

represented, and to the audience who walks into a constructed Parisian salon as spectacle, embedded in opaque Michi Saagiig grounded normativity. For me, as a Michi Saagiig audience, he set up a constellation as a flight path to my Ancestors, Maungwe-daus and Uh wus sig gee zhig goo kway, their family, and their affirmative refusal, centuries before that was even a concept.

TWELVE CONSTELLATIONS OF CORESISTANCE

STARS, IN EDNA MANITOWABI'S TELLING of the Seven Fires creation story, represent the thoughts of Gzhwe Manidoo.¹ In the first attempt at creating this world, Gzhwe Manidoo's thoughts and ideas went out into the universe in perpetuity because there was no physical structure to embody them. That's the first layer of knowledge that stars carry. They are a reminder that thought (the sound of the rattle) has to be combined with heart and motion (the sound of the drum) in order to have energy and influence. These are the sounds of the skyworld holding the universe together, because sound creates and maintains relationships that embody both intellectual and emotional knowledge, otherwise known in Nishnaabeg thought as knowledge.²

The skyworld is an important space in Nishnaabeg thought. I know of Nishnaabeg creation stories of spontaneous creation, creation from the earth below us, creation from the water, and of course, there are several origin stories about creation from the skyworld.³ To me, the skyworld in the peopled cosmos of the Nishnaabeg holds the present because it carries the events and

beings of the past, and the events and beings of the future. We are born from the skyworld, and we return there when our time in the physical world is done. The spirits live there. Knowledge is held there. One of the primary responsibilities and beautiful struggles of physically being Nishnaabeg is that we have to strive and commit to maintaining deep everyday relationships with this world when we are physically on the earth.

Collections of stars within Nishnaabeg thought are beacons of light that work together to create doorways, like Bagone'giizhig, into other worlds.⁴ On a conceptual level, they work together to reveal theory, story, and knowledge representing a mapping of Nishnaabeg thought through the night sky and through time. It takes the light of the stars a great deal of time to reach the earth, so when we look at stars, we are actually looking from the present back into time and space. When my children were being born, Edna Manitowabi told my partner and me to watch the sky for information of what this new being's name might be, because birth is an act of coming through the doorway between the spiritual and physical world. The people around me, supporting me, were in this way a constellation opening a doorway to the spiritual world to give physical presence to a new being. I am also a new hunter, and this comes with great responsibility. The taking of life is similar for me to the giving of living because they both involve transformations between worlds, and those transformations occur through doorways. The act of hunting requires an animal's consent to return to the spirit world by appearing and then physically dying, allowing its spirit to travel through the doorway back to the spirit world.

Constellations are not just physical doorways to other worlds; they also act as conceptual doorways that return us to our core essence within Nishnaabeg thought. Constellations are constantly in motion shifting with the seasons, serving as signposts indicating when it is time to tell winter stories, when the ice is no longer safe, or when it is time to move to the sugar bush. Some constellations are ceremonies, like the sweat lodge or shaking tent formations, while others are animals of the clan system. Constellations are coded mappings for Nishnaabeg for

those with star literacy.⁵ They are what Jarrett Martineau describes as opaque—visible to everyone all night and unreadable theory and imagery to the colonizer or those who aren't embedded in grounded normativity. Just as birds and other animals look to stars as guides in migration, the Nishnaabeg looked to the skyworld for knowledge and flight paths out of settler colonialism. The constellated and emergent relationships from within grounded normativity between radical resurgence, generative refusal, and reciprocal recognition, for instance, might create the potential for heightening nationhood, Indigeneity, and freedom. Similarly, Martineau writes of a slightly different conceptual constellation as a mechanism to open up flight and fugitivity in the context of radical resurgence:

Thus far I have explicated becoming other as a strategic movement away from the terms of subjection and subjectivity, considered through strategic refusals mobilized in abjection, disidentification, détournement, and opacity. Taken together, this resistant constellation can be understood as a modality of flight, both away from identity and identity politics as such, and in anticipation of an arrival to an elsewhere that is already here, if hidden from view. This elsewhere is a decolonial turn away from the romantic rhetoric of revolutionary subjectivity *represented* in direct contestation against Empire.⁶

This is an important intervention into the use of ideas of escape, fugitivity, and flight. Indigenous thought doesn't dissect time into past, present, and future.⁷ The future is here in the form of the practices of the present, in which the past is also here influencing. When Martineau suggests resistant constellations as flight paths to the future, he is really talking about the opaque Indigenous worlds that Indigenous peoples to varying degrees are already living within—flight paths to Nishnaabewin, flight paths to an amplified and centered grounded normativity. This works because constellations are place-based relationships, and land-based relationships are the foundation of Indigenous thought. Aki is the foundation of Nishnaabeg thought.

