

Killing the Settler to Save the Human: The Untidy Work of Unsettling Klamath River Thus Far

By Laura Hurwitz & Shawn D. Bourque

ABSTRACT

The specter of settler colonialism fills every sliver of the United States. This article studies the current moment of settler colonialism in the Karuk homeland on the Klamath River in Northwest California. Part of this moment has been the emergence of Unsettling Klamath River, a group of settlers engaging in the work of “unsettling.” Analysis and critique of this group’s political actions and internal dynamics are traced by the authors, who are also co-founding members. Specifically discussed is controversy raised by Unsettling Klamath River sending an open letter to a local commune, Black Bear Ranch, asking them to “close the portal” due to problematic consequences on Indigenous communities and suggest repatriating the land as a small contribution to decolonization and settler responsibility. The way white settler fragility manifests on the ground is analyzed. It is argued that only by separating our affinity and untangling settler identities from settler colonialism—in short, a death of the settler—might we end our complicity with the settler colonial system and potentially gain back our humanity.

Key Words: settler colonialism, Klamath River, unsettling, white fragility, back-to-the-land movement

Brief Overview of the Problem

Part of the mechanics of settler colonialism is the denial of settler colonialism. It is an unmentioned basic right for settlers not to have to acknowledge or take responsibility for the murder and displacement that provides those of us that are settlers with that which makes possible survival and wealth—land, every inch of it. We, the authors, are settlers, living

on stolen land that we “own,” legitimated by all the power, violence and ideological/cultural hegemony of the settler state of the so-called United States and the capitalist spectacle: the police, schools, entertainment industry, ideology, courts, prisons, etc. Numerous experiences brought us, separately yet together, to accept and challenge our place in the settler colonial system.

From our experiences living in a roughly half-settler, half-Indigenous community, these unnerving eight words crystalized our politics, “invasion is a system and not an event” (Wolfe, 1999). This has meant, among other things, acknowledging our own hypocrisies, challenging the settler code of silence and questioning our own motivations for this work termed “unsettling.” In no way do we feel we have done this right. We can never preclude the reality that we might eventually need to leave and return to Europe—settlers have no right to this land. Often it feels like we are heading blindfolded down an unknown path and often we slip back into complicity. We share with you the work of what has become known as Unsettling Klamath River, thus far.

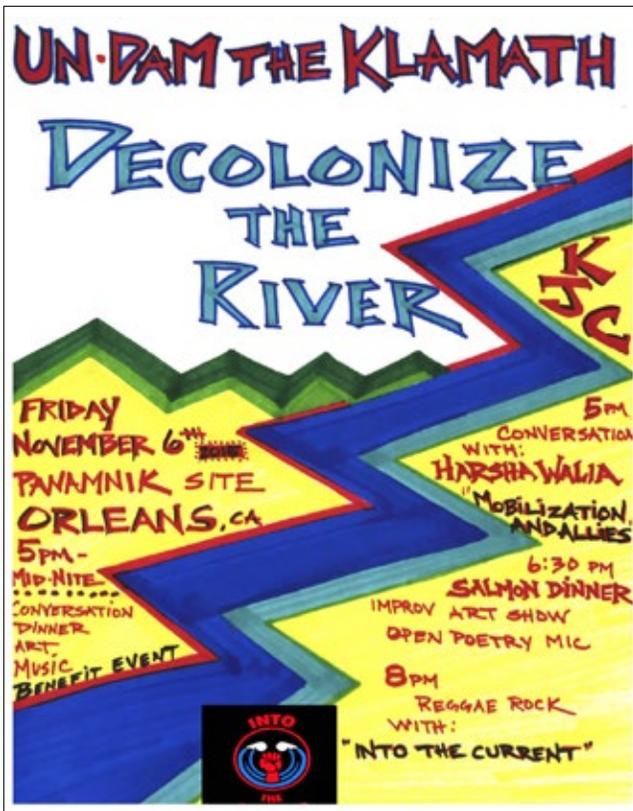
The Karuk homeland, on the Klamath River, in so-called California is the territory of settler intrusion we describe. The Karuk were never successfully removed from their homeland although all their land was stolen. They also have no ratified treaty with the United States and were not “given” a reservation. Mostly, colonial resource extraction has sustained settler occupation of the land: first the Gold Rush, then logging and currently the Green Rush of cannabis cultivation. The Karuk people have survived every attempt at genocide, work to revitalize their culture, ceremonies, and language, and fight to save their natural resources, land base and ecosystem from exploitation, greed, and ignorance.

