EDITORIAL INTRODUCTION

INDIGENOUS MATTERS: CULTURES, TECHNOLOGIES, MEDIATIONS

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Consider a photograph of a skinny polar bear taken on Baffin Island, Nunavut, in late August 2017. The photo was released by National Geographic (NatGeo) in early December 2017, accompanied by a video overlaid with somber piano music and text that read in part: “This is what climate change looks like.” The photo depicted an emaciated bear dragging its hind legs on an “iceless land,” its head down, its bones protruding, “staggering” toward an “abandoned fishing camp” to eat a piece of foam from a snowmobile seat. The photo and video have since been viewed and shared millions of times across a range of social and traditional media platforms. While a post made on Instagram by NatGeo admitted that the cause of the bear’s emaciation could not be gleaned from the photo, it still named the photo the #FaceOfClimateChange. On the same day, in a post geolocated from Beijing, Canadian Environment Minister Catherine McKenna wrote on Twitter: “THIS is what climate change looks like. Climate change is real. As are its impacts. Time to stand up for our polar bears and our planet.”

1 The photo was taken by National Geographic photographer Paul Nicklen, along with documentarians from the conservation group Sea Legacy, which is “on a mission to create healthy and abundant oceans” by sending “the world’s best photographers and filmmakers on expedition [to] capture the beauty below the surface of our oceans and the threats to its survival” (https://act.sealegacy.org/tide).

2 The camp acted as the observation point for the photographers and documentarians. The post continued: “We didn’t have a weapon and we didn’t have any food. There literally was nothing we could do for him as we were hundreds of miles from the nearest Inuit community. What could we have done? What we did do was push through our tears knowing that this footage was going to help connect a global audience to the biggest issue facing us as a species today.” See https://www.instagram.com/p/BceylHujELW/, 9 December 2017.

3 See https://twitter.com/cathmckenna/status/939601028567191553, 9 December 2017. Emphasis mine.
But this story, like so many stories, is also an echo. Two years earlier, in 2015, Nicklen released a photograph of another skinny polar bear, another ostensible effect of melting sea ice, another victim of the reality of climate change. And as with the bear in 2017, the claim issuing a clear climate-related consequence on Arctic animals was of little consequence in its contentiousness. Then, as now, it didn’t actually matter if the bear was skinny because of climate change or because it was injured—the future was there already in its protruding bones, atrophied limbs, and the global affect it inspired. If, as George Wenzel put it in an interview on Isuma TV in 2010, the “iconic image of a polar bear standing on a little piece of ice” has since at least the 1980s threatened to displace the relations—rhetorical, cultural, material, economic—present in the Arctic between Inuit peoples and the polar bear, the new iconography is perhaps the failed predator in a brown, not white, Arctic. Enter now the shambling skinny polar bear, a “face” of climate change regardless of whether or not its empty stomach has anything to do with the climate or change.

Public discussions about the photographs and video have been principally concerned, if predictably, with questions of legitimacy and

4 If the language of “our polar bears,” coupled with “our planet,” delocalizes the polar bear and the Arctic variously into the state and the planetary, this too is familiar to Arctic peoples in the Inuit Nunangat (Inuit Homeland). The Harper government’s (2009) mandate for the future of Arctic governance, in a report titled Canada’s Northern Strategy: Our North, Our Heritage, Our Future, used a similar language to describe Inuit peoples, whose “longstanding presence … [is] fundamental to our history” (3, emphasis mine). http://www.northernstrategy.gc.ca/cns/cns-eng.asp.

5 Again in partnership with Sea Legacy and NatGeo. See https://www.instagram.com/p/7TRP7WlsKm/. The same year, only months prior, a similar photograph taken by Kerstin Langenberger sparked further controversy. See http://www.cbc.ca/news/trending/thin-bear-photo-kerstin-1.3232725.

6 In a comment made to CBC radio program As It Happens, Sea Legacy co-founder Christina Mittermeier argued that it didn’t matter what happened to this individual bear. Rather: “The point is that it was starving…. As we lose sea ice in the Arctic, polar bears will starve.” As It Happens, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, 11 December 2017. http://www.cbc.ca/radio/asithappens/as-it-happens-monday-edition-1.4442887/viral-video-of-emaciated-polar-bear-may-not-be-what-it-seems-nunavut-bear-monitor-says-1.4442892.

7 At the time, Wenzel was speaking on the terms of representation and misrepresentation of the seal and polar bear hunts in the context of a changing Arctic environment. Rather than sound the alarm of adaptability, and capacity for adaptation—an all too common scholarly activity in contemporary scholarship of Indigenous communities—Wenzel was more concerned about the representational politics of animals like the polar bear to intervene and sweep away the economic, food, or cultural, and what can be called rhetorical relations Inuit have constituted. For more on these relations, see Wenzel, Sometimes Hunting Can Seem Like Business: Polar Bear Sport Hunting in Nunavut (Calgary: University of Alberta Press, 2008).
certainties about the end of the Arctic. Inuit peoples responded in turn with a counter-narrative on social media sites like Twitter and Facebook. In part, they have repeated and stressed the necessity to listen to and consult with Inuit on questions concerning their home—whether climate, animals, or health. But if dominant framing narratives (re)mediate the Arctic within the familiar tropic terrains of the Anthropocene, the crisis, the catastrophe, not to mention the pristine and the open, these fail to reckon with how, when Inuit remain “unconvinced,” they remediate Arctic mediations.

