# Native Renewables Affirmative

## File Explanation

This affirmative increases federal assistance for solar and wind energy in Native Alaskan Arctic communities. The overwhelming majority of Arctic communities in Alaska are rural, Native Alaskan, and in poverty. Almost all rely on diesel-powered microgrids to provide electricity (through there are some that have already incorporated some renewable power). They are called microgrids because they are not connected to a large power grid that might serve a region, like most grids are in the lower 48 states. Alaska has one large grid, called the Railbelt, that serves its biggest cities, and hundreds of microgrids that serve small rural communities. The overwhelming majority of villages in Alaska – predominantly Native Alaskan – are served by small grids (microgrids) that might only provide power to a few hundred people. The affirmative would involve a significant new federal commitment to wind and solar integration into microgrids. It’s not possible to replace diesel altogether, because renewables are **intermittent** (the sun only shines part of the time, and the wind doesn’t always blow). But it is possible to provide a portion of power through renewables (some estimates say as high as 75%).

#### The problem with the status quo

The main problem with diesel is that it is overwhelmingly expensive, because diesel fuel has to be transported great distances, usually by barge, to reach these villages. The first card in the 1AC describes a situation where some communities might see a 400% spike in electricity bills as a result of high diesel prices. No one in rural Alaskan communities can afford this, and the 1ac says it has real consequences on the health and well-being of people in poverty.

To make matters worse, the Trump administration in July cut renewable programs to Alaska (though not all). So while the status quo had been making (slow) progress in integrating renewables, those Alaskan villages that were in the transition to reduce their diesel fuel reliance can no longer afford it.

The last problem is that the process for an Alaskan tribe to apply for renewable assistance is extremely burdensome. The 1AC describes many issues with the current federal grant process, but most significant is that villages are supposed to provide matching funds for a federal grant (so, they might have to provide 50% of the cost). That means the wealthiest communities have made some progress, but the poorest have not, because they can’t afford it. 1AC evidence describes this as the continuation of colonialism, where tribes are forced into subservient relationships.

#### **What does the plan advocate?**

The plan is a vague statement, but it would provide more money, provide it collaboratively, and provide federal expertise to help Native villages build and operate renewable-diesel microgrids. The word “collaboratively” is the most important part. Essentially, whatever a tribe requests, the federal government will provide. If they don’t ask for it, then the federal government would not provide it.

#### Energy Justice Advantage

This advantage is about the high price of diesel causing energy poverty. The impact to this advantage is “structural violence” – in other words, slow violence that occurs as a result of the system of poverty and colonialism that Native Alaskans are subject to. The solvency claim is that by giving Native Alaskans renewable energy, that provides sovereignty – the ability to make their own decisions and be less dependent on the government as it relates to energy.

#### Framing

There isn’t a second advantage to this affirmative. The point of the framing contention is to elevate your impacts above the disadvantage. This helps you make the argument that challenging colonialism should be an ethical priority for the judge, and that the judge should be very skeptical of disadvantage impacts that result in extinction.

While there are extension cards, the only way you can really win with this affirmative is to be able to explain the 1ac evidence well. You should generally not be reading extension evidence as it relates to framing; instead, write blocks based on the major claims of the 1ac evidence.

## 1AC

### 1AC — Plan

The United States federal government should increase its collaborative development of tribally-owned solar and wind energy in Native Alaskan Arctic communities.

### 1AC — Energy Justice Advantage

#### Contention 1 is Energy Justice.

#### Native Alaskans face energy poverty due to a legacy of colonialism and systemic racism. This results in overwhelmingly high prices, food insecurity and lower health

Lila Hobbs and Autumn Cantu, 2024 - Lila Hobbs (she / her) was born and raised on the unceded Dena'ina lands now known as Anchorage. She received her BA in International Relations from the University of St Andrews in Scotland and completed a Postgraduate Certificate in Global Health from Johns Hopkins University. Autumn is attending the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) for her Bachelor’s degree in Social Work and plans to go for her Master’s degree in Social Work as well. Autumn is the business owner of Cantu Tactics &amp; Consulting (CTC), she currently works at Native Peoples Action and Native Peoples Action Community Fund as the Communication &amp; Indigenous Engagement Manager. “Amplifying Indigenous Voices for Energy and Broadband Justice in Rural Alaska” Native Movement, 7/30,

<https://www.nativemovement.org/nm-blog/2024/7/30/amplifying-indigenous-voices-for-energy-and-broadband-justice-in-rural-alaska> //DH

Hobbs

Imagine opening your electric bill one day and finding that your rate had increased by 400% without warning. Last month you paid $500—already a cripplingly high sum—and the next month you’re being asked to pay $2,000. Or what if your town lost 911 services for six months? Who would you call in an emergency? What if you lost power while caring for a terminally ill relative and all the food they had harvested and frozen was lost? What if you lost access to the internet for months?

These stories are real. Communities across Alaska, particularly rural communities, are navigating the stark realities of persistent, systemic energy injustice in rural Alaska. These challenges represent only a small glimpse into the infrastructure instability across Alaska.

Energy injustice refers to the unequal distribution of affordable, reliable energy resources. In rural Alaska, this manifests as disproportionately high energy bills, unreliable power generation, and limited access to essential services like broadband and telecommunications. These disparities are more than inconveniences—they have profound implications for health, safety, and economic stability. When communities are cut off from reliable energy and communication networks, their ability to thrive is severely compromised.

The roots of energy injustice in rural Alaska are deeply intertwined with the legacies of colonization and systemic racism. Through my work and relationships with Tribal communities, I have witnessed how rural Alaska bears the burden of disproportionately high costs for basic essentials like electricity, internet, and phone services. Energy insecurity and the persistent digital divide are manifestations of an ongoing legacy of colonialism, resource extraction, and systemic marginalization of Indigenous people. The disproportionately high costs, decaying infrastructure, and substandard services in rural Alaska are direct consequences of chronic underfunding, policies of forced assimilation, and the intergenerational trauma inflicted by a centuries-old, extractive worldview rooted in the denial of Indigenous sovereignty.

