasizing Tecumseh’s challenge to Harrison’s claims to the land—and encouraged readers to take stock of the technological progress of a nation that had two decades earlier nearly rent itself apart in civil war. Once serving as a meeting place for the Territorial council, Grouseland had

97 Johnston to Draper, Sept. 24, 1840, 11YY, Draper mss. Johnston was at the time advocating for a congressional bill to award James Rumsey Jr. a commemorative medal in his father’s honor “in giving the world the benefit of the steam boat.” The bill was passed; however, Rumsey’s title as inventor of the steamboat has been historically disputed. John Fitch and Rumsey battled over patents in 1787, and Robert Fulton often appears in textbooks as the inventor of the steamboat. Jack L. Shagena, *Who Really Invented the Steamboat?: Fulton’s Clermont Coup* (Amherst, NY: Humanity Books, 2004). For the congressional bill see, “Proceedings and Debates in the Senate and House of Representatives,” Abridgment of the Debates of Congress, from 1789 to 1856: From *Gales and Seatons’ Annals of Congress; from Their Register of Debates; and from the Official Reported Debates*, by John C. Rives 13 (1860): 745-750.
been a fortress against Indian attack, with the river-facing wall an “arc of a circle for better
defence” and “the windows, so deeply embrasured as to protect riflemen.” A powder magazine
was kept in the basement. The Grouseland surveyed by Barr however, had long gone silent, “a
stone tomahawk lying quietly by an old fashioned chair is all the furniture that is left to-day, but
they are suggestive enough.” Now, Harrison’s abode shared the riverside with the ancient
remains of mound-builders, resting passively as “Locomotives give the war-whoop of
civilization every time they pass his 'plantation'…and a dozen telegraph wires stretch from his
grave to the house where he planned his great successes when it took months to communicate
with Washington.”98 The rowdy dynamism of technological progress—containing as well a
romantic, imagined essence of indigeneity—whisk Americans past two silent sentinels:
Harrison’s aristocratic residence and the ancient remains of a prior civilization, a catalogue of
America’s past, emptied of Indigenous presence and racing towards the future.

Almost exactly one year prior to Barr’s account of settler time and technological
advancement, Century Magazine, a mouthpiece for the Northern Pacific Railway, published a
travel account by correspondent Eugene V. Smalley. Standing outside on the veranda of what
was presumably the Tacoma Hotel—commonly touted as the most luxurious accommodation
north of San Francisco—Smalley took in a stunning scene at the edge of the continent. But
instead of looking west towards the Pacific, he looked eastward, towards the glittering glaciers
of Mount Rainier and the seemingly infinite forest at its feet. Smalley was about to embark on a
journey tracing the proposed route of the Northern Pacific Railroad, the last stretch that would
connect the Puget Sound region at its proposed terminus in Tacoma with the Columbia

Plateau—increasingly coveted by American settlers as prime agricultural and ranching land—to the Great Lakes and beyond. In an intriguing reversal of Barr’s journey towards civilizational progress, Smalley narrates his journey backwards, from the grand, dynamic city of the future, Tacoma, eastward, across the Cascade mountains and onto the arid Columbia Plateau, where he finally arrives in Ainsworth, often described by travelers as a windswept, dusty waste—a primordial vista existing before time.99

While on the Yakama Reservation, just east of the Cascade Mountains, Smalley embarks on an extensive digression about an individual who was supposedly thwarting the Christian civilizing mission there, “an old humpbacked Indian prophet, named Smohallo, who has invented a religion of his own…a disturbing element among the Indians, because he tries to dissuade them from industry, saying that the earth is their mother, and that to plow the ground is to scratch her skin, to dig ditches is to wound her breast, and to open mines is to crack her bones, and that she will not receive them after they die if they thus abuse her.”100 Smalley was speaking of the Wanapum visionary dreamer and leader, or iyánča, Smohalla. Through much of the second half of the nineteenth century, Smohalla offered new techniques gifted to him through journeys to the land of the dead that helped him identify and respond to settler colonial-induced environmental change and other settler violences, and also instructed him on how to conduct proper relations with the human and other-than-human beings to ensure the future thriving of his people. For American settlers, however, Smohalla became a new Tenskwatawa, the latest Indigenous threat to their own visions of futurity as settlers in a new northwest.

99 Eugene V. Smalley, "From Puget Sound to the Upper Columbia," *Century Magazine* 7 (November, 1884-April, 1885).
100 Smalley, “From Puget Sound,” 841-842.
Chapter 4: Smohalla and Indigenous Law: An “Ontology of Care”

In the summer of 1884, Smohalla, the Wanapum visionary prepared his village for a special visitor. Anticipating the particular kinds of objects, architecture, and procedure that would demonstrate respect for the power and status of this visitor—the US Army Major Junius MacMurray—Smohalla ordered, by way of the Northern Pacific railroad depot in Aisnsworth, nails, lumber and canvas to construct a special bench and canvas tent, complete with a brush shade. He ordered the dry village street sprinkled with water to prevent the high winds that sweep through the Columbia River gorge from stirring the streets into clouds of dust, more than could be said about most territorial roads in the region.\(^1\) This, he would inform MacMurray, was “in his honor, and to show that his people had cleanly tastes.”\(^2\) This village, P’na (“fish weir”), above Priest Rapids on the middle Columbia was an appropriate place for such a meeting between two representatives of their respective peoples’ ontologies of land and law. P’na was near the place where human and other-than-human peoples emerged from the earth and left marks on the rocks soon after the creation of the world.\(^3\) The village was also safely tucked under the high bluffs of the gorge, on the flats near the river, entirely inaccessible by wagon and in Smohalla’s time, above the highest point navigable by steamboat. P’na was at the center of the Wanapum world, but also a place that resisted colonial surveillance and control.

\(^1\) “Bad Roads,” *Walla Walla Union*, Aug. 27, 1870.
\(^3\) “Categorical answers to Comments Upon Proposed Testimony from Johnny Buck in Connection with the Yakima Claim,” September 18, 1953, in Wanapum 025-07-001, Relander Collection, Yakima Valley Library.
By the middle of the 1880s, Smohalla—known as “the Dreamer” by American settlers and as a talented and revered iyánča (“one who trains or disciplines”) by Wanapum and other mid-Columbia Indigenous peoples—had remained at P’na, despite decades of efforts by Indian agents, the US military, and ordinary settlers to put an end to his influence which they deemed inimical to the civilization project and the spatial control of Indigenous people. Although there were many contemporaries to Smohalla, who also received important visions and brought new teachings to their respective communities,4 Smohalla was singled out as the “High Priest of the Dreamer theology,” and was understood by US federal agents and reformers as “the brake and the wheel of progress of his people.”5

In 1884, on the eve of the Dawes Act, which would break Indian reservations into individual parcels of private property, MacMurray was sent by General Nelson A. Miles, the commanding officer of the Military Department of the Columbia, to assess the grievances of off-reservation Indians like Smohalla and his followers, and help them understand the general tenets of individual land ownership and more specifically the US homestead laws.6 MacMurray

4 Ichishkín language scholar Virginia Beavert (Yakama) notes that most communities had their own prophetic figures, that so-called traditional Indians did not all follow Smohalla’s teachings. Virginia R. Beavert, Gift of Knowledge/Tmáwit Átawish Nch’inch’imami: Reflections on Sahaptin Ways (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017), 98. However, Smohalla was reportedly more prolific than many other visionaries. According to the several Sahaptins-speaking people Click Relander interviewed in the 1950s, although many individuals brought back songs from the land of the dead, they usually brought back only one or two. Smohalla brought back several at a time. “Jim Looney Interview, Pt. 1,” “Field Trip to Ft. Simcoe,” Relander Collection, TRA-057-21-002. Smohalla also brought the technology of a prophetic bird, carved of wood, named wawšuk-lá (Bullock’s oriole) to villages near the Dalles and Celilo Falls (Wyam, Sk’í’n), as well as White Salmon. From its perch atop a pole that extended deep into the earth (connecting the human body to its origin), wawšuk-lá could see into the future, and carry messages to humans from the Creator, usher in the several layers of the dawn, and wake the plants up and call the salmon up the river every spring, “Tommy Thompson Interview,” Aug., 1953, Relander Collection, TRA-058-05-001; “Tommy Thompson Interview Pt. 2,” Nov. 22, 1953, Relander Collection, TRA-058-05-002.


6 MacMurray was aware that he was stepping into a region engulfed in conflicts, beyond Indigenous-settler conflict alone. MacMurray himself drew the ire of Indian agents like Robert H. Milroy who not only chafed at MacMurray usurping his authority as agent, but also believed that Indians should be sequestered from whites on reservations, not assimilated as fellow landholding citizens. Conflicts between land-hungry settlers and the federal government,
was instructed by Miles to understand in as much detail as possible the logic behind Smohalla’s rejection of the “civilizing influences which were extended to Smohalla’s [sic] people, by the laws of the United States,” while “look[ing] over the situation in all its aspects, and…to exercise the utmost patience with the Indians humoring their desire to explain their view.” What MacMurray found—and shared in a public lecture at the Albany institute in New York that following winter—was that Smohalla and his villagers “were anxious to impress…the purity of their intentions, and the theological authority for their opinions.” What followed was nothing short of a “discussion of the philosophy of the universe, from the creation to futurity.” 7

But Indigenous “theology,” while “interesting” as an intellectual object to the learned gentlemen at the Albany Institute was categorically different from law to men like MacMurray and his audience. Settler property law, the modern, rational administration of land as resource, went unmarked in the discussion as common sense. As I argued in the previous chapter along with critics of secularism like Joan Scott, the rise of the secular nation-state in the late eighteenth-century West meant relegating the religious to the domain of the private and the domestic. This new disciplinary regime associated those marked as non- or pre-modern with those who organized their political structures through theological, religious, or spiritual concepts and that these people—Catholics, Mormons, “Mohammdans,” Indian “traditionalists”—were frauds at best, and dangerous, tyrannical leaders at worst. That Indigenous leaders like Smohalla were debating or acting from within the logics of their own

Indigenous legal orders or political ontologies was not a thought that colonial agents like MacMurray entertained. Instead, MacMurray believed that Indigenous spiritual leaders threatened the imposition of secular, republican governance by promoting a backwards theocracy. More than fifteen years earlier, Indian agent Albert Meacham reported on Smohalla’s “scheme” which he believed “was founded on pretended spiritual revelations…The principal idea seeming to be the restoring of the country at some time not distant to the Indians claiming immunity from civil law and asserting a higher law under the name of religion.” Meacham further warned that “[s]o much plausibility has this new religion that it has many followers throughout all that section lying east of the Cascade and west of the Rocky Mountains even down into Nevada.”

8 As I will discuss in more detail below, Smohalla was asserting a higher law, and this was Wanapum law, not simply an outlaw movement of renegade spiritualists simply subverting a supposedly universal civil law of the United States as it sought to cast its jurisdictional net across the land.

Smohalla indulged MacMurray’s request for him to explain Wanapum cosmology, and the explanation he gave seemed to anticipate MacMurray’s desire to be instructed. He pointed up to his flag, fluttering on a pole in front of the ceremonial longhouse to demonstrate the grounded sense of place held by the Wanapum. While expansive, this worldview moved out from a center:

8 It is striking how much this resembles anti-Mormon discourse that was simultaneously ascendent in the postbellum nineteenth century. Meacham to E.S. Parker, Comm, "Expedition to Priest Rapids," March 22, 1870, R10, OR Supt 1869-1872, RG75, NARA. For secularism and Mormonism see, Peter Coviello, Make Yourself Gods: Mormons and the Unfinished Business of American Secularism (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2019); David Walker, Railroading Religion: Mormons, Tourists, and the Corporate Spirit of the West (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2019).
“This is my flag and it represents the world. God told me to look after my people—all are my people. There are four ways in the world—north and south and east and west. I have been all those ways. This is the center, I live here; the red spot is my heart; everybody can see it. The yellow grass grows everywhere around this place. The green mountains are far away all around the world! There is only water beyond, salt water. The blue (referring to the blue cloth strip) is the sky, and the star is the north star. That star never changes; it is always in the same place. I keep my heart on that star; I never change.”

MacMurray had his own “philosophy of the universe,” which he sought to impress upon Smohalla. This was a philosophy that depended on the future transformation of ecologically entangled places into bounded parcels of transferable private property. As I detailed in the previous chapter, this relied on a settler prophetic tradition—one that held that a future of a land, abstracted into tidy squares of property and exploitable, extractable resources would inevitably come to pass as the fulfillment of civilizational progress, a process which was seen as simply taking advantage of and perfecting a revealed natural order helmed by an endlessly expanding United States. MacMurray chose to model this concept with a checkerboard that he carried with him on his tour of Sahaptin and Salishan villages along the mid-Columbia. Upon Smohalla’s request that he explain American land law, MacMurray unfolded this checkerboard and pointed to the black squares. These belonged to the railroad, while the white squares were available to prospective homesteaders, including Indians. MacMurray anchored his law to natural phenomenon, explaining that “the vertical lines were run toward the north star, and that cross lines were run from the direction of sunrise to that of the sunset, and thus divided the land

into square pieces, so that each man could find his own, and thereby prevent all disputes.”¹⁰ At no point does MacMurray attempt to explain what sovereign power legitimized such a law that would somehow guarantee the prevention of disputes between human people by throwing a checkerboard pattern over the top of the land.

Smohalla had heard of this “new law” before and concluded, through the words of an interpreter, that “it was against nature.”¹¹ In contrast to MacMurray, Smohalla did have an account of what legitimized Wanapum law and patiently related to MacMurray the story of Wanapum creation; the placement of humans and other-than-human peoples on the land, and the teachings given by the Creator laying out proper relations between humans and their other-than-human relatives. Significantly, in his account to MacMurray, Smohalla emphasized a time when selfish people fought over the best places to gather medicine and food, and fought each other all the time. The Creator punished them by taking away their wings and “commanded that the lands and fisheries should be common to all who lived upon them.”¹² Human conflict, in other words, could only be ameliorated by practicing relations of respect and reciprocity, first laid out by the Creator, and perpetuated through generations on and with the land. To Smohalla, MacMurray’s assertion that individuals should be disconnected from each other, isolated on individual parcels of land would have seemed absurdly anti-social, something that would impoverish relations, not bolster them.

¹⁰ Ibid., 247.
¹¹ It’s difficult to know what this appeal to “natural law” meant to either Smohalla or his interpreter. “Nature,” as Raymond Williams famously pointed out, already one of the most complex words in the English language, has also been of the most difficult ones to translate. Throughout this dissertation, I attempt to read these uses of the term “nature” as translations of Indigenous terms (which are absent from the English-language transcript) through Indigenous ontological frameworks that stress relationality grounded in place that presumes no tidy separation between humans and other-than-human beings, or the “natural” versus the “artificial,” or “manmade”/built environment.
¹² MacMurray, 247-248.
Through following the life and work of Smohalla, this chapter addresses the following. First, I draw attention to how Indigenous leaders and thinkers on the Columbia Plateau made inquiries as to the source and legitimacy of settler law, continuously through the mid- to late-nineteenth century. The exchange between MacMurray and Smohalla demonstrates that even as Indigenous people accounted for and pointed to the source of Indigenous law, US colonial agents would not, and perhaps could not reciprocate. Although Smohalla’s account of Wanapum or middle-Columbia law was not universally accepted by all Sahaptin and Interior Salish people in the region, it was a powerful elaboration of a dynamic, historically-unfolding tradition of prophetic dreaming and dancing that first emerged in the late eighteenth-early nineteenth century as a response to crisis and change brought about by new pathogens, new technologies of power offered by Christianity and the nation-state, and the consequences of American colonialist attempts to transform the land and human relationships with it. While an earlier wave of prophetic dreaming and dancing emerged in response to pathogens in the early nineteenth century, Indigenous prophetic activity surged again in response to increasing efforts by American colonizers to seize and transform the land in the second half of the century. The content of these prophecies and teachings became more pointedly about refusing settler capitalist modes of relationality and restoring relationships to other-than-human relatives that were most at risk from impositions of American settlers during this time.

Secondly, I draw attention to the ways in which activities that required high mobility across settler private property were arguably under the most threat during this time. Root digging, berry picking, and medicine gathering have long been long been overlooked by scholars who have emphasized salmon fishing and processing as the most profound casualty of settler colonial-induced change. There are several reasons for this. Settler scholars have long
devalued female-coded labor more broadly, but have also struggled to cast off the social evolutionist notions that place gathering below hunting on a scale of civilizational progress. Similar to the ways in which extensive corn cultivation by Indigenous peoples had been marginalized by historians of the Ohio Valley, root and plant gathering has been cast as secondary in importance or as merely supplementary to hunting and fishing. Another reason may have to do with both the economic value of salmon as a commercial resource by the turn of the nineteenth century, the ensuing conflicts over access to commercially viable fisheries, and the era of twentieth-century dam-building that inaugurated a new chapter in the assault on Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination. This has in part resulted from the political contexts of the times in which these historians have been working within which shaped the questions they had brought to the archive. In the mid twentieth century, for example, the “fish wars,” and Indian Claims Commission litigation loomed large.

Neither more nor less important than salmon in its cultural, social, and dietary significance, root foods have been a staple carbohydrate for Indigenous peoples of the Plateau in the way that rice, taro, millet, or wheat has been for others. Anthropologist Eugene Hunn has estimated that over 60% of the Indigenous Plateau diet came from root foods. The diversity of root species and the seasonal specificity of their harvest organized travels throughout vast yet familiar Plateau homelands, and these travels and digging expeditions reinforced and reproduced social ties and the intergenerational transmission of knowledge. Through the

13 Emphasis on salmon has led to the neglect of other aquatic species, notably the Pacific lamprey. Never seen as an economically valuable fishery by settlers, lampreys are becoming the focus of recent restoration efforts by Indigenous peoples of the Plateau. See, for example, Brian Oaster, “Humble Suckers: Pacific Lamprey have Survived 5 Mass Extinctions but are now Under Threat,” High Country News, January 26, 2022.
nineteenth century, roots and the places they grew figured prominently alongside berry fields and fishing stations in Indigenous efforts during treaty councils to secure specific locations that would be protected from settlers. “[T]hat is what I love the place we get our roots to live upon,” the Cayuse leader Tawatoy (Young Chief) proclaimed, speaking of the Grande Ronde Valley at the Walla Walla Treaty Council in 1855.\(^{15}\) Constraints to Indigenous mobility that compromised the ability to complete seasonal rounds—the seasonally-appropriate relations with, and care for other-than-human relatives—was a crucial factor in the erosion of Indigenous legal orders and political institutions during this time.

As Haida artist Jaalen Edenshaw explained to anthropologist Cara Krmpotich, the “fancy part” of culture—the ceremonies, regalia, dancing and singing—is “only a reflection of what we do in the ocean and the beaches.” While this is a Haida example, it can also apply to Wanapum and other Plateau peoples. Historians and anthropologists have often focused only on ceremonial practices of “Dreamers” like Smohalla and not the everyday constitutive relationships on and with the land that give meaning and purpose to the “fancy part” to begin with.\(^{16}\) Indigenous visionary practices on the Columbia Plateau—like those flourishing in the early nineteenth-century Ohio Valley—were technologies drawn on in times of relational duress (or impending duress), to hold open a place in the future for the recovery and restoration of relationships to a living earth. Understanding the intricate networks of relations composing the Indigenous Plateau world that were under threat by settler practices of settler agriculture and


\(^{16}\) This discussion and quote is in Joseph Weiss, Shaping the Future on Haida Gwaii: Life Beyond Settler Colonialism (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2018), 33.
institutions of private property is crucial in understanding Smohalla’s project and the new ceremonies he brought back from the land of the dead.

4.1 Locating Indigenous Law

Centralized systems of governance with hierarchical social systems locate the source of law centrally, in a single sovereign entity like a nation-state or a monarch. More decentralized systems of governance and social organization, like most Indigenous North American polities, tend to have a more dispersed legal authority.¹⁷ In an overview of the sources of settler and Indigenous law in Canada, Shiri Pasternak points to a range of Indigenous forms of legal authority including the transmission of knowledge from the Creator, emanating from the natural world itself, or emerging through the act of performing political autonomy, self-preservation, and reaping “the collective rewards of territorial stewardship.”¹⁸ For Columbia River Sahaptins like the Wanapum, tamánwit describes the practice of law as it was given to human people by the Creator, and expresses all of the elements of legal authority described by Pasternak. As Thomas Morning Owl (Umatilla) explains,

The tamánwit of the past included the concept of divine ordination and creation…[it] is an ideology by which all things of the earth were placed by the Creator for a purpose. The works of the Creator were given behaviors that were unchangeable, and until time’s end, these laws are to be kept. This understanding of tamánwit allows for the explanation of how things are placed on the earth, according to elders, whose teachings are explained as the time before that which

¹⁸ Pasternak, Grounded Authority, 6.
is spoken of in the mythological travels of coyote and his pantheon of “super-hero” animal spirits.¹⁹

Before human beings arrived on the scene, coyote, or spilyáy warned the animals of their arrival, that they would be like infants who could not take care of themselves and would have to be taught how to live in the land on which they were placed. A council was held by the animal and plant people to determine how to teach the human people—the Natítayt in the Walla Walla language—to live. Salmon offered first to offer his body and knowledge to the human people, and then others followed including roots and berries. In return for this gift of sustenance (not only food, but also knowledge and various powers), humans had a responsibility to take care of these other-than-human beings, by accepting their gifts, following proper protocol including singing appropriate songs, and taking care of the surrounding ecological meshwork so that these beings could thrive and continue to nourish the Natítayt. The practice of legal jurisdiction in this sense may be seen as a practice of what Pasternak calls an “ontology of care,” or what Glen Coulthard (Yellowknives Dene) has identified as “grounded normativity”—the conducting of proper relationships of respect and reciprocity across the human and other-than-human world, rooted in place-based ecological entanglements, and emanating from the ancient activities of the Creator, spilyáy, and the myriad of beings composing Plateau homelands.²⁰

²⁰ Coulthard, *Red Skin, White Masks*, 60.
Although tamánwit expresses a stable body of knowledge that has informed ethical, place-based practices within Sahaptin communities since time immemorial, these practices continue to be dynamic and alive, not ahistorical and static. For any legal order to continue to work and to have meaning and legitimacy for a people composing a given community, it must have the capacity to accommodate and meet the needs of emerging social and cultural contexts and be responsive to social change.\textsuperscript{21} In political communities and social orders that are composed of other-than-human beings and the land itself, ecological change necessitates political action and legal reckoning. The prophetic dreaming of individuals like Smohalla can in this way be understood as a \textit{legal technology}. Journeying to the land of the dead—either in sleep, or in a temporary death state—in order to bring back prescriptive teachings to ensure good relations between human and other-than-human kin was an ancient practice for Sahaptin and Salish peoples of the Columbia Plateau. The content and context of these teachings, however, was relevant to the times in which they emerged. In this sense, prophetic dreaming, dancing, drumming, and singing may also be seen to be akin to “doing history” insofar as history is understood to be a reckoning between past events, the needs of the present, and visions of a desirable future. In this sense, Smohalla was insisting on temporal sovereignty for his people: weaving new durable cordage from the time of creation towards an Indigenous future.\textsuperscript{22}

Whether prophetic dreaming is understood as a legal technology or a way of doing history, it was almost undoubtedly not, as ethnographers have so often characterized it,

\textsuperscript{21} Napoleon, “Thinking About Indigenous Legal Orders,” 232.
\textsuperscript{22} Rifkin, \textit{Beyond Settler Time}. For a discussion of the role of prophecy in the historical consciousness of Indigenous peoples in the Yukon, see Cruikshank, “Claiming Legitimacy,” 147-167.
understood as a religion by its practitioners—at least not in the sense of religion being a private, personal system of belief, separate from the domains of economy, politics, and law. Dreaming, drumming, and dancing were not restricted to an abstract, immaterial, “spiritual” realm by Plateau people but were woven into the fabric of daily life, binding together and regulating a social body that included both humans and other-than-human beings. Like any such system, it remained flexible and responsive to changing political contexts and challenges both internal and external. Ecological change initiated by settler colonial incursions—intensifying during Smohalla’s time—posed a unique challenge because of its large spatial and temporal scale, but was not the first time that local Indigenous people had adapted and survived drastic change.