8 Whether through the end of the Arctic or the end of the world, the Anthropocene or the capitalocene (Jason Moore, “The Capitalocene, Part I: On the Nature and Origins of Our Ecological Crisis,” Journal of Peasant Studies 44, no. 3 [2017]: 594–630), the membrane of Canadian Arctic sovereignty is shatter-thin—an exigency that could be thought of as the “outside” in the way Agamben traced its line: the thyrathen, the threshold, or fores, door: the passage that grants access. Still today the Northwest Passage persists internationally as an imminent question of granting for shipping routes, seismic surveys, oil spills, and catastrophic collapse. See Giorgio Agamben, The Coming Community, translated by Michael Hardt (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 68.

9 In a tweet posted on 9 December 2017, mayor of Iqaluit, Nunavut, Madeleine Redfern wrote: “Important to ask Inuit elders/polar bear hunters—they are the true experts regarding polar bears (demography),” and, in a separate tweet on the same day: “Ideally all stories about polar bears would automatically include Inuit from the start—not just biologists.” See https://twitter.com/madinuk/status/939680115398758400. Many other Inuit peoples responded on Facebook and Twitter, challenging the claims by NatGeo and Sea Legacy. In an interview with As It Happens, Leo Ikakhik, a polar bear patroller in Arviat, Nunavut—a part of a joint polar bear patrol partnership with World Wildlife Foundation Canada—told Carol Off that the bear was likely sick, that he’s seen various animals in such a condition, and: “Since I’m from the north, like I would really fall for the video that it’s going to affect every polar bear. It’s like it’s kind of hard to explain, but I’m pretty positive with that the polar bears are not decreasing, and the climate change is not really killing them” (emphasis mine).

10 Arctic Indigenous peoples do not deny climate change, of course. In a recent publication from Nunavut Arctic College, Inuit elders from across the Inuit Nunangat have spoken on the changes wrought by a changing climate. Indeed, the robins in Kangiqsujuaq, tall willows in Umiujaq, grass in Kugluktuk, dandelions in Pangnirtung, new wind in Pond Inlet, new trees in Nain, skinny caribou around Baker Lake, and thin ice in Kangiqsualujjuaq are stark reminders that mediation is geo-tropic. See “The Caribou Taste Different Now”: Inuit Elders Observe Climate Change, edited by José Gérin-Lajoie, Alain Cuerrier, and Laura Siegwart Collier (Iqaluit: Nunavut Arctic College, 2017). Also see Qapirangajuq: Inuit Knowledge and Climate Change (2011), dir. Zacharias Kunuk and Ian Mauro, Igloolik Isuma Productions and Kunuk Kohn Productions, http://www.isuma.tv/inuit-knowledge-and-climate-change/movie-noss.

11 One way to read this might be through what Audra Simpson has variously named refusal, “distantiation,” or “disaffiliation” (16)—a refusal of settler or state recognition, but also a positional distance from being recognized through or as difference, tethered forever to the acquiescences and chronologies of the colonial mutare. Indeed, for Simpson, distantiation from difference imposes a “territorial and semiotic imperative” (186) that, ultimately, rejects translation. See Mohawk Interuptus: Political Life across the Borders of Settler States (Durham,
But Inuit response is also mediated by broadband Internet access.\(^{12}\) As Erin Yunes writes, “One challenge to the growth of Inuit spaces online is that residents of the Arctic are underserved in Internet access, especially when compared with Canadians in urban centres. Infrastructure projects and social programming initiatives tend to be short-term, meeting only the minimum capacity to participate in high bandwidth global network.”\(^{13}\) The territory of Nunavut has the slowest and most expensive Internet in Canada, and this is the case all throughout the Canadian Arctic.\(^{14}\) So-called “expeditions” with cameras and streaming video recording therefore mediate the tropic spheres of Arctic representation as a recurring space of terminal crisis, while the wires and infrastructure of the Internet remain buried in southerly hotspots. Media events like this one, recurrent and shareable, point to these inconsistent mediatory collisions—access and affect, tears and traffic, and the stacks of unconcern.
either for ongoing impositions typical of colonial and settler futurisms, or their factuality for the present (if it isn’t true now, then “soon”).

In the course of the media process of sharing, retweeting, and commenting is the mediatory claim to the certainty of potentiality, familiar to the interaction of the settler state with Inuit communities in consultations and courtrooms. Potential harm is reaffirmed by the rhythms of the media landscape and tropes that populate the Arctic, which returns the ungrammaticality of the speech act—whether it’s a refusal to a consultation process or comments to an Instagram or Facebook post. But in turn, Inuit re-claim the histories of interaction and relation, that which does not signify the necessary-potential-to or the potential-not-to, but rather the various articulations of the situation-as-relation. These photos, and retweets, and cycles of concern—in mediations and meetings—are precisely familiar, one more mediatory event to actualize the potential latent in some southerly discourse. But more happens here: Inuit do not merely greet this familiarity; they actualize the potential-to of the story’s claimed humanist or liberal intent by reaffirming their own being-there-now.15 By calling the past into question, the skinny polar bear is drawn back into relation and right acting. This remediation might signify, not simply an epistemological divergence, but the secret hidden by the photograph: that the truth of the photo is mediated by what has long been decided by the state, by governance, police, by Arctic settlements and resettlements, sovereignty claims, comment sections, and Supreme Court Decisions.16