This conceptual layer of constellated intelligence is also seen in Nishnaabeg theory. The Gchi Ojiig formation, known as the Big Dipper, is to me about these same constellated relationships, overcoming hardship, struggle, and resolution, and in a radical resurgence context, it is a mapping of flight or fugitivity turning inwards and away from settler colonialism. Indigenous fugitivity is always flight inwards.⁸ The story takes place in a time where the world was engulfed with darkness—there was no sun. Let's say the story takes place exactly right now, as all of our stories do, because faced with the strangulation of settler colonialism that results in children as young as ten years old committing suicide, it certainly feels like I live in a place where there is no sun.

Ojiig (fisher), lynx, wolverine, and otter embark on a journey to the skyworld to see if they can get the sun back because sustaining life was so difficult in constant cold and darkness. The four beings travel to the skyworld, where life is very good and the sun's warmth brings forth a continual bounty of new life. It is warm with lush vegetation and a pristine lake. Wolverine and Ojiig decide to work together to make the hole in the sky bigger so the warmth of the skyworld will flow down to their mother. I wonder if they forgot to ask the sky people for consent. No one has ever told that to me, but still I wonder. It doesn't seem right. They aren't in their own territory, except for Wolverine because she is also a star person, she is also a member of both worlds.⁹ Maybe it's not consent that's missing. Maybe it is collective decision making.

After they work for a long time, the snow on earth starts to melt, the waters start to flow, and the world begins to wake up. At some point, the people of the skyworld show concern that the hole is taking all of their sun and warmth. They confront the four animals. Wolverine is so startled that she falls through the hole and back to the earth. Some of the sky people and fisher, lynx, and otter negotiate to make the hole the right size so that both worlds can share and benefit from the light and heat of the sun. Other sky people aren't able to understand, and they kill fisher with an arrow. Gzhwe Manidoo watches all of this. Honoring her for her work, Gzhwe Mnidoo picks up Ojiig and places

her in the stars for trying to help everyone on earth. Every winter Ojiig is struck by the arrow and falls over on her back, but during the summer she rolls onto her feet to bring warmth back to her people.¹⁰

This story is about mistakes, struggle, mobilization, sacrifice, love, negotiation, and sharing. To fully understand the coded conceptual meanings of this story, one has to consider all of the knowledge and story held by the four animals, the skyworld, the people of the skyworld, and the grounded normativity within which this story takes place. The lynx, otter, and fisher are all members of the larger Martin Clan, a clan that is concerned with providing the necessities of life to the nation, including protection.¹¹ In that way, the journey to the skyworld is a collective action in the fulfillment of their larger responsibilities to the nation.

Constellations are also an original code. When Canadians look up in the sky, they see the Big Dipper. When Nishnaabeg people who live within Nishnaabeg intelligence look up, they see Gchi Ojiig, they see their version of this story—an actual flight path out of darkness. They see a story and a series of relationships between otter, fisher, wolverine, lynx, and the sky people. They see a negotiation and a treaty. They see a problem, action, and solution. They see honoring and remembrance, and thanks to Martineau's work, I now also see opacity. The land itself is a coded representation of Nishnaabewin that is visible to those who live within Nishnaabewin but is opaque to those who do not. This is fundamentally why engagement with land-based practices generates theory within Indigenous contexts. Being on the land is a highly intellectual practice that is a living interaction between heart, mind, and movement.

Fugitive Intervention

Constellations exist only in the context of relationships; otherwise they are just individual stars. When individual star people or thoughts come together, they create doorways into Nishnaabewin. In the section of "Creative Combat" titled "Decolonial Constellations of Love and Resistance," Martineau details

the concept of constellations as opaque, fugitive theoretical interventions in the universe of settler colonialism. Martineau and I have been talking about constellations as Indigenous intelligence, as theory, and as an organizing concept for years now, and what follows is highly influenced by both these conversations and his published work.¹² The concept of constellation provides a different conceptual way of collectively ordering beyond individual everyday acts of resurgence, and Martineau provides several examples of this formation as a mechanism operating in the context of the artist collective. This gestures toward the constellation as an organizing value in resurgent movement building, one that I started to see glimpses of during *Idle No More* with small collectives of people coming together to organize a particular event, or to create or hold Indigenous presence that in some way was disruptive to settler colonialism. Martineau writes,

The artist collective, I claim, embodies Indigenous values of individuated creation and collaborative, interdependent communality. In the transdisciplinary work of artist collectives including Postcommodity, Skookum Sound System, A Tribe Called Red, and the Black Constellation, collectivization becomes a means of instantiating micro-communal forms of relationality, governance, and creation. In the case of Métis artist Christi Belcourt, for example, the *Walking With Our Sisters* “exhibit” becomes a collectively-produced and collaboratively authored work that self-generates structures of creative Indigenous women’s and queer leadership and accountability. As the exhibit travels between communities, it creates locally-organized, lasting relationships between co-creators and collaborators.¹³

The idea of a constellation of amateurs is the process that has driven my own artistic work through the production of the album *f(l)ight* (RPM Records, 2016). Starting with a series of poems, I worked with a collective of Indigenous and non-Indigenous musicians and artists to produce songs, a recorded

album, and a performance. This constellation grew each time the record was performed live in various incarnations from a site-specific installation and durational performance with Tanya Lukin Linklater to more standard musical performances. This constellation grew again through the creation of a series of music videos with a diverse group of emerging Indigenous filmmakers (leannesimpsonmusic.com).