4.2 Restoring Relations in Times of Duress

Prophetic dreaming, dancing, and drumming have been utilized by Plateau peoples before and after European “contact,” as finely tuned technologies to identify, cope with, and respond to social change, political challenges, and environmental crisis. Even in the colonial context, and even as it articulated visions of apocalypse, prophetic content did not signify a rupture in Indigenous society or a tragic, last-ditch attempt to salvage an Indigenous way of life as many ethnohistorians have concluded over the years.23 As Julie Cruikshank has shown in the context of twentieth-century Athapaskan prophecy in the Yukon, prophecy has long existed as a normative mode within oral tradition that has served as a “routine, self-evident way of explaining the linkages between past and present,” to make sense of anomalous events, and to bring back, from other-dimensional worlds, new lessons on how to conduct proper behavior to

23 For this view, see Miller, Prophetic Worlds.
ensure good relations. This last function is of special importance to the discussion here. Social relationships in the Plateau world included those between other-than-human animals, rocks, winds, trees, and other beings—often translated by ethnographers and anthropologists as spirit beings—but perhaps more accurately described as the “energetic remains”. In this ontological configuration, survival of human communities has depended on continually addressing the problem of how humans and other-than-human beings—in all their overlapping but also conflicting needs and powers—can share the world, ideally, in mutually beneficial ways. Managing conflict is a legal problem. Thus, addressing conflict—including imbalances of power resulting in illness, death, or social strife—requires going to the source of law.

Like modern Western legal institutions, the legal institutions of the Indigenous Columbia Plateau were dynamic: based in tradition and normative order, but always shifting in response to needs of the historical present through legal interpretation and reasoning, and the application of tamánwit. Through dream visions, important lessons from the Creator—known among nineteenth-century Sahaptin speakers as naami pyap, or “elder brother” (and often accompanied or followed by spilyáy, or Coyote, who shaped the landscape in preparation for

24 Importantly, Cruikshank notes that Indigenous prophetic traditions have been misunderstood by western academics who have extracted prophetic narratives from their Indigenous institutional frameworks and (usually implicitly) have inserted them into their own, which have been shaped largely by Weberian social theories. This framework has tended to explain prophecy through a Judeo-Christian tradition and characterizes prophecy as anomalous and exogenous to dominant institutional order. Cruikshank, “Claiming Legitimacy,” 149-150, 153, 160.
25 Kim TallBear urges scholars to rethink language that relies on binaries of spirit/matter that do not apply to Indigenous ontological frameworks. The best practice would be to use specific terminology from Indigenous languages. However, when speaking in more general terms, or when English must be used, “energetic remains” is one option that might do this work. TallBear credits Jessica Kolopenuk (Cree, Peguis First Nation) with suggesting this term. TallBear, "A Sharpening of the Already Present”.
26 Cruikshank, “Claiming Legitimacy,” 152.
human beings)—were revealed.\textsuperscript{28} This was a normative practice on the Indigenous Plateau and at the dynamic center of legal practice. Occasionally, some individuals were gifted with visions while dying, visiting the land of the dead, and coming back with important, actionable lessons in a time of need. These lessons were often prophetic in their temporality, and took the form of dances, songs, and ceremonial procedures. They prescribed new guidelines to strengthen relations to other humans and other-than-human kin in a changing world. By the opening of the nineteenth century, the Columbia Plateau world was on the cusp of radical transformation, and a surge of prophetic activity swept the region.

In the nineteen-teens, a Nespelem man named Kwelkwelta’xen (Red Arm) told anthropologist James Teit a creation narrative that encapsulates Indigenous Plateau cosmology, and helps explain the source of Indigenous legal practice as it was understood by Plateau peoples in the nineteenth century. Kwelkwelta’xen began by relating a version of a story common across the region, that related how the creator, or “old one” created the earth out of a woman to be the mother of all human people, the subsequent creation of people out of balls of clay made from this Earth Woman, and the travels of Coyote to transform the world into its present form. Significantly, Kwelkwelta’xen frequently pauses his narrative to highlight the points at which important details have been debated, and highlights where Christian theology and storytelling had interpenetrated pre-Christian narratives, demonstrating that these creation

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\textsuperscript{28} While naamí pyap has often been interpreted by European and Euroamerican observers as analogous to a monotheistic god, and that many Indigenous Christians have conflated naamí pyap with Christian God, the identification of the creator with the role of “elder brother” is important here. This role connotes a relationship of “mild authority,” characterized by “mutual regard edged by respectful distance,” not the ultimate sovereign authority of a patriarchal Christian God. Hunn, et. al., \textit{Nch'i-Wána}, 235.
stories—the source of law—were responsive to historic change and open to new insights and innovations.\textsuperscript{29}

Kwelkwelta’xen’s creation narrative explained to Teit how prophetic dreaming maintained a connection to the Creator, who, after the world was shaped by Coyote into the form recognizable to contemporary humans, made his departure from earth. Upon this departure, the Creator reassured human people that he would “send messages to earth by the souls of people that reach me [through dreaming or temporarily dying], but whose time to die has not come. They will carry messages to you from time to time; and when their souls return to their bodies, they will revive, and tell you their experiences.”\textsuperscript{30} Kwelkwelta’xen went on to explain the origins of the practice of prophetic dreaming:

Coyote and myself [Creator] will not be seen again until the Earth-Woman is very old. Then we shall return to earth, for it will require a new change by that time. Coyote will precede me by some little time; and when you see him, you will know that the time is at hand. When I return, all the spirits of the dead will accompany me, and after that there will be no spirit-land. All the people will live together. Then will the Earth-Woman revert to her natural shape, and live as a mother among her children. Then will things be made right, and there will be much happiness.

The Earth-Woman is now very old, and even her bones (the rocks) are crumbling away. Therefore the time cannot be far away when the earth will be transformed again, and when the spirits of the dead will come back. The Chief [Old One/creator] has sent messages from time to time. The Indians have learned from these that to be good, speak good, pray, and dance will hasten the return of Coyote, and therefore the Indians in many places often danced; and when dancing, they prayed much.\textsuperscript{31}

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\textsuperscript{29} James A. Teit, et al., \textit{Folk-tales of Salishan And Sahaptin Tribes} (Lancaster, Pa.: American folk-lore society, 1917), 65, 80-83. \\
\textsuperscript{30} Ibid., 83. \\
\textsuperscript{31} Ibid., 83. 
\end{flushleft}
Here Kwelkwelta’xen demonstrates a cosmology in which human time and the vast temporality of the earth are co-implicated in cycles of geophysical destruction and renewal. The ancient myth age—the origin of the familiar landscape—is continuous with the present and the future through direct communication with the creator via the technology of prophetic dreaming. These messages lay out codes of proper behavior—a legal scaffolding—to ensure the emergence of a new world in which the ancestors would return.

Disruptions in cycles of birth and death became an acute problem around the turn of the nineteenth-century. Pathogens, often preceding European contact, took a heavy toll on Columbia Plateau villages, interrupting normative death-ways, which in another North American Indigenous context Adam Waterman has described as the “circuit whereby affect is given orientation and kinship is nurtured in its relation to ecology as a mode of relation to place…part of an ecological metabolic of kinship and Indigenous sovereignty.” Following the work of Chief Justice of the Navajo Nation, Robert Yazzie, Waterman locates the disruption of burial practices and death-ways as part of a broader settler-colonial assault on Indigenous legal jurisdiction. Although Indigenous people in this region had not been enveloped by settler colonial governance in any meaningful way at this time, the disruption of death-ways caused by epidemic disease must have been traumatic. The equality Indigenous individuals within a

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32 Waterman, Corpse in the Kitchen, 49. The most definitive account of disease (specifically smallpox but also malaria, measles, and influenza) on the cusp of, and directly following European/Euro-American contact in region, albeit focused on coastal areas, remains Robert Boyd, The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence: Introduced Infectious Diseases and Population Decline among Northwest Coast Indians, 1774-1874 (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1999). For a recent collection of essays that complicates and challenges the influential “virgin soil” theory introduced by Alfred Crosby in the 1970s, and the political ramifications of quantitative analysis (disease is often implicated as the primary agent, not colonists) see, Catherine M. Cameron, ed., Beyond Germs: Native Depopulation in North America (Tuscon: University of Arizona Press, 2015).
political community have in the law (rather than the Anglo-Western emphasis on an individual before the law), includes a right “‘to rest unmolested in the grave while his or her spirit follows the natural course of the afterlife.’” Similar to the ways in which the Indigenous apocalyptic imaginary can be contrasted with that of the transcendent Judeo-Christian one (something I will address below), Yazzie, via Waterman explains that Indigenous afterlives are not based on “some ethereal transcendence,” but that “‘[t]he relationship between the Earth and buried remains can be seen within the greater context of a community of interrelated beings that include the plants, animals, and other spirits in the neighborhood of the grave…Within this cosmos, the remains of a community’s dead are inseparable from the land itself, and their spirits are inseparable from the living community.’”33 In other words, Indigenous jurisdictional practice as an “ontology of care” did not end at death: death was continuous with life, and life on the land. When so many people were dying, proper protocol could not be ensured to perpetuate these cycles.

Smallpox had swept the region, first in 1775 from Spanish or Russian ships searching the Pacific coast for furs, then in 1782, moving eastward from the Missouri River, and then again in 1801 when it travelled up the vital trade corridor of the Columbia River well before Europeans, Euroamericans, or Anglophone settlers had any significant presence in the region. Although disease carried off an estimated one half of all Indigenous Plateau people by the first years of the nineteenth century, “the Natives were strong to live,” and sought a new set of

33 Waterman paraphrasing and quoting Robert Yazzie, Waterman, Corpse in the Kitchen, 49.

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ceremonies to restore the balances of power animating the world, and to prepare for world renewal, a process that was familiar to Plateau peoples through centuries of oral tradition.34

It was in this context of multiple waves of smallpox-induced death that the volcano known by Sahaptin speakers as Lawilayt-lá (now to the Anglo-speaking world since 1792 as Mount St. Helens) erupted, sending a plume of ash eastward along the jet stream, darkening the sky and leaving a thick blanket of soft powder on the ground. Villagers awoke and stepped out of their tule mat lodges to thunderclaps and an eerie “dry snow,” sparking prophesy of the “sun burning up,” of the coming of a “new people,” from the east, of the technology of the book, epidemiological and ecological crisis.35 To prepare for “world would fall[ling] to pieces,” new songs and dances were brought out, and across the Columbia Plateau communities halted their spring and summer rounds to participate, a highly unusual breaking of seasonal norms (usually large community dances were held only in the winter). As Elizabeth Vibert has claimed, this effloresce of prophecy was not a reaction to, or rejection of, white colonial influences, but a normative way to address the catastrophe of epidemic disease, which, I argue, disrupted Indigenous legal jurisdiction as a practice of tamánwit—an expression of an ontology of care.36

34 That “the Natives were strong to live, and every evening were dancing and singing,” is a quote taken from David Thompson’s Narratives. Thompson had travelled through the Columbia Gorge in 1811 as part of a Northwest Company fur brigade and had encountered the Ktunaxa prophet Kauxuma-nupika, who brought news of future epidemic disaster and earth-changing events, but also of coming plenty, Elizabeth Vibert, “‘The Natives Were Strong to Live’: Reinterpreting Early-Nineteenth-Century Prophetic Movements in the Columbia Plateau,” *Ethnohistory* 42, No. 2 (Spring 1995): 197-229; Boyd, *Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence*, 99-100; Hunn, et. al., *Nch ’i-Wána*, 27.

35 The early 20th century anthropologist Leslie Spier remains the best single source for these accounts, Spier, *The Prophet Dance of the Northwest*. An importance source for the “dry snow” is the account of Spokane leader Silimxnotylmilakabok, or Cornelius, who related the event to Charles Wilkes of the US surveillance expedition in the early 1840s, which the former experienced when he was a small boy around the turn of the nineteenth century. Charles Wilkes, *Narrative of the United States Exploring Expedition During the Years 1838, 1839, 1840, 1841, and 1842*, Vol 4, (Philadelphia: Lea and Blanchard, 1845), 439.; Spier, *The Prophet Dance*.
4.3 Smohalla and the Fur Trade World of Oregon Country

Smohalla was born sometime between 1815 and 1820 into a generation of survivors during a time of new opportunities. His birthplace of Wallula, at the confluence of the Walla Walla and Columbia Rivers just south of the Snake and Columbia confluence, was, like most places where rivers meet, ecologically and socially rich. Coinciding with Smohalla’s birth was the establishment nearby of Fort Nez Perces (later, Fort Walla Walla) by the North West Company in 1818, with the permission of Walla Walla leader Tamatapam and other prominent individuals who welcomed a new access point to trade, but expressed trepidation at the erection of a stockade. While trading houses had previously tended to be open places of conviviality and sociality, this new barrier “symboliz[ed] white ownership and mistrust” and thus “angered the local tribes,” according to historians Roberta Conner and William L. Lang.37 Although the Columbia Plateau was still a thoroughly Sahaptin and Salishan world, the architectural imposition of the fort was no doubt a cause for concern among the Indigenous people of the region.

Fort Nez Perces was one of six fur trade entrepôts on the middle and lower Columbia and acted as the western base of the Snake River fur brigade, part of a strategy by the North West Company to head off American competition in the Rocky Mountains. The vast region drained by the Columbia and Snake Rivers—for centuries a hub of diplomacy, trade, war, and kin-making for diverse peoples—was now integrated into global markets. The North West

Company drew furs from a vast area to the southeast, down the Columbia River to Fort George/Astoria and out to the Pacific, to Canton, China, returning with provisions from Hawai‘i. The Company, which merged with the Hudson’s Bay Company in 1821, employed dozens of Kanaka Maoli, Iroquoian, and francophone Canadians who worked as trappers, farmers, carpenters, blacksmiths, and canoe paddlers. Smohalla, then, grew up observing firsthand the ebbs and flows of materials, peoples, and pathogens up and down the greater Columbia watershed, the hierarchical governing structure of the NWC and HBC, European agricultural practices, as well as new technologies of the book and Christian ritual.

Although Americans had little presence in the region between the 1820s and 1840s, regional Indigenous people began producing knowledge about Americans through their travels away from the region. Longer distance travel, especially to the bison country east of the Rockies had been made more possible and desirable with the arrival of horses in the 1730s. By the second decade of the nineteenth century, prophetic visions of the coming of new forms of power, law, and technology influenced many Plateau leaders to travel outside of the region to learn more. In 1825, sponsored by George Simpson of the HBC, two teenagers Slough-Keetcha, or Spokan Garry (Spokan), and Kootenai Pelly (Ktunaxa) travelled to the mission school at Red River Colony (present-day Winnipeg, Manitoba) for four years of Anglican education including instruction in theology, English, mathematics, history, and geography. They also participated in

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39 While there was no missionary presence on the Plateau before the late 1830s, other Christian influences may have come from fur traders and other Euro-American travelers like David Thompson who probably carried bibles and related some Christian songs and stories. Other sources may have included Kutenai Pelly and Spokan Garry dissemination of Anglican theology and ritual, and the presence of Haudenosaunee, Métis, and francophone trappers who practiced Catholicism and were a common presence in fur brigades.
the agricultural pursuits of the colony. Baptized, and sent home with their own copies of the Book of Common Prayer and King James Bibles, the pair returned in 1829, and convinced a subsequent party of prospective students to attend the Red River school. Pelly fell ill and died on the journey home from Red River, but Garry survived to play a major role in the transformation of his homeland through the rest of the century, acting as a translator, diplomat, and cultural broker in the region until his death in 1892.40

A year after the second party made their way to the Red River school, a Nimíipuu delegation from the Clearwater region (now north-central Idaho) travelled to St. Louis in 1831 to ask for teachers to explain to them “white man’s law.”41 The four men, Tipyeléhue Cimúuxcimux (Black Eagle), Tipyeléhue ‘Iléesenin (Speaking Eagle, also known as Ka’áwpoo, or Man of the Morning), Hey’úuxctohnin’ (Rabbit Skin Leggings), and Téewis Sísimnim’ (No Horns on His Head), were almost certainly seeking council with William Clark, who had made formal diplomatic overtures to Nimíipuu leaders while passing through their country with the Lewis and Clark expedition in 1806. The delegation spent several weeks with Rev. Joseph Rosati, first bishop of the St. Louis diocese, where they were instructed in catechism and baptized in the Catholic Church.42

41 That the Nimíipuu delegation was in search of “white man’s law” are the words of Cayuse/Nimíipuu scholar Antone Minthorn (citizen of the Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla) and is aligned with my critique of the use of “spiritual” and “religious” to describe nineteenth-century Indigenous understandings of their own ontological reality. In other words, my understanding is that the Nimíipuu and others were seeking to understand the source of the particular kind of power expressed by EuroAmericans across their institutions, not “religion” or religious institutions by themselves. Antone Minthorn, “Wars, Treaties, and the Beginning of Reservation Life,” in Karson, ed, Wiyaxayxt/Wiyaakaadwn/As Days Go By.
Unbeknownst to the Nimíipuu men was the sensation caused by their presence in the city, especially by Protestant church leaders who reported the visit in the pages of the *Christian Advocate*, one of the most highly circulated publications of its time in the United States. Though the account in the *Advocate* was based on, in the words of historian Robert Furtwangler, “twisted or unreliable information,” it presented the event as “glimmers of a present-day miracle or revelation” and that “to some, it seemed that God’s will was working through the Indians from out of the West, and through Clark’s response to them.” To those readers, the Nimíipuu delegation was emitting a “Macedonian call,” the cry of the “lost” to be saved by Christ. To the authors of the article, the St. Louis delegation represented an unprecedented opportunity in world history for Protestant missionaries to “penetrate into these wilds where the Sabbath bell has never yet tolled since the world began!”

One of the men responsible for the *Christian Advocate* article, the Wyandot agent William Walker, had been in the thick of Indian policy debates over northeastern Indian removal. In his letters to Gabriel P. Disosway of the Methodist Missionary Society, Walker elaborated on his views against Wyandot removal and advocated for missionization within Indigenous homelands as the most humane and effective tactic to assimilate Indigenous peoples. Sending missionaries ahead of settlement, Walker believed, could prevent the fracas of removal and resistance to removal that had stirred Indigenous-settler and inter-Indigenous politics in the Ohio Valley and lower Great Lakes in the years following the War of 1812. Heeding the call, and working within the auspices of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions

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(ABCFM) two couples agreed to establish missions in the far northwest. The Whitmans, Narcissa and Marcus—and the Spaldings, Eliza and Henry—set out for Oregon Country in 1836, each establishing Presbyterian missions at Waiilatpu in the homeland of the Cayuse, and Lapwaii, in the homeland of the Nimíipuu, respectively.44

While the Whitmans and Spaldings were establishing a Protestant missionary presence on the Plateau, a third Indigenous journey took place, one that was especially significant for its production and dissemination of knowledge about Americans as colonizers. Upwards of forty Walla Walla people (joined by several Nimíipuu and Cayuse) led by Pyópyo Maqsmáqs (Piupiumaksmaks or Yellow Bird), travelled to New Helvetia in the Sacramento Valley in the summer or fall of 1844 to trade horses and furs for a herd of cattle. The founder of New Helvetia, John Sutter, a Swiss émigré who had been living in St. Louis at the time of the Nimíipuu delegation, had gained experience in cross-border and cross-continental commerce through his participation in the Santa Fe Trail trade. He then moved to the future site of Kansas City to trade with Shawnee and Lenape communities during the last years of Tenskwatawa’s life. In 1838, Sutter set out with an American Fur Company caravan towards the Willamette Valley, and by 1839, arrived in the Sacramento Valley where he established a settlement on Nisenan, Yokut and Miwok land. This settlement probably appeared to the Nisenan, Yokut and Miwok much as the Whitman mission settlement had appeared to Cayuse, Umatilla, and Walla Walla, with its livestock, and tilled fields of neatly spaced and separated food crops: a radically different model of human and other-than-human relationality. Sutter’s Fort, at the site of New Helvetia, would have appeared similar to other fur trade establishments with its high stockade

44 Furtwangler, Bringing Indians to the Book, 26-27.
walls and hierarchical, punitive governance that had so offended Tamatapam and other leaders upon the establishment of Fort Nez Perces.\textsuperscript{45}

In the Sacramento Valley, the Walla Walla travelers would have seen dozens and maybe even hundreds of mostly Indigenous men hard at work, catching salmon to barrel for the Pacific trade, butchering cattle, tanning hides, rendering tallow, making adobe bricks, digging irrigation ditches, plowing, sowing, and weeding fields, and harvesting and processing crops. They would have seen a land in the process of radical transformation from an Indigenous-cultivated oak savanna ecology to a combination of factory and farm. Not only was this transformation at a much larger scale to the one at Waiilatpu, it was also more oriented towards commodity production for the market—in this case, a diversifying fur trade.\textsuperscript{46} It’s impossible to know exactly what the Walla Walla traders thought of the New Helvetia settlement. As many were aspiring cattlemen, they may have found its expansive ranch operations and Sutter’s wealth inspiring. Whatever the case, they would soon get a glimpse of the capricious violence that came to be associated with American settlers in California.

After a successful trading agreement was reached at New Helvetia, Pyópyo Maqsmáqs and other Walla Walla men spent the remaining season hunting in the Sacramento Valley, where they also procured twenty-two stolen horses from a “band of thieves”.\textsuperscript{47} Horse raiding

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had long been a vital component of the “Indian trade” in California but had also been “the bane of Spanish, Mexican, and early Anglo-American California” and the main impediment to effective colonial control in the region. When Americans learned that the Walla Walla band was in possession of stolen horses, they confronted Pyópyo Maqsmáqs’s son Elijah Hedding and fatally shot him, despite Sutter’s attempt to intervene. The Walla Walla party hastily departed to avoid further violence. Pyópyo Maqsmáqs allegedly vowed to avenge his son’s death, stirring up settler rumors of pan-Indigenous violence from the Columbia to the Sacramento Valley. But American settlers in California still depended on Indigenous people to assert their hegemony over Californios, and rumors of impending attack by Walla Wallas and their allies were eventually dispelled with the onset of the US War with Mexico in the spring of 1846. Sutter convinced Pyópyo Maqsmáqs and other Walla Walla men to join John C. Frémont’s California Battalion along with Yokuts and American militiamen, enticing them with the promise of twenty-five dollars for three months in the field, and food, clothing, and horses for the Walla Walla men, women, and children accompanying the party.

The war with Mexico ended in California in January 1847, and the Sahaptin participants returned north to their Columbia River homeland with knowledge of how Americans conducted warfare, particularly California militiamen’s capacity for extreme, indiscriminate anti-Indian

50 Akins and Bauer, We Are the Land, 129-130.
violence.\textsuperscript{51} They brought back horses they had raided from Oregon communities and possibly the measles virus that led to the deadly outbreak that precipitated the killing of thirteen settlers at Waiilatpu, including the Whitmans themselves, by Cayuse warriors the following November. The Cayuse held Marcus Whitman responsible for the deaths of 200 Cayuse people that the missionary had failed to heal or had intentionally poisoned. This event would almost immediately become a centerpiece of settler mythology, a narrative of sacrifice that legitimized American claims to the land and the death of Indigenous people, as well as the outbreak of the “Cayuse War,” a set of several regional conflicts that retarded Euroamerican settlement until the mid-1850s.

To Indigenous people at the time, the event was understood as a routine act of justice to keep the community safe from a man wielding dangerous powers over life and death, but also from a family unwilling to follow the most basic foundations of Cayuse law regarding reciprocal relations, paying to inhabit lands assigned to the Cayuse by the Creator, and sharing resources. In the years before the Whitman killings, the family had increasingly turned away from the people whose land they occupied and towards American overlanders. In a confrontation with the Cayuse headman Tiloukaikt over the pasturage of Cayuse horses on land claimed by the Whitmans, Marcus reported that Tiloukaikt had “demanded of me what I had ever given him for the land. I answered ‘Nothing,’ and that…I never would pay him anything. He then made use of the word ‘Shame,’ which is used in Chinook the same as in English.”\textsuperscript{52}

\textsuperscript{51} For Frémont’s exploits specifically (including the 1846 Sacramento River Massacre of several hundred Wintu men, women, and children) and genocidal violence in California more generally, see Benjamin Madley, \textit{An American Genocide: The United States and the California Indian Catastrophe, 1846-1873} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), Ch. 2.

\textsuperscript{52} November 18, 1941 in Narcissa Whitman, \textit{The Letters of Narcissa Whitman, 1836-1846} (Fairfield: Ye Galleon Press, 1986).
Whitman’s flagrant rejection of the most basic relational norms must have been alarming and deeply offensive to Cayuse and neighboring peoples, and in part influenced the eventual killings at Waiilatpu.

After many years of American settler colonial impositions in the region, Smohalla put the Whitman killing into historical perspective explaining to Army officer Eli Huggins over forty years after the event that Marcus Whitman had “made a long journey to the East to get a bottle of poison for us,” and upon his return, “uncorked [it] and all the air was poisoned.” In sense, Smohalla’s historical account may be understood as an apt way to describe the danger of settler colonial relations—extractive, nonreciprocal and asocial—as a sort of poison that began spreading along the networks of trade and communication that wove together the trans-Mississippi West. After the Oregon Treaty established the Oregon country as a US possession in 1846, thousands of settlers, at least one third them from the Ohio Valley, set their sights on the Pacific Northwest.