It is an impossible task to “introduce” the mediation of Indigeneity. On the one hand, because to define—to introduce, transitively17—is already to misunderstand the practices of both mediation and Indigeneity; on the other,


because I would not be the one chosen, or responsible, for it if such an introduction could be given over without misunderstanding and misapprehension. No, the “mediation of Indigeneity” will not and cannot be introduced here, by me. Instead we might speak of an approach, and approaches, to mediations, to Indigeneity, and to the mediations of Indigeneity today. Much might be said of the approach itself, which shifts and changes the horizon through movement, scanning, immersion, and of course from descent, knowledge, and practice. But, of course, to ascribe an either/or is already a mediation. If global climate change discourses, paternalistic sovereignty claims, and myriad tropes and mythoi blow through the Inuit Nunangat, and over those European skeletons imagined there still today, then the approach is also mediated by the imaginations of governors and documentarians alike as they converge upon the skinny polar bear in search of the wrong food. And as Mario Blaser has pointed out, an approach is also a practice, and a practice that can be misapplied even by its “proper” practitioners—the “variably successful performance” of the worlds in which stories narrate and make. Blaser repeats what has been repeated before, that “stories are not only or mainly denotative (referring to something ‘out there’), neither are they fallacious renderings of real practices; rather, they partake in the variably successful performance of that which they narrate.” The story and the storyteller can be wrong according to the world it makes and finds itself making.

19 Ibid., 54.
20 Ibid.
21 For Blaser this plugs into a question about the threat of repetition in ontology, whether in the overflowing heterogeneity—of “things,” “objects,” “assemblages,” not to mention cosmopolitics (Isabelle Stengers, Cosmopolitics, Volume 1, translated by Robert Bononno [Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010]; Yuk Hui, The Question Concerning Technology in China: An Essay in Cosmotechnics [Falmouth: Urbanomic Media, 2016] and “Cosmotechnics as Cosmopolitics,” e-flux 86, November 2017, http://www.e-flux.com/journal/86/161887/cosmotechnics-as-cosmopolitics/) and “Gaia” (Bruno Latour, Facing Gaia: Eight Lectures on the New Climactic Regime [Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017]; Déborah Danowski and Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, The Ends of the World [Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016])—or the positing of the nested space, the ultimate and final bedrock where multiple ontologies sit. Indigeneity, he writes, questions the “due process” of the pluriversal, and comes ultimately to a “political ontology,” which “cannot be concerned with a supposedly external and independent reality (to be uncovered or depicted accurately); rather, it must concern itself with reality-making, including its own participation in reality-making” (“Ontology and Indigeneity,” 55). For Blaser, this “way of worlding” is described as “a proposition that seeks to be hospitable to the notion of multiple ontologies” (54, emphasis mine). But the notional might be understood as the site of mediation, where the proposition is
To speak of the mediations of Indigeneity today is to trace, perhaps even conjugate, the colonial mutare in the state, the body, the border, the family, the network, the platform, the modern (and the modem), and the “natural.” Whether through paternalistic state mechanisms and policies, genetic tableaus and racial purity, blood quantum, mythos and settler indigenization, legal and infrastructural partitioning, plots, and design, the project of settler colonialism has still not succeeded. The unwanted trees in a land wanted for pasture, as Ronald Niezen once put it, stand taller and their root networks are stronger. Indeed, as Māori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith has argued in her seminal work, hospitable to the notion or the multiple ontologies qua ontologies. Does the seeking seek a notional proposition, or might it propose a notion to a notion? The question isn’t trivial. What is a notion of an ontology if not the mediation of a notion? Do propositions and hospitalities stay with the notions while enacted? There is a kind of classic rhetorical proposition, which enacts notionally into non-notional ontologies in the act of seeking the hospitality. Indigeneity is itself notional in this reading. Still, this way of approaching worlding, this “seeking,” may be reckoned as a “regard” to the approach to right acting or wrong acting that variously concerns the authors of this issue. See Cheryl L’Hirondelle, “Re:leting Necessity and Invention: How Sara Diamond and The Banff Centre Aided Indigenous New Media Production (1992–2005),” in Indigenous Art: New Media and the Digital, edited by Heather Igloliorte, Julie Nagam and Carla Taunta, PUBLIC 54 (2016).

It is perhaps all too familiar to Western philosophy to trace the etymology. Walter Mignolo has usefully identified the ways that languages and alphabets structures and carries the matrices and nodes of the colonial. See Mignolo, The Darker Side of Modernity: Global Futures, Decolonial Options (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2012). The colonial matrix of power is what Mignolo calls the foundational structure of Western civilization, a kind of post-culpability of power, body, and knowledge. At base, the colonial matrix of power defines the ways colonialism has defined the body against the soul, the body of knowledge, the body politic, the body in economy, and the bodily in the technologico-economic. Ergo from the racial to the ethnic, aesthetic and epistemic, linguistic and alphabetical, sexual and state, to labour and finance, Mignolo finds these “historico-structural nodes” wherein the logic of coloniality and imperial qua difference and diversity are articulated and rearticulated, recursively (17). Mutare, the root of “mutate” and “mutation,” therefore gives more than the logical, legal, material, bodily mutations, or changes of and to colonialism. I signal to mutare to dig out these roots—neither to merely to give over to the definitions of change and alteration in a chronological or linear trajectory, nor to conjugate the diversifications or the exchanges, but rather to excite the ways of “forsaking” that mutare also translates from. To take mediation as a potential “forsaking” reckons with the ways that the colonial is forsaken and moved, altered but varied. Also see Mignolo, “Delinking: The Rhetoric of Modernity, the Logic of Coloniality and the Grammar of De-Coloniality,” Cultural Studies 21, no. 2 (2008): 449–514.

