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# Looking for Cracks and Pathways of Resistance through Outdoor Learning

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Jennifer Wigglesworth is an Assistant Professor in the Outdoor Recreation and Tourism Management Program at the University of Northern British Columbia. Her research explores justice, equity, and inclusion across the contexts of outdoor recreation, sport, tourism, and education. Her doctoral project examined rock climbing through feminist perspectives. She studies outdoor experiences with respect to different categories of identity and structures of power; she also analyzes the cultural politics of naming practices in outdoor communities.

In this chapter, I draw upon Ahmed's (2007) conceptualization of power to suggest that the field of outdoor learning needs "some kind of understanding of power that shows that things don't always hold; that shows the cracks, the movement, the instabilities and that appreciates how much things have changed, even whilst recognizing that there is much left to do" (p. 165). As a researcher and a teacher, I am interested in how power operates, and I am motivated by the aim to offer practical outputs for social change. I see power as both oppression and resistance. For instance, in my research on women's rock climbing experiences, I document gendered discrimination, but also look for moments of pushback. I collect evidence of women's agency and resistance to demonstrate that it is possible to create change and that change is still needed.

I am inspired by scholarship that theorizes how power operates through multiple, intertwined axes of oppression. I subscribe to a feminism that is intersectional (hooks, 2000), which recognizes that access to gender equality varies according to other aspects of one's identity, including race, class, sexuality, age, ability, nationality, ethnicity,

and religion. Black feminist scholarship is foundational to my understanding of intersectionality. Since the 1980s and 1990s, Black feminists (Crenshaw, 1991; Davis, 1981, 1989; Essed, 1991; Hill Collins, 1986, 1990; hooks, 1981) have been calling for analyses that seek to understand how different categories of identity and structures of power are interconnected.

My research explores social justice in rock climbing, and the concepts of sexism, misogyny, and settler colonialism are central to my analysis. In defining sexism, I draw upon Manne's (2018) work in which she described sexism as an ideological system of domination that often operates by making supposedly 'natural' differences between men and women seem inevitable. Sexism reflects a belief in men's superiority to women in masculine-coded and highly valued fields, like politics, business, and sport (Manne, 2018), or in the case of my research, outdoor rock climbing. Compared to sexism, Manne (2018) described misogyny as the social practices that *enforce* a sexist system. Therefore, misogyny is a way to keep women and non-binary persons in their place.

In addition to considering how outdoor experiences are gendered, I also think deeply about the politics of land-based leisure in a settler state and the effects of settler colonial logics on outdoor learning. For myself – a white settler Canadian situated within the colonized and colonizing space of academia – settler colonial perspectives deepen my thinking, because I need to confront the reality that outdoor learning takes place on land that the state has stolen from Indigenous peoples (Lowan-Trudeau, 2021; O’Bonsawin, 2010; Betasamosake Simpson, 2004, 2014; Tuck & Yang, 2012).

I define settler colonialism as an ongoing structure, tied to white supremacy, that is about land, resource extraction, and wealth generation (Cole, 2020; Smith, 2012; Tuck & Yang, 2012). Settler colonialism entails arriving at a territory and making it a permanent home, so settler colonial states do not simply invade and extract, they also rely on a structure of *ongoing* dispossession. According to Tuck and Yang (2012), settler colonialism illustrates how racism was invented to justify stealing people’s land and labour. European settlers used the processes of displacement, spatial confinement, and restricted movement (e.g., the pass system of the late 1800s and early 1900s) to dispossess Indigenous peoples of their land and destroy their culture and group cohesion (Norman, Hart & Petherick, 2019). However, there have also been, and continue to be, important forms of Indigenous resistance in contesting colonial land claims (Laurendeau, 2020). When it comes to sport and recreation, Downey (2018), Te Hiwi (2021) and Forsyth (2020) have shown, through the respective examples of the Six Nations’ Iroquois Nationals lacrosse team, Tom Longboat Awards, and Arctic Winter Games, how Indigenous peoples shape their lives against colonial imposition.