While my understanding is shaped by my work and the time I spend in communities across rural Alaska, the lived experiences of Alaska Native individuals provide crucial insights into these challenges. My colleague and co-author, Autumn Cantu, a Koyukon Athabascan from Ruby, AK, brings professional expertise and a profoundly personal understanding of these realities.

Cantu

The loss of subsistence food due to power outages has been particularly devastating. After the significant effort involved in hunting, butchering, and storing food, seeing it spoil due to an inconsistent power supply is heartbreaking and threatens our food security. These experiences underscore the urgent need for reliable renewable energy systems in rural Alaskan communities. Embracing renewable energy addresses these challenges and eases the financial strain of escalating electricity bill.

In my work as the Rural & Indigenous Outreach (RIO) Director at The Mobilization Center and MMIWG2S Communications Coordinator & Graphic Designer at Native Movement, I advocate for equal rights in community safety. Our work emphasizes the critical necessity of reliable energy, broadband services, and consistent telecommunications throughout all rural Alaskan communities.

#### Dependence on diesel generation causes widespread structural violence. Price shocks mean Native Alaskans have to choose between heating or eating

Yasmeen Hossain, 2016 – University of Alaska Fairbanks, PhD in Sustainable Development “Defining energy security in the rural North—Historical and contemporary perspectives from Alaska” Energy Research & Social Science Volume 16, June 2016, Science Direct, Accessed via University of Michigan //DH

5. Contemporary energy security concerns in Alaska

In rural Alaska, dependence on fossil fuel permeates all of the categories of energy use noted above: subsistence and food production, household activities, municipal activities, and industry. Today, imported diesel and gasoline are the primary energy sources for rural Alaskan villages [61]. Diesel is used for electricity and heat for household, municipal and industrial activities, and gasoline is used as fuel for snowmobiles and four-wheelers for subsistence activities as well as transport of imported goods, including food and supplies from hub communities. Energy and other municipal infrastructure in rural Alaska is also relatively new, designed when fossil fuel was inexpensive, abundant, and not implicated in climate change. Indeed, Alaskans now are locked in to an overreliance on imported fuel for all aspects of rural life, which makes them vulnerable to any environmental, economic or social change that affects the supply or price of fuel [62].

Rural communities have a unique challenge in that a large number of rural areas are accessible only by plane or barge as they are not on the road system. This increases the general cost of living when compared to the urban centers [63] because the majority of goods, including fuel, building supplies, and food has to be imported long distances. Likewise, the cost of energy in rural regions can be as high as $10/gallon of diesel and over $1/kWh for electricity [64], [65]. Colt et al. [66] estimate that the consumption of diesel fuel and gasoline in rural Alaska equals roughly 1000 gallons per person annually, including fuel consumption for heating, electricity and transportation, but not including the indirect fuel costs associated with imported foods. Electric utilities in rural areas receive high subsidies from the state, such as through the Power Cost Equalization Program, to be able to lessen the cost of energy such that local utilities can be sustainable [67]. Nevertheless, even temporary fluctuations in the cost of fuel can drive local families into an energy insecure state [63].

Fossil fuel use in rural Alaska also has impacts on local ecosystems. For example, storage of diesel is key because fuel can only be barged to many communities in the summer months because of river and sea ice (most rural communities in Alaska are not on the road system). Due to aging and inadequate infrastructure, storing a year’s worth of diesel and gasoline can lead to leaking storage tanks, spills and discarded drums that all have adverse impacts on the ecosystem and human health [68]. Chapman [68] estimated the cost of remediating the environmental impacts caused by emissions and spills from diesel engine operation at an additional $3/gallon.

Finally, the community power plant equipment is likewise often at risk of failing, leaving entire communities without power for weeks. Maintenance and repair is difficult in remote communities that are not accessible by road and often don’t have skilled technicians living in the community. Moreover, in the event of a disaster or other shutdown of all transportation modes to Alaska the import of fuel would cease and the overall livability of remote communities would be considerably impacted. This scenario happened in a community in Northwest Alaska in the fall of 2011. The annual fuel delivery by barge to Nome could not occur due to a severe storm in the Bering Sea making the water impossible to navigate [69]. By the time the storm died down Nome was already locked in by sea ice. The residents did not have enough fuel to last through the winter. With no other way to get enough fuel for the entire town a Russian ice breaker had to make the trip to transport the fuel to Nome. Flying the fuel in by plane would have raised the fuel prices from $5.40 to $9 per gallon and as such been cost prohibitive for the residents [70]. The emergency fuel did not reach the community until January 2012 [71].

5.1. Food-energy interactions

Alaska’s rural community food systems, including both subsistence and small-scale agricultural production, are also now much more energy dependent than they were in the past, with transportation as one example. The predominantly subsistence lifestyle requires fuel for hunting and fishing with snowmobiles, all terrain vehicles, and motorboats. Climate change is also affecting the subsistence lifestyle of many rural Alaskans [62]: retreating sea-ice, shorter freeze periods of rivers and lakes and changing vegetation patterns leading to changing game migration patterns are impacting the availability of fish and game and safety of transportation across land, rivers, and the ocean. Due to these factors, as well as the creation of federal and state parks, restricted hunting and fishing on private land and the high cost of fuel, the reliance on subsistence foods in rural Alaska is continuously decreasing [72]. With reduced access to and availability of subsistence foods, community members rely on larger amounts of imported foods. On average food sold in local grocery stores travels a long distance from the lower 48 before reaching Alaska and as such the price of food and fuel in these communities is tightly coupled (Fig. 2), with the cost of the foods sold in the village stores is as much as 2–5 times that of food sold in the contiguous US [62].

5.2. Household and municipal uses

Energy for heat, lighting and running electric appliances is important to both household and municipal buildings. Families often feel energy insecure if they cannot afford the high cost of electricity and heating fuel to be comfortable throughout all of the seasons of the year. With the upkeep of a modern lifestyle that includes using electronics such as TV, computer, mobile devices and game consoles electricity use is furthermore increased. Municipal energy use has similar concerns, such as being able to keep offices heated adequately and having enough budgeted to pay for electricity without needing to cut-back on other areas. Aside from the availability factor of fuel in rural Alaska, increasing fuel prices coupled with the high cost of food are leading some low-income families to decide whether to spend a large portion of their income on either food or fuel to heat their home because they can’t afford both [63], [73]. Rural low-income families spent up to 47% of their household income on home energy use in 2008, as compared to urban families who spent up to 18% [74].