See Kim Tallbear, Native American DNA: Tribal Belonging and the False Promise of Genetic Science (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2013).

networking is an act, an approach, of decolonization—it continues, it moves, it 
remediates in “survivance,” 25 “right thinking,” 26 and “future imaginary.” 27

The past, suggested Smith, and the “stories local and global, the 
present,” and “communities, cultures, languages and social practices—all may 
be spaces of marginalization, but they have also become spaces of resistance 
and hope.” 28 Speaking of the ongoing “explosion” of Indigenous artists, 
scholars, teachers, and innovators, Heather Igloliorte, Julie Nagam, and Carla 
Taunton have recently argued:

Through gathering and networking, Indigenous voices and 
perspectives come together, are centrally positioned, and 
ultimately combat the colonial marginalization of 
Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies … Indigenous 
artists have always already been innovators, and have 
therefore been at the forefront of practice and 
technologically orientated methods and methodologies. 29

Indeed, the Internet is today variously described as populated by ancestors, 30 
built upon layers already travelled and mapped by angakkuk, 31 representative, if 
not residual, of the tools and practices already built into Indigenous

25 Gerald Vizenor, *Manifest Manners: Narratives on Postindian Survivance* (Lincoln: 
University of Nebraska Press, 1999).

26 Joe Karetak, “Inuit Knowledge Applies Today,” in *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: What 
Inuit have Known for a Long Time*, edited by Joe Karetak, Frank Tester, and Shirley Tagalik (Halifax: 

Future Imaginary in Aboriginal New Media,” in *Coded Territories: Tracing Indigenous 
Pathways in New Media Art*, edited by Steven Loft and Kerry Swanson (Calgary: University of 

28 Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* 

29 Heather Igloliorte, Julie Nagam, and Carla Taunton, “Transmissions: The Future Possibilities 
of Indigenous Digital and New Media Art,” in *PUBLIC* 54 (2016), 7.

30 Steven Loft, “Mediacosmology,” in *Coded Territories: Tracing Indigenous Pathways in New 
Media Art*, edited by Steven Loft and Kerry Swanson (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 
2014), 172.

31 Katarina Soukoup, “Travelling Through Layers: Inuit Artists Appropriate New 
online.ca/index.php/journal/article/view/1769/1889. The word “angakkuk” is the Inuktut word 
for “shaman,” who “when asked to find out about living or deceased relatives or where animals 
have disappeared to: travel across time and space to find answers.”
communicative media tropes. And yet, these also compete with the questions of online and technical “utility,” the question of “bettering yourself,” and the cascades of claims of placenessness, data-terra nullius, and the addictive codification of the platform. But, as Jason Lewis has argued,

One can imagine the spirits of our ancestors inhabiting those networks, whispering to each far below the error correction and noise suppression, continuing their

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34 As Nick Srnicek has argued, platforms are the newest emergence for the business model of capitalism and the digital economy. Writ into the platform is the mining of data, which places its users—geolocates, predicts, and addicts—through the interface while simultaneously rendering them into the placenessness of the Internet. See Srnicek, *Platform Capitalism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016). And while Indigenous peoples have variously worked against terra nullius of the Internet, questions about net neutrality, the freedom of data, and so on, have led to what Mueller has called the “transnational coalition of Internet users” (*Will the Internet Fragment? Sovereignty, Globalization, Cyberspace* [Cambridge: Polity Press, 2017], 142). The “Declaration of the Independence of Cyberspace,” written by John Perry Barlow in February 1996 is one such example. It reads, in part: “Governments of the Industrial World, you weary giants of flesh and steel, I come from Cyberspace, the new home of the Mind. On behalf of the future, I ask you to leave us alone. You are not welcome among us. You have no sovereignty where we gather.” It continues: “You are terrified of your own children, since they are natives in a world where you will always be immigrants.” See [https://www.eff.org/cyberspace-independence](https://www.eff.org/cyberspace-independence). By giving unfettered access to personal data to the platform, Srnicek argues that analysis, prediction, and repository are the necessary correlates and coordinates in this space (176). In other words, mediations of place, body, and history are in constant conflict, while aggregation, competition, and monopolization narrowly focus network and platform providers into single restrictive points. The opening of platforms therefore struggle with Indigenous claims to intellectual and cultural property, traditional space, and the protocols of relationality, further mediated by the predictive and aggregative motions of platform and interface, and competing tropes of “becoming native” to the space of the Internet. For ways that Indigenous peoples have responded against the self-indigenization of the Internet, see Jason E. Lewis and Skawennati Tricia Fragnito, “Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace,” *Cultural Survival Quarterly* 29, no. 2 (2005); Candice Hopkins, “Interventions in Digital Territories: Narratives in Native New Media,” in *Transference, Tradition, Technology: Native New Media Exploring Visual and Digital Culture*, edited by Melanie A. Townsend, Dana Claxton, and Steven Loft (Banff: Walter Phillips Gallery Editions, 2005); Jolene Rickard, “First Nation Territory in Cyber Space Declared: No Treaties Needed,” *CyberPowWow* (2001), retrieved from [http://www.cyberpowwow.net/nation2nation/jolenework.html](http://www.cyberpowwow.net/nation2nation/jolenework.html) 4 December 2017; and Archer Pechawis, “Not So Much a Land Claim,” *CyberPowWow* (2001), [http://www.cyberpowwow.net/archerweb/index.html](http://www.cyberpowwow.net/archerweb/index.html).
commerce with one another, speaking forward into the future—the spirits in the tree and the stone and the stream becoming the ghosts in the machine.”