Many settlers arrive as continuing reverberations of the “back to the land” movement, not knowing whose land they/we have gone “back” to. Hippies, homesteaders, survivalists, primitivists: we occupy land, attempt to invent new cultures and “connect with the land” with the hubris of assuming the land

speaks our/their language and not the language of the people who have tended it since time immemorial. Most of us settlers fancy ourselves somewhere in the political spectrum of liberal, progressive, or radical. Yet the reality of our occupation of the place we claim to love and the collective silence of our benefiting from the continuing system of settler colonialism leads to an ever-present tension lingering in all settler/Indigenous intersections. Land repatriation waits to exhale as (we imagine) Indigenous people do not hold their breath that us settlers will ever give up anything.

The Birth of Unsettling Klamath River

It has been four years since a small group of settlers in this place began to organize around decolonization and unsettling. In the beginning we thought that public dialogue might begin amongst Indigenous and settler people together. However, as one Indigenous friend explained, he feels obliged to let settlers off the hook, protect their feelings and make them feel better when these difficult issues are addressed. Another friend who is Indigenous pointed out that it would be better for us to work within the white settler community to better educate ourselves before attempting to engage in decolonizing conversations with Indigenous people. He didn’t have the energy to deal with settlers going through their process which would inevitably result in Indigenous people having to endure ignorant and insulting comments. This made sense to us as it has been clearly articulated from within other struggles such as the anti-racist and feminist movements that it is the job of the oppressor to educate themselves. In practice, this was problematic because so many settlers want to hear from Indigenous people first-



hand. At the same time, we were receiving feedback from Indigenous people that settlers do not seem to want to hear these truths from them either. As settlers, we have had to be ever-vigilant not to center ourselves, thus inadvertently recreating settler colonialism in our efforts to defy it.

Integral to the groups coming together, one of the authors, Hurwitz, was working on a master's thesis and was conducting interviews with white settlers. Many of the interviewees were interested in continuing these conversations along with other individuals who had been engaging in dialogue. This led to an initial set of meetings where settler colonialism was explained and an open conversation about these ideas and how it relates to our area ensued, including some settler's repulsion. Out of this, a smaller group of us agreed to meet once a month. We organized loosely using popular educa-

tion tools, including readings and group activities, such as making a living timeline of settler colonialism and resistance to it on the Klamath River. We rotated facilitation and other group roles monthly and attempted to share responsibility and power in decision-making.

Attendance at our meetings fluctuated regularly. Many people recoiled, we believe largely because of uncertainty, fear, and the pain of acknowledging the unintended harm we are causing to our Indigenous neighbors. One older male person left the group as he irately described that it felt like we were trying to cut off his penis. New community members continued to be interested, try the process on, and to engage. Time was spent understanding who we were, learning the history of the area, knowing our own ancestral heritage, and the long history of war, conquest, and displacement that lead to Europeans not being a land-based people. Inspired by the efforts of *Unsettling Minnesota* and *Unsettling America* we began to call ourselves *Unsettling Klamath River*.

We spent some time developing our understandings and points of unity which were identified in the following list:

- We are settlers living on stolen land.
- Settler colonialism is a structure that continues today, not just a thing of the past.
- As settlers, we benefit from this system.
- We are not entitled to be here in the Karuk homeland.
- We want to support Indigenous-led material change and Indigenous resurgence.
- The state of the world is unsatisfactory due to dominant culture, which has been perpetuated generationally.

- We do not have a right to Indigenous knowledge, yet we believe Indigenous knowledge is critical to this place and the survival of life on this planet.
- All of our liberation is tied together, no one is free until we all are free.
- We believe decolonization is a process, the destination is unknown, it means different things to different people, it is not centered on the future of settlers, and it is ultimately about the repatriation of land.
- For white settlers “unsettling” is a process of facing and destroying a false entitlement and be-heading an identity that affords us a toxic privilege.
- Becoming new people will require on-the-ground material change to power and privilege, we cannot “think” ourselves into a new way of being.
- We want to see change in our lifetime and are also dedicated to change for future generations and all life.