The consequences of sexism, misogyny, and settler colonialism in outdoor learning are far reaching. The literature demonstrates evidence that women depreciate their own technical skills (Loeffler, 1997; Mulqueen, 1995; Warren, 1985; Warren & Loeffler, 2006). Gendered microaggressions can erode women’s confidence

in their own skill development and create barriers for women in outdoor environments (Wigglesworth, 2021a). For instance, the feeling of being watched and assessed by men makes some women avoid certain spaces, adapt their training schedules, and wear looser clothing (Laurendeau & Sharara, 2008; Wigglesworth, 2021a). When it comes to settler colonialism, the land upon which outdoor learning takes place has always been contested space, whether in terms of treaties, displacement of Indigenous peoples, labour of stolen peoples, or internment of migrant communities (Gauthier, Joseph, & Fusco, 2021; Mason, 2021). Arcand (2020), an Indigenous advisor to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, emphasized how settler colonial policies shape the landscape: “Today, National Parks and Parks Canada have a larger land mass than all of the reserves in Canada put together” (para. 12). Beyond the conditions making outdoor learning possible, several scholars have indicated that solely relying on Western knowledges and methods in university classrooms further marginalizes Indigenous students and educators (Battiste, 2013; Ermine, 1995; Little Bear, 2011; Smith, 2012) and hinders Indigenous thought systems (Betasamosake Simpson, 2014).

Given these implications, I argue that if outdoor learning does not (continue to) constructively engage in feminist, anti-racist, and decolonizing approaches, the field risks missing out on supporting, and producing, more equitable futures. Practitioners and researchers need to interrogate their own work and confront inequities in order to enact hopeful futures.

Throughout this chapter, I put feminist and settler colonial theories into conversation with outdoor learning perspectives to consider how the institution of education, and its practitioners, can take responsibility within the masculinist and colonial terrains of land-based learning. First, I clarify what I mean by misogyny and settler colonialism by providing examples from my research. Second, I highlight pathways of resistance by summarizing how Canadian scholars interrupt the sexist and colonial inequities in land-based leisure and learning. Third, I share some of

the anti-oppressive methods and strategies that I use to confront inequities in my teaching. Finally, I conclude by restating the importance of resistance in generating possibilities for social change.

### **Empirical Examples of Misogyny and Settler Colonialism**

In this section, I detail examples from my PhD project (Wigglesworth, 2021a) that centred on one recreational climbing community in south-eastern Ontario. I spoke with 34 self-identified women recreational climbers aged 19 to 34. I conducted 17 individual, semi-structured interviews, four focus group interviews, and two years of participant observations.

The gendered discrimination I documented in women's rock climbing was hidden and internalized, as well as overt and operative. On the hidden and internalized end of the spectrum, participants shared that they felt expected to climb, and excel at, certain styles of routes because of identifying as women. Participants were frustrated that women's climbing achievements were dismissed when it came to flexibility; they explained that flexibility, like strength, is hard to develop, but strength is viewed by the climbing community as more important. These gendered climbing expectations are not surprising when you consider that they are structured into the social fabric of rock climbing.

Route setting at the institutional level of the climbing competition organizes bodily practices. The International Federation of Sport Climbing (IFSC) sets different routes for women and men in its Climbing World Cup competitions, which influences the organization of regional climbing competitions. I observed a local climbing competition where people of all genders climbed together during the preliminary rounds, but people were separated into men's and women's divisions and instructed to climb different routes for the final rounds. More of the women's final routes were set on 90-degree walls that necessitated static climbing, and more of the men's final problems were set on overhanging walls calling for dynamic climbing. I noted how the men loud-

ly clamored, jumped and ricocheted off the overhanging wall of their set route, while the women exhibited flexibility and quietly traversed across the slab wall of their set route. Segregating and treating men and women differently bolsters ideologies that constitute men and women as different and unequal (Adams, 2011). This example illustrates how men aurally and spatially dominate the shared sex-integrated sporting space, which reproduces ideas of hierarchical difference between men and women (Maclean, 2019). The organizers of the competition teach men to "focus on jumps – those all-important signifiers of masculinity – while women and girls are taught to focus on fluidity and finesse of line" (Adams, 2011, p. 227). Men and women adapt their training in preparation for these gendered competition routes, which consequently sculpts their bodies, their comportment, their views of themselves, and their capabilities.

When I asked women about the gendered micro-aggressions they experience while climbing, the most common example they gave was unsolicited advice. The women's comments supported my observations and demonstrated the tendency of some men to 'mansplain' or dominate intellectual space. In her analysis of mansplaining, Manne (2020) argues that a mansplainer feels entitled to occupy the "position of the knower by default" (p. 140). Men giving unsolicited advice to women on how to climb routes is predicated on the idea that men are entitled to dispense information and women need these explanations, a view which concomitantly underestimates women's physical and intellectual skills. In writing about misogyny in sport, Caudwell (2017) asserts that sexism is casually manifest through men's verbal demonstration of domination through assumed expertise. Therefore, men's entitlement to give unsolicited advice to women reflects misogyny, as it reproduces moralistic and policing processes that aim to keep the patriarchal system in check (Manne, 2018).