This special issue of MediaTropes, “Indigenous Matters: Cultures, Technologies, Mediations,” therefore convenes a dialogue on the matters and materials, toolkits and practices, that culturally mediate contemporary Indigeneity on the land, in the letter of the law, via social and political activism, in the press (new/emergent media and mainstream), and through science, technology and art. Lessons from Indigenous art, practice, and media scholarship have troubled the borders and assumptions of our media ecologies, and are recoding the “landscapes” of media and mediation toward distinct epistemological and relational cosmologies.

Part of the work described by contributions to this issue is to complicate the purported inventions installed by the colonial. Whether through policy or in the remainders of dominant settler enframing, it is often the case that Indigenous peoples are imagined to have adopted or understood a medium only yesterday. I put some emphasis on this term, which I borrow from Craig Womack. Indigenous resistance in the nineteenth-century, writes Womack, did not merely take the form of plains warriors on horseback; Indian people authored books that often argued for Indian rights and criticized land theft. In addition to publishing books, many of these authors engaged in other rhetorical acts such as national speaking tours lobbying for Native rights. Their life stories, as well as their literary ideas, provide a useful study of the evolution of Native thought that has led up to the contemporary notions of sovereignty and literature…. Most approaches to the ‘Native American Literary Renaissance’ have proceeded as if the Indian discovered the novel, the short story, and the poem only yesterday.

Womack’s study of Indigenous literatures in the United States foregrounded what Walter Mignolo called the nodes of the colonial matrix that mediate the pace and trajectory of varied apprehensions of Indigeneity. To this end, it is

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36 Craig S. Womack, Red on Red: Native American Literary Separatism (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 3.
37 Ibid.
38 Mignolo, The Darker Side of Modernity.
not at all uncommon to find Indigenous peoples also working against the mediation of the introduction, “only yesterday,” to the pace and path of the medium-as-introduced. Only yesterday can only be claimed from a “today” where “yesterday” is always too recent to fully participate in tomorrow, and for which the too-recent past lived by those imagined to have been introduced was not the right one. It was only yesterday when that past was supposed to have shifted course.

This issue convenes diverse voices from a number of disciplines and backgrounds together to explore the myriad ways that Indigeneity is culturally mediated in the contemporary media landscape. Among its questions: How are claims, self-determination, nationhood, community, and identity related to and constituted across complex and colliding landscapes? What is the role of new and old technology, and how is it being remixed, remediated, reclassified, reconstituted? What, and where, are the fault-lines and shifts? The authors were encouraged to probe the transformational, connective, memorial, and communicative tensions and potentials found in these shifting tropic terrains, and to scan the horizons. Readers may note the tension in a story told again (and again), one described by Zoe Todd and Jennifer Adese in their contribution to this issue. On the one hand, the practices of Indigenous matters and materials, epistemologies, and ontologies are precisely in the telling and retelling of story—repetition. But, on the other hand, with retelling comes an uneasy difference, both as a matter of concern and a matter of principle. Whether the story shores up or wearies depends on this play of difference and repetition.

The essays featured in this special issue therefore may be said to share the approach in common, but not as a matter of course. Though all authors do share in their commitment to analyze the matters of course—the trajectories, tenses, sites, and plots of nation, identity, of people, and of traditions as they are known today—the approaches move variously through the terrains, media ecologies, and platforms mediating Indigeneity. These approaches are disciplinary and methodological, yes, but they are also grounded or tracked in places, in times, in families, and in ways that speak intermedially: as counternarratives, refusals, and in different skins.


40 See Jennifer Adese, Zoe Todd, and Shaun Stevenson’s contribution to this issue, 11–12.

41 In her monograph on Inuit literatures, Keavy Martin adapted the trope of skin found in myriad Inuit stories and lessons to, in her words, find the ways that “Inuit intellectual traditions
Article Summaries

We open this issue with contributions from Jennifer Adese, Zoe Todd, and Shaun Stevenson, “Mediating Métis Identity: An Interview with Jennifer Adese and Zoe Todd,” and Sébastien Malette and Guillaume Marcotte, “Marie-Louise: Protector of Louis Riel in Québec.” Taken together, these essays offer both a powerful statement on contemporary Métis scholarship, and, despite the disagreements evident between them, what might be named a shared concern for the medial—neither poles, nor quite the middle.

Throughout, Adese and Todd sketch the various and variegated mediations of contemporary Métis identity: the matrilineal and relational bonds of kinship; the land and waterways of Western Canada, and the beings that draw within, through, and from them; the ongoing production of the literary and linguistic, from Michif to children’s literature; the pedagogical and collegial, in the academe and band council; and, finally, the different tenses, forms, and beings of the future. For his part, Stevenson variously moves between “interview,” “conversation,” and “discussion” to describe what with Adese and Todd also becomes, in the course of its unfolding, a practice. The “interview” (appearing only once in the title of their contribution) implies, if it does not testify to, what Sophie McCall once named the “central point of struggle” of voice implicit to the relation between settler scholar-editors and Indigenous...