### 4.4 Tamánwit and Treaty Councils

Like Cass, Trowbridge, and others working as Indian agents in the Old Northwest, Isaac Stevens, newly appointed Governor and de facto Superintendent of Indian Affairs for Washington Territory, was primarily interested in infrastructure development. In 1853, Stevens had led a surveying party across the west to map a transcontinental railroad route that would

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link the Pacific Northwest to greater Pacific markets. The passage of the 1850 Oregon Donation Land Act in advance of formal cession of Indigenous lands created anxiety among prospective American land holders regarding the integrity of legal title. With settlers newly encouraged to emigrate during a brief period of respite after the end of the Cayuse War, Stevens acted with a sense of urgency to tidy up this legal miasma of title, while seeking to establish large reservations that would, ideally, separate Indigenous populations from their white neighbors. Possessing little knowledge and experience of local conditions and the social weave of the fur trade world, Stevens was bound to fail and indeed did largely fail at his project. This failure does not mean that his activities were of no consequence—quite the opposite. Working alongside federal Indian agent General Joel Palmer, Stevens’s treaty councils, including the large one held near Smohalla’s birthplace in the late spring of 1855, would raise questions among Indigenous leaders as to the legitimacy of US jurisdiction and claims to the land, as well as contribute to ongoing waves of violence between Indigenous peoples and incoming settlers.

Stevens and Palmer used an unconvincing rationale to explain and legitimize their project to purchase Indigenous land and “sell” the treaty to those gathered at the Walla Walla Council grounds and at the subsequent Wasco Council south of the Columbia just days later. Stevens, Palmer, and other US agents relied on a settler futurity framed as a self-fulfilling prophecy. White settlers would arrive, inevitably, in an unstoppable wave. Using naturalistic imagery, Palmer declared that American settlers were coming, like “grasshoppers on the plains.” Like the flowing of the Columbia, or the blowing wind, “you cannot stop them. Our

chief cannot stop them, we cannot stop them.” Appealing to the democratic ideal of the land as a universal commons, Palmer added that “they say this land was not made for you alone, the air that we breathe, the water that we drink, was made for all.” The treaties would enshrine in settler law the rights and privileges of Indians to fish, hunt, and gather “in common” with white settlers, ideally transferring Indigenous legal systems which dispensed rights to certain fishing sites, berry grounds, and camas prairies through family and individual permission, to the settler state. For colonial agents, no human, including the President of the United States, could stop this natural process of an unfolding settler future.56

Palmer also drew on the history of the Ohio Valley as an example of what he saw as a natural and inevitable pattern of violence between Indians and settlers, especially when the former refused to resign themselves to the progress of white civilization. The treaties would separate the races for the good of both, to prevent “quarreling,” and to “protect” Indians from “bad white men” intending to prey upon their supposedly credulous nature. The knowledge of this trajectory from past to future was one that the agents believed they had special access to, an access that Plateau peoples lacked. “You may not understand all the advantages of the propositions that have been made to you; but they are for your benefit and those who come after you,” Palmer insisted.57 After Wallachin, a Cascades headman, refused to sign the Wasco Treaty, Palmer assured him “that he and his people will ultimately desire to be embraced in [the] treaty,” ostensibly because Palmer understood himself to have a monopoly on the future legitimized by his special knowledge of history on another “northwest” frontier in the Ohio

57 Ibid., 417, 423.
Valley and Lower Great Lakes which he recounted in his treaty talk as a window into a projected settler future in a very different place.\textsuperscript{58}

Yet over and over, Indigenous leaders questioned the origin and legitimacy of Stevens’s and Palmer’s law. While the two federal agents could not, or would not give an adequate answer or explanation, Indigenous treaty-goers explained, relentlessly, to the federal agents the source of their law. Many of the treaty representatives expressed frustration over the anthropocentric assumptions of the treaty commissioners who assumed they were negotiating over an inanimate landscape. Tawatoy (Young Chief) reminded the treaty commissioners that the “land is afraid,” and asked why the earth itself was not asked to speak, as it was the central subject being spoken about at the council. He answered his own question thus:

\begin{quote}
I hear what this earth says, the earth says, God has placed me here. The earth says, that God tells me to take care of the Indians on this earth; the Earth says to the Indians that stop on the Earth feed them right. God named the roots that he should feed the Indians on: the water speaks the same way: God says feed the Indians upon the earth: the grass says the same thing: feed the horses and cattle. The Earth and water and grass say God has given our names and we are told those names: neither the Indians or the Whites have a right to change those names: the Earth says, God has placed me here to produce all that, grows upon me, the trees, fruit, etc. The same way the Earth says, it was from her man was made. God on placing them on the Earth during then to take good care of the earth and do each other no harm. God said. You Indians who take care of a certain portion of the country should not trade it off unless you get a fair price.\textsuperscript{59}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{58} Palmer quoted in Andrew Fisher, \textit{Shadow Tribe: The Making of Columbia River Indian Identity} (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010), 45-46; In the Treaty minutes, Stevens, and then Palmer describes how the recalcitrance of Indians in the Ohio Valley to assimilate (to capitulate to the supposedly inevitable unfolding of settler time) cost them their lives and land and warned that the same thing would happen on the Columbia Plateau to Indians there if they did not agree to live apart from white people on reservations. Walla Walla Treaty Council Minutes, 394-396, 401-405.

\textsuperscript{59} Walla Walla Treaty Council Minutes, 429.
Although the law is emanating from God here, it is the Earth and waters that translate this law to Cayuse people. The Earth made humans to take care of specific places of its body.

Other treaty attendees expressed similar concerns with breaking their obligations to the living earth, the law set by the Creator. Owhi echoed Tawatoy in his conviction that to speak of the land itself was an affront to the Creator and to tamánwit, that language itself emerges from the relationship between the Creator and a particular place:

“God looked one way then the other and named our lands for us to take care of…where does this talk come from that you have been giving us[?] God made this earth and it listens to him to know what he would decide…God named this land to us that is the reason I am afraid to say anything about this land…Shall I steal this land and sell it? Or what shall I do? This is the reason that my heart is sad…God made our bodies from the earth as if they were different form the whites. What shall I do? Shall I give the lands that are a part of my body and leave myself poor and destitute…I love my life is the reason why I do not give my lands away. I am afraid I would be sent to hell.”

Five Crows expressed the local rootedness of tamánwit, and like Owhi used language lightly inflected with Christian elements: "We have but one Fat her in Heaven; it is He (pointing above) who has made all the earth; He made us of earth on this earth: He made our Fathers; when he gave us this earth. He gave no gardens." For his part, Stachas shared what had made him “troubled in mind” about the idea of selling land, asking the treaty commissioners, “[i]f your mothers were here in this country who gave you birth, and suckled you, and while you

60 Walla Walla Treaty Council Minutes, 431-432.
61 That the Creator did not give his people gardens suggests a critique of American-style agriculture and its associated relations, Ibid., 409. Throughout the council, Sahaptin leaders frequently clarify that God is the relation of elder brother.
were sucking some person came and took away your mother and left you alone and sold your mother, how would you feel then? This is our mother this country, as if we drew our living from her."62 Tawatoy, Stachas, and Owhi all identified the European/American practice of selling land as an affront to the practice of tamánwit, an imposition of a new legal regime that could spell unforeseen disaster to the social and political fabric of the Indigenous Plateau.

Pyópyo Maqsmáqs reminded Stevens and Palmer that he was far from naïve about American treaty talk “having experienced the same in California, having seen treaties there,” suggesting that he had continued travelling to the Sacramento Valley after fighting Californios for the Americans, including the time of the 1851-1852 treaty councils held in the region.63 Responding to Stevens and Palmer’s appeal to history, Pyópyo Maqsmáqs asked “Should I speak to you of things that have been long ago as you have done?” He proceeded to detail the history of Euroamerican influence on Plateau peoples, the challenge to gender roles, new dances and ceremonies, and the emergence of a more centralized political authority, “when all the Indians became proud, and called themselves chiefs.” Americans were also tenacious colonizers; as Pyópyo Maqsmáqs observed in California, “[in] one day the Americans became as numerous as the grass.” However, Pyópyo Maqsmáqs reminded Stevens and Palmer that “he knew that this [process] was not right,” nor was it inevitable that it must take place on the Columbia Plateau, disputing the treaty commissioners’ argument that American territorial expansion was an inevitable, unstoppable force.64

62 Ibid., 425.
63 These treaties were never ratified. See Stuart Banner, Possessing the Pacific: Land, Settlers, and Indigenous People from Australia to Alaska (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), ch. 5.
64 Walla Walla Council Minutes, 409-410.
Crucially, Pyópyo Maqsmáqs critiqued the heart of US land law—the absurdity of exchanging commodities for the land itself, asserting to Stevens and Palmer that “[g]oods and the Earth are not equal; goods are for using on the Earth.” Despite his wide and frequent travels, he admitted “I do not know where they have given lands for goods.” For Pyópyo Maqsmáqs goods were collections of shored-up and distributed power and could not be exchanged for land, a categorically distinct concept; an emergent property of human and other-than-human sociality, and a mother from which everyone emerges and eventually returns, as Stachas and Tawatoy asserted. Additionally, the Walla Walla leader expressed frustration at the ways in which Stevens and Palmer talked about land as an abstract, quantifiable commodity: “You have spoken for lands generally. You have not spoken of any particular ones, your words are here (at this place)...I do not know as yet what lands they [the Interpreters] have spoken. If they had mentioned the lands that had spoken of then I should have understood them.” In a strikingly similar way to which the Lenape critiqued Moravian accounts of Christ highlighted in chapter 2, appeals to authority by non-Indigenous people (whether conceived of as religious or secular and legal) were unconvincing because they did not emerge in place and in relation. In the thinking of Pyópyo Maqsmáqs and other Plateau people, land as a vast collection of radically individuated places could only be addressed through storied particularity. For this reason, Indigenous treaty-goers expressed unease with the haste by which federal agents marked out seemingly abstract parcels of land. Instead, all parties need to “expose the country and think over it slowly.”

65 Ibid., 410 (italics mine).
66 Ibid., 413.
67 Ibid., 438.
Palmer answered these expressions of Indigenous legal authority and political ontology in a way that must have seemed dismissive and frustratingly insufficient to the Sahaptin leaders. Imagining a shared attachment to place based on romantic sentimentality trumped by the necessity of individualistic achievement and self-making, Palmer insisted that, “I too love the earth where I was born. I left it because it was for my own good.” The way that Palmer spoke of his own land in talk devoid of any notion of obligation to the place that had given him life—why would it be for someone’s “own good” to leave the land from which they emerged?—was probably deeply disturbing to the Indigenous treaty attendees and contributed to their distrust of the treaty commissioners and representatives of the US government more generally.

As a people with an oral tradition, the predominantly Sahaptin-speaking peoples at the treaty council understood the treaty obligations flowing from the treaty talk, not just the ink on the treaty documents. But even if they had placed their ultimate fidelity in the paper document, Stevens betrayed this faith by immediately taking out ads in local newspapers announcing the land cessions and proclaiming the land open for settlement—even though he had promised the treaty delegates that ratification by congress would take at months, if not years. Settlers, believing their title to the land was now secure, began to once again flock to the region. This discovery of gold in the Colville area drew scores of young men across Plateau homelands where they harassed Indigenous men and sexually assaulted Indigenous women. These incursions lead to the outbreak of a new Indian war, the “Yakima War,” an ongoing series of violent encounters which never really resolved until the completion of the transcontinental

68 Ibid., 433.
69 The Walla Walla Treaty was not ratified by Congress until 1859.
railroad in the 1880s. As the following chapter will detail, settlers in the region lived in a constant state of anxiety over a future that seemed at once guaranteed but always under threat—an anxiety that the presence of Smohalla and other “dreamers” did much to unintentionally perpetuate.

On October 29, 1858, upon the shaky peace following the Yakima War, General W.S. Harney announced the end of a moratorium placed on homesteading east of the Cascade Mountains. But it was the lure of gold, not just the availability of land itself that drove the initial wave of US settlement on the Columbia Plateau. The gold rushes in Idaho, concentrated on the Clearwater and Salmon Rivers, and to a lesser extent the Cariboo and Fraser rushes in British Columbia, produced geographical and environmental consequences extending far beyond the diggings. As the Sacramento Valley had fed the California gold rush, so the “Great Columbia Plain” would act as a “nursery for cattle,” and breadbasket for the mining districts, as it “lay between the mines and the sea, and thus became directly bound up in the whole maelstrom of development.”  

The Dalles on the mid-Columbia and Walla Walla further inland became central nodes in shipping and distribution and grew to be the major hubs of population and commerce on the Columbia Plateau. The Dalles Daily Mountaineer reported optimistically in the fall of 1865 that “large bands of sheep, cattle and horses have been crossing the Columbia river at this point to be driven to the rich pastures in the Yakima, Attanum [Ahtanum] and Keetatas [Kittitas]. This is a move in the right direction and will tend to bring the district to the north of us into notice among stock-growers.” Also in 1865, 7,000 barrels of locally ground

71 “The Pastures to the North,” The Dalles Daily Mountaineer, Nov. 24, 1865.
flour were reportedly shipped to the Idaho mining districts, almost double that of the previous year.\textsuperscript{72}

It was common for men in eastern states to enlist in the Army in order to exploit the free transportation to western forts and then desert to the mines, but they were also attracted to agricultural prospects. Many of those who had been initially drawn to the diggings in Idaho, or California, decided to try their luck at farming or stock-raising on the Columbia Plateau instead. James J. Archer, an Army officer stationed at Ft. Colville, noted in 1860 that discharged soldiers who had “originally enlisted for the sake of getting their transportation to this country or California” were more and more likely to stay as “projects of agriculture and grazing are so high that the soldiers all think they can make fortunes.”\textsuperscript{73} Additionally, as much of western Oregon had been staked out by early overlanders and land speculators by the 1860s, more families moved to the dry side of the Cascade Mountains from the Willamette Valley, “satisfied with the drenching rains, the Oregon mist and the fathomless mudholes of that country.”\textsuperscript{74}

This grain and cattle boom, though modest in comparison to those in California’s Central Valley of the 1850s, inaugurated a wave of ecological changes that were felt by Indigenous peoples of the Plateau. The valleys of tributary streams flowing from their sources in highlands into the main trunks of the Columbia, Snake, and Walla Walla Rivers, were privileged by Euroamerican settlers, who encroached on delicate microclimates in which veritable pharmacies of plant medicines and root staples were bound together in an intricate

\textsuperscript{73} James J. Archer to “Mother,” May 5, 1860, Archer Letters, 1860-1867, Relander Collection, TRA-040-04-008.
\textsuperscript{74} \textit{The Dalles Mountaineer}, Nov 29, 1865. For speculation in the Willamette Valley see Wilm, \textit{Settlers as Conquerors},
ecological meshwork. It was in this context, between the Yakima War and the mining-induced settler boom on the Columbia Plateau, that Smohalla established a new village at P’na near Priest Rapids. Here he died, traveled to the land of the dead, and, to the surprise of his kin who had already prepared him for burial, awoke to recall his visions which laid out a new relational protocol that critiqued and rejected activities that physically reshaped the earth: the terraforming project of settler colonialism. The new songs, dances, and relational protocol Smohalla brought back—given to him by the Creator, or Nami Piap, and formalized in a washat, or ceremonial procedure—would hasten the return of the dead and the renewal of the world.

It is likely that Smohalla’s call to reject drastic earth-altering activities and redouble efforts at maintaining good relations with other-than-human relatives stemmed from an understanding of the agricultural-mining nexus and the ecological changes it produced and would likely produce in the future. That the scale and quality of these changes was new required new ceremony. These new songs and dance would formalize existing first foods ceremonies that give thanks, show respect, and ask permission of the salmon, roots, and other foods to continue to nourish the people, as well as to usher in a future of thriving and plenty foreseen in prophecy. Smohalla was among the most prolific visionaries on the Columbia Plateau, bringing back from the land of the dead an estimated 100-200 songs throughout his lifetime. These prophetic interventions would only become more critical by the 1870s, as the settler population tripled, and the valleys most sought after by newcomers for agriculture—the Yakima and Kittitas

75 Hunn, et. al., *Nch’i-Wána; Beavert, Gift of Knowledge.*
76 Harry Tomalawash and Johnny Buck in “Wanapum Indian Interviews, 1951,” Relander Collection, TRA-058-08-001.
77 For a good overview of Smohalla’s various visions and context within the Plateau prophetic tradition, see Clifford E. Trafzer and Margery Ann Beach, “Smohalla, the Washani, and Religion as a Factor in Northwestern Indian History,” *American Indian Quarterly* Vol. 9, No. 3 (Summer 1985): 309-324.
valleys especially—were also dense with Indigenous villages, fishing stations, and root-digging grounds. The mobility necessary to access the latter was especially under threat by agricultural settlement and cattle ranching during this time.78

4.5 The Importance of Plants

Women on the Columbia Plateau have possessed a deep and complex knowledge of plant ecology transmitted by oral tradition through countless generations.79 This knowledge is embedded in the landscape and recalled through creation narratives and narratives recounting the transformation of the world as communities travelled through their territories to conduct seasonal rounds of plant harvesting, hunting, fishing, and production and repair of tools, clothing, housing, and other objects. Unlike Western scientific taxonomies that tend to alienate individual species from their broader ecological relationships and present knowledge about them as universal, Sahaptin and Salishan plant knowledges stress relationality: between plants and humans, and between plants and other-than-human persons that are place-specific, contribute to community and political identity, and convey moral teachings on how to be a good human being.

This knowledge was also time sensitive. Certain plants actually change identities as they experience seasonal transitions so that a plant known to botanists as Gray’s lomatium

78 The 1870 census counted 11,000 settlers in the region, over half living in Walla Walla Through the 1870s though, settlers dispersed more, into river valleys. The decade saw a 700% increase in settler population from just a handful of families to 2,862 residents. The entire region had a settler population of 31,316 by the end of the 1870s. Meinig, The Great Columbia Plain, 240; Ficken, Washington Territory, 124-125.
79 Nancy J. Turner, Ancient Pathways, Ancestral Knowledge: Ethnobotany and Ecological Wisdom of Indigenous Peoples of Northwestern North America, Vol 2 (Montreal: McGill-Queen University Press, 2014), 300. Although this division of labor is gendered along a male-female binary, the ideal was that everyone participate in a cooperative, coordinated way. The devaluing of women’s labor is a settler-colonial imposition and does not accurately reflect the political and social realities of Plateau society in the time of Smohalla.
(Lomatium grayi), is latít-latit (little flowers) when it first appears as a vitamin C-rich vegetable but then becomes transforms into waʔwinu after it flowers and becomes less nutritious and palatable. Similarly, one of the most important roots, xamsí, which is often featured in spring salmon and root feasts, becomes aswaniya, or “slaves,” when the mature stalks become woody and fibrous.\textsuperscript{80} Women also learn how to determine when to harvest roots depending on elevation, generally moving up-slope as the snow melts and the spring progresses but also weighing the particularities of local microclimates where weather and landform create unique conditions. Relationships with plants also structured the time of an individual human’s life: an adult with particularly gendered responsibilities arrayed around caring for, and harvesting plant foods. In essence, conducting proper relationships with roots made it possible to become a woman.\textsuperscript{81}

Plateau women were responsible for making the crucial decisions when to move camps throughout the year. This required an extensive knowledge of ecology as well as skill at political bargaining within the human community and also with the plants in question. Within the “kincentric” ecology of the Columbia Plateau, Indigenous peoples understood plants as generous relatives that must be treated with respect and care. This ecological knowledge, then, can be seen as an expression of tamánwit: a legal order that does not make categorical differences between humans and the rest of nature or between the secular (material) and spiritual (inmaterial). As Tawatoy and others explained to Stevens and Palmer at the Walla

\textsuperscript{80} This change in status reflects Sahaptin and Salish political structures in general. The ways in which status and identity are not fixed essences possessed by individuals, but situational and based on who is in relation and when, and conditioned by access to certain powers derived by personal spirit helpers. While slavery was never widely practiced on the Plateau, the “aswaniya” designation might refer to the plant ceasing to be kin, or becoming socially useless. Ibid., 104.

\textsuperscript{81} Turner, \textit{Ancient Pathways}, 339. For personal stories of this transformation see Beavert, \textit{Gift of Knowledge}. 227
Walla Treaty Council, plants had to be addressed by their proper name given to them and could not be spoken about in generalities, as simply “resources”. For a root, berry, fish, or deer to continue to care for humans, humans have to sing particular songs or approach the other-than-human person with a talk, or “prayer” expressing humility and respect should that being be offended and withdraw their care, or, at worst, invite disaster onto an individual or their community. Ultimately, the kincentric ontology of the Indigenous Plateau meant that reproducing human political communities and practicing legal jurisdiction was always a more-than-human practice, one that required moving through an intimately familiar landscape, sometimes across great distances. The reproduction of healthy communities was contingent on seasonal mobility, something that became much harder to practice in the second half of the nineteenth century, as settlers, Indian agents, and a growing cohort of Indigenous farmers began to more thoroughly transform the ecological relationships composing the Columbia Plateau world.

4.6 Navigating Settler Geographies

Euroamerican farming came to reservations as Indian agents began to advocate more aggressively for the civilizing mission of “the Bible and the plow”. While this project largely failed on the Warm Springs and Umatilla Reservations (the former described by Oregon’s Superintendent of Indian Affairs A.B. Meacham as a “miserable, bleak, sterile devil’s

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82 Ibid., 105.
83 This predated, but would soon be bolstered by, Ulysses S. Grant’s “peace policy,” officially unveiled in 1868. Grant believed that missionaries, of any denomination—supposedly morally superior to secular agents—would serve as better models of civilization, would promote agriculture and “useful trades,” and discourage corruption in the Indian Dept.
garden\textsuperscript{84}), farming was met with varying degrees of success on the Yakama Reservation, which was located on rich and well-watered bottomland. While many Indigenous people found success farming on the reservation, seasonal rounds continued to be conducted, sometimes in addition to sedentary agriculture. Like many Ohio Valley people in the early nineteenth-century Ohio Valley, Indigenous people on the Plateau frequently found no contradiction in raising crops and herding cattle, while also following the teachings revealed by visionaries like Smohalla, even if these visionaries derided Euroamerican agricultural practices as antithetical to good relations. To the chagrin of Indian agents, Yakama-affiliated people farming on the Reservation often abandoned their crops after planting to follow their seasonal rounds gathering roots in the spring, moving into the mountains for berries, deer, and elk in the late summer and early fall, and moving back and forth from rivers to fish for salmon and other aquatic species in their own various seasons. This mobility was initially tolerated by reservation agents who either accepted seasonal rounds as a fact of Sahaptin and Salishan life in the region, or grudgingly admitted that treaty stipulations guaranteed that signatories could continue to hunt, fish, and gather in their “usual and accustomed places”\textsuperscript{85}. One agent even asked the Commissioner of Indian Affairs for an extension on the September 1\textsuperscript{st} submission date of his annual report since so many in his agency were off-reservation in mountain berry fields.\textsuperscript{86}

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{84} AB Meacham to Gen. ES Parker April 25, 1870, R10, Oregon Superintendency, RG75, NARA.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{85} On the Yakima Reservation, farmers often prepared and planted their crops in the time between off-reservation travel to dig roots, gather berries, medicine, and building materials, fish, and hunt: “I have the honor to report that during the month the Indians having finished putting in their crops most of them have gone to the plains of the Columbia to dig ‘kouse’ wild onion and spat-lum or bitterroot,” Winans to McKenny, June 30, 1871, Relander, R20, WA Supt, 1870-1871 TRA-042-02-005; From Meacham’s agency report from Warm Springs: “Agent Smith reports that a fair supply of Indian provisions consisting of roots, berries, and fish has been secured which together with such assistance as he can give will enable the people to get through the coming winter,” Oct 28, 1871, Oregon Suptcy Ind Affairs 1848-72, R10, Microcopy 2, RG75, NARA.}
\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{86} James H. Wilbur to General J.L. McKenny, July 9, 1867, R17, Records of the Washington Superintendency; Smith to Ross, Sept 10, 1870, R19, Washington Superintendency, RG75, NARA; Huntington to Cooley, Annual
Settler petitions and Indian agency reports complained continuously of livestock rustling, destruction of settler property, and “crimes of gross immorality” (sex work) especially in and around the two major population hubs, The Dalles and Walla Walla. In response, Indian agents sought tighter control of the mobility of their “charges.” As Andrew Fisher has documented, Indians who avoided reservation life for whatever reason became known among settlers, federal agents, and military men alike as “renegades.” Accused with perpetrating every attack or “depredation,” on settlers, “renegades” were charged with chopping down fences, burglarizing homesteaders, and making off with any horse not vigilantly guarded. Like they had in the Old Northwest and greater Mississippi Valley, settlers were, in the words of Adam Waterman, “effective in translating the material forms of place-making practiced by [Indigenous peoples] into an idiom of unredeemable savagery and atavistic malevolence.”