On the overt and operative end of the spectrum of gendered discrimination, I found misogynistic language was institutionalized into rock climbing through the tradition of first ascent naming

rights and the practice of route names (Wigglesworth, 2021b). Manne (2018) helped me to comprehend that misogynistic route names are anxious and combative and that they aim to restore patriarchal order when it is disrupted (i.e., when women challenge men's superiority in outdoor climbing). It was through my analysis of the oppressive route names that I came to better understand the intersection of misogyny and settler colonialism. I argued that the misogynistic route names cannot be divorced from the settler state that has long used mapping and (re)naming land as a strategy for nation-building.

In my doctoral project, I also examined three ways in which settler colonial logics shape outdoor recreation, including the cultural construction of 'wilderness' spaces, racist toponyms issued by the state, and the tradition of first ascent naming rights. Rock climbers require wilderness spaces to set up, name, and climb routes. However, wilderness spaces are not natural; they are culturally constructed (Spence, 1999).

One of the crags I studied is situated on Anishinaabe and Haudenosaunee Territories and part of the Crawford Purchase. The Crawford Purchase is the treaty between the British and Mississauga peoples that is the basis for Canadian claims to sovereignty in the area. The Mississaugas ceded an area of land to the British Crown in October 1783, with the signing of the Crawford purchase. However, the terms of this agreement are ambiguous and disputed. According to Surtees (1985), in the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development document, *Indian Land Surrenders in Ontario 1763-1867*, "the actual depth and extent of the purchase were vague" (p. 24). The British interpreted the term of "back as far as a man can travel in a day" to mean two or three townships, which is 28 to 42 kilometres, but it is unknown if the British and the Mississaugas had the same distance in mind (Murray, 2018, p. 268). This example demonstrates not only how wilderness spaces are culturally constructed, but also how rock climbing involves exercising treaty rights.

A few of the white and racialized women settlers I spoke to during my PhD were aware of how treaty relations and ongoing settler colonialism shaped their climbing. For instance, Lilith, who researched settler colonialism at the graduate level, said:

*When I went to [the crag]...there was some plaques there, and I was reading them, and I was like, 'god, this is so colonial.' ...I'm literally potentially just reaping the benefits climbing here as a settler because...who knows how this space would be right now if Indigenous peoples were recognized as this being their sovereign territory.... What does it mean that I can just climb this mountain? ...What is this mountain to other people potentially? (Wigglesworth, 2021a, pp. 183-184)*

Lilith recognizes that she is a beneficiary of settler colonialism, and she sees how this privilege shapes her climbing practices. It is important to note, too, that her knowledge is facilitated by university education. Lilith's social location allowed her to see the connections between rock climbing and settler colonialism.

A second way in which settler colonialism constructs outdoor recreation is through state sanctioned names for geographic features, some of which include anti-Indigenous racist slurs. Place names give authorship and ownership to the colonizing nation, and they also erase the Indigenous knowledge of the land, including that which grounds land claims (Clayton, 2000; Erickson, 2003; Gendron, 2021; King, 2013; Monmonier, 2006; Whetung, 2019). Many geographic features have been named with a racist and misogynistic slur that refers to Indigenous women: the s-word. At the time of writing this chapter, this slur is still used to name 18 geographic features in Canada (Natural Resources Canada, 2023). Twenty-eight of these names were rescinded in the past. These geographical names, whether official or rescinded, evidence a state that is sexist and racist with a sexist and racist history.

Finally, for outdoor rock climbing in Canada, the tradition of first ascent naming rights represents

a colonial logic. First ascents are predicated on the notion of ‘untouched cliffs,’ which is akin to the harmful colonial narrative, *terra nullius* (no one’s land). The idea that a cliff is a blank canvas conditions climbers and facilitates climbing’s tradition of first ascent naming rights. Climbers presuppose that they are the first to climb cliffs, which erases Indigenous peoples’ histories with the land and Indigenous peoples’ names for cliffs and mountains. It is my hope that by briefly explaining how misogyny and settler colonialism shaped outdoor recreation in my work, I can provide a view to understanding some of the constraining (and enabling) features of outdoor learning.

### Resistance in the Scholarship

Outdoor learning scholars have called upon the field to address exclusionary discourses and practices and to question how outdoor experiences can be reimagined (Allison & Pomeroy, 2000; Gray, 2018; Humberstone & Pedersen, 2001; Rose & Paisley, 2012; Warren et al., 2014). Humberstone (2000), stated that the problem of sexism in women’s outdoor leisure demands that we critically examine gender in the outdoor field. Several academics conclude that it is not enough to add women to outdoor learning and leadership roles; instead, the field needs to address social justice at the structural level (Collins & Humberstone, 2018; Henderson, 1996; Warren et al., 2014).