might ... dress in new ‘skins’ for the purposes of infiltrating the academy—and likewise, in the ways in which the wrongs of the southern institution might similarly be ‘re-dressed.’” See Martin, Stories in a New Skin: Approaches to Inuit Literature (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2012), 8. More recently, Martin has argued for the need to “consume,” to hunt and feast upon Inuit and Indigenous texts as a matter of protocol. Drawing from Papaschase Cree scholar Dwayne Donald, and her own experience at the Pangnirtung Nunavut Summer School, the persistent denial of relationships—whether by polite refusal to eat “country food,” disregard, or other such unknowing sleights—is the “extended process” of the colonial. Indeed, as Martin describes, it is precisely the motivation not to be colonizers that wedges the openness of difference, alterity, otherness, and recognition. Texts and contexts, then, demand an ethics of butchering, feasting, of removing and enclothing a skin—that enacts the protocols and respects, the responsibilities and relations, that do not hoard but shares, do not control but act rightly. We might further the argument to suggest that if proximity is a practice of decolonization, questions of mediation similarly require, perhaps even suggest an approach, a moving in, whose protocols already imply the butchering, sharing, and wearing of platforms, networks, codes. Keavy Martin, “The Hunting and Harvesting of Inuit Literature,” in Learn, Teach, Challenge: Approaches to Indigenous Literatures, edited by Deanna Reder and Linda M. Morra (Waterloo, ON: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2016), 445–458.

storytellers. But the multiple mediations of the interview and of testimony are not lost to Stevenson, who notes that “recognition of the implications” of what he calls the “false claims to Indigeneity,” implicit in the arguments to be made about métissage and settler self-Indigenization, “does not necessarily result in a nuanced understanding” of the multiple meanings of Indigeneity, Métis, and the mediations of their meanings. But here is where the tri-authored text finds Adese and Todd in dialogue not only with each other and Stevenson, but in dialogue as such. We might think of this dialogue mediated by conjugations of “connection”—in the familial, geographic, and historical connections, the connective tissues of the settler state called Canada, in the collegial and academic connections or networks of the university, and connected via emails and shared documents on the Internet. We might think of the way Cheryl L’Hirondelle, in her own interview with Sara Diamond, linked relation to the act of telling, or the email subject protocol RE: to the respect protocols of the “regard.” The question that, as Adese describes, lingers in the air between family, kin—will you see me as yours?—is one of many instances of time as a mediator. For it is not simply that the “unasked question” is the time where relation and kinship are founded, but it is when they continue to be made. That it is both founded and made is the way of kinship as it has been described by so many Indigenous peoples: together over time, founded in its own making. But maybe founded is the wrong word, as Neizen would have it—not founded, but “engendered.”

If we take seriously Stevenson’s claim that Métis are in many ways on the “frontlines” of Indigenous mediation in Canada, then Malette and Marcotte’s substantial contribution to this issue moves along these provocative and illuminating “lines” by tracing the claims to Métis political consciousness, peoplehood, descent, history, and homeland. At issue are two significant claims concerning the life, or the “living proof” (27), of archival research, and its proximity to the enduring question of presence: who, where, and when are the Métis? Who decides and how? What counts, literally and figuratively, and through what means and mediums? The authors issue a challenge to what they will argue is an ongoing mediation of scholarship and political consciousness wrought through the Powley and Daniels Supreme Court of Canada decisions, in contemporary scholarly debates concerning Métis epistemology and archive, and through often painful questions of platform and place, ontic and ontology, sovereignty and self-determination. What emerges, in part, are stories, histories, families, and relations of Mme. Violet Lalonde, the great-great-granddaughter of Marie-Louise Riel, in what was until now an unpublished testimony. From

this, the resonances of oral testimony left in Maniwaki, Québec, and the “people” of Marie-Louise. The authors bring forth Louis Riel in his sojourns to Québec and Ontario, along the Kichisipi or Ottawa River between 1873–75, “a fugitive in the Outaouais.” Anecdote, story, testimony: to this end, Malette and Marcotte probe what is no less than the narrativities of peoplehood that issue from the Outaouais to Red River. Throughout emerge the constitutive tenses and modes of the postcolony.

The stakes are high, the terms unstable, and the emotional and theoretical weight is significant. As the bio-logical and bio-racial claims of mixedness variously converge upon the meaning of Métisness, much still remains in the embrace of the scare quote. And yet, these loads bearing down on the matters of Métis Indigeneity in the medial space of these two contributions—nation and peoplehood, homeland and identity, descent and emergence, presence and testimony, story and history, practice and profession—might just be, after all, the “doing” that names the practices of decolonization.

Next, we offer three essays concerning the discursive mediations moving through traditional and social media, as well as the politics of recognition and self-determination as they play out in extractive industry discourses directed at Indigenous peoples in Latin America. As with the skinny polar bear, Indigenous peoples contend with and negotiate the anaphorá (a carrying back) and kataphorá (a carrying forward) of trope—whether in globalized atmospheric and climate futures, the conservation and governance qua protection of places and beings, in the stories and mythoi of adversity and social justice, or the moral landscapes of conveyance.

As any descent into online comment sections will reveal, whether on news websites, YouTube, or Facebook, commentary to Indigenous news stories—as with the general confusion or annoyance with Idle No More, offensive claims by police after the suspicious death of Annie Pootoogook, or

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44 As the contributions to this special issue suggest, the “-ness” of Métisness remains variously intersected, divulged, debated, and claimed. For another recent take on these terms, see Adam Gaudry and Daryl Leroux, “White Settler Revisionism and Making Métis Everywhere: The Evocation of Métissage in Quebec and Nova Scotia,” Critical Ethnic Studies 3, no. 1 (2017), 116–142.