5.3. Stability

One way to evaluate the question of whether or not the existing energy economy in rural Alaska can be maintained over time is with the concepts of resilience and vulnerability. When energy security is viewed through the lens of resilience it can be interpreted as energy self-reliance and independence. Resilience in this context is the magnitude of a change in supply and demand, delivery or affordability of energy services that the system could withstand without experiencing a fundamental change in the energy security baseline [75], [76]. For example, the resilience of a household is determined by how long they can continue generating and using power if an ice storm prevents shipment of fuel to their region if their sole power source is imported fuel. Increased resilience can take the shape of additional fuel drums that a household has in storage but could also be their ability to adapt, reorganize and innovate. One example is if households join forces and share cooking and other electrical needs they can stretch their combined fuel reserves, thus increasing their resilience to the system shock.

An increased dependence on imported food also increases the reliance on fuel for the transportation of the food to the store and the electricity to power the freezers, fridges and lights in the store. An example of a situation where aging infrastructure in a local community power plant failed and affected food security occurred in the fall of 2014 in the village of Tuluksak, near Bethel in Southwest Alaska. All three generators in the local power plant failed at the same time, leaving the village with no power [77], [78]. The main concern was keeping the villages’ food supply in freezers from thawing. Many families store the bulk of the food they consume throughout the winter in freezers. The school and the village store have private generators and can remain open, however the village clinic did not have any power. None of the generators were salvageable and new generators are very costly. The state of Alaska flew in an emergency generator to turn the power back on in the village, but the residents were without power for over two weeks.

In January 2016 another village in Alaska was left without power for four days [79]. The only generator in Newtok, a rural community in Southwest Alaska, failed during the winter leaving the entire community without power. The main concern for residents was keeping warm. The state flew in an emergency generator. In total roughly $30,000 was spent restoring power to the community. This scenario again addresses the availability component of energy security, but merely replacing the generators does not address the access, utility or stability of the future energy security of the village.

Vulnerability of rural energy security increases if there is a sole reliance on imported energy sources, such as oil and gas. If there are diversified energy sources combined with energy conservation measures the resilience is increased multifold. In parallel with issues surrounding food security, availability of raw materials for generating energy is often not the culprit; it is access and distribution that needs to be improved upon [80]. The natural resources of Alaska provide a host of energy options: aside from oil there is solar, wind, hydro, geothermal, biomass, tidal and natural gas, but access to technology to harness and use these for generation is limited and slow to progress [81]. Potentially due to its nature as an oil and gas supplying region, coupled with the legacy of climate inappropriate home heating and construction models the vast majority of households are largely dependent on oil and gas in the rural areas. Affordability often rules out exploring alternative energy sources on a household level, though a number of organizations and state programs are on the upswing to provide assistance in the adoption of renewable energy and climate appropriate house designs [82], [83].

6. Discussion

The contrast of historical and contemporary energy uses and needs in rural Alaska illustrates the importance of adopting a place-based approach to energy security. While the state itself is a major oil producer and urban households are all connected to energy grids, the picture in rural Alaska is one of vulnerability more than resilience, a result of expensive imported fuel with unreliable import schedules, inefficient homes and inefficient use of heating fuel. A significant segment of the population is therefore energy insecure, specifically within three out of the four energy use categories proposed above. Food systems, household activities, and municipal activities – such as water supply and heated public buildings – are all vulnerable.

The categories of access, availability, utility, and stability add clarity to our assessment. There are abundant energy resources available in Alaska including oil, natural gas, geothermal, solar, wind, biomass, hydro and ocean/tidal power [84] but most people do not have widespread access to these options. While some subsidies exist, they are often not sufficiently high to make these options affordable. Since the current predominant fuel type in remote Alaskan communities is diesel, increasing access in the current system would mean purchasing and storing additional drums for fuel or facilitating cheaper fuel transportation to rural communities on a more frequent schedule. This however, can affect stability through the environmental impact, since this increases the risk for leaking fuel drums causing polluted ground and water resources. It would simultaneously impact the affordability of energy as more upfront payment would be needed to purchase the fuel drums. Branching out into renewable energy sources, such as wind, solar and hydropower would afford a larger availability of energy. However, installing renewable energy in rural Alaska can also be cost prohibitive because of the high costs of shipping the equipment. A number of non-profit organizations and state funded grants are providing assistance in installing wind turbines and tapping into geothermal power, as well as utilizing solar energy for community buildings, to heat greenhouses and provide hot water [85]. This is in alignment with Alaska's energy policy to obtain half of the state's electricity from renewable sources by 2025 [86].

As stated earlier, energy costs in rural Alaska are relatively high compared to urban areas in the state. Rural inhabitants therefore are often confronted with trade-offs, in some cases choosing between heating or eating. This raises the important question of how much energy is required to maintain a sustainable standard of living. While that amount can vary from household to household, we believe that most would agree that having to choose between food and heating a home is not consistent with any possible definition of energy security.

The utility dimension of energy security encompasses both the energy efficiency of the technologies at use as well as the social and cultural acceptability and appropriateness of those technologies. Historically, technologies used in rural Alaska for housing, hunting, even clothing embedded aspects of energy security; today, we argue that new energy options would likewise need to be place-based, that is, designed according to locally available energy sources and governed locally. The efficiency of technologies used for the four activities above play an important role as well, whether for buildings, appliances, transport vehicles or machinery.

Energy efficiency is supported by Alaska's energy policy to decrease energy use per capita by 15% by 2020 [86]. If homes are heat efficient, less of the heating fuel will be required, thus lowering the yearly cost, thus increasing affordability, which allows for less trade-offs and arguably can increase the standard of living if tradeoffs between using fuel and purchasing household goods or food does not need to be factored in any longer. Education to increase the energy literacy of homeowners is also an important part of the solution, especially when it comes to simple measures such as replacing light bulbs for more efficient ones [87]. Energy literacy also gives homeowners more control over their energy security.