We met formally with a group of Indigenous activists and community and spiritual leaders to seek direction, as we sought not just to educate ourselves but to take action. This was hosted on Martin Luther King Jr. Day, which also coincided with the anniversary of the Red Cap War (a local anti-colonial struggle which began in 1855). This also had its challenges as clearly Indigenous people are individuals with a wide range of opinions, ideas, and priorities and the directions that we would take would vary greatly depending on whom we received feedback from. It was a goal of the settler group to each talk with and listen to as many Indigenous people as possible in

order to get the greatest amount of perspective. Inevitably the people we were more connected to were the people we got more guidance from. This prioritized certain families more than others which likely insulted other families that we had not reached out to. It has also proven difficult for most settlers to speak unsettling ideas out-loud and initiate conversation with Indigenous people or settler people, albeit for different reasons. We continue to stumble, falter, make mistakes, and learn as we do this work.

Identifying the Issues

Prior to the MLK Day meeting we had to intentionally work on learning to listen more and talk less. While making clear that inevitably settler society, the elimination of private property, and total land repatriation was what decolonization looks like, lots of short term actions were suggested that would make settlers better guests. Problems named at this meeting were: how cannabis production had made property prices so high and Indigenous people are pushed out of the market, while increasing economic disparity between settler and Indigenous communities and wreaking substantial impacts on the land from pollution and heavy water use; and the number of settlers moving into the Karuk territory was growing exponentially, leaving many “homeless in the homeland” and forcing more settler culture on Indigenous people. These institutions of dispossession that bring settlers to this place became known as “portals” and many were named including: non-profit interns, the AmeriCorp program, farm interns, the cannabis economy, the Forest Service, and Black Bear Ranch. Black Bear is a local commune where many settlers (including the authors) had lived before moving and often

buying land. Another problem brought up was that cannabis growers and other settlers, many not even living in the community, have erected fences (sometimes with guard dogs and armed workers) which prevents Indigenous people from gathering wild plants (such as mushrooms, acorns, and basket materials), and hunting and access to ceremonial sites. Some settlers treat the area like a resort, leaving in hard winters and coming back to enjoy summers. Lots of settlers do not work and many jobs need doing (it was explained that this was a tough one because in some ways Indigenous people do not want to integrate, but if folks are going to stay then it might be better to be all in, but then again having us all just leave might be the best scenario). Indigenous people fight hard to protect the land-base while settlers reap the benefits and many don't step up enough to support the community. One of the most potent comments was, "You say you're settlers living on stolen land... You know what you need to do. And it's not giving your land to me personally or even the tribe. You know what you need to do!"

Reflecting on all of this at the next meeting we interpreted the following issues to guide our action planning: Stop growing cannabis and stop other settlers from growing; shut down portals; confront gated properties and open up where you are living to Indigenous use; support Indigenous activism and fight for the land base; fight private property; shed our entitlement to this place and learn to live with uncertainty. We came up with actions that we could collectively work on, including keeping each

other accountable for our participation in the cannabis economy; drafting a "pot stance" from Unsettling Klamath River and bringing this message to other settlers and businesses serving the cannabis industry; targeting the worst of the worst cannabis growers; work to educate farmers and non-profits to not bring in interns from the outside the area; work to close the Black Bear portal through conversations, theater events, and an open letter to the commune family; seeking out ways to further contribute our skills to the community; creating a support network modeled after **Black Mesa Indigenous Support**,¹ those of us that are "land owners" finding ways to create housing for Indigenous families, tear down fences, and open up land access, and those of us who are tenants talk to our landlords about making these same things happen; work to create a land trust that aims at eliminating private property.

Educating the Community

The group was energized and full of life. As one member at the time described it, "sometimes seeds need fire to grow." Also, during this time members of the group helped to organize a book tour for the amazing decolonization author and activist Harsha Walia, and many settler and Indigenous people attended the event. An outsider, who was neither white nor Indigenous, sharing first-hand knowledge and experiences with decolonization work, turned out to be an effective messenger. This event was co-sponsored by the Klamath Justice Coalition, a local Indigenous-led group working to protect the Klamath River, and funds were raised to support their efforts. Some participants of Unsettling Klamath River took the time to turn the timeline of settler colonialism and resistance into a beautiful art piece and it was displayed around the room at this

¹ Black Mesa Indigenous Support is a group of non-Native grassroots activists committed to working with the resistance communities of Black Mesa/Big Mountain in Arizona.

event. This gave community members a chance to contribute to the growing collective knowledge.