false rumours spread on Facebook[^47] to devalue the second degree murder of an Anishinaabe woman struck by a trailer hitch—can often be painful, if not horrific. As Kimberly Matheson argues with her contribution, “Rebuilding Identities and Renewing Relationships: The Necessary Consolidation of Deficit- and Strength-Based Discourses,” the saliency, affect, expectations, and power of a discourse variously converge upon strategic mobilizations and balance. “Centuries worth of paternalistic systems are in place,” writes Matheson, “and the tenets of these systems reach deeply into the current culture and governance of each nation that makes up the Indigenous peoples in Canada.”[^48] Matheson employs social identity theory to parse the arrangements of “strength” and “deficit” based discourses. Depending on the mode and application of either, qualitatively different affects, expectations, anticipations, and views emerge. Both discourses hold truth, finds Matheson, and yet their saliency is highly contextual and mediated by, if not implicated in, trope. Consider, for example, the varied outcomes of the “David versus Goliath” underdog story on non-Indigenous peoples. Depending on the deployment, and propelled by the tropes particular to the underdog story, an empathetic and aspirational gravity is disposed with coincident mediations and expectations for struggle, loss, performatives of exertion, perceived threats to non-Indigenous communities, and questions of legitimacy. Ultimately, Matheson finds that the mobilization of discourses is most effective when there are strong and effective leaders capable of integrating meaningful articulations of identity, community, and visions together. Rather than fall back on simplistic dualisms complicit in the mediation of Indigeneity and the discourses that shape its apprehensions, Matheson ends with a strong recommendation for a complexification of the medial spheres of expectation and identification, grounded in historical and systemic injustices, and a confrontation with “the incapacity of universal standards to legitimize other knowledge systems.”[^49]

With “A Vulture is Not a Dove: The Politics of Indigeneity and Resistance to Canadian Extractivism in the Americas,” Steven Schnoor probes what is at base the ongoing collision between what the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) calls “free prior and informed consent” (FPIC)^[50] and the longstanding resource extraction goals of settler state


[^48]: Matheson, 88.

[^49]: Ibid., 89.

[^50]: See “Free Prior and Informed Consent: An Indigenous Peoples’ Right and a Good Practice for Local Communities, Manual for Project Practitioners,” Food and Agriculture Organization,
capitalisms. In the 1970s, during the senior Trudeau’s Liberal government, Indigenous peoples in the Arctic and northern territories refused Ottawa’s vision for Arctic development. One of the most publicly recognizable outcomes from this period was Justice Thomas R. Berger’s 1977 report on the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline. In it, Berger describes the naturalness with which Canadians are prone to think of developing the Arctic, the “last frontier.” Among other things, Berger offers a simple lesson from this document that, for too many reasons to name, should not be forgotten today: Indigenous peoples claim a homeland—not nowhere, not empty, not nothing—“and they believe they have a right to say what its future ought to be.” All throughout what are called the Americas, extractive industry projects—pipelines and mines, seismic surveys and tar sands, open pits and fracking—encounter Indigenous movement and staging: from dances, walks, and circles, to blockades, talks, and court cases. The discourses concerning these projects are also moving (and affecting) and staging (platforms) on- and offline, where “exploitation” and “opportunity” are mediated, and remediated, in body and body politic, in campaigns, social movements, streaming video, and Facebook pages. If development and extractions projects are contentious, there is no uniform rejection of their terms. To this end, Schnoor investigates the different ways that the language of recognition, self-determination, and FPIC are strategically deployed by Canadian extractive industries in Latin America—propped up by mining law reforms in the 1990s—to favour, if not vouchsafe, the terms of “prosperity, democracy, and security” as imagined by former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper. For his part, Schnoor is concerned with the matters and ways that “irreversible” environmental degradation and contamination, near universal rejection by Indigenous peoples, and Indigenous lifeworlds encounter and precipitate the rhetorics of “community” and “self-determination.” If, as Berger


52 Ibid., 1.

said decades prior, and as is found today in the language of human rights and the UNDRIP, Indigenous peoples “ought” to decide on their future, then what are the mediations of the *terms and grounds of this future*?

Marisa Elena Duarte and Morgan Vigil-Hayes’s contribution, “#Indigenous: A Technical and Decolonial Analysis of Activist Uses of Hashtags Across Social Movements,” employs a network scientific and social media analysis of a sample of Indigenous rights activists on Twitter during the 2016 US election. Twitter, of course, was then a space of incredible energy, and witnessed the transmission and creation of countless bits of data crashing in waves of memes, outlier sources, rumour, and what a Twitter representative called “thoughts, comments, [and] questions.” The *New York Times* published a piece on the day of the American election calling Twitter “the champion of social media”54 throughout the campaign. In 2008, and again in 2012, Twitter emerged as the medium *par excellence* for Barack Obama’s campaign machine. By 2016, Twitter promoted itself as the central election platform for streaming video, live updates, and the meme economy.55 By day’s end on Election Day 2016, over 40 million tweets had been posted to Twitter—10 million more than in 2012.56 The goal, in the words of a Twitter representative, has been “to increase engagement in the election process and encourage voter turnout.”57 While the terms of that “engagement” are still troubled by bots and potential extra-state interference, Duarte and Vigil-Hayes depart from the idealized political subject of social media. The “sample” employed by the authors, then, is already suggestive of the *depth* of mediation online—as set and subset, as bits of data in a constant upswell, as citizens of a state, as subjects of settler rule, and as peoples of nations and homelands. Dominant narratives, used to help explain the outcome of the contemporary Western political landscape,

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have focused on the so-called meme war,\textsuperscript{58} disinformation, the undertow of populist clamour, or on US President Donald Trump’s scandalous (and ongoing) use, or misuse, of the platform. But Duarte and Vigil-Hayes offer, rather, what they call the “existential sphere and material expression” of Indigenous social media communication—“in phases scientific, experiential, technical, governmental, political, and metaphysical.” With it, the responsibility \textit{qua} praxis of Indigenous Internet researchers to discern, detect, and engage the silt carried by the tributaries of the colonial—whether as design, the state, or in technological assemblage.