Some scholars consider how mainstream western culture simultaneously subjugates women and the land (Erickson, 2003; Humberstone & Pederson, 2001; Mitten, 2018). Humberstone and Pederson (2001) outlined how the land is personified as female and thought open to conquering, and Erickson (2003) illustrated how this personification is linked to sexuality, as the feminized image of land is often contrasted in discourse with the masculinity of the explorer. Mitten (2018) offered some examples of such language, references to nature that use the pronoun ‘she,’ and comments like ‘rape the land’ and ‘reap nature’s bounty’ (p. 23). Tourism scholars report similar findings. For instance, media campaigns and pro-

motional materials heterosexualize places and privilege the male, heterosexual gaze (Frohlick & Johnston, 2011; Pritchard & Morgan, 2000). In his research on ecotourism and white-water rafting, Fletcher (2014) commented on how outdoor environments are commonly constructed as feminine landscapes that should be courted, penetrated, and conquered. In addition to the land being gendered and sexualized, scholars also think deeply about the politics upon which people teach, learn, and recreate in terms of settler colonial logics.

There are a few examples of how settler colonialism has been brought into the outdoor literature (Gauthier et al., 2021; Mullins, Lowan-Trudeau, & Fox, 2016; Rose & Paisley, 2012). Mullins, Lowan-Trudeau and Fox (2016) indicated that outdoor learning has been historically taught by and for white people. The authors discussed how the Canadian context of settler colonialism moulded outdoor pedagogy and subsequently positioned “land as a space to be conquered, occupied and visited, but not inhabited” (Mullins et al., 2016, p. 51).

Gauthier, Joseph and Fusco’s (2021) research explored whiteness, racialization and Indigenous erasure in an outdoor program at a Canadian university. Their study included a discourse analysis of six advertising documents and five semi-structured interviews with undergraduate students, and their findings suggest that harmful colonial narratives, such as *terra nullius*, condition identities and marginalize Indigenous peoples’ land claims.

It has only been relatively recently that scholars have begun applying anti-racism theoretical frameworks to critically examine how whiteness is perpetuated and reproduced in outdoor recreation (Kivel, Johnson, & Scraton, 2009; Laurendeau, 2020). By contrast, anti-racist, decolonial, and whiteness studies have been present in the environmental literature for some time. For example, the *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education* hosted a special issue on decolonizing and Indigenous outdoor learning in 2012. In her research on the decolonizing journeys of

white outdoor environmental educators, Root (2010) explained that acknowledging Indigenous Territories is instrumental to decolonizing the academy and outdoor learning. Despite Root's recommendation, Newbery (2012) revealed that most non-Indigenous environmental educators do not acknowledge the outdoors as a colonial place. In her study of canoe pedagogy and colonial history, Newbery (2012) found that educators and students are precluded from connecting with the land as respected Indigenous Territories and from connecting with Indigenous peoples as members of shared space. To help address this issue, Grimwood (2021) encouraged settlers to "undo" themselves so that they may shoulder more responsibility in resisting settler colonialism through practices of solidarity, allyship, and accountability; he aims to leverage his skills, privilege and access to help dismantle settler colonialism, which may make more inclusive spaces for Indigenous peoples to enact their self-determined worlds. In a similar way, Korteweg and Root (2016) called upon settler environmental education scholars to shift toward decolonizing and land-based reconciliation research and pedagogies by acknowledging and supporting Indigenous land and jurisdiction struggles.

Some environmental education scholars posit that critical place-based Indigenous education can foster cross-cultural understandings of social and ecological justice and support the resurgence of Indigenous cultures (Scully, 2012, 2020; Betasamosake Simpson, 2014). For instance, Scully (2012, 2020) asserted that Canadian teacher training for Indigenous education should include anti-racist instruction that contends with white privilege, land-based learning, and local Indigenous communities. Betasamosake Simpson (2014) used Nishnaabeg stories to advocate for land-based pedagogy that nurtures Indigenous peoples with skills, knowledges and values that can rebuild the Nation according to Indigenous worldviews and perspectives.

### **Anti-Oppression Pedagogical Strategies**

I want to support the scholarship I have cited above in my teaching, so it is within this mind-

set that I introduce some of the anti-oppression resources and strategies I use in the classroom. These approaches reflect my social position and my (un)learning journey, so they are not relevant to all people, or all points in one's career. However, it is my hope that some of these sources contribute to the project of addressing historical and contemporary injustices in order to construct better futures.