The next event hosted by the Unsettling group was about settler colonialism in Palestine and utilized the technique of palimpsest, a tool that overlay's images on top of one another—in this case, Israeli settlements on top of the original Palestinian villages. Local Indigenous activist art was displayed, including a map of the so-called United States that boldly stated “Indian Land” in red. This event shed light on some divergence within the group as the organizer steered the conversation away from the local situation and asked the group to focus on Palestine. They preferred to infer the local relevance and let people come to their own conclusions. Other members, specifically the authors, felt that it was important to state the connection between the situations outright and that settler people experiencing discomfort and pain over this is an important part of the process. These issues had arisen before, during our hours and hours of discussions, causing a large rift in the group. Some felt it important to be patient with settlers and prioritize not hurting people's feelings, that we will get more done if we do not offend people. Others wanted to de-center settlers, believing that it is not possible to decolonize without hurting settler feelings and not wanting to be beholden to settler fragility. Only now are some members of Unsettling Klamath River beginning mediation to address issues around group dynamics.

Unsettling Klamath River was faced with challenges not only in our interpersonal group dynamics but in actualizing some of the action items we came up with. For instance, we never succeeded in organizing an Indigenous solidarity network. Efforts were

made to connect with elders in order to determine if settlers could be useful. Some individual acts of support did and do happen but we have still to create a collective model from which to work.

There was also an effort to create an Indigenous land trust as a transitional step towards land repatriation to hold settler private property in. We met with different Indigenous people, a lawyer and other environmental land trusts. Many stumbling blocks emerged including: how would an inclusive Indigenous Board be set up, who would be on it and how would tribal government be involved? The main challenge remained, that there are very few settlers willing to consider returning land in any way. Looking for ideas from other similar projects proved disappointing as well and we could find very few examples. Many potential endeavors that were imagined within the land trust included the idea of “back rent,” inspired by Waziyatawin's project Makoce Iki cupi (Land Recovery). Back rent acknowledges that settlers can never repay Indigenous people, but can at least start making payments. Another part of this included the idea of “cultural easements,” that is, on parts of settler's land, particularly on large parcels that settlers are not living on, the land would be managed and used by Indigenous people using tradition ecological knowledge. Building housing for Indigenous families on so-called “land owners” properties was also talked about. Again, some of these ideas have been actualized, but individually, not collectively.

In working to close settler portals, Unsettling Klamath River recognized the obvious contradiction that we remain in this place while trying to prevent other settlers from coming here. We have learned

that we must be ever-mindful to fight against adoption and belonging fantasies that we might harbor and that we must continue to force settler colonialism into the forefront of our consciousness. Living with these contradictions, we believe it is better to break the silence than to be paralyzed by the inevitable hypocrisies that current political systems keep us bound within. People from the group did talk to farmers who use intern labor about why it was important to hire and house local people instead of bringing in more settlers. This was ultimately successful in two cases. The Forest Service and non-profit AmeriCorps program was serendipitously shut down at this time, closing that portal. Stopping the influx of settlers associated with cannabis production has proved more difficult as the financial incentive is so high and the sheer size of the industry so great.