It is important that an indigenous and decolonized conversation be had about energy security in the North and how it ought to be pursued, with some skepticism at least about whether new technologies developed outside the North make sense for northern people and places. As elaborated above, colonialism of Alaska and the invasion of settlers significantly changed the fuel sources, energy uses and home energy efficiency of the indigenous populations. Households went from using appropriate, locally available, affordable and very efficient methods of using energy sources with a relatively fuel secure situation to a complete conversion using imported fuel sources. Additionally, the imported fuel was used at a much higher rate due to energy inefficient homes, which impacted affordability of energy directly leading to a questionable if not energy insecure situation for most households. The colonial legacy cannot be underestimated when reviewing the energy situation of a region. As can be seen with organizations building homes incorporating features of pre-contact homes, sometimes the way forward to increase energy security is to take a look backwards.

Finally, and as noted above, rural energy systems are lacking stability, both in terms of the vulnerabilities that communities are exposed to through current systems and also because of the inherent unsustainability of those technologies. The carbon pollution associated with oil and gas extraction, transportation and burning fossil fuels for its end-use is well known, and the climatic changes that are resulting are impacting livelihoods in rural Alaska in many ways. With the effects of climate change already visible, the local environmental consequences of fossil fuel-based energy generation multiply the problems. However, due to limited availability and access to alternatives, residents don’t usually have a choice in the matter. Implementing energy efficiency measures is one possible exception. Though there is typically an upfront cost associated with energy efficiency improvements and the payback rate is low, especially when oil prices in rural Alaska are relatively high.

7. Conclusion

Whether the place is rural Africa or rural Alaska, the primary drivers and determinants of energy security at the household level will invariably involve some combination of historical, economic, political, geological, cultural and ecological dimensions. As has been previously done for food security, we offer here a framework for “downscaling” the energy security discussion to bring clarity to these dimensions and how they interact. In so doing, we have illustrated the highly place-based nature of energy security and how it interacts with other components of the food-water-energy nexus. If energy democracy and/or energy justice are the goals, it is imperative that policies take these localized contours into account.

Alaska is fruitful with oil and gas reserves (which benefit the state’s treasury) but its people are lacking in rural energy security. In this Alaska is similar to many other oil producing nations that lack the infrastructure, policies, or political will to ensure that outcomes are equitable and their people are secure. Many government and non-governmental organizations in Alaska are working with remote communities to lessen their overreliance on imported fuel through renewable energy generation, though the costs remain high and institutional support is only nascent. What we learn from the discussion above is that building energy security in these places is not just a matter of implementing the latest and greatest alternative energy technologies, but also of confronting the structural and built legacies of colonialism. To that end, it is essential that local governance and decisions regarding the cultural appropriateness of technologies must play a central role in shaping a region’s energy future. Planners and policymakers must look at the local discourses surrounding alternative energy when developing these solutions such that local people are literally and figuratively empowered by reforms; the alternative is to repeat past mistakes by implementing technologies that do not meet local needs and that lock people into a posture of dependency.

#### Trump gutted federal support for clean energy and it will devastate rural Alaskan tribes

Miacel Spotted Elk, 2025 – Indigenous Affairs Reporting Fellow at Grist. “Clean Energy Projects on Tribal Lands Were Booming. Then Came Trump’s Tax Bill.” Next City, 7/7,

<https://nextcity.org/urbanist-news/clean-energy-projects-on-tribal-lands-trump-tax-bill> //DH

President Donald Trump signed his sweeping domestic policy and tax bill into law on Friday, July 4, after House Republicans passed the legislation with a vote of 218-214 on Thursday. As the administration celebrates, many Americans are contemplating its effects closer to home. With deep cuts to Medicaid, food stamps and renewable energy projects, the bill is likely to have a devastating effect on low-income and rural communities across the country.

But while Republican governors in states that rely on those programs have largely remained silent about the bill’s effects, tribal leaders across the country are not mincing words about the upcoming fallout for their communities.

“These bills are an affront to our sovereignty, our lands, and our way of life. They would gut essential health and food security programs, roll back climate resilience funding, and allow the exploitation of our sacred homelands without even basic tribal consultation,” said Chalyee Éesh Richard Peterson, president of the Tlingit and Haida in Alaska, in a statement. “This is not just bad policy — it is a betrayal of the federal trust responsibility to tribal nations.”

Tribes across the country are particularly worried about the megabill’s hit to clean energy, complicating the development of critical wind and solar projects. According to the Department of Energy, tribal households face 6.5 times more electrical outages per year and a 28 percent higher energy burden compared to the average U.S. household. An estimated 54,000 people living on tribal lands have no electricity.

Under the 2022 Inflation Reduction Act, or IRA, the Biden administration opened up new federal funding opportunities, increased the loan authority of the Tribal Energy Loan Guarantee Program, and created new tax credits for wind energy, battery storage, large-scale solar farms, and programs to repurpose lands harmed by environmental degradation for related energy projects. Trump’s new bill will largely dismantle these programs.

Historically, tribes have had limited access to capital to fund clean energy projects. Through the IRA, new projects were driven by tribes to address community and infrastructure needs on their terms. According to tribes and energy advocacy groups, these projects not only help build energy infrastructure for each tribal nation but also create jobs, boost local economies, and affirm sovereignty.

Crystal Miller, a member of the Walker River Paiute Tribe, heads government affairs and policy at the Alliance for Tribal Clean Energy, underlined the existential outcomes for tribal communities. “It is extremely life or death if you’re talking about clean energy projects, in particular solar, which provide energy to homes, provide heat to homes that wouldn’t have it without because they don’t have lines run to their community,” she said.