Because many “Dreamers” lived off-reservation in their traditional territories and tended to eschew US assimilationist projects, agents feared that they were “controlling” “renegades” through their “pretended spiritual revelations,” and “traveling from one reservation to another trying to induce the Indians who are residing on them to abandon their homes” and join their ranks, rejecting “civilization,” and fomenting hostility towards US settlers. It didn’t occur to these agents that off-reservation mobility and revelatory dreaming might have been something besides a stubborn resistance to “progress” and “civilization.” As they cast their jurisdictional


87 Settler fears of Indigenous attack, and the role of “Dreamer Prophets” in exacerbating these fears is explored at length in the following chapter. Huntington to Jes. C. Wilson, Dec 8, 1865, R9, Oregon Superintendency, RG75 NARA; Fisher, Shadow Tribe, Ch. 3.

net over the land, US Indian agents could only read Indigenous practices of sovereignty as criminal.\textsuperscript{89}

It was in this context that Smohalla first appeared in the US colonial archive. In December of 1860, following the trail of rustlers that had stolen horses from a military officer, Superintendent of Indian Affairs Edward R. Geary wrote a report “near the camp of an Indian named Smoke Hollow (the same known as Dreamer on Seven Mountains). The Indian is represented as being of notoriously bad character and having gathered about him a number of renegade and thievish Indians who are a great annoyance to settlers and parties passing to and from the northern mines. He is also said to be prominent among those who are exciting the Indians of the interior to the renewal of hostilities against the whites.” Geary suggested that Smohalla be apprehended and “turned over to the military for safe keeping…along with the desperadoes he is gathering around him.”\textsuperscript{90} Due to lack of military resources, but also because of administrative chaos at the Yakima Agency, Smohalla and members of his band were never taken into custody.\textsuperscript{91}

4.7 Private Property and Indigenous Landscapes of Care

In the years after the Civil War, immigration began yet another upswing and travelling to root-digging grounds became ever more perilous for Plateau peoples. Despite this, many communities continued their seasonal rounds, and sometimes successfully prevented Americans

\textsuperscript{89} NA Cornoyer to TB Odeneal, 1872, Oregon Superintendency, Relander Collection, TRA-043-17-001; Meacham to E.S. Parker, March 22, 1870, R10, Oregon Superintendency, RG75, NARA.
\textsuperscript{90} Geary to Abbott, Dec 5, 1860, R8, Oregon Superintendency, RG75, NARA.
from disturbing places made through generations of carefully cultivated ecological relationships. Near Colville, an Indigenous community refused to permit a settler family from settling in Paradise Valley, “claim[ing] said lands as their cammas [sic] ground, where they provide themselves annually with their winter supply of cammas food.”92 Many settlers welcomed root digging near their homesteads and expected seasonal encampments to spring up on or near their properties throughout the year. A Yakima Valley settler recalled Yakama people digging for celery root near Tieton (western Yakima Valley, approaching the Cascade foothills) every year until the 1930s.93 Similarly, ranch operator and horse broker R.E. Sisk remembered Indigenous women gathering “all kinds of roots,” in between hop-picking in the Moxee valley into the early twentieth century. However, regional Indigenous people also began to face an uptick in settler violence during this time. As one schitsu’umsh (Coeur d’Alene) man complained to a federal agent in a bid to get schitsu’umsh territories secured to them and protected from American settlement, especially the Paradise Valley, “We have had much to suffer from your white children; they kill, kick, slap, steal.”94

Historian and travel writer Frances Fuller Victor, who recounted her journey by rail, steamboat, and wagon through the Pacific Northwest in 1872, was impressed by the fertile valleys that lined the Columbia River, feeding the eponymous river. She identified the most desirable sites for settlement in the context of a regional grain boom, early developments in dryland agriculture, and the promise of a transcontinental railroad connector, and notes that

92 George W. Harvey to Samuel Ross, May 7, 1870, R20, RG75, NARA.
94 Charles Ewing To Sec of Interior, June 5, 1873, M1070 Reports of Inspections of the Field Jurisdictions of the OIA, Roll 56, RG75, NARA.
many of these places were fast filling with homesteads. Of the valleys that received some of Victor’s highest praises was that of Dry Creek, a tributary of the Walla Walla River, which she described as a pastoral paradise in the making. Inviting readers to “behold a new phase of this country,” Victor described the “perfectly charming” views of “this winding belt of cultivation,” that “like the effects in a picture,” dazzle the passerby with “[t]ints of green, yellow, and brown in the fields; russets and grays; white houses in the midst of orchards and gardens; the beautiful forms of native and cultivated trees grouped about the houses or fringing the creek,” livestock, and wagons loaded with hay, a farmer with his children. “[W]e find ourselves wondering why we have not always preferred the country to the town,” she gushed. Despite this vision of the present and future of Dry Creek as a settler space, it continued to be an Indigenous one. The insistence by Indigenous people that it remain so would soon lead to a violent encounter.

Near the end of wawáxam, the spring root digging time, a community of about one-hundred Sahaptin people, likely Walla Walla or Umatilla, moved to the head of Dry Creek to gather roots. Nearby, a trio of Indigenous men, reportedly intoxicated, approached a settler’s cabin, asking for tobacco. They were denied this request by the father of the settler family. Possibly offended by this show of disrespect and lack of generosity expected of good

95 Victor’s narrative is a good example of a hybrid travel narrative-cum-emigrant guide and she spilled a great deal of ink working against the perception that the inland Northwest was inhospitable to farming. On the contrary, not only was the land amenable to farming, but a condition for the rise of civilizations, as they had “in the rainless countries of Egypt, Peru, and Mexico. Moreover, the dry climate would lead to “superior intelligence” of the settler population “as it is well known a pure, dry air is stimulating to the mental faculties, while a moist, dull, or cloudy atmosphere is depressing.” Frances Fuller Victor, All Over Oregon and Washington: Observations of the Country, Its Scenery, Soil, Climate, Resources and Improvements (San Francisco: Joh H. Carmany & Co., 1872), 93, 98-100, 143, 155.

96 Victor reported that in Walla Walla Country, the government had surveyed 820,000 acres with 150,000 claimed, 20,000 acres claimed but not surveyed, and 63,377 acres “improved.” The population as of 1870 was 7,000 settlers, with 5,787 horses, 1,727 mules, 14,114 “neat” cattle, 8,767 sheep, and 5,067 hogs. Farmers grew Wheat, oats, barley, timothy, and corn as well as smaller crops of rye and buckwheat. Victor, All Over Oregon and Washington, 110, 115.
neighbors—offensive behavior they had probably already endured many times—the three men refused to leave. The settler patriarch knocked one of the Indigenous men to the ground and in the physical confrontation that ensued, the daughter of the settler family partially scalped one of the “intruders”. The three Indigenous men fled but were soon “whipped, captured, and lodged in jail.” Although the Walla Walla Union argued that “the matter should have ended by allowing the law to take its course with the affairs,” settlers organized an 80-man mob, who rode out to Dry Creek and “ordered the Indians to pack up and leave at once.” Consistent with Sahaptin political conventions, the headman of the village had no ultimate authority over the young men in his community, and thus could not be held responsible for their actions, admitting to the vigilantes that neither “he nor his people should be held responsible for the acts of individual drunken Indians.” The mob was unconvinced and refused the headman’s plea that the village remain for three more days.97

On the face of it, these villagers might be seen as lucky: settlers were well known to shoot freely at Indigenous people making their seasonal rounds across their properties and in this case, nobody was killed.98 The village was also preparing to depart to the Snake River to fish anyway, undoubtedly for the spring Chinook salmon run, so most of their root digging had gone on uninterrupted before this encounter.99 What this incident does show is how the tightening of the net of private property and its armed defenders—sometimes working outside of US law, but always outside of Indigenous legal jurisdiction—posed a threat to the social and

political reproduction of Indigenous communities and the exercise of their own legal jurisdiction. The fictive overlay of private property was made material through anti-Indigenous violence or the threat of it. The visions, songs, and ceremonial procedures that Smohalla received from the land of the dead anticipated a future ushered in by renewed relations to roots, salmon, and all other-than-human relatives, a world renewal that saw the end of a settler colonial regime of private property and the reorientation of ecological relations towards the capitalist market.

The success of diplomatic overtures by US federal officials depended on a knowledge of Indigenous seasonal mobility that included travel to root digging grounds. One summer in the 1880s, Captain Eli L. Huggins, Acting Inspector General of the Department of the Columbia journeyed to P’na Village to seek out Smohalla. Huggins’s search was in vain, as Smohalla was encamped with his community at their root digging grounds in the Kittitas Valley. Huggins would have better luck in the early fall, encountering Smohalla by surprise while the former was “encamped on a tributary of the Yakima,” probably Toppenish Creek, where Wanapums travelled annually to gather huckleberries before returning to P’na for the winter. In the interview that ensued, later published in the Overland Monthly and Out West Magazine, Smohalla drew on a lifetime of knowledge and experience to counter, one-by-one, all the usual claims American settlers had made about Indians while affirming his commitment to the

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100 The date of Huggins’ visit is unknown as he describes it vaguely as “some years ago”. Huggins was appointed Acting Assistant Inspector General of the Dept. of the Columbia in 1882 and published the article in 1891, so it would have been sometime between these dates, Huggins, “Smohalla,” 210. For biographical information on Huggins see, Carolyn Thomas Foreman, “General Eli Lundy Huggins,” Chronicles of Oklahoma Vol. 13, No. 3 (Sept. 1, 1935): 255-265.

101 Pakayatut (Birds Feeding in a Flock), Smohalla’s nephew and Washaat practitioner, mentions Toppenish Creek as an important berry gathering place for Wanapum people, Puck-Hya-Toot (Chief Johnny Buck) to Relander, March 23, 1951, Relander Collection, 14.
persistence of his people and all their relations into the future. He reminded Huggins that settlers had come to his country dependent on their knowledge to survive but then transformed the land into private property: “[b]ut for the Indian the white man would be poor and miserable, We have made him what he is…The Indians guided them into the best valleys, and pointed out to them the best springs. The white men fenced up their springs, and would not let the Indians water their ponies there.” Whitman “opened his bottle” of “poison” and soon after, “the white men began to kill all the Indians they could. They would come to a village and profess friendship, and then rise in the night and kill men, women and, children.”

Smohalla also pointed to the hypocrisy of white settlers who remained unmolested on large swaths of land that they did not cultivate or graze livestock on, and reminded Huggins that that if he did decide to plow his land, “it would not protect me.” He refused to engage with Huggins’s insistence that Indigenous people, along with the game they hunted, were on the path towards inevitable extinction and should assimilate into American society by adopting an Anglo-American work ethic. Instead, Smohalla deflected, marking the crucial differences between what “work” meant to Wanapum people and the hegemonic ideal of work in Protestant/secular American society. Wanapum people worked hard to gather fish and dig roots, but it did not “harden soul and body” like the “work of the white man.” Work was the fulfillment of specific obligations to other-than-human kin who offered their gifts so that human people could live. “We simply take the gifts that are freely offered,” Smohalla explained to Huggins when the former inquired about digging roots, “[w]e no more harm the earth than would an infant’s fingers harm its mother’s breast.” American settlers, on the other hand, were

violent, extractive, “tear[ing] up and mutilat[ing] the earth…run[ing] deep ditches, cut[ting] down forests, and chang[ing] the whole face of the earth.” In distinguishing Sahaptin ways of relating to the earth from Anglo-capitalist ones, Smohalla was implicitly indicating the generations of women who with reverence sang and talked to the plants, who carefully weeded around them so that they could grow strong, and spent winters weaving baskets while children gathered around to hear their stories and imagine the bounties that these vessels would someday contain.

Huggins emphasized for his readers the resistance of Smohalla to civilization-as-work: “‘My young men shall never work,’ said he with a wave of the hand, including numerous imaginary Indians, as well as the two seated near by. ‘Men who work cannot dream, and wisdom comes to us in dreams.’” Yet it would be a mistake to take this statement at face value and interpret it as a tragic disengagement from a world irrevocably lost through settler colonialism. Smohalla was not arguing for a passive flight or an idle escape from an intolerable historical present—melancholic daydreaming of an imagined past of purity and perfection. Rather, Smohalla was expressing to Huggins the need for the time to employ the technology of dreaming: the time necessary for the arduous and dangerous journey to the land of the dead. The time to conduct the ceremonies necessary to restore relations with a living earth. The time to usher the people towards a future of abundance. Dreaming for Smohalla named the activity that would produce a material future that extended beyond the single life of an individual. Laboring in a field or a shop for a wage, for food to eat, is not enough to sustain a

103 Ibid., 214.
104 This is Christopher Miller’s assessment in the now classic Prophetic Worlds.
people and the land that constitutes them. Dreaming named a technology that would facilitate the practice of an ontology of care, the practice of Indigenous jurisdiction.

Huggins considered himself sympathetic towards the injustices faced by Indigenous people in the US and urged policymakers to “deal generously, justly, and mercifully towards the remnants of a proud and sensitive race who have suffered unspeakable wrongs at our hands.” Like many of his contemporaries, he saw no contradiction in this attitude and his endorsement of a radical assimilation policy, including compulsory education of Indigenous children at American boarding schools. Yet he was also pessimistic that white settlers and Indians could ever tolerate living alongside each other. In an 1885 article weighing in on the “Indian Question,” Huggins described the process by which an idealist philanthropist from the Northeast becomes an Indian hater capable of genocidal violence, merely by witnessing Indigenous ceremony which, in settler minds, was the expression of a fanaticism that could only lead to the “warpath”. Proximity to the “frantic orgies” and “weird music” of Indians conjured in the settler “the tales of Indian massacres which fill so many pages of our history. He soon looks upon the Indian as an uncanny and dangerous creature possessing few human attributes; and becomes as unscrupulous as any ‘old-timer’ as to the means of getting rid of him.” This transformation of the Eastern philanthropist into Indian-hater could lead to an explosive situation should an “‘Indian scare’ arise,” Huggins warned.

Huggins knew that this was all provoked by a certain kind of settler fear rooted in a much longer history of American colonialism. “[N]o other hatred is so bitter and unreasoning as

that prompted by fear,” Huggins admitted, and that under such conditions, “the thin veneer of civilization gives way” and the settler “becomes as savage as any Indian.” According to this logic, the settler, through his genocidal fear of “Indians,” becomes an “Indian” himself. The forward momentum of settler time is thus arrested. Huggins goes farther to suggest that settlers are hopelessly entrapped within this cycle of frontier violence through an anticipatory fear: “It is no use to tell the settler that the Indian will remain peaceable if justly treated, for he knows that injustice is very likely to be committed, and *hates the Indian in anticipation of the revenge he fears.*” Notice the passive voice of this statement. Who will commit this injustice? A fellow settler? Huggins himself?

The next chapter will explore this configuration of settler fear in terms of settler prophecy, which was threatened by Indigenous peoples’ refusal to disappear. Settlers anticipated a future of technological progress and the transformation of the land into parcels of private property and market commodities, but they were also haunted by the violence of a past that would not simply go away. They often contradictorily recognized their role and their ancestors’ role in injustices towards Indigenous peoples while also moving towards innocence in their stories about the past. While chapter 3 dealt with elite colonialists: railroad and canal boosters, Indian agents, scientists—men of letters, the following chapter addresses how more ordinary settlers responded to threats to the supposedly inevitable fulfillment of the settler prophecy anticipated at least as strongly as they anticipated Indigenous revenge.

106 Ibid., 570. Italics mine.
Chapter 5: Settler Fears of an Unsettled Future

Smohalla was one among many Indigenous visionaries of his time, yet he appears by name in settler archives—in official government documents, and the diaries and accounts of ordinary people—more than any other “Dreamer” prophet.¹ This may be because he was a man: there were numerous female prophets, as well as those that might today be considered two-spirit, but they did not provoke the same level of fear in settlers that their male counterparts did, as Indigenous men were more often associated in the settler imagination with military uprising, pan-Indian conspiracy, and threats to white womanhood. A second reason might be the geographical location of Smohalla’s band of mostly Wanapum people. They resided on the edge of some of the most sought-after settlements on the Columbia Plateau, in the rich east-west river valleys that that drained the Cascade Mountains: the Yakima, Kittitas, and Klickitat. Smohalla’s P’na village was also at arms length from the northern shipping terminus on the Columbia River at Priest Rapids, where, by the 1860s, ever more prospectors, cattle drivers, and packers, were venturing north to the British Columbian gold districts and westward across the Cascade Mountains to Puget Sound. It was also near the Yakama Reservation where Indian agents, especially the fervently Methodist James Wilbur, feared that Dreamers would undo his relentless work to civilize Indians by luring them away from a Christian, agricultural life that corresponded with labor discipline and orientation towards capitalist markets.

¹ “Dreamer” was a moniker applied by outsiders, not by Plateau practitioners of the Washat specifically, or prophetic visionaries more generally. Beavert, The Gift of Knowledge, 98. For North American Indigenous revitalization movements as normative see Miller, “Every Dream is a Prophecy.”
But perhaps the central reason why Smohalla was so feared by settlers was because he articulated a futurity at odds with settler future imaginaries. As I explored in chapter 3, Euro-American settlers had their own prophetic tradition, one in which they were destined either by God or nature to “overspread the continent” with their superior civilization, democratic institutions, and increasingly, railroad and other steam technologies. Though not universally shared, this teleological narrative conditioned the expectations of settlers who sought to make their fortunes in the homelands of Columbia Plateau peoples. It’s no coincidence that Smohalla shows up in settler archives at particular points of acute settler anxiety: moments in which settler projects were frustrated or looked like they might not pan out. In this case, these settler anxieties intensified in the 1870s. Bookended by the Modoc War and the Nez Perce and Bannock Wars on the peripheries of the region, settlers languished through the decade as expected railroad connectivity did not materialize and the Panic of 1873 frustrated their hopes of agricultural success.

There was something especially pernicious to settler colonialists about spiritual leaders—Indigenous or otherwise—who resisted US hegemony. Figures like Smohalla posed an existential threat to those Americans who anchored their national identity to the image of rational republicanism, the performance of which required skepticism towards “superstition,” excess religiosity, and charismatic leaders who expressed these traits. In one of the earliest reports of its kind by an Indian agent on the Plateau, William Kapus fretted to the commissioner of Indian affairs in 1861 that “Prophets and Dreamers, who used to work in secret are becoming

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more bold…though they pretend that it is solely for the purpose of worshipping the great spirit in their own peculiar manner, it is very evident that there is something behind all this, which is not fully understood by the whites.”

3 Like the orientalist figure of the “dusky Mohamet” conjured by Northern Pacific promoter Eugene Smalley to describe Smohalla, Kapus is bothered by the mystical presence surrounding Dreamer prophets and their followers, that there is “something” that has yet to be exposed about the inner workings of Indigenous life. The danger here is that spiritual leaders like Smohalla would subvert the civilization process—and challenge the authority of Indian agents—by duping their credulous followers through their “pretend” spiritual machinations, leading them away from the rational presence of mind necessary for their transformation into virtuous republican citizens, or at least obedient workers. “He has exercised a great influence over his tribe and other Indians as a Medicine Man,” worried a pair of ferry operators at White Bluffs, “and is therefore more dangerous.”

The fear expressed by Kapus and others, that there was something that white people could never fully understand about Indians like Smohalla, indicates the presence of something that remained always inaccessible and thus uncolonizable by settlers invested in the project of complete settler sovereignty. Smohalla became a monstrous figure to the settler colonialist, an ever-present specter of a loss of control, a reminder that settler colonialism would never be—could never be—a finished project. In a sense, these settler fears were not entirely unwarranted; Smohalla and other Dreamers were threats to settler colonial projects in their refusal of settler futurity and the insistence of their own temporal sovereignty. There was some truth to Kapus’s

3 William Kapus to Edward R. Geary April 9, 1861, R17, RG75, NARA.
5 James Ritchie and Thomas Howe to Edward R. Geary, March 6, 1861, R19, RG75, NARA.
hunch that something beyond religious worship subtended Smohalla’s teachings. But this something wasn’t an anti-white conspiracy, or “Indian superstition.” Smohalla and other Sahaptin and Salishan visionaries were articulating Indigenous futurities that depended on maintaining a multitude of relations with a dynamic and animate world that made them Wanapum, Yakama, Walla Walla, Palus, Spokan, or Umatilla people.6

This chapter argues that settler fears of Indigenous conspiracy to commit violence legitimized pre-emptive anti-Indigenous violence. Not only this, but settlers needed “Indian Wars” and settler martyrs to imagine a just claim to the land. Instead of attempting to understand why and how conflicts on the peripheries of the Columbia Plateau between Indigenous and settler communities might spread through Indigenous networks of kinship and war, beyond the settler-Indigenous contexts, US military leaders and ordinary settlers in the region framed all Indigenous people guilty of fomenting anti-settler violence by association.

This had disastrous consequences for one Umatilla group who, attempting to remove themselves from violence on the peripheries of the region, found themselves in the thick of settler anxiety and fear, which manifested materially through a massacre in the heart of their homeland. The retributive killing of a settler couple that followed this massacre was seen by settlers not as an act of Indigenous justice but an unprovoked and savage sacrifice of innocents, a martyrdom which legitimized the rightful occupation of Indigenous lands by settlers and further violence against regional Indigenous people. Settlers narrated their recent past using tropes drawn from both popular literature and their own experiences in the Old Northwest.

6 For prophecy as an insistence of Indigenous futurity see Estes, Our History is the Future. For the political stakes of Indigenous temporal sovereignty see Rifkin, Beyond Settler Time.
Ordinary settlers were less interested in spreading republican institutions across the land, and more narrowly focused on accessing what they believed was rightfully theirs as white Americans—access to and control of their own private property. They legitimized these claims through their stories of sacrifice in the face of the supposedly inherent violence of Indians who stubbornly refused to recede into the past.

5.1 Anticipating Settler Futures in a New Northwest

Mining traffic through the region lulled by the end of the 1860s, and this undoubtedly brought relief to Indigenous communities who experienced these mineral rushes as a flurry of unpredictable violence. Agricultural activity, however, accelerated. Historians of the region have identified a shift in settler orientation during this time. Farmers and ranchers began to look towards broader, global markets rather than confining their scope to local rumors of the latest mining booms.7 “[L]ong after the placer mines have the gold washed out of them…our pastures and fields will support in affluence a population greater than the mines ever can,” a writer for the Dalles Daily Mountaineer prophesied.8 In the wake of a catastrophic civil war, a sense of technological optimism prevailed across a nation eager to stitch itself back together. Upon the completion of a telegraph line from Walla Walla to Wallula, the Walla Walla Statesman newspaper proclaimed, “This will be one more link in the chain that binds us to the rest of the world, and will go far to dispel the belief entertained by those who have never been here, that

7 Meinig, The Great Columbia Plain, 233.
8 The Dalles Daily Mountaineer, December 10, 1865.
we are on the extreme outpost of civilization.”

The Great Columbia Plain was well on its way towards global integration as “a shining light or star of magnitude in the Pacific constellation.”

To a great extent, this sustained agricultural growth was encouraged by the promise of the future completion of the transcontinental Northern Pacific Railway as well as the numerous branch lines yet to materialize. Conventional histories of railroad expansion emphasize the ways in which transportation technology created new geographies and population patterns, but in the case of the Columbia Plateau, it was the promise of future railroad building that attracted settlers. Railroad boosters and local commercial interests filled newspapers with prophetic visions of the Pacific Northwest as the site from which the inevitable westward march of civilization would reach its ultimate fulfillment: “When the North Pacific Railroad shall have been completed, the business marts of the East will be placed within our grasp, and an unlimited market afforded for all the surplus products of this vast country...Let the timid falter and flag in their industries, if they cannot be induced to go forward and onward in the march of civilization and prosperity,” a regional booster trumpeted in the Walla Walla Union.

The railroad would literally be the technology to carry Americans across the temporal plain of civilizational progress, breaking links to European despotism once and for all, “making the world Republican” by “knocking the fetters off the people forever…uniting in the bands of fraternal fellowship the whole brotherhood of man,” according to “Nonpareil,” who evangelized from the pages of the July 27, 1872 edition of the Walla Walla Union. “Steam, the great civilian,” was in the process of completing the unfinished work laid down by the rhetoric of the

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9 Walla Walla Union, March 12, 1870.
10 “Our Climate and its Produce,” Walla Walla Union, April 9, 1870.
11 Ibid.
Founding Fathers but “with ties tenfold stronger than tongue or pen ever made.” Railroad technology itself was “forming a contract between section and section which can never be annulled. In short, [railroads] are giving iron guarantees of a higher civilization, a wider enlightenment, a mightier power, than the world has ever yet seen.”

Though undoubtedly a greatly exaggerated version of the hopes and dreams of ordinary Americans, these expressions of railroad futurity demonstrate a growing sense of entitlement among settlers, many of them second-generation descendants of overlanders to Oregon Country or Ohio Valley settlers, who felt like their sacrifices and the sacrifices of their forbearers should be rewarded through market integration with the rest of the nation. Never fear, crowed Selucious Garfield, in a long-winded speech delivered at the Washington City YMCA in 1869, the long sea voyages around Cape Horn and the rutted overland trails made shipping expensive and travel miserable, “But now the dawn of a better day is upon us; and the pioneers of civilization, who have waited, and struggled, and hoped, until hope was merging into despair, may look forward to the early sunburst of a brighter day.”