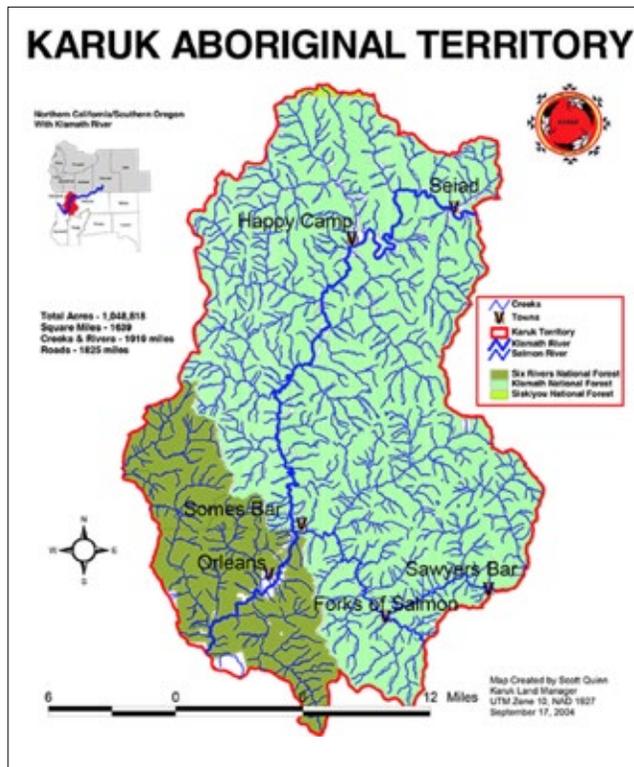
Decolonizing Black Bear Ranch

Along with these efforts, we began talking to members of the Black Bear community. Our unsettling group agreed to talk with as many former Black Bear residents as possible about what we had learned about the impacts of the commune on Indigenous communities. Foremost of concern was the continuing pattern of settlers moving to Black Bear to live collectively, tiring of the place and moving into nearby communities and often buying the land with family money and/or money from cannabis production. Here again, we found ourselves internally struggling. We knew that this new information would be painful to many in the Black Bear family (as former members address themselves) which many of us, including the authors, were a part of. It was difficult to get the words out as we did not

desire to bring a discomfiting message to those we were close to. From the beginning there were also a number of unsettling participants who had never lived at Black Bear and who did not think that so much energy should be focused on addressing the commune.

The first public action to gain support for closing the Black Bear portal was the performing of an interactive skit using tools from “Theatre of the Oppressed,” a technique developed by Brazilian revolutionary Augusto Boal that works through audience participation in the service of social justice. This took place at the commune, ironically, during the annual Thanksgiving gathering of 2015, where large numbers of former residents converge. Many people were inspired to participate and the activity prompted lots of honest dialogue that went on into the night. Theatre of the Oppressed is one example of a successful and creative contribution that members of Unsettling Klamath River brought to the work.

Because the extended Black Bear Ranch community is comprised of hundreds to thousands of people who are geographically dispersed, we needed a vehicle to reach as many people as possible and decided an “open letter” would best accomplish this. The authors of this article made a rough draft of a letter that we presented to the group. The group agreed to work from this draft. In retrospect, it was problematic to start from an already fashioned draft and not from scratch, although the letter changed considerably from the original. Up to a dozen Unsettling Klamath River participants at a time worked for over six months to collectively write this letter. There was continuous anxiety around the tone of the letter, again stemming from the tension between



not wanting to hurt those that we love, and a dedication to systematic change. The continual debate still remains: is it the tone or is it the message itself that leaves settlers so upset? Again, we the authors landed in the latter camp. Creating a letter that appealed both those that wanted to soften the message and not insult the Black Bear family, and of us who felt we had to hold a hard line proved difficult. The language of repatriation was touchy as well as some felt it was imperative and some thought it just might be too much. We were never asked to call for the repatriation of Black Bear Ranch by Indigenous people, only to close it as a portal. Yet many of us felt the returning of Black Bear would be a good place to start land repatriation since there are no permanent residents, it was not privately owned, and we naively believed that the Black Bear family would be open to engaging about this new possibility for the future of the Ranch. Positively, writing collectively taught us all a lot and at times was very inspiring. We at times

healthily debated many issues and ideas, forcing everyone to expand their thinking.

Black Bear Ranch is located on the Salmon River, in the Konomihu, Shasta, and New River Shasta Homelands. Most of our group was located downriver in the Karuk homeland and we had gotten a lot of perspective from Indigenous people there as well as from Yurok people (downriver from the Karuk) about how their land was also being bought up by settlers, some who came through the Black Bear portal. At this time, we realized that we had not talked to enough Indigenous people on the Salmon River itself. We met with the Salmon River Indian Club and shared a draft of the letter with them. We heard that there were issues on the Salmon River that were more pressing than Black Bear but it was also clear that there had been constant problems as a result of Black Bear for decades. Visitors who are kicked off the commune many times end up on the Salmon River causing harm and danger to the community, such as mentally ill people turned loose in the community without warning, starting fires in the heat of the summer to cook a road kill squirrel, graffiti, abandoning junked vehicles on the road and living in a campsite during the cold of winter with children and not having food or resources to properly care for them, to name a few. Also, the Salmon River is even more bought-up than downriver by Black Bear settlers, forcing most Indigenous people to live other places and remain in exile from their homelands. We took their input and made changes to the letter.