Before developing a course, obtaining anti-racist pedagogical training has been crucial for me. However, this training is not a lone check box. It is an ongoing pursuit. Scully (2012) advocated for teacher training that contends with white privilege, land-based learning, and local Indigenous communities. Canada's (2015) Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action 62 insists that government "provide the necessary funding to post-secondary institutions to educate teachers on how to integrate Indigenous knowledge and teaching methods into classrooms" (p. 7). Through anti-racist pedagogical training I learned the importance of self-awareness and self-reflexivity – to look inwards and assess my social position as part of the process of dismantling systemic inequities. This critical reflection includes understanding different forms of racism, acknowledging white privilege, engaging Critical Race Theory, and acknowledging racial trauma. For me, this process entails educating myself about topics that lead to deeper analysis and familiarizing myself with the institution's policies and practices that limit oppression and discrimination, and if there is no anti-racist policy, to get one in place.

When developing a course, I consider Picower's (2021) curricular tools of whiteness. Picower (2021) highlighted seven ways that teachers can uphold whiteness without even knowing it, such as erasing Black, Indigenous and other racialized contributions, essentializing Black, Indigenous and other racialized people, and exoticizing or tokenizing others; she also suggested strategies for disrupting white supremacy in the classroom, such as collaborating with an ally in the school or community, checking course materials against anti-racist books or social media examples, and staying open to feedback. Heeding Pi-

cower's (2021) recommendations, I draw upon diverse authors and practitioners who represent non-traditional perspectives for course materials, I discuss my syllabus with a colleague before putting the course in action, and I interrogate my pedagogical approach. For instance, she challenges me to critically reflect upon how I frame minoritized communities in my lectures.

At the beginning of a course, I include Territory acknowledgements, and I discuss the importance of learning the histories and ongoing legacies of the lands and waterways – this can be with respect to treaties and/or Aboriginal rights and title. One example that I look to is Murray's (2003) case study about teaching Indigenous and settler histories, where she instructs university students to understand a treaty as a living document of ongoing relationships between nations.

At the outset of a course, I also hold class time to work with students to develop community guidelines for respect and inclusion. We reflect and expand upon these guidelines throughout our time together, especially as learning environments shift. Community guidelines can recognize physical and social barriers to learning and acknowledge when to take, share, and give up vocal space. A guideline that I like to instill in class is: While everyone is allowed to speak from personal experience, no one is required to. When developing community guidelines, if students do not offer this suggestion themselves, I direct them to using appropriate language for referring to the complexity and multiplicities of gender and sexuality. A helpful resource on this topic is *Gender: Your guide* (Airton, 2018). Consequently, when I ask students to introduce themselves, I invite student to share their preferred names and pronouns, which can also be written on name placards for the benefit of retention.

When delivering a course, I attempt to adopt an anti-oppressive approach, which, for me, means fighting against oppression. I am inspired by Kishimoto (2018), who emphasizes that becoming an anti-racist educator is a lifelong process that requires examining myself and the structures that surround me and asking student to do

the same. Following Kishimoto (2108), my anti-oppressive disposition aims to bolster humility and mutual learning in the classroom so that students can take ownership over their own education and recognize that they are powerful collaborators. And if I witness a discriminatory slight or microaggression (Sue, 2010) occur in the classroom, I use Harris and Wood's (2020) R.A.V.E.N. framework to guide my response. Their framework is a five-step approach that involves:

- R. Redirecting the conversation and stopping the harm,
- A. Asking a probing question,
- V. Values clarifying (for instance, referring back to the classroom-developed community guidelines),
- E. Emphasizing the instructor's thoughts, and
- N. Next steps offered in concrete terms, such as an apology or further readings.

### Conclusion

As I explained at the outset of this chapter, I am inspired by Ahmed's (2007) conceptualization of power as something that simultaneously cracks and perseveres. Her insight is quite fitting for me – when I climb, I search for cracks in the wall because these cracks give me more purchase over the rock and help me finish the route. Hence, as a climber *and* a teacher, I look for cracks. I encourage outdoor learning practitioners to do the same. Point out oppressions and privileges, and point out how people can challenge inequities. Since there is little point in exposing operational power if alternative, more socially conscious fields are not possible. I am hopeful that by "looking for cracks," outdoor learning facilitators and students can better understand how systems of power operate, which can lend itself to developing more comprehensive solutions for making the world a better place.

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