Through the 1870s, settler optimism was stifled by a growing anxiety that the expansionist prophecies they had invested in would not be self-fulfilling. Rampant corruption, insolvency, the reneging of promises over the routes and terminus points, and the financial Panic of 1873 (itself partially caused by the collapse of railroad investments), all compromised public confidence in the fulfillment of the railroad’s promise to provide markets for local

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12 Walla Walla Union, July 27, 1872.
13 Selucious Garfield, "The North-West Coast" lecture, Lincoln Hall, Washington City, November 15, 1869 in Walla Walla Union, January 15, 1870; for settler entitlement legitimized by narratives of sacrifice see Ficken, Washington Territory, 106.
agricultural products. The decade of the 1870s as a whole was, for the Columbia Plateau, a decade of uncertainty. No one knew where railroad branch lines would ultimately be located and thus, where the hubs of commerce would be. Rather than building along the most efficient routes, the fulfillment of local political interests was often the most decisive factor.

Occasionally, entrepreneurs from particular localities, frustrated with the slow pace of railroad building, planned their own rail lines and wagon roads. These “people’s roads” were celebrated on paper, but largely unsuccessful. An important exception was a rail line running from Walla Walla to Wallula, completed in 1875, that finally provided a more efficient link between Walla Walla and the Columbia River, and out to the Pacific.

The uncertainty of road and rail-building, in combination with new Indigenous-settler conflicts at the region’s peripheries, would lead to reactionary violence. Dreamer prophets would be targeted by multiple and often competing and conflicting settler colonial interests—railroad builders, land speculators, farmers, ranchers, Indian agents, and military men—as primary threats to the unfolding of a settler future—what one historian has described as an ideal of a republican landscape—on the Columbia Plateau.

5.2 The Landscape of the Modoc War

If American settler prophets had a print mouthpiece in the mid-nineteenth century it was surely Bret Harte’s Overland Monthly, a magazine that did much to shape perceptions of the

15 Ficken, Washington Territory, 113-114.
North American West for the Anglophone reading public in the latter half of the nineteenth century. In his work on this periodical, literary historian Stephen J. Mexal characterizes its content as a series of “theorias, or political travel narratives,” that place into dialogue the republicanism of the East with the atomistic individualism of the West, to form new liberal subjects who would then transform the premodern wilderness into civilized space.\(^{17}\) This Turnerian transformation also had a prophetic dimension in which the magazine’s contributors projected settler futurity onto the landscape they described for their readers, many of whom had never set foot in the West.\(^{18}\)

In his “District of the Lakes,” J. Wassen travels through northeastern California and Southeastern Oregon, describing an excitingly strange landscape. In an early appeal to tourist economies in places with no apparent material resources to extract, Wassen touts this region, “with its dense forests and weird deserts, picturesque mountains and delightful valleys, and silent waters enclosed by perpendicular walls of mysterious formation,” as being a “scene of enjoyment for the tourist and lover of all that is grand, beautiful, and peculiar in nature.” Beyond a mere cache of resources, the West could also be a place where the sublime enjoyment of strange landscapes was in itself useful as a means to enrich the modern subject. Included in this experience was the sight of “natural trails” “carefully flanked at favorable intervals with little bastions and semi-circular breastworks of loose stones—mementoes of Indian skill and strategy.” These formations, already in the process of becoming artifacts of “the expiring race,”

\(^{17}\) Mexal also points out how federal agents drew on material from travel narratives like “District of the Lakes,” and even used versions of them as part of their reports. Stephen J. Mexal, Reading for Liberalism: The Overland Monthly and the Writing of the Modern American West (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2013), 39, 50-51.\(^{18}\) There seems to be an implicit assumption that readers would do so eventually, another way the magazine projected the future.
could be registered in settler time as a prehistory to the unfolding of American civilization just
as the earthworks of ancient mound-builders had in the Old Northwest earlier in the century.\textsuperscript{19}

Wassen was already imagining the Klamath Basin as a tourist attraction devoid of
Indigenous presence. He spoke too soon in declaring the fulfillment of settler prophecy,
however, as only a year and some months would pass before the Modoc War erupted, in which
Modocs, known to themselves as Móatokni Máḵlaks, refused to be transformed into relics to be
consumed by American settlers. Settler violence against the Móatokni Máḵlaks was in reaction
to the latter’s insistence on their own future, a future in the homeland that made them Móatokni Máḵlaks.\textsuperscript{20} What for Wassen had been only months previously curious and admirable
fortifications, built by a declining race who were “hardly to blame for the tenacity displayed in
[the] defence” of their country, were now active tools of Indigenous resistance. They had
suddenly become actual threats to settler lives and property—lives and property that were
invested in a real, material way, in settler futurity. With settler prophecy literally on the rocks, a
landscape promoted by travel writers as the geological sublime suddenly turned sinister and
settlers across the Pacific Northwest began to read ominous signs everywhere in the basaltic
landscape.\textsuperscript{21}

\textsuperscript{20} The Modoc War was fought in the seven months between November 1872 and June 1873. It has its origins in
return of Móatokni Máḵlaks to their homeland from the Klamath Reservation in 1870, after the federal government
was unable to adhere to treaty promises there. The return of Móatokni Máḵlaks led to conflict with local settlers
who resented their reappearance. These settlers appealed to President Grant for the removal of Móatokni Máḵlaks
back to the Klamath Reservation, which he obliged. As a US army contingent surrounded a Móatokni Máḵlak
village to forcibly remove them, the villagers disbanded and made their way to the safety of the lava beds in
northern California—part of the vast and varied Móatokni Máḵlak landscape. On their way to the lava beds,
warriors killed eleven settlers, leading to the start of the war.
\textsuperscript{21} Wassen, “The District of the Lakes,” 163.
As the Móatokni Máḵlaks continued to successfully hold off US troops from the lava beds in Móatokni É-ush, the center of their country (known by settlers as the southern Klamath Basin), settler fears of Indian war were reignited across the region more broadly. Over four hundred miles north of the conflict on the Columbia Plateau, rumors began circulating among settlers of pan-Indian uprisings and race war. The killing of General Canby by Móatokni Máḵlak warriors at a peace commission on April 11, 1873, “inflamed the whole Indian population of the Northwest,” itinerant preacher George W. Kennedy reminisced in his 1913 book *The Pioneer Campfire*. On his ride through the Yakima and Kittitas valleys in the spring of the Canby killing, Kennedy recalled that “the Indians all over the interior were uneasy, and many of them took the ‘Warpath,’” reflecting a common settler perception that a homogenous Indian race was operating through a centralized, hierarchical command structure analogous to the US military. “Dodging through as best I could, I found the people [settlers] badly scared and ready to fort up.”

Settlers read Indigenous conspiracy into the land, into the very soil and stone that leaders like Smohalla instructed should be touched, as their mother, only with the greatest care. Local settlers blamed Smohalla and other “renegades” for constructing earthworks in preparation for a siege. Of particular concern was the vast triangle of land bounded by the Nez Perce, Umatilla, and Yakima reservations, and specifically the vicinity of White Bluffs and Smohalla’s P’na Village located to the west, just below Priest Rapids. Yakima agent James Wilbur reported to Superintendent of Indian Affairs Robert H. Milroy that the Modoc War had

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24 Ruby and Brown, *Dreamer-Prophets of the Columbia Plateau*, 52.
stirred up settler fears and that “Reports were put in circulation that two thousand indians armed and well-fortified had gathered at White Bluffs in the Columbia River, and were about to break out on the Settlements. Quite a number of the white families left this country: others went into fortifications and applied to the government for arms to protect themselves during the approaching struggles.”

Similarly, the *Walla Walla Union* reported “that 1,500 Indians have thrown up two and a quarter miles of breastworks at Priest Rapids,” and that they were erected “with a view of withstanding a siege.”

It’s difficult to ascertain whether settlers were motivated by actual fear of Indigenous people or had other reasons for drumming up Indian hostilities. It had been common since the earliest days of US settlement of the region to agitate local Indigenous peoples into retaliation in an attempt to draw in Federal troops or mobilize citizen militias, to annul treaties to access reservation land, to legitimize massacres, or to file bogus claims for property destroyed by “Indian depredations.” A letter extracted from an unnamed individual who happened to be stationed with troops at the Oregon lava beds during the Modoc War suggested that this settler strategy was widespread. The letter describes the “beautiful country on the ‘Spokan River’ rich soil, with fine timber, there is plenty of land just as good on which the Indians are now living, but the whites have deliberately chosen the Indians land, so as to make trouble, for that brings soldiers, and they bring money. [A]re not these things known in Washington [DC]? [I]f they are why is not something done to prevent these outrages[?]” Yakama Agent Wilbur similarly

25 Wilbur to Milroy, August 26, 1873, R1, Yakima Indian Agency, NARA, RG75; ARCIA Yakima Agency, 1873.
28 Delano to EP Smith May 16, 1873, M234, R912 Letters Received by the Office of Indian Affairs 1824-81, RG75, NARA.
observed the same year that in the Yakama Valley, “a class of irresponsible whites were quite anxious to have a war, that the treaty might be broken up and the land of the [Yakama] reservation opened for white settlements.”

Whether or not settlers were actually afraid of Indigenous violence, settler stories of imminent Indian war dovetailed with broader anxieties. One of these anxieties was that the region was not developing into the agrarian utopia expected by settlers. The decline in mining by the end of the 1860s eliminated one important market for regional produce and cattle, and the lack of adequate shipping made exporting grain prohibitively expensive, even as growers experienced bumper crops. Settlers were not unified in their visions of progress and improvement and used the threat of Indian hostility towards different ends. Cattlemen drummed up fears of Indian hostilities in an attempt to inhibit the spread of farmers into the prime grazing range in the Yakima Valley, for instance. Even those who dispelled rumors of Indian uprisings—like Walla Walla newspapermen who attempted to debunk rumors of Indian hostility—were acting from their own interest in settler futurity—they worried that a destabilization of Indigenous-settler relations would deter business interests from investing in the region and impede the construction of transportation infrastructure to move agricultural products, timber and mining resources to market.

Rumors of imminent Indian attack proliferated because they activated perhaps the most central settler colonialist fear, that the smooth transformation of the Plateau’s landscape from an alien desert of basalt cliffs, channeled scablands, and broken coulees to the agrarian Inland

29 James Wilbur, ARCIA, 1873, Yakama Agency, 313; Fisher, Shadow Tribe, 70.
30 Ruby and Brown, Dreamer-Prophets of the Columbia Plateau, 59.
31 Ficken, Washington Territory, 124.
Empire of their dreams was not the self-fulfilling prophecy it had once appeared to be. For settlers, Indigenous refusal of this preordained agrarian transformation represented a deviation from the supposedly natural trajectory of history itself, and prophetic figures like Smohalla personified this deviance.32

Rumors that Smohalla’s band were preparing for war were finally put to rest by a military commission led by Doug Ballard, who was “sent...to those ‘lava beds’ on a tour of inspection” to “go and see for himself what the Indians are about.” Upon arrival to Priest Rapids, Ballard and an interpreter were treated hospitably and reassured by the “Chief,” probably Smohalla, that those at Priest Rapids were “well disposed of whites and that neither he nor his people had any desire to molest any one.” Predictably, the “Chief” reminded Ballard that the neither he, nor any other leader had any ultimate authority over the actions of their young men, or anybody else.33 For his part, Yakima Indian agent Wilbur found “nothing [at the Simcoe Agency] that indicated hostility on the part of the Indians,” and that “Such was their zeal for the right, I believe I could have raised five hundred men in a day that would have marched to the hottest part of the battle [against the Modocs].” Wilbur however “did find [a number of] whites were quite auspicious to have a war that the treaty might be broken up and the land of the Reservation opened for white settlements.”34

32 Travis Wysote and Erin Morton argue that the idea of “improvement” through agriculture and the transformation of ecological relationships underpin settler claims to indigeneity and naturalize Indigenous erasure, as white settler nativism “forces the land to lie for them” as “a new property-based reality for the white settler state,” Wysote and Morton, “‘The Depth of the Plough,’” 480-481.


34 Wilbur to Milroy, August 26, 1873, Yakama Agency Roll, RG75, NARA; ARCIA, Yakama Agency, 313.
When local settlers read the landscape and saw “breastworks” and “fortifications,” what they really observed were “wing-dams” built for catching salmon in the pools left behind after river flooding, or, even more likely, the mining ditches and tail races that “Chinese miners have dug…along the bars and banks of the river.” The Walla Walla Union, a Republican paper, was ever suspicious of settlers getting their “Indian ‘scare on’” in order to advance what the editors saw as narrow, self-interested behavior risking the destabilization of society and the regional economy. Nevertheless, Walla Walla Union editors also drew on a shared language of the Modoc War, a conflict that historian Boyd Cothran has shown was widely publicized and voraciously consumed by the settler public, referring, in this case sarcastically, to the ‘lava beds’ of Priest Rapids.35 Also not lost on the Walla Walla Union editors was that building “intrenchments” would seem to go against Smohalla and other “Dreamers’” insistence that mining, ploughing, and digging irrigation ditches was an act of violence against the earth, that it would be “scratching their mother’s face” or breast. The editors condescendingly reassured readers that, despite the Chinese mining activity, “the face of mother earth is just as nature made it.”36

“Dodging through” the Yakima and Kittitas Valleys during the Modoc War scare, the Reverend G.W. Kennedy was actually on his way to visit Smohalla, who was encamped with about 200 people in the Kittitas Valley. Smohalla was probably less concerned with events hundreds of miles away in southern Oregon and more with gathering roots, an activity organized and conducted by women leaders of the village who directed the move from winter

35 “Those Fortifications,” Walla Walla Union, May 10, 1873; Cothran, Remembering the Modoc War.
villages into the valleys and uplands as days warmed and plants matured. Smohalla graciously met with an apprehensive Kennedy, who was worried that his party of evangelists would be ambushed at any moment by perfidious Indians in a repeat of the Peace Commission’s betrayal during the Modoc War. Kennedy led the meeting off with appeals towards the brotherhood of man, to which Smohalla allegedly replied, “If we are all brothers, why has the white man taken our lands from us? Has the white man any rights here in Kittitas that the Indian has any right to respect? The Indian came first.” One can imagine the awkward silence that hung before Kennedy piped up: “Well, that was an unanswerable speech. But I excused the white man all possible. ‘That we could plow and plant where they could not and still let them hunt and fish.’ And I promised utmost friendship on the part of the white brothers.” And with that, “under those balm and fir trees we most devoutly thanked God for saving us from savage treachery, and rode away.”

37 In reacting to Smohalla with speechlessness, Kennedy tacitly acknowledged Indigenous sovereignty and legal jurisdiction. But at the same time, Kennedy expressed the settler entitlement that assumes that US settlers should govern the dispersal of “rights” to Indians, to “let” Wanapums or others hunt and fish. To reject this offer of settler magnanimity, Indians would be rejecting the inevitable march of white settler civilization and at worse, prove their supposedly natural inclination towards “savage treachery,” rather than being seen as expressing genuine grievances and responding to the invasion of their lands.

Although Kennedy and his party were surrounded by dozens of women filling their large tule baskets full of bulbs or roots, the preacher did not include harvesting plant foods in his

37 “It was the influence of Father Wilbur’s agency over those Yakimas, that kept them quiet—for he certainly was a major general, in the management of Indians.” Kennedy, Pioneer Campfire, 201, 211-212.
proposed land use compromise. If he had understood the centrality of camas, cous, bitterroot, desert parsley, and dozens of other plants to Sahaptin and Salishan life, he would have known that divvying up the land into plowing and planting zones around which Indigenous people would circumnavigate to hunt and fish would have been impractical and insufficient, and, as discussed in the previous chapter, an impediment to the practice of an ontology of care expressed through the legal concept of tamánwit.

Surprisingly, federal agents expressed only minor concerns about the influence of Smohalla on Joseph’s band of Nimíipuu in the five years between the end of the Modoc War and the Nez Perce War in 1877 and little settler fear was palpable in local newspapers, even as tensions mounted. This all changed in 1878 as the Bannock-Paiute War, also on the margins of the territory, stirred up new spectres of pan-Indian conspiracy in the settler imagination. This fear was magnified by an act of anti-Indigenous violence, a steamboat attack on several groups of Indigenous peoples—identified across historical sources as Umatillas or Columbia River Indians—along the Columbia River between The Dalles and Wallula.38 This event, itself caused by a reactionary kind of fear, was deemphasized in contemporary reports and almost completely erased in subsequent histories. The act of Indigenous retribution in its wake, however, became proof in many settlers’ minds that Indigenous people were naturally violent and inherently duplicitous.

This act of retribution—the murder of a settler couple, the cattle rancher Lorenzo Perkins and his wife Blanche Perkins, nee Bunting—became a useful narrative for settlers

38 Historically, “Columbia River Indians” could have referred to any number of bands or nations including the Cayuse, Walla Walla, Umatilla, and Wanapum but by the end of the nineteenth century referred to anyone living off the main reservations in the region: the Yakama Nation, Confederated Tribes of Warm Springs, or Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation. See Fisher, Shadow Tribe, “Introduction.”
seeking to legitimize their occupation of Indigenous territories. Pioneer narratives and local histories plugged the “Perkins affair” into the mythological origin story of the United States: colonization as emerging through a bloody gauntlet—a “regeneration through violence”—from which true Americans emerge who had earned their rights to the land as martyred innocents.\textsuperscript{39} Importantly, the Perkins affair and its aftermath re-ignited settler fears, both of Smohalla, and one of his rivals for power and influence, Chief Moses, an Interior Salish-speaking Sinkiuse headman. Moses went out of his way to cultivate good relations with settlers and US federal officials alike while Smohalla—though advocating peaceful relations with newcomers—refused settler hegemony and the kinds of relations to land, humans, and other-than-human beings inherent to white settler practices of agriculture and private property. However, despite their important differences, Chief Moses and Smohalla became conflated in settler minds, especially because of the perceived threat posed by their mobility. As settlers became more anxious about where and when railroad connectivity would arrive, this threat of Indigenous mobility became more acute.

This fear was compounded by a new eruption of Indigenous-settler violence, which, like the Modoc War several years earlier, took place at the distance of hundreds of miles, but seemed just close enough to put settlers on edge. By the spring of 1878, settler encroachment on and especially the introduction of livestock to the Big Camas Prairie in present-day south-central Idaho led to ecological degradation of a place that had sustained Indigenous life since time immemorial. Additionally, starvation conditions at the Fort Hall Reservation became too

much to bear prompting a contingent of Bannock under Buffalo Horn, and their allies, to raid settlements on the Snake River Plain and then to organize against the US Army. The army, under the command of Civil War General O.O. Howard rushed in immediately to defend the embattled settlers.\textsuperscript{40} Near the end of spring, the Bannock, along with a small contingent of Shoshonis and Paiutes, extended their search for allies, travelling throughout the Snake River country and into eastern Oregon in June. Umatilla people and their Cayuse relatives were not unified in their attitudes and opinions about the conflict, however, and many continued to harbor an historical antipathy towards Bannock and Paiute people.\textsuperscript{41} In times of ramped-up fear, settlers tended to make little difference between “hostiles” and “friendlies” as subsequent events would show.

5.3 The Steamboat Massacre

As was customary to do in the late spring and early summer, a band of Umatilla people left their elders at their winter village on the Columbia River and travelled south to dig camas, probably in the region of the North Fork John Day, John Day River, or as far south as Malheur country—which was, for settlers and US military command, dangerously close to the location of Bannock and Paiute “hostiles”. According to Shaw-ou-way-coot-shy-ah, a Umatilla man interviewed in the early twentieth century, a small band of Paiutes rode into the Umatilla encampment there. Displaying a sizable herd of captured settler horses, the Paiutes appealed to

\textsuperscript{40} For a look at the environmental conditions that led to the conflict see Sterling Ross Johnson, “Newe Country: Environmental Degradation, Resource War, Irrigation and the Transformation of Culture on Idaho’s Snake River Plain, 1805-1927,” (MA Thesis, University of Nevada, Las Vegas, December, 2011).

\textsuperscript{41} The War came to the region in the form of a raid by Bannock warriors on the Umatilla Reservation and ended with the killing of Bannock war leader Egan by a Cayuse warrior Umapine. Karson, \textit{Wiyaxayxt / Wiyaakaa‘awn / As Days Go By: Our History}, 84.
the Umatillas to “do their part” in warring against “the whites”. The Umatilla people did not want to join the war party but feared that if they refused, the Paiute warriors would kill them. They fled with haste during the night, abandoning most of their belongings at the root camp, save for blankets and enough food for the journey back to the Columbia River.42

Before they could reach their village, however, the Umatilla band fell under attack, not by Paiute warriors, but by a steamboat outfitted with “what seemed like a machine gun.”43 “The white people from the Dalles they all organized and got guns and got a steamboat,” Shaw-ou-way-coot-shy-ah recalled. They then “went up to the village and they killed all the old people, that don’t do nothing all the old ladies and all the old men and before these Indians got back to their home they were all dead”.44 Other accounts tell of multiple attacks: one on a village called Now-wow-wee in which there were no casualties, another at Com-i-tal-lum on the Washington side, killing a man named Wâh-la-lowie who was struck in the stomach and a woman named Wah-lúl-mi, who was struck in the forehead. Many horses were also killed. As another band fled across the river near čáwpawá láakni known to settlers as Long Island or Christmas Island (now Blalock Island) towards the Washington side (it is unclear whether this was made up of people fleeing their villages under fire, the root-digging party fleeing the Paiute, or another group made up of locals residing in the permanent villages along the river), the steamboat again

opened fire, which this time, was returned from the top of the basalt bluffs overlooking the river, striking the pilot house of the steamer which had been armored with bales of wool.45

This armed and armored steamboat was the Spokane, an Oregon Steam and Navigation company vessel that had been retrofitted with a Gatling gun, an early machine gun developed during the Civil War and used as a tool for colonial expansion across the world.46 It was commanded by Major John Alexander Kress, Lieutenant Melville Wilkinson, Captain William Charles Painter, who was appointed by Gov. Ferry to assist Kress in commanding forty-two volunteers onboard the Spokane, and piloted by Oregon Steam Navigation (OSN) company captain William Gray. The steamboat would patrol the Columbia River on the lookout for “hostile” Bannocks and Paiute who were planning to infiltrate Indigenous communities to the north and west. A June 18th telegram from General Howard’s aid de camp J.A. Sladen, to Governor Ferry, reported that Bannock and Paiute militants were to move northward “toward Snake River continuing until they make a junction with the Columbia River Indians first going to the Umatilla and then the Northern Columbia Indians. They expect to form a junction with the latter and make a clean sweep of everything returning this way.”47 The military feared that the Bannocks and Paiute militants would gather forces from disaffected Indians around Wallula, the Simcoe (Yakima) and Umatilla agencies, and then northward along the stretch of the

46 James Maffie, “‘In the end, we have the Gatling Gun, and they have not’: Future Prospects of Indigenous Knowledges,” Futures 41 (2009): 53-65. Echoing twenty-first-century rationale supporting drone warfare, the inventor of the Gatling gun, Dr. Richard J. Gatling, hoped that the gun’s technological efficiency would reduce war casualties and make more warfare cleaner and more efficient. Paul Wahl and Donald R. Toppel, The Gatling Gun (New York: Arco Publishing, 1965).
47 J.A. Sladen to Elisha Ferry, June 18, 1878, WA Territory Secretary of State Indian War Correspondence Pt 2, in Relander Collection, TRA-057-13-002.
Columbia inhabited by Moses and Smohalla’s bands. Military leaders also theorized that there would then be a general, multi-pronged attack on white settlements from the Malheur to the Kittitas Valley. Threats of a general Indian uprising again became a central preoccupation of the US military and settlers alike. This had dire consequences for Indigenous communities regardless of their orientation towards the US government, Indian agencies, or American settlers.48

Andrew Dominique Pambrun, a former Hudson’s Bay Company man often employed as a translator for the US federal government was onboard the *Spokane* at the request of General Howard. Pambrun wrote about the attack(s) on the village(s) more luridly, describing a tranquil scene of women drying salmon and children playing along the beach—some watching the vessel approach—when without warning, the steamboat opened fire: “suddenly the destructive missiles came flying like hail, laying waste everything that came within their range, men, women, and children, lay in every direction, corpses, a few escaped and made for the hills.” In a post-massacre scene common in the nineteenth-century American West, volunteers descended into the camps to pillage for trophies and curios. Pambrun recalls seeing “many finely worked buckskin dresses and shirts in different saloons both in Portland and Vancouver, exhibited as fine trophies of the Massacre.” Though the massacre would quickly disappear from public

discourse, material remnants of the violence would circulate on the settler marketplace of memory both as texts and objects.\textsuperscript{49}

According to Sam H. Gill, the engineer of the \textit{Spokane}, the armed steamboat continued to patrol the river, looking for “hostiles”. Upon reaching čáwpawá láákni, the crew of the \textit{Spokane} found “a band of Indians with a large number of horses…coming west…evidently surprised at seeing the boat and began hastening to the next draw, for a hiding place.” The pilot began blowing the whistle of the steamer, “hoping to call them down to us for an interview and when he saw they were hurrying [sic] to evade us the Gatling gun was prepared and brought into action and the gun pointed directly at the fleeing band. The capacity of the gun is 400 shots a minute and we fired at them several minutes. It was to me a cruel proceeding for the Indians did not understand our call of the whistle. Our bullets made the dust fly on the hillside and finally we got our range directly into the band.” Upon landing at the foot of the draw, the soldiers went ashore in pursuit of the fleeing band but the latter lost the pursuing troops as they summited and descended the hill beyond the riverbank, leaving their horses behind.\textsuperscript{50} Gill describes a more orderly distribution of plunder here than at the scene at the village in Pambrun’s account. After wounded horses were “dispatched with well placed shots,” Major Kress “gave permission to those of our soldiers who were volunteers the offer of selection of a horse apiece,” and the remaining horses, some of them with backs stained with the blood their former riders, were herded alongside the river.\textsuperscript{51}

\textsuperscript{49} Pambrun, \textit{Sixty Years}, 131. For the concept of settler marketplaces of memory in the context of settler colonial violence see Cothran, \textit{Remembering the Modoc War}.