We approved a final draft and two members agreed to deliver the letter to the residents currently living there. They backed out of delivering the letter

at the last minute, sending shockwaves through our group and bringing about serious division and conflict. At this point some people were pushing hard to release the letter and others questioned if we should even send it at all or start the letter from scratch with a much gentler message. The authors of this paper reflect on how patriarchy intensified the already challenging diversions within our group dynamics, manifesting at times in the casting of judgement and lack of compassion for ourselves and other settlers. Over the next two months the group tensely met in order to address concerns about the tone. Some of us fought to keep the message from being watered down.

Blowback

The letter was released. As it cycled through the internet, the letter went viral in comparison to our expectations, even receiving press coverage. The backlash was worse than most of us could have imagined. Many Black Bear settlers spewed ugliness and hate at members who stood behind the letter. Divisions that had arisen during the writing of the letter were fully enflamed at this time. Due to all this infighting and resentment the group was not able to support one another in a time when we all needed each other's support the most.

During the aftermath of the letter going out, two public meetings were organized by Unsettling Klamath River and Indigenous activists who felt that these issues were important. There was one on the Salmon River and one later in Orleans, each full of respectful yet intense discussions. Some of our group backed away somewhat denouncing the letter, and those of us who stood behind it began to grow

thicker skin. We (the authors) made personal house calls to many BBR elders living in the area. Some folks talked with us about their discontent with the letter. Others did not invite us past their porch and closed the door on us and our then five-year old daughter. This felt shocking to behold from what we knew as an open-armed community of acceptance.

Soon after this some of Unsettling Klamath River attended the Black Bear Ranch summer solstice gathering (the other large event hosted at BBR) to talk further. There are a few core families who have given a great deal of their time to manage and care for the Ranch and to keep the original vision of the commune alive, many of whom we met with at this time and were close friends of ours. They took the letter as a personal attack. It seems very difficult for most settlers to center the systematic underpinnings of settler colonialism over their own hurt feelings in the situation. The conversation here mostly revolved around how hurt people were and the ideas contained in the letter never even made it on the table. As Robin DiAngelo has observed in anti-racist work in what she calls "white fragility," we witnessed white fragility in action at this meeting. White settlers often center themselves by presenting themselves as the victim who is being attacked and are resolute in protecting their own moral character, thus denying responsibility to their/our role and benefits within a continuing settler colonial system.

Another obstacle to white settler accountability in this place is how settlers labeled hippie/ "Back to the Lander's" have built an identity in part based on being "stewards of the land" because of the environmental work that has been done to prevent logging,

stop the spraying of pesticides, etc. This lends itself to a narrative that claims to have saved the area, benefitting Indigenous people and that hippie settler presence was/is necessary to “save” this place. This white savior complex completely ignores the intense and costly struggle that Indigenous people have engaged from initial colonial invasion through the present. Older counterculture settlers and their settler children born in the Karuk homeland are specifically tied to these identities and are extremely threatened by challenges to their stories of place and belonging.

One unfortunate consequence of the Open Letter was how Unsettling Klamath River began to be equated with the closing of Black Bear. For distinctive reasons, some Indigenous and some settler people felt that we focused on Black Bear too much. We never intended for this work to take over the unsettling agenda or dialogue. Village sites and all land in more traditional living areas “owned” by settlers is far more important for repatriating than Black Bear Ranch, which is extremely isolated. Some of us thought that closing the Black Bear portal had a real chance at happening and for material and symbolic reasons would further galvanize the unsettling movement. The other side of the coin is that Black Bear Ranch is the heart of settler society in this area, and our letter was an arrow shot with a direct hit, bringing about more conversation and engaging more settlers than probably any other action we could have achieved. The settler right to silence was, for a time, revoked. There is an extreme sense of nostalgia held for Black Bear Ranch and it is important to recognize that for many of the communes

extended community the time spent living at Black Bear, even if it was fifty years ago, was the only time where they felt connected to a land-base and a community. Imagine how they would feel if their relatives had been living there since time immemorial?