#### Low levels of federal assistance, barriers to grants, and lack of community collaboration make Alaskan Native villages feel abandoned and marginalized

Stephen Lezak and Genevieve Rock, 2024 – \*Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge AND \*\*Native Village of Shaktoolik, Shaktoolik, United States “On Micropolitics: Climate adaptation and Indigenous governance in Western Alaska” Climatic Change (2024) 177:135 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-024-03769-4> //DH

Despite a torrent of media attention (Bennett 2021; Herrmann 2019; Marino 2012), many rural Alaska Natives continue to feel abandoned and marginalized by a “distant bureaucracy” (Marino and Ribot 2012). Systems that are putatively designed to aid these communities, such as federal grant programs, often prove to be inaccessible, or navigable only with the assistance of professional grant writers and civil engineers. The fundamental principle of self-determination — which is critical to effective Alaska Native government (Cornell and Kalt 2003) — is complicated by a bureaucracy that is broadly out of step with the administrative capacity of small sovereign communities, Indigenous or settler. In 2020, the Alaska Federation of Natives approved a resolution stating, “The regulations and requirements of most federal programs, including FEMA and the Army Corps of Engineers, are developed for the contiguous United States [i.e., excluding Alaska]. By design, they prevent vital resources from being available to our communities” (Increased Coordination 2020).

To date, the federal government’s response to environmental change in Alaska Native villages has been, by its own admission, inadequately coordinated and underfunded (US GAO, 2022). Several reports by the GAO have pointed to these failures and recommended pathways for change, many of which do not require acts of Congress and could be enacted through executive and agency action (US Government Accountability Office 2003, 2009, 2020, 2022). These recommendations, and the principles underlying them, are echoed in other government publications (Status of Tribes and Climate Change 2021; 2018 National Climate Assessment, Ch. 15). A number of academic publications have also pointed to shortcomings and pitfalls in current systems (Bergstrom et al. 2022; Bronen and Chapin 2013; Marino 2012, 2015; Pennington 2023; Ristroph 2017, 2021; Shearer 2012).

Some of the most frequently cited barriers to environmental adaptation include (1) the high cost of construction in rural Alaska, where the estimated of relocating a single village exceeds US$100 million in many instances (US Army Corps of Engineers, Alaska District 2006); (2) a lack of funding allocated to Alaska Native communities by government entities relative to the need for infrastructure development; (3) poor coordination between a multitude of federal agencies with overlapping mandates; and (4) barriers to accessing federal funds, e.g., through cost matching requirements.

These are policy issues. But behind these hurdles is a historical and cultural backdrop of fraught engagement that creates chronic obstacles to Alaska Native governments partnering with federal agencies with the capacity to fund infrastructure-scale projects. The friction of working collaboratively across a vast geographic and cultural distance, from rural Alaska to Washington, D.C., underpins the feeling of disenfranchisement in village communities. This leads to poor engagement and coordination, undermining service delivery and disparaging the “trust responsibility” (Case and Voluck 2002) that the federal government has with Alaska Native communities.

#### Barriers to assistance replicate colonialism. Native communities are forced to adapt to rigid federal rules and hire outside consultants to apply for assistance

Stephen Lezak and Genevieve Rock, 2024 – \*Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge AND \*\*Native Village of Shaktoolik, Shaktoolik, United States “On Micropolitics: Climate adaptation and Indigenous governance in Western Alaska” Climatic Change (2024) 177:135 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-024-03769-4> //DH

**Italics in original**

In the existing academic and government literature, commonly proposed interventions to improve the delivery of environmental assistance are well-informed and urgent. But these recommendations sometimes fall short of engaging the more mundane and micropolitical barriers to effective collaboration with Indigenous communities, such as Alaska Native villages. Issues that seem distant from federal offices in Washington, DC, can pose significant challenges in rural Alaska. These include, for example, intermittent Internet access, English spoken as a second language, misaligned expectations around trust and relationship-building (Whyte 2020), and the need to spend days to weeks at a time away from village centers to fish and hunt (Marino 2015). Effectively assisting with environmental adaptation—and indeed, any issue—in rural Alaska requires attending to these place-based and culturally-specific dimensions, and the micropolitics that arise between them.

A list of micropolitical barriers, with examples and exceptions, is presented in Table 1. Neither the list, nor the exceptions, are exhaustive. Table 2 presents a list of non-micropolitical barriers — also non-exhaustively.

Alaska Native villages face micropolitical barriers to successfully engaging federal programs even when those programs (e.g., those within the Bureau of Indian Affairs) are specifically designed to render aid to Indigenous communities. Often, these barriers are technological, cultural, or pragmatic in ways that are not legible (Scott 2008) to agency staff in cities in the Lower 48. These barriers are *micropolitical* because they are not readily visible to policymakers but nevertheless pose major challenges in the practice of policy execution and service delivery.

In this case, micropolitics is about the *conduct* of government rather than its overarching goals. As such, they are easily overlooked or even ignored by high-level officials in Congress and the agencies tasked with delivering services. Nevertheless, they underlie the conditions for success or failure in many communities, as was the case following Typhoon Merbok.

For example, many Tribal leaders are limited in their capacity to manage a bureaucratic landscape of tools that are required for successful funding applications. This includes, for instance, the often-cited SAMS.gov website that is required for federal funding and procurement. As a result of these complicated systems, some small villages are only able to succeed in applying for federal assistance by hiring outside consultants who can navigate the labyrinth of bureaucracy involved in federal funding. For a glimpse of the challenge, navigate to www.grants.gov to see the web portal through which most federal grant applications are submitted. Despite the evident best intentions, the portal is a complex maze of information best suited to specialists. The creation of several different “technical assistance centers” or “adaptation centers” has helped some communities overcome these hurdles, but the reliance upon outside experts may still impinge upon communities’ capacity to exercise self-determination by articulating their needs in nontechnical language.

Individually, several of these challenges have also been identified by other researchers. But brought together, this pattern of seemingly mundane obstacles may collectively disenfranchise many Alaska Native villages. Micropolitics function by rewarding those communities that are best able to succeed within externally imposed colonial structures. As a result, Alaska Native communities are subjected to a particular form of neoliberal and colonial governmentality (Coulthard 2014), whereby their consideration for funding is made contingent upon adopting an externally-imposed political subjectivity—for example, as clients of engineering firms and grant-writing specialists who are fluent in the institutional language of metric tons and dollars. To receive aid, Alaska Native communities are pressured to adopt the bureaucratic language and governmental forms of their colonizers.