\textsuperscript{50} Gill, “Steamboating,” 6-7.

\textsuperscript{51} Ibid., 7-8.
Shortly after the attack, Major Kress wrote a glowing report of the incident and those involved to the command in Vancouver, praising Captain Painter and “‘his 42 volunteers from Walla Walla’” for his “‘good conduct and bravery’” as well as “the regulars together with Captain Gray with the officers and crew of the steamer, Spokane who stood firmly at their post under fire.’”\(^{52}\) This celebratory tone was echoed up the military chain of command, including from General Howard himself who commended Wilkinson “‘for efficiency in commanding the gunboat’ and being ‘a faithful officer’.”\(^{53}\) From Umatilla on July 21, the Lewiston Teller praised the continued efforts of the Spokane under Col. Wells and Capt. Gray for “doing very effective service and making it hot for the Columbia renegades,” by maintaining patrols and destroying the canoes, provisions, and “camp equipage,” of so-called hostiles.\(^{54}\) Local histories penned decades later would likewise praise the leadership and crew of the Spokane for their “vigilance,” even though they had let some of the Umatillas “escape” northward towards White Bluffs.\(^{55}\)

The few local newspaper reports in the immediate aftermath of the massacre(s) were more cautious with their praise of Kress and Wilkinson’s conduct. One concluded that Kress and Wilkinson were perhaps “Over Vigilant,” and that “the probability is” that the two men “have made a serious mistake. In their zeal to hinder the Indians from crossing the Columbia river it appears they have fired upon and killed and wounded peaceable savages whose only aim was to get away from the scene of hostilities.” Kress and Wilkinson’s haste in firing on fleeing non-combatants “without a pause to ascertain whether they were hostile or peaceable” was sure

\(^{52}\) Ibid., 4.


\(^{54}\) *Lewiston Teller*, July 26, 1878.

\(^{55}\) *An Illustrated History of Klickitat Yakima, and Kittitas Counties*, 164.
to backfire, “arousing otherwise friendly Indians to bloodshed.” The anonymous “telegram” warned ominously—prophetically it would turn out—that Kress and Wilkinson “have been a little bit indiscreet, and evil results will be the consequence.” In a similar vein the editors of the Walla Walla Statesman feared that Kress and Wilkinson’s carelessness would only stir up more fear and uncertainty, spreading instability in Indigenous-settler relations to the north where Moses enjoyed considerable power and influence among non-reservation Indians, but also among white settlers with whom he had cultivated friendly ties for many years. “Great anxiety is felt at this moment as to the course Chief Moses will pursue, and it is feared that Major Wilkinson’s wild raid up the Columbia will have the effect to drive him to hostilities,” the Statesman worried.

5.4 Reinscribing Tenskwatawa and Tecumseh in a New Northwest

The perception of both Moses and Smohalla held by American settlers was shaped by their experiences in the Ohio Valley and the historical narratives emerging from this experience—stories they told themselves about their past, and their family’s past, sometimes several generations removed, and then shaped over the years by popular narratives in books, newspapers, songs, and stage plays. Moses was described in the lengthy newspaper piece, “Moses and Smohalla,” as “perhaps more resemble[ing] Tecumseh in brain and form than any

57 “Chief Moses,” Walla Walla Statesman, July 13, 1878. Despite glowing reviews of his conduct, it’s possible that as federal officials received more details about the gunboat attack, they began to see Wilkinson’s role in a different light. Within weeks of the Spokane incident, Wilkinson applied for an eight-month leave of absence to look for a new occupation. Eventually he would be instrumental in developing late-nineteenth century Indian education as what he viewed as a necessary alternative to military intervention in Indian affairs, Collins, “Forest Grove Indian School,” 470.
Indian who has lived since that chief’s time.” The unnamed author of “Moses and Smohalla” likened Moses and the Sinkiuse resistance to American expansion in confederacy with the Wenatchi, Cayuse, Yakama, Palus, Umatilla, Spokan, and other Columbia Plateau peoples in the 1850s as heroic. Like Tecumseh, who had fought valiantly for his people with a patriotic virtue to rival George Washington—but had been vanquished as a worthy foe—Moses and the Plateau “confederacy” had also been conquered by American forces. But as other leaders were intimidated by Col. Wright’s retributive hanging of hostiles during the Yakima War as a passive, “conquered,” emasculated people, Moses “never surrendered” and has “sturdily maintained his independence…at peace with the whites since the war of 1855.”

If Moses resembled Tecumseh in his demeanor and place in settler history, Smohalla was likened to Tenskwatawa, the foil to Tecumseh’s “noble savage,” as “much inferior to Moses and subordinate to him,” as a “cunning” “Spiritualist and dreamer.” In contrast to Moses’s physical virility, Smohalla was depicted in nineteenth-century print as slight, hunchbacked, and deformed. Even the oft-told local legend that Moses and Smohalla faced-off

58 In September 1858, Col. George Wright led a retaliatory campaign after US military defeat of Col. Edward Steptoe against an estimated five hundred Yakama, Palus, Spokan, schitsu’umsh (Coeur d’Alene), and Kalispel (Pend d’Oreille) warriors (Steptoe had been sent to punish the entire Palus people after white miners were killed and settlers became fearful of an “Indian outbreak”). After Col. Wright’s forces defeated Indigenous forces in two battles, Wright went on a campaign of vengeance, hanging at least ten Indigenous prisoners he suspected of killing white settlers as well as Yakama leader Qualchan. Wright also ordered the slaughter of eight hundred Palus horses. Richard D. Sheuerman, Renegade Tribe: The Palouse Indians and the Invasion of the Pacific Northwest (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1986), 91. Also see Spokan Tribal Preservation Program and Bobbi Rose, “Battle of 1858 Lesson Plan,” Plateau Peoples Web Portal, https://plateauportal.libraries.wsu.edu/digital-heritage/battle-1858-lesson-plan-spoqi%CC%81n-spokan-curriculum (accessed 1/1/2023).

59 That this description of Moses and Smohalla was printed in St. Louis as well as in Pacific Coast newspapers speaks to the widespread legibility of Tecumseh stories, and narratives of the Ohio Valley frontier across the United States, and their continued importance to the ways in which Americans understood the unfolding process of colonizing the Pacific Northwest, “Moses and Smohalla,” From the San Francisco Chronicle in the St. Louis Globe-Democrat, August 16, 1878. For the role of Indian chiefs in the American imagination and in the creation of national mythology see Gordon M. Sayre, The Indian Chief As Tragic Hero: Native Resistance and the Literatures of America, From Moctezuma to Tecumseh (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2005).
in a skirmish resembles tales of the supposed rivalry between the Shawnee brothers related in chapter three. But while Indian prophets were not seen by the American settler reading public as heroic and tragic chiefs and worthy foes, they also didn’t quite fill the role of the “merciless Indian savage” either. As I discussed in Chapter 3, white Protestant Americans needed the figure of the Indian prophet to act as a foil for the formation of a rational secular subject required to spread civilization as American republicanism across the continent. But at the same time, when faced with fears of Indian conspiracy and revolt, settlers on the ground largely abandoned the abstract figure of the Indian Prophet. Neither the noble savage nor “dusky Mohammat” of sentimental writers, to many settlers on the Plateau, leaders like Moses and Smohalla became bloodthirsty savages, their followers reduced to bare life.

Depictions of Smohalla in print the previous year exemplified this role of the Indian Prophet in Gilded Age America, and also demonstrates the malleability of the roles, as another Indigenous leader would be cast in Tecumseh’s role. For a brief period during the 1877 Nez Perce War, several accounts in the popular press across the U.S—including two German-language newspapers—were explicit in casting Smohalla in the role of Tenskwatawa, this time in contrast to Nimíipuu Chief Joseph’s Tecumseh: “The Nez Perces Indian outbreak in Idaho seems to be the story of Tecumseh and the Prophet over again,” the Massachusetts Springfield Republican reported. This story and other versions of it appeared in other newspapers

60 This anecdote can be found in A.J. Splawn, Ka-mi-akin, the Last Hero of the Yakimas (Portland: Kilham Stationary & Printing Co., 1917), 348.

61 I’m referring here to the application of Agamben’s concept to the settler colonial context in which Indigenous peoples find themselves outside of the legal protections of the state and thus exposed to its violence, “marked for elimination.” Morgensen, “The Biopolitics of Settler Colonialism,” 73. Mormons were portrayed in the popular press at the same time in similar ways, though this was tempered by their closeness to whiteness. See Walker, Railroading Religion.
nationwide. Like the Tenskwatawa-Tecumseh dyad, Smohalla played the role of the false prophet, an imitation of the biblical Gideon, leading the Israelites to victory against their formidable Midianite enemy, inspiring in “the average savage that he shall yet see the day when he can glut his never-dying revenge upon the white man, exterminate the race, and again redeem to himself and his people the lands from which the whites have driven them.”

Smohalla’s “incendiary doctrine,” a perceived perversion of the lessons he had allegedly received from missionaries near the Yakima River in his youth, was aimed at the latent desires believed by Americans and others in the settler-colonial Anglosphere to reside in the hearts of all Indigenous and Black Americans—a desire to eradicate white people once and for all in an act of bloody vengeance. This was rarely understood by Americans as a legitimate Indigenous response to settler colonial violence. Instead it was understood in terms of an unbridgeable chasm between inherently different and competing races, always at risk of spilling out into total war. The temporal aspect of this was crucial. White, mainstream Protestants believed themselves to be the vanguard of civilizational progress, and anti-colonial violence by Indigenous peoples was understood to be an unfortunate, if tragic, attempt of the latter to forestall the inevitable. Joseph, like Tecumseh, was admirable in terms of American standards of masculinity, “in the full vigor of manhood…a model warrior chief—tall, well formed, of bold bearing, dignified demeanor, and every inch a leader.” Now indoctrinated by Smohalla’s “insidious teachings,” Joseph had become his “devoted disciple and willing tool,” ready to carry

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62 “The Story of Tecumseh and the Prophet Repeated,” Dodge City Times, July 21, 1877 (Reprinted from the Springfield Republican). German language newspaper reports include Der Deutsche Correspondent (Baltimore), July 06, 1877; Der Nordstern (St. Cloud, MN), July 26, 1877.
out a fool’s errand which nonetheless would prove “his subjugation…tedious and extremely difficult.”

In a familiar echo of discourse surrounding Tenskwatawa in the early nineteenth century, Indians, even the most trustworthy, were seen to be inherently credulous and irrational, “peculiarly sensitive to the influence of prophets.” Indian prophets were depicted by American commentators as priest-like “spiritists” who would mire their followers in a past of illiberal superstition, the antithesis of the civilization mission driving President Grant’s Peace Policy. More generally, Indigenous prophets also threatened the entire settler project by proposing an alternate future of Indigenous power and settler failure. For General Howard and others, this was a religious fanaticism, working outside of a rational politics that at its worst could stir Indians into a general race war. General Howard believed Smohalla had provided the ideological edifice that had compelled Young Joseph and his band to refuse to move to the Lapwai Agency and remain in their summer village in the Wallowa Valley, and winter near the mouth of the Grande Ronde River. The Bannock-Shoshoni and Northern Paiute were the next to fall in thrall of his “doctrine” and now that they were “subdued,” nonreservation “Dreamers” north of the Columbia River would have to be contained on reservations where they could learn the arts of civilization. Years later, Howard continued to express confidence that Smohalla “was

64 “The Story of Tecumseh.” For speculations on the influence of missionaries on Smohalla in his early adulthood, including accounts that he had learned vernacular Catholic practices from francophone voyageurs, Oblate fathers at the Saint Joseph’s Mission on Ahtanum Creek, or from Norbert Blanchet and Modeste Demers at Chemna Mission, see Ruby and Brown, Dreamer Prophets, 22. Other articles covering Smohalla from this time use the idea of this Indian prophet as a sounding board for other American anxieties ranging from Mormon polygamy and theocracy to proto-environmentalist worries of a despoiled “natural” landscape. In an early iteration of the ecological Indian figure—here posed in a sort of environmental revenge-fantasy—Smohalla joins other “truculent Indian[s]” in avenging the degradations of the fallen commercial world of advertisements debauching the sublime wilderness: “an expedition is about to start across the continent…,” Tipton Advisor, August 16, 1877 (reprint from Springfield Republican, Springfield, Mass.).
the head and front of all the lawless bands which went roaming over the country—Indians of whom the white settlers never ceased to be afraid."65

While praising Moses for his virtuous character, the author of the “Moses and Smohalla” article expressed ambivalence through his assessment of the threat the two leaders posed, and did not criticize or seek to dispel rumors that after finishing the campaign against the Bannocks, General Howard “intends [on] taking all his troops into the country occupied by Indian chiefs Moses and Smohalla, and forcing them either on the reservation or out of the country.” This legitimized fears of Indigenous violence by framing Moses and Smohalla as inherently dangerous, enough so that a federal military intervention was warranted.66 Indeed, General Howard himself viewed Smohalla as especially threatening, as “the cause of the restlessness of the Columbia River tribes, for [the ‘dreamer religion’] keeps alive the hope of supernatural aid, somehow, to come through a general Indian resurrection.”67 In the eyes of Americans like General Howard, Smohalla was the sinister counterpart of a civil or military leader. In contrast to Moses, the Tecumseh-like statesman, who might be celebrated as embodying republican characteristics—even while posing a potential threat to American expansion—Smohalla was a spiritual “imposter,” controlling the minds of credulous followers to do his dark bidding, subverting what was understood by many Americans as the natural temporal progression of the unfolding of western civilization as it was destined to take place in the North American West.

65 O.O. Howard, Famous Indian Chiefs I Have Known (New York: The Century Co., 1916), 332; For Gen. Howard’s engagement with Nimíipuu, and Palus leaders see Ruby and Brown, Dreamer Prophets, Ch 6.
66 Ibid.
67 O.O. Howard, Nez Perce Joseph: An Account of His Ancestors, His Lands, His Confederates, His Enemies, His Murder, His War, His Pursuit and Capture (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1881), 82.
Undermining the fulfillment of settler prophecy, Smohalla and other Indigenous “prophets” were monstrous because they were working against the supposedly natural order of time.

5.5 Promise and Dread in the Inland Northwest

Settlers within the Columbia Plateau region, especially those without the political and economic power of military brass, Indian agents, and cattle barons, did not depict Moses and Smohalla as Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa figures. This was probably because many settlers felt as though they had little to benefit from upholding the bourgeois norms that the Tecumseh and Tenskwatawa dyad staged for more elite Protestant white men and their colonial project of republican institution-building. Instead, these settlers were more immediately concerned with the viability of their farms and livelihoods, investments they made in the cruelly optimistic promise of a white, agrarian utopia premised on patriarchal control over private property and family.68

68 The origins of this can be found in scholarship on the 18th-century American backcountry. In the 1970s, Richard Maxwell Brown introduced the idea of a “homestead ethic,” the expectations held by backcountry settlers by the 18th century that they had “the right to have and hold, incontestably, a family-size farm; in the right to enjoy a homestead unencumbered by a ruinous economic burden; and in the right peacefully to occupy the homestead without fear of violence to person and property.” Richard Maxwell Brown, “Backcountry Rebellions and the Homestead Ethic in America, 1740-1799,” in Tradition, Conflict, and Modernization: Perspectives on the American Revolution, ed. Richard Maxwell Brown and Don E. Fehrenbacher (New York: Academic Press, 1977), 76. Honor Sachs has recently expanded on this “homestead ethic” ideal and the expectations surrounding it, arguing that since the settler household served as “the touchstone of backcountry identity and experience,” anxiety ran high among backcountry men who constantly “worried about their inability to protect families against the threats of Indian violence or the greed of land speculators,” a worry that galvanized violence against Indigenous peoples. However, this ideal was constantly under threat by actual conditions of poverty, labor exploitation, and dependence. Yet still, among ordinary backcountry settlers, there was an “abiding faith in the patriarchal household and an evolving commitment to the social and political privileges of white men” that was evoked precisely in these moments of perceived threats to the fulfillment of this patriarchal household control. I argue that settler emigrants to the “new Northwest” brought these ideals with them and continued to hold out faith in their ultimate fulfillment. Honor Sachs, Home Rule: Households, Manhood, and National Expansion on the Eighteenth-Century Kentucky Frontier (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2015), 7-9.
The Bannock War provoked much more fear for settlers because it coincided with anxieties both over the completion of the railroad—when it would happen and where—and anticipation of future progress as settlement to the inland northwest increased dramatically after the Civil War. The Panic of 1873 halted railroad construction, slowed immigration, and even encouraged out-migration to locations like the new southern California boomtown of Los Angeles. But by the mid-1870s, a number of factors made the prospect of settling in the inland northwest more desirable. Frederick Billings, leading a consortium of bondholders, bought out the sinking Northern Pacific Railroad in August 1875, increasing confidence in the inland Northwest that an east-west transcontinental connection was imminent. A number of private railroad companies had also rushed in to exploit the local need for market connectivity, including the famed thirty-mile Walla Walla and Columbia River Railroad, or the “rawhide railroad,” constructed with wood, strap-iron and, famously, topped with a rawhide that over continuous use, became hard and smooth. Helmed by Walla Walla merchant and banker Dorsey Baker, this rail link promised more efficient portage between the land-locked Walla Walla and Wallula, the latter being the main entrepôt on the Columbia River above The Dalles.69

69 J. Orin Oliphant, ed., The Territory of Washington: As Described by an Impartial Pen, In the Hand of Francis H. Cook, who is Perfectly Familiar with the Country of which he has Attempted to Draw a Plain Pen Picture (Cheney: State Normal School, 1925), 7-14; Ficken, Washington Territory, 111-112. By the end of the nineteenth century, historians would frame the years between the proposed Northern Pacific line and its completion through the inland Northwest as an era in which privation acted as a generator of private enterprise. Facing inaction by the Northern Pacific, men like Dorsey Baker were depicted as rising to the occasion by proactively organizing their own private railroads, which would subsequently act as an intermediate stage in a supposedly inevitable march towards transcontinental connectivity. Yet from the perspective of settlers in 1878, there was no certainty that the transcontinental railroad would reach their locality. Men like Baker who were celebrated later as plucky entrepreneurs were also often maligned by citizens in the 1870s as creating new monopolies and controlling shipping rates, as the OSN Co. had done. Ficken, Washington Territory, 88. Elizabeth Gibbons, “Walla Walla & Columbia River Railroad is completed from Wallula to Walla Walla on October 23, 1875,” HistoryLink.org, accessed 10/14/2021; Meinig, The Great Columbia Plain, 242 fn1.
New technologies like the steam thresher, better-than-average rainfall, and high grain prices world-wide due to California crop failures and political instability in Europe created “near-bonanza conditions” that “sparked an unprecedented wave of immigration” especially to the undulating glacial till of the Palouse in the southeast corner of the territory and in Walla Walla. According to historian Robert Ficken, filings at a Walla Walla area land office increased from 421 in 1873 to 1,377 in 1877, to 1,754 in 1878. On the Palouse, a new land office opened in the town of Colfax in April of 1878. By November of that same year, 1,000 settlers had filed claims.70 The American settler population of Columbia, Stevens (then comprising what would become Spokane County and the city of Spokane Falls), and Whitman counties grew by 1,074, 1,755, and 1,581 respectively between 1878 and 1879 alone.71 Transportation infrastructure struggled to keep up with this influx: “The railroad and stage lines find themselves taxed to their utmost capacity to accommodate the increasing travel,” reported the Walla Walla Statesman.72

The east-west-running valleys draining the eastern slopes of the Cascades—the Klickitat, Yakima, and Kittitas—as well as much of central and eastern Oregon, became even more desirable for cattlemen, drawing many from the overpopulated Willamette Valley and Puget Sound by promises of the abundant bunchgrass that newspapers were fond of promoting for its rejuvenating qualities that would rehabilitate the decrepit cattle raised west of the Cascades.73 This golden bunchgrass was rendered by one reporter as akin to a “mine that can be worked with the least labor and expense and with the greatest profit.”74 Livestock would do the

70 Ficken, Washington Territory, 119-121.
71 Oliphant, ed., The Territory of Washington, 10.
72 Walla Walla Statesman, May 11, 1878.
73 For an example of the recuperative qualities of Columbia Plateau bunchgrass see Oregon Weekly Tribune, March 3, 1877.
74 “The Cattle Range 1876,” Dalles Mountaineer, March 25, 1876.
work of extracting value from the land as well as feed actual miners in the recent gold rush in the Black Hills of Dakota Territory.\textsuperscript{75} The \textit{Portland Oregonian} reported in the summer of 1876 that stock-raising for the Puget Sound market was the “principal business.” About 200 head a month crossed the Cascades via Snoqualmie Pass.\textsuperscript{76} By the end of 1876, “60,000 head of cattle had been driven from Eastern Oregon to the different beef markets of the Pacific Coast. Salmon canny operators took advantage of a glutted livestock market by canning mutton and beef in the off-season which was shipped to Astoria by Columbia River steamers.\textsuperscript{77} Markets further east also opened by 1876, and in the late spring of 1877, 8,300 head of cattle were bought in Walla Walla and driven to Nebraska and then to Chicago and other eastern markets.\textsuperscript{78} Newspaperman and “Inland Empire” booster Francis Cook’s account of his tour of Klickitat, Yakima, and Kittitas valleys just months before the start of the 1878 “Indian troubles” confirmed these flattering reports. On Wenas Creek, a Yakima River tributary, for example, “cattle and horses are fat on the range.” The farms in the Kittitas Valley in Cook’s opinion, were flourishing the most, "owing in the main to the fact that settlers had come to the conclusion that the line of the NP railroad would be through the valley.”\textsuperscript{79}

Despite this optimism, there were reasons to be cautious. Settlers anticipated a future of railroad connectivity that would link their terraforming project to the broader world of

\textsuperscript{75} “From the Dayton News,” \textit{Oregon Weekly Tribune}, April 29, 1876.
\textsuperscript{76} \textit{Portland Oregonian}, August 1, 1876. By the fall of 1878, a noteworthy drive of 516 cattle made it over Snoqualmie pass, \textit{Weekly Pacific Tribune}, October 17, 1878.
\textsuperscript{77} Dalles Mountaineer, February 13, 1875. This meat, canned in Astoria, would then be shipped to Honolulu to supply the whaling industry, according to this editorial. Ten thousand cattle were reportedly being driven to the canneries in spring, 1877 “for the Eastern and foreign markets,” \textit{Oregon Weekly Tribune}, April 28, 1877.
\textsuperscript{78} \textit{Oregon Weekly Tribune}, October 14, 1876; \textit{Walla Walla Union}, June 9, 1877; For more on eastern drives in the late 1870s, see \textit{Walla Walla Union}, January 27, 1877, February 10, 1877; \textit{Weekly Pacific Tribune}, April 3, 1878; \textit{Portland Oregonian}, June 7, 1879, August 14, 1879; Four thousand cattle were driven to be driven to Cheyenne by drivers “called ‘cowboys’,” and then to Chicago, \textit{Spokane Times}, June 19, 1879.
\textsuperscript{79} “Cook’s Tour through Eastern Washington,” 1878, transcript in Relander Collection, TRA-046-07-001.
commercial exchange. They understood themselves to be part of a world-historical trajectory that was spreading an advanced civilization across the world, and the territorial frontiers expanding across the western United States was the vanguard. This was to be a natural and/or a godly-ordained mission. Railroads, telegraphs, improved roads, and institutions from the grist mill to the town courthouse were seen as signs of imminent providential fulfillment, attested by the meticulous enumeration of their number and quality by travellers and newspaper correspondents. Indians were supposed to shrink into the shadowy past of this enlightened era. The Whitmans had martyred themselves for the settler future at the inaugural moment of the Americanizing of the far Northwest. Following the Whitman incident, the Indian wars of the mid-1850s were supposed to signal the death knell of Indigenous power and hegemony over the region. But what if Indigenous people insisted on their own future and remained in their homelands? What if railroad connectivity bypassed settler homesteads and crops rotted before they could get to market? What if bunchgrass and timber continued to disappear, even as more people and livestock streamed into the region? All of these scenarios seemed possible to settlers in 1878. The stakes seemed the highest in this year: both success and failure seemed just over the horizon.80

What irked many settlers on the Columbia Plateau was the reminder that the Indian Wars of the 1850s were not the end of Indigenous resistance in the region. Unlike Tecumseh,

80 Nearly every settler reminiscence and local history of this region mentions 1878 as a pivotal year where anxiety ran high over the possibility of a new Indian War that would frustrate the civilizational progress that had reached an unprecedented level. Even accounts that played down the extent of violence during this time often contradictorily used martial language to describe events. See for example, Martha Berry Parker, Tales of Richland, White Bluffs & Hanford 1805-1943: Before the Atomic Reserve (Fairfield: Ye Galleon, 1979), 16; “Nelson Family History,” in Told by the Pioneers: Reminiscences of Pioneer Life in Washington, Vol. 1, ([Olympia?]: Works Progress Administration, Washington State, 1937), 95.
who had died before he could fulfill his project of a pan-Indigenous homeland and so could be safely appropriated as a symbol of American identity, Moses, and his imagined collaborator Smohalla, were very much alive. And while the 1858 war seemed to have ended in the defeat of Columbia Plateau peoples by the United States army, Indigenous peoples refused to disappear. Settlers seemed unsure how to assimilate this reality, as it came into conflict with their sense of temporal sequence. When settlers remembered the late 1870s decades later, they tended to frame accounts of settler-Indigenous violence as exceptional because these events happened after the Northwest Indian Wars of 1855-1856 were supposed to vanquish Indians and open the way for American settlement once and for all. One settler, who had arrived in the region in the late 1870s recalled that “the Indian wars were over by the time we reached Yakima but the first two years were stirring times…Frequent warnings of Indian attacks reached us,” suggesting that a looming threat of Indigenous violence permeated everyday life at a time when settlers were supposed to be confident in the safety of their lives and property.