The idea of artist collectives creating space for instantiating microcommunal forms of grounded normativity and Indigenous intelligence is rich and fertile Indigenous space across Turtle Island and extends beyond artistic practice. Collectives allow people with common goals to come together, produce, act, and then disband, reform, or continue as needed. They are an opportunity to govern ourselves using Indigenous processes, to challenge heteronormativity in our ceremonial practices, to critically examine how our movements erase and marginalize 2SQ and replicate transphobia. Individuals can and should have their own practices of production, but these collective spaces can be used to generate resurgence modes of production in addition to their own work, and when these collectives start to develop relationships with other collectives, constellated organizing intensifies across orders of magnitude. This organizational structure seems to have relevance to radical resurgent organizing.

Constellations then become networks within the larger whole. Individual stars shine in their own right and exist, grounded in their everyday renewal of Indigenous practices and in constellated relationships, meaning relationships that operate from within the grounded normativity of particular Indigenous nations, not only with other stars but also the physical world and the spiritual world. Constellations in relationship with other constellations form flight paths out of settler colonial realities into Indigeneity.¹⁴ They become doorways out of the enclosure of settler colonialism and into Indigenous worlds. They can be small collectives of like-minded people working and living together, amplifying the renewal of Indigenous place-based practices. They can be larger Indigenous nations working within their own grounded normativity yet in a linked and

international way. When these constellations work in international relationship to other constellations, the fabric of the night sky changes: movements are built, particularly if constellations of coresistance create mechanisms for communication, strategic movement, accountability to each other, and shared decision-making practices.

Mobilization within Grounded Normativity

A few years have passed since Idle No More, which represented the largest mass mobilization of Indigenous peoples that I've witnessed in my lifetime. I want to now spend some time thinking about this mobilization, how we organized, and what we achieved. I think these conversations are important, and while I know we're having them in small groups, with our most trusted friends and colleagues, I don't think those involved with the many facets of the movement are having them on the scale of the movement. My consideration of these issues here is primarily based on my own experience from within the mobilization. Many, many others will have different experiences and perspectives, and in my consideration, I mean no disrespect to the tremendous contributions of the organizations, leaders, and people that I struggled alongside with during the winter of 2012–13. There were several beautiful and effective moments in our collective action. My discussion here is also by no means a comprehensive review of Idle No More, and I am using the term "Idle No More" in the broadest sense and in a temporal sense as well; that is, I am referring to the diverse movement that was at its peak during the winter of 2012–13. I am not referring to the organization Idle No More (www.idlenomore.ca) nor the ongoing work that has continued to occur under the banner of Idle No More to the present day. I focus on primarily three issues here: our use of the Internet, how we built the movement, and our relationship to allies. These issues in a sense are not specific to Idle No More but are relevant to thinking through mobilizations in the age of the Internet. I will be upfront: I have a lot of observations and few answers. This section is based largely on my personal experiences and observations during 2012 and

2013 in Ontario, and there is certainly regional diversity within the movement. I have not been involved with Idle No More as an organization, and I have not organized under the banner of Idle No More since 2013. I'm not sure any of us have answers at this point, because the Internet and mobilizing in Indigenous contexts are so new. I do, however, think we need to take stock and remember how to organize and mobilize within grounded normativity in a way that is effective in the present.

At the beginning of Idle No More, I *felt* like I was part of a community. I felt like I was part of something bigger. I remember being excited about being a part of something with a group of like-minded people who wanted to change and were willing to make sacrifices to do so. I worked with people I had met online and never met in person, editing blogs, organizing protests and events. There was a sense of unity that I enjoyed, and even though I knew that politically I might not agree on everything with the organizers I was working with, we could agree on enough to trust each other and work together on some issues. I thought that I was part of a community, and in a sense I was. And on the other side of that, there was shallowness to my online relationships that would only later reveal itself.

During the editing of *The Winter We Danced*, a collection of key writings from the winter of 2012–13, it became clear to me that there were three distinct but interrelated Indigenous political strains coming together: a rights-based approach that was interested in changing the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the state through policy, bills, and electoral politics; a treaty rights approach that included using the numbered treaties to change the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the state; and a nationhood approach that involved the rejection of recognition and rights-based politics and a turn toward Indigenous resurgence and that was anticapitalist in nature.¹⁵ In many ways, the divisions weren't as clear as I am making them, and many individuals saw and see merit in all three approaches, while others simply do not. There was also a fourth strain, which involved lifelong organizers, those who had been organizing as activists through years of work, many of whom were involved