This form of governmentality echoes what Agrawal terms “the soft hammer of self-regulation” (Agrawal 2005; p. 15). When micropolitics are unacknowledged, Alaska Native communities and Tribes are framed as responsible for a lack of competitive funding applications, absolving federal agencies of the need to actively render assistance. When grantmaking is too onerous, or calls and emails to federal agencies are not returned (or are only returned once, perhaps when the local cell towers are down), the blame is readily shifted onto already-disenfranchised communities.

As Alaska Native communities struggle to overcome these micropolitical barriers, “capacity building” has emerged as a solution that positions Native communities as a broken element in an otherwise-functioning institutional meshwork. But this narrative risks overlooking the consequences of historical violence and oppression, and may imply that communities are responsible for their own success or failure as they apply to—rather than *demand*—assistance (Kashwan and Ribot 2021; Marino and Ribot 2012).

These issues impinge upon communities’ ability to make demands upon systems of power and to access resources; this is where the *politics* (relating to *power*) of micropolitics come into play. Micropolitics privileges certain communities and disenfranchises others in a way that has limited correspondence to need or merit.

In rural Alaska Native villages, community requests (and demands) for assistance are only admitted through a highly technical language and practice of bureaucracy that obfuscate the moral and legal responsibility the federal government has to assist Tribal communities. In this process, Tribes and their members are required to discipline themselves and become better colonial subjects in order to be considered for aid.

#### The endpoint of the violence of colonialism is the elimination of Alaskan Natives

Madelyn Irene Poehlein, 2018 - A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for graduation with Honors in Politics-Environmental Studies at Whitman College. “Subsistence is Greater Than Sustenance: Developing a Framework to Interpret the Continued Colonization of Alaska Natives”

<https://arminda.whitman.edu/_flysystem/fedora/2021-10/Subsistence_is_greater_than_sustenance_developing_a_framework_to_interpret_the_continued_colonization_of_Alaska_Natives.pdf> //DH

Environmental Degradation: A New “Logic of Elimination?”

As Coulthard and Alfred,12 both note in their works, under postmodern imperial conditions, “‘oppression has become increasingly invisible; [it is] no longer constituted in conventional terms of military occupation, onerous taxation burdens, blatant land thefts, ect.,’ but rather through a ‘fluid confluence of politics, economics, psychology and culture’” (Coulthard 2014, 58). The incorporation of communities into for-profit Regional Corporations intricately tied Alaska Natives to a capitalist economic framework. Then, the ANWR drilling debate—just one of many controversies surrounding extraction of resources on Native lands— creates conflict within and among tribes, dividing community support towards common goals (Standlea 2006, 11). The United States has left behind overt violence, instead forming intricate economic and political structures that incentivize resource development, creating division within Alaska Native communities.

At this point, the idea of settler colonialism as a “logic of elimination” is integral to my argument (Wolfe 2006, 387). In his influential article Wolfe writes, “In its positive aspect, elimination is an organizing principle of settler colonial society rather than a one-off occurrence” (2006, 388). Thus, the debate surrounding ANWR and the push for oil and gas exploration cannot be separated from the overarching settler colonial project of the United States that relies on the elimination of Native societies. Similarly, Native Feminist authors Arvin, Tuck, and Morrill establish settler colonialism as a persistent formation wherein settlers will do whatever it takes to disappear the Indigenous peoples that are there.13 They write, “Within settler colonialism, it is exploitation of land that yields supreme value. In order for settlers to usurp the land and extract its value, Indigenous peoples must be destroyed, removed, and made into ghosts” (2013, 12). Following the adoption of Native societies into a corporate model through ANCSA, the ANWR debate continues the “logic of elimination” through incentivizing the degradation of subsistence lifestyles through environmental exploitation.

Richard Glenn, a central figure in The Atlantic article, member of the Iñupiat tribe, and executive vice president of the Arctic Slope Regional Corporation, takes the approach that his tribes’ whole region is holy land, but his community needs the infrastructure that inherently results in some development. Specifically, he states, “Even the place where we built a sewage lagoon for our village is sacred land—but we needed a sewage lagoon.” This reaction, although read as simply pragmatic in this case, stems from larger assimilation into ideologies of development and improvement that are produced by imperial legacies.

To be sure, I am not putting forth the essentializing argument that Native communities must not develop their resources or establish infrastructure. Instead, I am exploring what constructions many have influenced tendencies towards development and environmental degradation. Returning to the idea of imperial ideology, Beinart and Hughes classify imperial thinking as that of more intensive utilization of land, improvement, and progress (2010, 13). Additionally, Murphy asserts that environmental degradation was integral to both the ideological and physical projects of imperialism, arguing that the proliferation of ideas like rationality and efficiency disguise the colonial legacies that were predicated on ideologies of development and improvement (2009, 13).14

Returning to Chow’s concept of the “ascendancy of whiteness,” whiteness is normalized and Indigenous peoples and other minorities are given the “opportunity” to take part in the nationalist privileges that dispossess similarly “othered” peoples globally, “naturalizing and maintaining settler colonialism in the United States” (2013, 10). Alaska Native Corporations promoting oil and gas development on their land is an example of this theory in practice. Alaska Natives are welcomed into the seemingly neutral white, corporate structure where they justifiably want to provide economic wealth for their communities. These desires are understandable given the poverty and hardships they have faced since the beginning of settler colonialism in the United States, but seemingly neutral incorporation into the extractive destruction of their natural environments maintains the covert settler colonialism characterized by Coulthard and Alfred.

In his statement addressing Alaska Native approval of oil and gas exploration in the 1002 area, Rexford also draws upon the argument that if the Iñupiat are in support of and involved with the oil and gas activity in Alaska, they can take part in “seeing that any and all development is done in a manner that keeps our land and subsistence resources safe” (Rexford 2017, 2). This statement overlooks the adversarial relationship between development and subsistence, and speaks to the seeming neutralization of the privilege of “safe” development. Oil development inherently harms the health of both humans and the environment, and the siting of injurious development projects is never neutral.