Finally, we close the issue with two papers concerned with the practices and fields of Indigenous collaborative media production, from Fourth World Film\textsuperscript{59} to podcasting practices. In both cases, the authors read not only the ways in which these medias and tropes are employed or practiced, but the matters and materials that continuously found and place the medias into traditional and contemporary geographies of Indigenous knowledge-making.

The first of the final two papers is Joanna Hearne’s “‘Who We Are Now’: \textit{Inupiaq Youth On the Ice},” which reckons with cinematic genre \textit{in situ},\textsuperscript{60} in her reading of Andrew Okpeaha MacLean’s first feature film \textit{On the Ice}. The claim advanced here by the filmmakers, argues Hearne, variously speaks (of) the time of the ice flows, its migrations and situations; the relations with and of the hunt and tracking; the remixes of history, of words (the shifting meanings, and groans, of the word “ice”), and cultural expression; and the interaction of traditional and contemporary knowledge-making into the broader mediations of genre, production, gaze, and being. Indeed, for Hearne the film \textit{acts} precisely as a saturation of living here, now, with and on the land, with and

\textsuperscript{58} See for example Angela Nagle, \textit{Kill All Normies: Online Culture Wars from 4Chan and Tumblr to Trump and the Alt-Right} (Winchester: Zero Books, 2017).

\textsuperscript{59} See also Michelle H. Raheja, “Reading Nanook’s Smile: Visual Sovereignty, Indigenous Revisions of Ethnography, and \textit{Atanarjuat (The Fast Runner)},” \textit{American Quarterly} 59, no. 4 (2007).

\textsuperscript{60} I am playing here with “\textit{in situ},” in place, the place of the generic, and \textit{siku}, the Inuktut word for “ice,” which, as Hearne describes, is its own unique place in the world. Siku must be thought as a mutable but ongoing place: of tradition and story; of right acting; of the return of the seal at the breathing hole; of the \textit{tuvaq} (shorefast ice) trails used by whalers off Barrow and along the shoreline to the Beauford. See Matthew L. Duckenmiller et al., “Assessing the Shorefast Ice: \textit{Inupiat Whaling Trails off Barrow, Alaska},” in \textit{SIKU: Knowing Our Ice, Documenting Inuit Sea-Ice Knowledge and Use}, edited by Igor Kupnik, Claudio Aporta, Sheari Gearheard, et al. (New York: Springer, 2008), 207. See also Julie Cruickshank, \textit{Do Glaciers Listen? Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination} (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007).
as its inhabitants, human and hip-hop moving that encounter beyond the border, through it, and within it to perform the complexities of Inuit inhabitancy. Hearne outlines this intervention and framing of the symbolic landscape and performance of Inupiaq practice in spaces popular and “remote.” Marshall McLuhan, borrowing a term from Cardinal Newman, famously described Alexis de Tocqueville as having mastered “the grammar of print.” The technological and generic appropriations and remixes that Hearne outlines in MacLean’s On the Ice—whether via Mark V. Campbell’s description of the “common grammar” and lingua franca of hip-hop, or in “the visual grammar” of the camera—might be said to describe a “concern with the continuation of Inupiaq systems of knowledge” that is precisely a mastery of the Barrow grammar of ice—the blanche immanent to film noir. As with other contributions to this special issue, that grammar is a matter (of concern, but also of place and time) as material practice, long since mastered by the toolkits available to Inupiat—matter that moves, remixes and re-places, and finds its ways to the “who” and “now” of “who we are now.”

We close the issue with Lindsay Day, Ashlee Cunsolo-Wilcox, et al.’s contribution, “The Expanding Digital Media Landscape of Qualitative and Decolonizing Research: Examining Collaborative Podcasting as a Research Method.” Taking their cue from Linda Tuhiwai Smith, participatory action research, and decolonizing research, the authors undertake the under-researched space of the podcast as “a method of qualitative data collection and analysis, critical inquiry, and knowledge mobilization.” Water returns here as a concern and mediation, shared with the paper that opens this issue, enacted through a transdisciplinary podcast—The Water Dialogues Project—with an approach to water grounded in the Mi’kmaw Two-Eyed Seeing framework uniting Indigenous and Western research approaches together. Indeed, as the authors initiate the approach, and the sharing of the approaches in the medial space of the podcast, they reflect the constitutive “object” of this special issue and the myriad ways that the contributions, taken together, approach the mediation of Indigeneity. The podcast performs, acts, and approaches in the frame, remediating the medium and the collection of 32 interviewees sharing approaches to water, collaborative research, and gathering. Throughout, the process of producing the podcast is variously mediated: by seating arrangement, opportunity, priority of voice, and the editing process of listening, relistening, cutting, summary, and thematic and tropic highlighting. As the authors spotlight the role of making, mediating, and marking the distinctions of the

collaboration—the practice of gathering together, dispersing, prioritizing, reframing, and sharing—so too emerge the mediatory collisions between sharing and dissemination, speaking and telling, summary and representation, privilege and convergence, testimony and story. In the end, through the tropic spheres of mediation, what remains, perhaps, is the gathering—and it is this gathering that is the decolonizing framework.

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Issue cover photograph courtesy of Tiff-Annie Kenny, taken in Qikiqtarjuaq, Nunavut, in August 2017.