Lots of talk about change has been happening by the Black Bear family, which the authors are, for all practical purposes, banned from now, but as of now there has not been any material changes to the practices of the commune. Two years after the letter, some BBR family have released their own “open letter.” It in no way acknowledges Unsettling Klamath Rivers letter but addresses “Our [I]ndigenous Neighbors.” While the letter did state that the commune wanted to be more responsible to Indigenous people, the letter took on an air of burying one’s head in the sand as we had personally observed the family being told a multitude of times over the last two years, by numerous Indigenous people what the ramifications of Black Bear were and that the portal needed to be closed. The authors of this article diverge on whether this letter has any potential to forward positive change to the situation at Black Bear. The Black Bear family at least opened up an opportunity to listen to Indigenous voices and yet as one Karuk elder commented, “Yeah, maybe a bit better than no response at all? But maybe not, as it rings very offensive by just continuing to dance around and avoid issues, as opposed to actually addressing issues.”

Reflecting on the Conflict

Alongside efforts to close the Black Bear portal, members of the group (particularly one comrade

who did not ever live at Black Bear) were also working to address the cannabis economy. This meant pushing each other to disentangle from this destructive industry. Direct actions against the most exploitive growers were carried out by unidentified individuals. A letter from Unsettling Klamath River was released after the Black Bear letter, taking a stance on the cannabis economy. In part, the letter states:

What was started with the intention of supporting an escape from the greater capitalistic society, has become another aspect of its resource extraction, impoverishing the disadvantaged to the benefit of the privileged. Like the timber and mining industries before it, the marijuana economy has begun to eat its own tail. Its inability to stay within sustainable limits, or respect the land-base it exploits has become obvious.

We stopped meeting formally shortly after the pot-stance letter. Some members have moved out of the area, as settlers often do. Others have chosen to not collaborate with each other. Many continue this work as individuals, not as a group. The language has seeped into settler culture, particularly the use of the word “settler” to identify non-Indigenous people.

Complacency can often be seen. Some members meet more informally, checking in and trying to keep on and planning the next incarnation of Unsettling Klamath River.

In our experience, gender has directly affected white settler’s willingness and ability to engage with unsettling. On the whole, women have been much more inclined than men to try out the ideas as one woman candidly explained, “I am used to being told I am wrong, so it is not as big a deal for me.” A growing number of white settler women and men in this place have a heightened awareness about settler colonialism and the role that we play in the system. Yet, white settlers are still afraid to speak up about these issues. Despite the loss of social standing or the ridicule and alienation that may follow, a collective breaking of the silence is necessary in propelling white settler society further down the path towards accountability.

Through conscious efforts or just by the nature of reactionary motion, division and individualism corrode many a decent movement of affinity. Doing our best as individuals cannot create exponential motion. Settlers here seek unity, connection, and belonging, thinking we have discovered our own paradise. But how can our dreams be built upon the destruction of another’s paradise? The path to these deep relationships is rocky and has revealed a much rougher terrain than anticipated. It will never be gained with the blueprint of settler colonial violence we inherited. It will not be obtained by engaging in the illusion that it is already so. For the settler, reaching this destination is by no means guaranteed, especially in this lifetime. We find ourselves part of a continuum, of things that came before us and things that are to come. There is strength in knowing that the collective actions we take today

will continue to ripple out over time and contribute to the connection we seek. Settlers' unity might be found in our collective unsettling.

If the authors had a guiding motto through our unsettling journeys it would be an inverse of the Richard Pratt's slogan "kill the Indian to save the man;" instead, we say "kill the settler to save the human." Fighting against the toxic ideologies, mythologies, histories, beliefs, silence and culture of settler society is not to "save" the Indian but is in the interest of life. We do not expect an enchanted rescue by the "noble savage" to release us from a culture of death

but recognize that with all the supposed technology and civilization settlers claim, settler society has absolutely no idea how to live off of and tend a land base. After millenniums of intergenerational trauma, white settlers best interest is in the destruction of the structure that we are taught to believe benefits us. What we view as necessary conditions, made possible by the deaths of others, is our own suicide.

Everyone was Indigenous to some place at some time. Those of us that are white settlers will never be native to the lands we occupy, but may we one day not be settlers, no matter what this looks like.▪

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Shawn Bourque is an anarchist and a settler. Along with his partner and three daughters he lives in the Karuk Homeland along the Klamath River in Northern California where he is an organizer, writer and homesteader. His work with Unsettling Klamath River, writings and blog (astheworldbunns.net) focus on dismantling settler colonialism and other intersecting hierarchical systems. He holds a Masters in Anthropology from the New School for Social Research. Currently he is co-writing a history of the Red Cap War, a Karuk uprising shortly after invasion. For his day job, Shawn is the operator of a local water system.