Although I don’t agree with all of his argument, Benjamin Sovacool15 succinctly describes the many environmental harms that are inherent to oil extraction beyond the common oil spill rhetoric. The 1002 area is more sensitive than other areas of the refuge because it lies on the coastal plain where there are fragile wetlands and thin permafrost layers. He lists the many potential environmental harms:

Operational drilling fluids, used to lubricate the cutting bits during drilling, contain toxic substances such as bentonite, borehole cuttings, chemical and polymer additives, engine coolant, unused cement slurry, biocides, furacants, lubricants, and emulsifying agents. Additionally, the maintenance and operation of pipelines, storage facilities, and oil rigs could release drill cuttings, flocculated bentonite, cementing chemicals, toxic organic compounds, aluminum silicate beads, and dense sledges composed of crude oil, paraffin, asphaltics, reservoir material, radioactive material, and drilling mud into wetland habitats. (2006, 190)

This long list of destructive processes continues for four more pages, drilling home that the idea of “safe” oil and gas exploration fails to acknowledge the effects of daily environmental harms on the health and wellbeing of Alaska Natives. Applying concepts from the field of environmental justice, the toxic environments produced through oil and gas exploitation follow a larger pattern of polluting minorities in the United States, backed by a global trend of disproportionate environmental degradation.

Crystal Bartolovich begins to address inequalities stemming from oil development, acknowledging that on a global scale, oil disproportionately benefits a small portion of humanity. Similarly, the costs are also unevenly distributed, often falling heavily on those who derive little or none of the benefits (2016, 224). The term “environmental racism” has gained traction to describe the tendency of environmental harms to disproportionately fall upon non-white people. According to Melissa Checker’s book Polluted Promises, in the United States, roughly 50% of Asian/Pacific Islanders and Native Americans live in communities containing at least one uncontrolled toxic waste site (2005, 13). Tying Wolfe’s “logic of elimination” into the idea of “environmental racism,” development practices that harm Alaska Natives and their environments cannot be seen as anything but continued settler colonialism.

This reality is backed by a global trend where—due to the settler colonialisms that continued in the global South even after the administrative colonialism of the European empires was dismantled—the global South now bears the brunt of the economic and environmental needs of the global North (Byrd 2011, xix). As previously stated, Byrd even acknowledges that the continued colonization of American Indians and their lands “provides the United States the economic and material resources needed to cast its imperialist gaze globally,” connecting the threads between the domestic inequalities and those that exist on a global scale (2011, 122). Although not all disproportionate environmental harms are due to settler colonialism, the imperial ideology of development and progress undergirds these processes. Specific to Alaska Natives, “colonial myths” of striving towards mainstream society convince tribal members of the benefits of oil development. On a broader scale, seeming equality before the law does not exclude the tendency towards continued colonization of Native peoples.

#### The plan solves. Significantly increasing federal funding for collaborative, tribally-owned renewable energy development reduces energy injustice and increases Native self determination

Lila Hobbs and Autumn Cantu, 2024 - Lila Hobbs (she / her) was born and raised on the unceded Dena'ina lands now known as Anchorage. She received her BA in International Relations from the University of St Andrews in Scotland and completed a Postgraduate Certificate in Global Health from Johns Hopkins University. Autumn is attending the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) for her Bachelor’s degree in Social Work and plans to go for her Master’s degree in Social Work as well. Autumn is the business owner of Cantu Tactics &amp; Consulting (CTC), she currently works at Native Peoples Action and Native Peoples Action Community Fund as the Communication &amp; Indigenous Engagement Manager. “Amplifying Indigenous Voices for Energy and Broadband Justice in Rural Alaska” Native Movement, 7/30,

<https://www.nativemovement.org/nm-blog/2024/7/30/amplifying-indigenous-voices-for-energy-and-broadband-justice-in-rural-alaska> //DH

Hobbs & Cantu

We recognize that addressing these critical needs requires a radical paradigm shift—one that centers on transformative solutions rooted in Tribal sovereignty, Indigenous self-determination, and decolonial models of sustainable development. To build a just and sustainable future, we must combat energy injustice and bridge the digital divide in rural Alaska. Prioritizing Tribal energy sovereignty empowers Indigenous communities to control their energy resources and determine their futures through development aligned with their values and traditional ecological knowledge systems. Investing in Tribally-led renewable energy, such as solar and wind microgrids, can provide reliable, affordable, and sustainable power. These initiatives pave the way for the creation of Tribally-owned independent power producers, fostering economic independence, creating local jobs, and generating revenue for critical community services. Enhancing broadband infrastructure owned and operated by Tribes is equally vital, ensuring digital self-governance and unrestricted access to opportunities in telehealth, online education, and economic development.

But true systemic change demands we dismantle the root causes of inequity. This includes significantly increasing federal funding for rural infrastructure development directed by and accountable to Tribal nations. It also means empowering tribal communities by making grant applications and financing mechanisms easily accessible and continually tailored to their needs, and by removing unattainable match requirements. It necessitates meaningful collaboration between federal and state government, the private sector, and Tribal governments—not as an act of charity, but as a restorative process in service of Tribal sovereignty.

We share a vision for Alaska’s future: Imagine a future where every Alaskan Tribe controls its energy resources, where access to broadband and telecommunications are open and accessible to all Alaskans. We see villages powered by renewable energy systems that respect cultural values and ensure long-term resilience. In this new reality, we envision an Alaska where the digital divide is a distant memory and every future generation has access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities, regardless of location. Together with our communities and partners, we are committed to turning this vision into reality.