Drawing on a long history of settler fear of Indian confederacy, many settlers, especially those outside of the larger population centers of The Dalles, Walla Walla, and Yakima City worried that a combination of Indian forces was in the works that would encircle the entire

81 Karson, Wiyaxayxt / Wiyaakaa’awn / As Days Go By, 82-84.
82 Mrs. NJ Dickson in The Grange News (Seattle), May 4, 1935 in Relander Collection, TRA-052-03-007. This temporal logic is both explicit and implicit in settler narratives taken by the Works Progress Administration in the 1930s, published as Told By the Pioneers. From the 1910s on, The Yakima Valley Historical Society also frequently hosted local settlers who read papers on their and their ancestor’s experiences. Transcriptions of these papers and talks can be found at the Washington State Library, Olympia, WA, as can the original transcriptions of the oral histories collected for As Told by the Pioneers. Regional histories from the late nineteenth-century on have also papered over settler anxiety and continued Indigenous presence, assuming an inevitable decline of Indigenous resistance by the 1860s. In contrast to these settler histories, a recent book on history from Umatilla perspectives considers the time period between the Cayuse War and the Bannock War as a thirty-year period of unbroken conflict, provoked by settler invasion, Karson, Wiyaxayxt / Wiyaakaa’awn / As Days Go By, 82-84.
Columbia Plateau, inaugurating a general race war.\textsuperscript{83} As the Bannock War inched closer to Washington Territory, the fear that a handful of “hostile Indians were trying to cross the Columbia River over to the Yakima side…greatly increased the anxiety” prevailing throughout the relatively isolated region, “for it was generally believed that if they succeeded the little handful of settlers would be wiped out.”\textsuperscript{84} The “Indians could have taken the whole valley,” remembered one Kittitas settler.\textsuperscript{85} Some local settlers imagined that individual Indigenous leaders would command their warriors like the hierarchical institutions of modern state armies. Rumor had it that “Chief Colawash with his Klickitats was encamped in the Naches pass; that Smohollah with his band of Columbia Rivers was guarding the Snoqualmie pass, while the advancing Bannocks and the Okanogans would prevent egress toward the eastward or southward.” Settlers would then become “entrapped and must prepare to fight their way through the ranks of hostiles.”\textsuperscript{86}

And prepare they did, with the help of the US federal government who, through a joint resolution of congress, passed a bill authorizing the distribution of up to 1000 surplus arms and ammunition “not to exceed fifty ball cartridges for each arm…for the protection of citizens and their property against hostile Indians within or of Indian raids into such Territories.\textsuperscript{87} Shortly

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\textsuperscript{83} I discuss this in earlier chapters on the Ohio Valley. For a treatment of the settler fear of Indian conspiracy to confederacy see Owens, \textit{Red Dreams, White Nightmares}. The fear that Indigenous warriors from the east and west of the Cascades would form combinations to control the passes was widespread among settlers during the Yakima/Puget Sound Indian Wars of the late 1850s. These anxieties weren’t completely baseless, as many Indigenous families from the Kittitas, Yakima and Klickitat Valleys had kinship ties with peoples west of the mountains like the Nisqually and Cowlitz, and frequently travelled along the low passes in what is now known as the southern Washington Cascades to trade, feast, and visit.


\textsuperscript{85} Mrs. P.H. Schnebly (Eliza Frances Cook), Kittitas County in \textit{Told by the Pioneers}, Vol. 2, 190.

\textsuperscript{86}An Illustrated History of Klickitat, Yakima, and Kittitas, 164.

\textsuperscript{87} “Joint resolution providing for issue of arms to Territories,” June 7, 1878, Forty-fifth Congress. Sess. II. Res 27-30, 1878, 252.
\end{flushleft}
after the passage of the resolution, Washington Territorial governor Elisha Ferry sent needle
guns and ammunition to Yakima City at the request of panicked settlers. From Yakima City the
arms would then be distributed to the various territorial militias formed in the Kittitas, Yakima,
and Klickitat valleys, composed to a large extent by Civil War veterans and veterans of other
Indian Wars, including the Klickitat Mounted Infantry Volunteers.\textsuperscript{88} In mid-August, the Weekly
Pacific Tribune reported that "102 stands of govt. arms were sent last week from Ft. Vancouver
to Yakima City for the protection of the settlers in that exposed locality...40 stands have also
been left in Klickitat county."\textsuperscript{89} Around the same time, Governor Ferry sent General Howard a
message that “activities of Yakima county apprehend difficulties with Indians,” and urged a
military force to “allay excitement and give confidence to settlers in the future.”\textsuperscript{90}

5.6 Anticipating Indian Violence

At the time of the \textit{Spokane} gunboat incident, Moses and about three hundred people in
his band of Interior Salish-speaking Sinkiuse people were over a hundred miles to the
northwest, in the Kittitas Valley, gathering roots. Although this was a seasonally appropriate
place for the Moses band to be, some settler observers believed that the band was avoiding
conflict with the Bannocks by removing themselves from the center of hostilities. One local
newspaper reported that “their presence does not in any way disturb the white settlers who have
every confidence in the peace-abiding promises of an ever-friendly Moses,” who had already

\textsuperscript{88} Lyman, \textit{History of the Yakima Valley}, Vol. 1, 258; A.H. Curtis and John Gruhum to Gov Ferry, and Gov Ferry’s
response, Sept 12, 1878, Relander Collection, TRA-057-13-002; Washington Territory Secretary of State Indian
War Correspondence Pt 2., Ibid.
\textsuperscript{89} \textit{Weekly Pacific Tribune}, Aug. 14, 1878.
\textsuperscript{90} Elisha Ferry to Capt AL Nickerson, Aug 15, 1878, Washington Territory Indian War Correspondence, Pt. 2, in
Relander Collection, TRA-057-13-002.
that winter proved his loyalty by “dr[iving] from his camp…two hostile Nez Perces who sought shelter there.” Shunned by Moses, the two Nimíipuu men were said to have gone to Smohalla’s camp instead.\textsuperscript{91} Moses had in fact been in the Kittitas Valley at least since early April, reportedly “to prevent the ‘bad Bostons’ [Americans] from ‘breaking out’ and making d----d fools of themselves.”\textsuperscript{92} More accurately, Moses was concerned about General Howard’s true plans north of the Columbia and knowing how fragile the peace was between local settlers and Indigenous people, found himself in a difficult, if familiar position for Indigenous leaders engaging with colonial powers. Like Catahecassa, Mihšikinaahkwa, and Ducoigne in the Old Northwest, Moses was confronted with the problem of how to sustain diplomatic relations with white ranchers and farmers, maintain open dialogue with the US military, and keep his people out of harm’s way while avoiding alienating community members who had real grievances against American settlers.\textsuperscript{93}

Yakima agent Wilbur also believed that white settlers had little to fear from Indigenous people—especially those residing north of the Columbia River—and recognized that the biggest threat to stability in the region was settlers themselves, writing to Indian Commissioner Ezra Hayt that local Indigenous people were friendly and “will not give us trouble if we can keep the whites from breaking out on the friendly Indians.” Yet Wilbur also acknowledged that the “whole country has been thrown into a feverish excitement in consequence of the outbreak of

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\textsuperscript{91} \textit{Weekly Pacific Tribune}, July 10, 1878. The report of the Nimíipuu refugees appeared in at least three regional newspapers and was followed by an addendum by General Howard reassuring readers, including Moses himself, that the military recognized the latter’s peaceful intentions and that his band should not be molested by soldiers “while behaving themselves properly.” \textit{The New North-West}, February 9, 1878; \textit{Vancouver Independent}, February 21, 1878; \textit{Lewiston Teller}, February 28, 1878.

\textsuperscript{92} “Shy Low,” \textit{Weekly Pacific Tribune}, April 3, 1878.

the Snake and Bannicks [sic].” To Wilbur’s annoyance, his reservation clerk and a resident white farmer family fled the agency in fear despite no direct evidence that violence was imminent.94

The Walla Walla Statesman echoed this assessment of settler fear on July twentieth when they reported that “scarcely a day passes but we have a scare, from some one bringing in a report that the Indians are coming, and causing a stampede for the court house and mill.” Wheat on the Columbia Plateau is typically harvested in early July, which made this particular Indian scare especially inconvenient for settlers who had moved to the region with the express purpose to take advantage of the booming wheat market. As settler fled their farms at harvest time, deeming it unsafe to be exposed in the fields, “the grain is left to the mercy of the loose stock, which in many places are breaking in and destroying everything.” Settler fear had become an economic liability as their terraforming project—transforming complex historical-ecological landscapes into commodity-producing ones—was undoing itself in front of their eyes.95

Under these circumstances, the diplomatic efforts of Moses in the Kittitas Valley would prove no match for settler fears of a general Indian uprising. Moses would find himself conflated with Smohalla and other “renegades” or “hostiles” in the settler imagination after a group of young men from the fleeing Umatilla band conducted a retaliatory killing for the Spokane gunboat massacre as they made their way to the relative safety of the White Bluffs.

As the Umatilla band attempted to make their way north to the relative safety of villages led by Moses and Smohalla, away from the main settler population centers and transportation

94 Wilbur, however, reassured Ezra A. Hayt that the harvest would proceed regardless, with the help of those remaining at the agency Wilbur to Hayt, July 16, 1878, Yakima Letterbook, Relander Collection, TRA-056-11-001.
corridors, and away from the Bannock War, they intersected with Blanche and Alonzo Perkins, who had left their cattle ranch to deliver a baby in Yakima. After they find out that their fathers and mothers in the old village had been killed by the white people and not by the soldiers they felt pretty bad about it, for these old people were not doing no harm and so they started ahead to the north for the Moses tribe, Shaw-ou-way-coot-shy-ah continued in his narration of the sequence of events unfolding after the gunboat massacre and after the band of Umatilla people made it safely across the Columbia. Crossing paths with the Perkins at Rattlesnake Springs, the band deliberated about what to do next. “Some of the Indians says ‘Here the white people have killed our fathers and mothers and they were not doing any harm, now I am going to kill this white man to make even.’ Some says, ‘better not kill them, for they are not the ones.’ But some of them, they wouldn’t reason they was mad, they were not the head men, they were among the young men so they went on ahead and killed them anyhow.”

Several Umatilla men opened fire, killing Alonzo Perkins. As Blanche scrambled and slid up the loose scree slope, attempting to guide her horse up the basalt cliffs towards safety, she was also shot and killed. Several weeks passed before their bodies were discovered by a search party, led by a cousin of Blanche Perkins out of Yakima City, their bodies “covered up with stones in a ravine.”

96 Other accounts claim that the Perkins feared that their isolation made them vulnerable to Indian attack and that they had left to seek more secure environs. Another account explained that they simply wanted to “see the country.” “John Wilson Beck, One of the Earliest Yakima Settlers, Died Monday,” Yakima Republic, Aug 21, 1903.

97 It’s noteworthy that Shaw-ou-way-coot-shy-ah makes a distinction between soldiers and settlers here, as a large contingent of the fighting force on the gunboat was comprised of territorial volunteers.

98 Shaw-ou-way-coot-shy-ah, “Incidents of Piute War and the Perkins Murder.”

99 Lyman, History of Yakima, 257; “Their bodies covered,” Wilbur to Howard, July 26, 1878, in Relander Collection, TRA-056-11-001.
In the days following the gunboat massacre but before the news of the Perkins killing made its way through the telegraph wires, the Bannock War seemed to be winding down, at least from a distance. From the perspective of a California newspaper’s Portland correspondent, not only had the Bannocks and Paiute been subdued (the war leader Eagan had been killed by Umatilla scouts), but that the loyalty of the Umatilla people towards Americans should not be doubted, “although they are very impudent.” Newspaper reports north of the Columbia reaffirmed this message but often to no avail. Settlers—who had been in a panic since the news that Bannock war leaders were travelling northwest towards the Columbia Plateau to gather supporters in late June—continued to flee their isolated homesteads for larger settlements, town halls, hotels, blockhouses, and hastily erected fortifications, often simply “upended logs” with “guards mounted on top.” A Seattle newspaper reported that “several families came over the mountains from Yakima Valley” a week before, “frightened from their homes by Indians.”

When news of the Perkins killing finally reached the settlements by late July, anxiety over a looming Indian war crystallized into a finer point. In Yakima City, “a meeting was hurriedly called to take some active steps for the protection of the settlers. Every gun was brightened up and every man was buying ammunition.” As if the city was already under siege,

100 The report also mentions the cessation of the patrolling campaign by the gunboat Spokane, and the continued threat of Umatilla raids on settler horse herds and theft around Pendleton, “The Indian War,” and “The Situation at Umatilla,” Marysville Daily Appeal, July 28, 1878; For a similar story, see Seattle Post-Intelligencer, July 29, 1878.
101 One newspaper maintained that “The reports of depredations in this vicinity are untrue. Moses is also being misrepresented. Persons can travel through this country with safety this season unless we should be visited by hostiles from some other part of the country.” “The Indian Problem,” Walla Walla Statesman, July 27, 1878.
103 If the families arrived in Seattle a week before this report, they would have left the Yakima Valley just before or right as the news of the Perkins murder reached them, Weekly Pacific Tribune, Aug 7, 1878.
“men were placed on guard at different places on the outskirts of town. Armed men paraded the streets at night, and some of the braver women buckled on revolvers and walked at the side of their husbands.”

Rumors circulated that “the Simcoe [Yakama] Indians had all left the reservation…and were on the warpath.”

I.A. Flint of Parker Bottom, near the Simcoe (Yakama) Reservation recalled that “night after night during the Indian scare of 1878,” he and his family “could see [Indian] signal fires on the hilltops above our ranch.” Flint read a hostile landscape of colluding Indians “on the warpath” onto what was probably an ordinary encampments of Indigenous families traveling through their summer gathering sites which usually involved travelling to higher elevations.

Moses had taken pains to show his peaceful intentions, and had spent many years cultivating friendly relations with neighboring settlers, even embarking on periodic tours of the Kittitas Valley, visiting each homestead, accompanied by one of his wives to chat over coffee with the inhabitants. At the same time, and not in contradiction of his diplomatic visits to settler cabins, Moses projected power and authority as a leader of his people, publicly displaying a large contingent of warriors, an impressive herd of horses and refused to move permanently onto a reservation, insisting on mobility across his territory. Yet Moses knew he had to tread lightly and was probably aware that regardless of his response to current developments his people would be put in danger of violence at the hands of US soldiers or civilians (ironically, Smohalla’s purposeful isolation above Priest Rapids and away from land coveted by settlers kept him relatively safe from fearful, vengeful, trigger-happy Americans).

104 Account of Louise Heiler Cary in Lyman, History of the Yakima Valley, Vol 1, 257.
105 Weekly Pacific Tribune, Aug 14, 1878.
106 The Yakima Republic, May 18, 1935, in Relander Collection, TRA-052-03-007.
Indian agents, military personnel, and some settlers did recognize that Moses played a crucial role in maintaining social stability—and made diplomatic forays—but this could not quell rumors that began to circulate among regional Indigenous people that the US military was going to turn on them, kill them all, or confine them to reservations.\(^{108}\)

The experienced Indian agent A.J. Cain penned a lengthy and revealing letter that summer to Washington territorial governor Elisha Ferry. It voiced his concerns at the state of Indian affairs in Eastern Washington that belied the rosy outlook of boosters and more optimistic settlers. Cain expressed concern that the gunboat massacre would further destabilize the region through the generation of new rumors. One of these held that the Umatilla “refugees” who had fled the *Spokane* incident “sought Moses camp frightened to death, that Gen. Howard himself was on the gun boat and was intending to kill all the Indians along the Columbia.” With their trust of the US federal government frayed, and frightened settlers armed and unpredictable, Cain took it upon himself to meet with Indigenous leaders to convey “words from General Howard…in order to relieve their minds of great anxiety,” to prevent an actual breakout of open warfare on the Columbia Plateau, which, he warned was imminent “unless the situation is relieved by Congressional legislation next winter and other precautionary steps taken.”\(^{109}\)

Cain also understood this regional instability as a result of a set of problems rooted in a longer history, chiefly, the “anomalous” legal condition of non-treaty Indians and the land law

\(^{108}\) As Jeffery Ostler has demonstrated, Indigenous people across North America have always been conscious of the genocidal tactics, campaigns, and attitudes of white Americans. As I mentioned in the previous chapter, this awareness was undoubtedly bolstered by Plateau peoples’ journeys to California at the time of the Gold Rush and US annexation where they either witnessed genocidal acts or learned about them from local Indigenous people there. See Jeffery Ostler, *Surviving Genocide: Native Nations and the United States from the American Revolution to Bleeding Kansas* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019).

\(^{109}\) A.J. Cain to Elisha Ferry, July 25, 1878, Indian War Canister 185, 5-60, No. 12, Washington State Library, transcription in Relander Collection, RA-057-13-002.
of the US—not only of the Homestead Act, but also the federal lands appropriated for the Northern Pacific Railroad. According to Cain, when Isaac Stevens met with representatives of the nations who would sign the 1855 Yakima Treaty, he intended that those not in attendance “should have a treaty with similar provisions” yet “the war of 1855-6 prevented the making of any new treaties,” and delayed the senate ratification of those that had been signed. Cain was disillusioned with the reservation system and instead advocated for a policy emphasizing fee-simple land ownership for individual Indigenous homesteaders instead of the creation of new reservations. Still, Cain expressed some admiration for Moses’s “very ambitious plan which involves large military and other resources of the government to back him as head chief over all the Indians in this part of the country [except for those who chose to take up homesteads],” which would essentially become a vast Indian territory. Cain saw this as a plausible course of action, but also recognized that Moses, like other Salish and Sahaptin leaders, did not “exercise exclusive control over his immediate followers and his plan would only involve hostilities for the benefit of him and his immediate followers.”

Although he seemed to understand the limited authority of individual Indigenous leaders, Cain did believe one individual to exercise an outsized influence on and off reservations across the region. This was Smohalla, whose “voice for good or evil is more potent than that of any of the chiefs of the present time.” As “a kind of high priest trance medium and big medicine man,” Smohalla had regained some of his waning influence in the late 1870s, by appealing to Indians who had become “dissatisfied with the management of the reservations under the different church organizations of which he always had a great jealousy and has

\[110\] Ibid.
labored to secure followers in opposition to them and not with any direct views to making war.”

Although Cain was adamant that Smohalla “was not responsible for [the Joseph band of
Nimíipuu, led by Young Joseph] going to war…pernicious as his practices are,” he believed that
Dreamer doctrine did encourage hostile attitudes among Young Joseph’s band. Still, because
Cain misunderstood Smohalla’s teachings as counterpart to “Boston religionists,” and not an
expression of Indigenous law (tamánwit), modes of relationality, and/or critiques of settler
colonialism, his understanding of Nimíipuu motivations would always also be limited. But even
as Cain assigned Smohalla to the category of religious leader (albeit a deviant one), he was
skeptical of the sincerity of the iyánča’s beliefs. Like many settler assessments of
Tenskwatawa’s motivations discussed in chapter 3, Cain suggested that Smohalla’s
“zeal…[was] not from entire conviction but from a desire to wield influence and rival the
church organizations among the Indians.” According to Cain, in a bid for power and influence,
Smohalla was cynically exploiting the grievances of local Indigenous people in the same way
that Tenskwatawa was perceived to be doing some seventy years earlier in another settler-
colonial northwest.

For Cain, practices of Mesmerism and Spiritualism, popular in the Anglo-speaking
world by the mid-nineteenth century, were closer analogs to Smohalla’s practices than
monotheistic religion. In an unusual twist, Cain proposed to use mesmeric techniques on and
through Smohalla, in order to manipulate the latter’s followers to fulfil US Indian policy
objectives:

I done [sic] Smohalla a great favor in years gone by which he has never
forgotten. I am arranging to get a two or three days interview with him away
from his followers, and while I have no hopes of inducing him to quit dreaming,
at present; but I feel confident I can induce him to dream the right kind of dreams by which all of the believers in his dreams would be properly influenced and his influence retained and exerted in the present exigencies in behalf of peace and a satisfactory solution of all pending difficulties. I desire to make use of Smohalla's influence to counteract the unreasonable demands of the ambitious chiefs.\textsuperscript{111}

Adjacent to mainstream Protestant denominations in shouldering the implementation of Indian policy, Mesmerism, or broader concepts of “animal magnetism” popular during this time, could also possibly play a legitimate role in advancing a secular modernity and encouraging civilizational uplift among the Indigenous populations within the borders of the United States. Cain’s purportedly special rapport with Smohalla would give him access to credulous Indians under the latter’s sway.\textsuperscript{112} Cain’s suggested policy of applied Spiritualism was apparently not taken up by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

Unlike Cain, Ft. Simcoe (Yakima) agent Wilbur continued to view reservations, at least his reservation, as important sites from which Indigenous-settler relations could be policed, civilization incubated, and indiscriminate violence against Indians by settlers reduced. Upon hearing news of the Perkins affair, Wilbur urged General Howard not to implicate Moses or Smohalla. Wilber reasoned that even as the perpetrators of the Perkins murder were camped above Priest Rapids below both Moses’s and Smohalla’s camps, he had reason to believe that the two leaders “will not allow this party to come among their people lest they should in some way become involved in their supposed crimes,” and face reprisals by indiscriminate white

\begin{flushleft}
\textsuperscript{111} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{112} For the use of Mesmerism as an institutional technique to systematically manipulate credulous populations in the nineteenth century and a thoroughly modern practice not necessarily antagonistic to secular rationality, see Emily Ogden, \textit{Credulity: A Cultural History of US Mesmerism} (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2018). Ogden discusses how factory owners sought to put mesmeric techniques to use to discipline their supposedly credulous workers.
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settlers. Indeed, since the start of the Bannock War, Moses and Smohalla had both taken care to avoid associating with the violence further south and continued to proclaim their peaceful intentions. Moses took a more active role than Smohalla in these diplomatic gestures, penning several letters to General Howard in 1877 and 1878 that pledged peace. Moses also expressed his commitment to cooperate with Agent Wilbur at Simcoe and recognize US criminal jurisdiction by assisting in the capture of Indigenous cattle rustlers and thieves. Moses and his people were also adopting Western agricultural practices and had found a market for their produce among Chinese miners who continued to work the diminishing mines on the Upper Columbia. Like Smohalla though, Moses was adamant about remaining within his homeland, and refused to move onto a reservation.

With an intensifying risk of settlers, enflamed by the Perkins murders, “breaking out on the friendly Indians,” and producing another widespread and costly Indian War, General Howard called for a council at the foot of Priest Rapids with Moses, Smohalla, and Walla Walla “Dreamer” Homily. This “Steamboat Council” would be held on none other than the vessel that had fired on the Umatilla refugees and Columbia River villagers that summer, the steamboat Spokane. Smohalla did not attend the council, despite it being held just downriver of P’na village. The familiar pledges of peace and cooperation were heard by Moses and other speakers, and Howard expressed confidence in their sincerity. The council did nothing.

113 Wilbur to Howard, July 26, 1878, Yakima Letterbook, Relander Collection, TRA-056-11-001. The Tacoma Herald also used this language in a warning that race war was imminent, that “The Indians and whites can never more live peaceably together in the great Yakima country. There is thirst for blood on either side.” While an “general outbreak” had been averted, “the whites will ‘break out’ this fall if nothing is done to settle the vexatious Indian problem,” Tacoma Herald, Sept. 6, 1878.
114 One of these letters can be found in Ruby and Brown, Half-Sun, 88-89.
115 This interesting reversal of the familiar language of “hostile Indians breaking out” is from a letter by Agent Wilbur to Commissioner Hayt, July 16, 1878, Yakima Letterbook, in Relander Collection, TRA-056-11-001.
however, to assuage settler fears that Moses—and Smohalla—were behind the Perkins murder. Moreover, Howard’s willingness to consider Moses’s request for a large reservation for his people and forward the plan to the President of the United States felt like a betrayal to settlers. By the autumn of 1878, settlers did indeed seem to be on the verge of “breaking out on the friendly Indians.”

To help pre-empt vigilante action against Moses and those accused of the Perkins murder and to preserve his own jurisdictional authority, Wilbur sent the Yakima Indian police to assist in the apprehension of the murder suspects in mid-December.116 This fifteen-man Indian police force, led by Captain Eneas, an avowed enemy of Moses, joined a jurisdictionally confusing combination of volunteer militia and local law enforcement, including the deputized cattleman A.J. Splawn, who, with arrest warrant in hand, led a group of “seventy well-armed men” eastward towards Moses’s hunting encampment near Crab Creek, where Moses agreed to lead the force to the perpetrators he had been keeping under surveillance. Assisted by a handful of Moses’s warriors, the force detained five men accused of the murder, one of whom committed suicide on the spot. One suspect was found residing in Smohalla’s P’na village, which a contingent of the armed posse found mostly empty. After several escape attempts, three of those accused were hanged, one released, and the other lynched, shot, and killed several years later by a group of vigilantes, including the brother of Blanche Perkins.117

116 Wilbur was also unhappy that Gen. Howard advocated a separate “Moses reservation,” believing that Moses and his people should be at Yakima and under his own supervision, guided by Methodist values, Ibid. 117 The most detailed historical account of the apprehending of the Perkins murder suspects is found in Splawn, Kami-akin, 308-317; A detailed contemporary account can be found in “Arrest of Moses,” Lewiston Teller, Jan 24, 1879. The purpose of this lengthy account was to convince federal prosecutors that the Eneas and Splawn force was not “make[ing] war on peaceful Indians,” as they were suspected of doing, presumably by the military who may have been unhappy that the Indian agency and civilian militias were usurping their jurisdictional power.
Despite his role in guiding the volunteer forces to the camp of the accused murder perpetrators, Moses was suspected of aiding the murderers, and formulating a secret plot to ambush Captains Eneas and Splawn and their men, inaugurating a new cycle of Indian War. He was detained in the middle of the night at a hunting camp near the “lava bed fortifications” at Crab Creek, put in irons, and confined first at the Yakima City jail, and then at Simcoe, supposedly under the protection of Agent Wilbur until General Howard intervened and secured his release at the end of January.  

While these events were transpiring, regional newspaper accounts were circulating false reports that Smohalla had also been detained and that his people were coming onto the Yakima Reservation. A large number of Indigenous people of the Middle Columbia, including those associated with Smohalla, were indeed likely coming onto the Yakima Reservation in large numbers to avoid conflict and settler violence, but for many, this was probably a temporary strategy to remain out of harm’s way. On-reservation population in general tended to swell in the wintertime, as families returned from berry grounds and hunting camps to visit with relatives and tell stories, share food, and conduct seasonally appropriate ceremonies. During this time, Smohalla had avoided contact and conflict with settlers, the US military, Indian agents, and Indian police and was never apprehended.

Why were reports of Smohalla’s incarceration circulated? Were they simply a product of wishful thinking on the part of settlers who desired an end to Indian hostilities? There’s a chance that settlers conflated Moses and Smohalla as the same person, the same Indian bogeyman, but this is unlikely as local knowledge, and newspaper reporting had long differentiated between the two men. One newspaper report on Moses’s capture and confinement

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118 Howard, Famous Indian Chiefs I Have Known, 205.
reported that “it is thought by General Howard that Smohalla, the most restless, influential and
dangerous Indian on the coast, is in company with Moses,” and on their way to Washington, DC
to confer with the federal government, “virtually end[ing] all possibility of Indian hostilities this
coming summer.” The opinion shared by General Howard, Governor Ferry, and the general
public alike, this article concluded, was that the anti-American element among regional Indians
had been extinguished and the most dangerous “chiefs” were finally under control.119

5.7 Settler Martyrs and Narratives of Settler Innocence

To imagine a steam-powered machine equipped with the latest mass-killing technology,
plying up a river as it trained its sights on the people for whom that river is a source of life and
being is to imagine a scene of terrifying violence. Yet for local settlers stirred by the fear of
impending Indian attack, the real locus of violence resided in what the former understood as the
wanton slaughter of the Perkins by “some of the worst desperadoes in the whole Indian
country” those capable of “one of the cruelest events in all the long and cruel history of Indian
warfare,” as a hyperbolic local history proclaimed forty-one years after the incident.120

Historical accounts of the Perkins murder from the late nineteenth through most of the twentieth
century were largely sanitized of the anti-Indigenous violence that precipitated the Perkins
killings. If anti-Indigenous violence was present, it was framed as defensive, or part of an
exchange of fire between combatants. Even Sam Gill, who was on the Spokane when it fired on
the Columbia River villages, chose to narrate the event as a critical episode in regional history,

120 Lyman, History of Yakima Vol 1, 255; Weekly Pacific Tribune, Jan 26, 1879.
as “Oregon’s last conflict with its aboriginal enemies…our last contact with the Indians and the very last of the closing battles for the whiteman’s occupancy of the Indian Empire.”\textsuperscript{121} Gill drew on this narrative to justify his entitlement to land through sacrifice and exposure to Indian savagery as someone who had “fought and almost bled and died for my country.”\textsuperscript{122} Even though Gill was only exposed to the threat of violence, the incident nevertheless gave him a powerful sense of historical purpose as a local settler and an American citizen, entitled to Indigenous land.

This narrative of settler sacrifice in the face of danger and privation was a common theme when settler descendants recalled this time for local historical societies and oral history projects in following decades. For Yakima/Kittitas Valley settler Harriet Hadley, the summer of 1878 was one of intense anxiety: “I don’t know how we ever escaped with our lives during the Indian troubles. Blanche Bunting, or Perkins, lived with us once. For years we lived in terror.”\textsuperscript{123} For settlers like Hadley, just the mention of the name Perkins had special import and signaled a perception of embattlement that made it possible for Columbia Plateau settlers to portray themselves as innocent martyrs entitled to the land, as well as a broader sense of historical purpose. “Such was the toll the pioneers had to pay,” local historian AJ Splawn explained in his 1917 regional history in regards to the Perkins killing.\textsuperscript{124}

Settlers had a variety of sometimes competing interests and their assessments of threat and the distribution of fear was arrayed along differences in status, occupation, location, and religious affiliation. For example, elite Americans feared Smohalla as a threat to secular

\textsuperscript{121} Gill, “Steamboating,” 8.
\textsuperscript{122} Ibid., 11. Italics mine.
\textsuperscript{123} Told by the Pioneers, Vol. 2, 45-46.
\textsuperscript{124} Splawn, Ka-mi-akin, 308.
governance and the civilizing potential of a mild Protestantism, while settlers with less economic, social, and political power feared Smohalla as an instigator of Indigenous aggression against their lives and livelihoods—a threat to the cruelly optimistic promise that someday their homesteads would make them rich, or at least give them control over their lives. What local settlers, ranchers, railroad interests, military men, and Indian agents all had in common was an adherence to a settler futurity—a prophetic vision of inevitable settler hegemony, technological progress, and terraforming in the image of European pastoralism and American republican yeomanry. This rendered Indigenous articulations of futurity illegible for anyone invested in the settler colonial project except as a wanton attack on the unfolding of history as civilizational progress. The Modoc War that opened the decade and the Bannock War that closed it both served as uncomfortable, and sometimes terrifying reminders that Indigenous resistance was an ongoing threat to this settler project.

The Bannock War was especially challenging for settlers who had even more to lose after a global financial depression had given way to a surge in prosperity and institution-building in the Inland Northwest. This optimism was tempered by an anxiety that railroads would never be built, isolating them from markets for their produce. Also existing during this time was a growing sense that resources were finite, that the tree-fringed hills on the edges of the Columbia Plateau would be soon deforested, that over-grazing by cattle and sheep would deplete the lauded bunchgrass and cause soil erosion, compromising stream vitality that farmers depended on to irrigate the dry east side of the Cascades.

Even though the Indian Wars of the 1870s were on the peripheries of settlement on the Columbia Plateau, settlers nonetheless suspected the presence of systematically organized Indian confederacies that conspired to ignite an all-out race war against them. Drawing on their
experiences in the Ohio Valley and lower Great Lakes, they anticipated widespread Indian violence. This war never occurred on the 1870s Columbia Plateau, even though the story of the Perkins murder and the general unease of 1878 were flagged by settler memorialists and local historians as a key event, a sacrifice they had to endure, a way for them to enter history writ large. Settlers drew on the Perkins murder, and the looming threat of Indian attack as a violence that would render them embattled innocents and legitimize their occupation of and control over the land. Although Indian wars were “supposed to be over” in the Inland Northwest, settlers remembered this time as one full of threats to a future that was destined to unfold. At the same time, settler informants speaking after the fact also constantly admitted that “there was no battle,” “there was no attack,” or simply that “nothing happened.” Even so, prophecies of the inevitable “finished-ness” of the settler colonial project—read into a landscape of productive farms and technological connectivity—was at threat, and this felt to local settlers like nothing less than a crime against nature, a crime against their birthright as white Americans fulfilling their destiny as agents of historical progress.

This attack on what settlers understood to be an innocent, natural process legitimized violence against Indigenous people who refused to disappear and who had their own visions of future thriving that, if not overtly hostile towards white settlers, often had nothing to do with them. Although Smohalla died before the turn of the twentieth century, the ceremonies, songs, and dances he brought back from the land of the dead continue to circulate through the Washat, (or Seven Drums) religion practiced today. These practices are primarily about strengthening

125 Parker, Tales of Richland, White Bluffs & Hanford, 16.
126 Cora Clark in Told by the Pioneers, Vol. 2, 43; P.H. Schnebly in Told by the Pioneers, Vol 2, 190.
and maintaining relationships with human and other-than-humans in the homelands of Salish and Sahaptin-speaking peoples but can also be seen as refusals of settler colonial time, including settler colonial stories that assume a future, not only without Indigenous peoples, but without the lands composed through exercises of Indigenous jurisdiction, through ontologies of care.
Conclusion

This dissertation has argued that settler colonialism unfolded in two North American “northwests” through a clash of prophetic visions, each of which expressed modes of relationality that were fundamentally at odds. Both sets of prophetic visions were responses to vulnerability. For Indigenous prophets, who drew on ancient techniques of dream visioning, traveling to the land of the dead, drumming, singing, and dancing, prophecy was a technology to cope with the inherent precarity of human existence in a world of unstable interdependencies. When settler colonial impositions transformed the landscape, imported new flora and fauna, and imposed a regime of private property over the top of the earth’s surface, the socioecological relationships sustaining Indigenous peoples in their various homelands were compromised, often in ways that were experienced as full-blown environmental crises. Because Indigenous political and legal orders have always cohered through the negotiation of, and proper relational conduct between, humans and other-than-human beings, these environmental crises were felt as simultaneously political, legal, and spiritual crises. Prophecy was employed as a technology to diagnose, theorize, and critique settler colonial relationality and simultaneously restore, refuse, and maintain proper relations on and with the land. This practice was grounded in the present contexts, drawing on past memory, and oriented towards Indigenous future imaginaries grounded in Indigenous homelands.

Settler colonialism has always been about resisting the inherent vulnerability of being alive. The settler future imaginary consists of a vision of endless abundance and an end to the intrinsic precarity of life within a web of interdependencies. It imagines a future without the responsibilities of relationship. This vision of an end to human vulnerability was also predicated
on the disappearance of Indigenous peoples and the severance of Indigenous relations on and with the land. But in the face of continuous resistance, refusal, and persistence on the part of Indigenous peoples, settler prophecy has always been reactive, and exposes the inherent fragility of the settler colonial project. Although settlers confidently proclaimed the imminent fulfillment of a “manifest destiny,” they also expressed anxiety when a future of technological progress, flourishing republican institutions, market connectivity and private land ownership seemed compromised. Settler prophecy helped to inoculate settlers against the ongoing specter of an Indigenous future at odds with a settler civilization without Indians, and without the complex socioecological relationships that composed particular places. This dissertation has shown how various settlers in different settler colonial “northwests” attempted to contain, defuse, and neutralize the threat of indigenous futures, including the actual Indigenous prophets and prophecies that emerged on these settler-colonial frontiers.

This dissertation has lingered on events taking place in the nineteenth century. There is a danger here of reproducing the same temporal mythology that this work has been critical of: that settler futurity is premised on a stadial history of progress and civilization that necessitates the destruction and superseding of Indigenous societies and their replacement with an ever-advancing Euro-American one. Conventional US historiography has usually taken this temporal frame for granted, flagging the end of the nineteenth century as the end of Indigenous power on the North American continent. Corresponding with the US census bureau’s 1890 report of the close of the frontier, the massacre of three hundred Lakota Ghost Dancers at Wounded Knee in 1890 has long symbolized the end of Indigenous resistance, and the end of “real” or “authentic” Indians. Scholars have long pushed against this mythology, but the narrative persists in popular histories and in the public imagination. Recently, though, a number of scholars, many of them
Indigenous themselves, have been writing with a popular audience in mind, demonstrating the
deep connections and continuities between the past, present, and future of Indigenous North
America. These works build important bridges between nineteenth-century Wests and
contemporary struggles over land and resources, as well as the political, spiritual, economic,
and legal self-determination of Indigenous nations and communities.¹ They make important
connections between Indigenous sovereignty, decolonization, and land repatriation/rematriation
and broader movements for environmental justice. Scholars and activists have also put
Indigenous land and water protection campaigns into international context. Although this
dissertation is concerned almost exclusively with the nineteenth century, I wrote it in the spirit
of these recent works.

One flashpoint of these temporal connections between Indigenous pasts, presents, and
futures, has been the twenty-first century struggle between Indigenous water protectors (and
their allies) and proponents of the Dakota Access Pipeline. It is with these more contemporary
events, not the close of the nineteenth century, that I wish to conclude my dissertation.

Between April of 2016 and late February of 2017, at least 5,000 (but likely many more)
people gathered at the edge of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe reservation in North Dakota to
protest the construction of the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) by the Dallas-based Energy
Transfer Partners. This 1,172-mile-long underground pipeline would carry nearly a half million
barrels of crude oil daily from the Bakken oil fields in North Dakota through the Dakotas and

¹ For a sampling of these public-facing works see Estes, Our History is the Future; Nick Estes and Jaskiran
Dhillon, eds., Standing With Standing Rock: Voices from the #NoDAPL Movement (Minneapolis: University of
Minnesota Press, 2018); David Treuer, The Heartbeat of Wounded Knee: Native America from 1890 to the Present
(New York: Penguin Publishing Group, 2019); Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz, An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the
United States (Boston: Beacon Press, 2014).
Iowa where it would meet an existing pipeline in Illinois. Enroute, the pipeline would cross underneath Lake Oahe, a reservoir on the dammed Mni Sose, or Missouri River, near its confluence with the Cannonball River. Not only do those bodies of water provide the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe’s drinking water, but this confluence is considered a sacred site. The initial July 2016 lawsuit filed by the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe against the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) charged that the pipeline’s route through unceded lands would violate the 1851 Fort Laramie Treaty, violate the Clean Water Act, the National Historic Protection Act, and the National Environmental Policy Act. Though initially successful in blocking the DAPL (the USACE under the Obama administration revoked Energy Transfer Partner’s permit for the final easement in December 2016), President Trump reversed the decision shortly after his inauguration in February 2017. Although ultimately unsuccessful in stopping the DAPL, what would become known as the Mni Wiconi (water is sacred) movement, or #NoDAPL, can be seen as an important battle in a much longer context, not just of protesting, but of protecting lands, waters, and the relationships that constitute life in a place.²

The Mni Wiconi movement shares many features in common with Indigenous prophetic movements of the nineteenth century and, as Nick Estes has pointed out, is part of a continuous history of Indigenous resistance to settler colonialism that stretches backwards and forwards in time, before and after the nineteenth century. Like those who participated in nineteenth-century Indigenous prophetic movements and whose teachings and actions were misconstrued or distorted by settler colonists, twenty-first century water protesters “placed their claims in the margins of what the law and public consider sacred or religious,” as Caitlyn L. Brandt has

emphasized in her MA thesis on prophecy, ceremony, and anti-colonial refusal in the Standing Rock Mni Wiconi movement. Much of this has to do with the difficulty of placing Indigenous prophetic movements into either the category of sacred/religious or secular/political. In the ontology of the modern West, sacredness is often drawn upon to imply purity, something that should not be touched—but for water protectors, water was “also something to be taken care of in everyday actions,” that, in the face of settler colonial violence, “the water had not been taken care of, therefore, collective, meaningful ceremonies and prayer were necessary to protect it.”

The Black Snake prophecy is central to understanding the simultaneously sacred and material quality of this movement, as well as its expressly Indigenous temporal framing, particularly within the framework of the Oceti Sakowin Oyate (People of Seven Council Fires, or the Dakota-, Nakota-, and Lakota-speaking Sioux Nation). When the Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe filed a preliminary injunction against the Army Corps of Engineers to block construction of the pipeline in 2017 while the Standing Rock Sioux lawsuit was in process, they placed the Prophecy at the center:

Long ago, Lakota prophets told of the coming of a Black Snake that would be coiled in the Tribe’s homeland and which would harm the people. In the prophecy, the snake was black, slippery, in motion, and would devour the people. Although there can be no way of knowing when this prophesy emerged into the Lakota worldview, Lakota religious adherents now in their 50s and 60s were warned of the Black Snake by their elders as children. The Black Snake prophecy is a source of terror and existential threat to the Lakota worldview.

Lakota religious adherents today believe that the Black Snake has been made real. Lakota religious practitioners believe that the Dakota Access pipeline,
a crude oil pipeline proposed to cross under their homeland is the black, slippery terror described in the Black Snake prophecy. And the coming of the Black Snake is not without consequence in the Lakota religious worldview.4

Like other Indigenous prophetic movements, the Black Snake prophecy has acted as a critique of settler colonialism, identifying it as a destroyer of relations between humans and other-than-human relatives. But it has also acted as a theorization of settler colonialism, understanding it as an entity that acts as a coherent system. As Tenskwatawa (Shawnee) did in the early nineteenth century when he theorized settler colonialism as a giant earth-altering crab, water protectors also theorized settler colonialism as a monster, a massive black snake that would destroy life-giving land and waters and by extension, the myriad relations constituted and sustained by them. These theories have always required deliberate action. These actions move beyond resistance alone, towards building a livable future, strengthening relationships with other-than-human relatives, and refusing the ontological premises underpinning settler colonial modes of relationality and settler colonial time. This manifests as practicing an ontology of care regardless, despite, or in the face of the ongoing grip of settler colonialism.

This is why participants in the Mni Wiconi movement as well as many other similar Indigenous-led movements across North America/Turtle Island and the world have called themselves protectors, not protesters. In an article for Indian Country Today, Misty Perkins (Northern Arapaho) draws attention to the limitations of the English language to describe Indigenous concepts, emphasizing the difference between “protester” and “protector.” Water protectors are not protesting in a dispute over property or resources but “protecting the land and

waters against its very destruction for ALL OF US, for ALL life.” Water protectors “mean that the water and the land are part of a living network in which we have the right to defend if threatened, because it cannot defend itself and we depend on it for our very existence as a species. They mean ‘ours’ as in our childrens’ generation which literally and figuratively are our future on this earth.” The #NoDAPL movement was not simply a dispute over who gets to possess land and resources, but a project to protect the basis of life itself, the terrain from which a future can emerge.5 Although rooted within ongoing, dynamic traditions of the Oceti Sakowin, the Mni Wiconi movement produced new forms of ceremony that made sense within global Indigenous frameworks, but also provided an Indigenous-led entry-point for settlers to rethink their own conceptual groundings in modern, Western, extractive, capitalist modes of relati

The practice of Indigenous jurisdiction as rooted in an ontology of care does not translate easily, if at all, into Western legal frameworks. It must be understood from within Indigenous ontologies and epistemologies. Thus, political and legal sovereignty must also be joined to a cultural sovereignty to enable Indigenous governing structures to reflect Indigenous jurisprudential understandings that may “extend to what we might call the religious—spiritual relationships, responsibilities and rights,” as Michael McNalley has argued.7 Religious studies


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7 In a discussion of the work of Indigenous law scholar Rebecca Tsosie, Michael McNalley considers how cultural sovereignty matters as a crucial component of political sovereignty. This moves beyond a scholarly tendency to avoid a the perceived risk of emphasizing culture at the expense of the “real” issues of political sovereignty and material decolonization. For Tsosie, it is the “internal construction of sovereignty by Native peoples themselves that will elicit the core meaning and significance of sovereignty for contemporary Native communities,” not the
scholar Greg Johnson has called this practice of legal self-determination auto-jurisdiction, “the ways people look past the putative authority and mechanisms of prevailing [settler colonial] jurisdictions and, alternatively, invoke the authority of tradition as long-term grounded experience in order to construct and speak forth their legitimacy.”8 The Cheyenne River Sioux Tribe’s use of the Black Snake Prophecy within a US legal forum was a sincere expression of Indigenous legal precepts grounded in Indigenous ontological premises, even as it was framed within US law as an appeal to first amendment rights to religious freedom. Yet placed in this frame, it loses much of its power as a guide to “being a good relative” in a time that, for Indigenous peoples, can be seen as a double apocalypse: the ongoing apocalypse of settler colonialism and the localized effects of climate change.9

The Black Snake Prophecy is an end-time prophecy, but unlike the end-times prophesied in Abrahamic traditions that foresees the inevitable end of an earth-bound existence and tends to encourage apathy, knowledge of the Black Snake Prophecy encourages action in the face of a threat to all that is sacred: all of the relations that constitute a people. Global climate crisis and its runaway effects require rethinking relationships between humans and with other-than-humans on the planet. Considering how settlers and Indigenous peoples each envisioned the future is important here. As articulations of Indigenous modes of relationality as well as critiques of settler ones, Indigenous prophecy can illuminate the ways in which settler society

simple reproduction of Western forms of sovereignty that “emphasize the secular nature of ‘legitimate governance.’” In other words, cultural sovereignty—determining the meanings of these categories from within Indigenous nations—is key in the practice of Indigenous sovereignty writ large. Tsosie in McNalley, *Defend the Sacred*, 20.


9 For the limitations of drawing on religious freedom discourse in US legal forums, especially in terms of land, see Johnson, “Auto-Jurisdiction and Indigenous Futures.”; McNalley, *Defend the Sacred*.
has come up short in addressing environmental crisis, both in its historical iterations and in the context of contemporary global warming (a result of settler modes of relationality in practice).

While searching for fixity in a world of flux, settlers prophesied a future of endless abundance. Settlers in North America and beyond continue to adhere to this future vision despite a parade of evidence that it is not sustainable.10 Without calling for the appropriation of Indigenous practices, my hope is that this dissertation can add to conversations around the possibilities of relationship in an interdependent world faced with the challenges of climate chaos, mass extinction, and the legacies of ongoing settler colonialism.

10 Anthropologist Lucas Bessire has written a beautiful account of the connections between settler family history in southwest Kansas, the imminent depletion of the Ogallala Aquifer, the deep history and erasure of Indigenous presence. Running through this story is the unwillingness of locals to recognize their failures and reckon with the detritus of histories of patriarchal and colonial violence as they continue to pump water out of the aquifer at an unsustainable rate. Lucas Bessire, Running Out: In Search of Water on the High Plains (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2022).
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