#### Renewable energy can eliminate tribal dependence on government and will transform power relations

Victoria Herrmann, 2018 – managing director of The Arctic Institute, and Assistant Research Professor at Georgetown University’s Walsh School of Foreign Service “Breaking Free: Alaska’s Path Forward for Renewable Arctic Energy” The Arctic Institute, 11/13, <https://www.thearcticinstitute.org/breaking-free-alaskas-path-forward-renewable-arctic-energy/> //DH

Local-Level Action: Networks of Agency in Remote Alaska Native Villages

The final scale studied is one that is often overlooked in the path creation of renewable energy – small-scale communities, and specifically here remote Alaska Native villages. Here, Alaskan remote village energy systems were made sustainable in relation to Native agency by Alaskan communities. As Howitt16) observes, “sustainable Indigenous futures in communities and territories that are remote from mainstream markets and other institutional arrangements cannot arise from policy interventions” that rely on programs that promote a trickle down of wealth to local Indigenous communities for sustainable development. But what Howitt and other scholars miss is that the path creation in Alaska remote energy systems is a two-way exchange where both government and community have agency. Remote Native communities were not passive actors in this time frame; rather, they were empowered with agency and a vision for the future to pursue renewable energy sources as a means of further defining energy sovereignty on their terms. If agency is understood to be temporal it requires aspirations for the future, sense-making of the past, and a conceptualization and strategy for what is transpiring in the present. As Stewart et al. note, “the transition to a low carbon economy provides potential opportunities for Indigenous communities living in remote areas”.17) These communities have a high carbon footprint due to “a frequent reliance on diesel-powered electricity generators [and] fossil-fueled vehicles.” Some remote Indigenous communities are responding to this reliance on fossil fuels by pursuing innovative and sustainable approaches to meeting their energy needs, Alaska Natives included.18)

But more than an opportunity for electrical power transitions, making local energy systems sustainable is also a chance for political power transformations. Much like Whyte19) argues in his writings on Indigenous food sovereignty, renewable energy implementation is more than an aspiration of self-sufficiency, lowering costs, and raising public health standards. Making energy systems sustainable is relational to Alaska Native sovereignty – it is a strategy for communities to cultivate and repair social, cultural, and economic relationships that were damaged by colonialism. In a guide to restoring energy and food sovereignty in Native America, a publication of Honor the Earth,20) the call to pursing energy sovereignty through localized, low carbon production is framed as a decision about a future path by breaking the cycle of dependency: “We must decide whether we want to determine our own future or lease it out for royalties. In the end, developing food and energy sovereignty is a means to determine our own destiny.” Here, sustainability embodies the contours set forth by the editors of this volume. Implementing sustainable energy systems in Native communities is a political struggle between competition visions of the future – a vision of dependency, both on oil and on colonial systems of power, versus a vision of independence, wherein communities are able to create their own futures using renewable energy generation. Though the action to make an energy system sustainable transpires at the local level, sustainability, in the form of renewable energy, intervenes in the discursive struggle at the state level in Alaska over the future allocation of energy rights, resources, and Native sovereignty.

#### The plan’s model of collaborative development builds trust and creates effective infrastructure

Stephen Lezak and Genevieve Rock, 2024 – \*Scott Polar Research Institute, University of Cambridge AND \*\*Native Village of Shaktoolik, Shaktoolik, United States “On Micropolitics: Climate adaptation and Indigenous governance in Western Alaska” Climatic Change (2024) 177:135 <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10584-024-03769-4> //DH

**Italics in original**

3.3 Discussion: improving domestic diplomacy

Public institutions do not interact as sovereign bodies in a frictionless medium. There are forces at play that operate at more mundane levels than policy itself. Governments are not things that can be separated from the complex world of human relationships; they are made up of people, computers, intermittent phone connections, hearing aids, and a whole host of human and more-than-human components (Abrams 1988). The actual practice of how governments— federal, Tribal, state, and regional—communicate with each other is “messy” (Law 2004). And messiness is not apolitical; it entrenches existing power structures. The neglect of micropolitics, which is one form of this messiness, leads to chronically poor relationships and ineffective communication between Alaska Native communities and their governments.

Unaddressed, micropolitics may prevent Indigenous communities from engaging on equal footing with the systems designed to serve them. This disparages their sovereignty. These relationships, in order to succeed, must be built on a foundation of mutual trust and understanding. Potawatomi scholar Kyle Whyte notes that “lessons from generations of colonialism about how to avert bad relationship-making have not been learned by the parties who should have learned them” (2020; p. 5). These institutional failures are not the responsibility of Tribes to address (e.g., through “capacity building” as a self-contained remedy); framing them as such inappropriately accepts a logic that makes colonized communities responsible for overcoming their own marginalization (Kashwan and Ribot 2021).

It would be wrong to identify these issues as simple matters of policy implementation. Rather, these phenomena are rooted in deep structures of colonialism and racism. The context of “natural” disasters often gives false cover to the violent origins of environmental vulnerability (Marino 2012; Marino et al. 2022). In the case of Alaska Native villages, their current precarity is not an issue of bad geographical luck; rather, it’s political all the way down.

The micropolitical issues identified in this paper are not universal across the US federal government. Many agencies, including the White House, have taken steps toward addressing these issues. For example, in 2022 the White House released “Guidance on Indigenous Knowledge,” encouraging federal agencies to integrate traditional and Indigenous knowledge practices, where appropriate, into their processes and protocols. These are encouraging signs of progress (Council on Environmental Quality 2022).

This final section elaborates upon three specific ways in which micropolitics impinges on Alaska Native self-determination in environmental adaptation, and outlines steps toward improving addressing these issues.

3.3.1 Technical planning requirements limit communities’ agency

Across the US’ bureaucratic funding landscape, technical planning is a prerequisite to receiving funding for environmental adaptation. Having a hazard mitigation plan, or a technical architecture for a community adaptation project, is often a necessary condition for major infrastructure projects. As a result, Alaska Native communities are required to perform complex infrastructural planning tasks that consume time and resources and limit community agency by requiring third-party involvement.

A “capacity gap” (Minnes and Vodden 2017) emerges in the space between Alaska Native villages’ technical capacity and funders’ eligibility requirements. This leaves rural communities in a catch-22. In order to be eligible for funding, they must submit detailed and technical plans. But they require funding in order to create such plans; that level of capacity is rarely available within any small rural community, settler or Indigenous. On the wall of one Tribal government’s office building is a handwritten list of these plans, which the community has made in recent years. It numbers in the dozens, including a flood assessment, resilience plan, strategic plan, strategic management plan, risk assessment, and more. Expressed as a ratio, the village has roughly eight residents for each plan required by various agencies.

To fill this capacity gap, third parties are often hired by Alaska Native Tribes and their regional nonprofit organizations to translate village needs into the language of engineering and infrastructure planning. In one village, a phone call with EPA following Typhoon Merbok was joined by an Anchorage-based engineer. When technical questions arose about this particular community’s recovery efforts, the engineer was called upon to answer them. The community was required to trust that the engineer, who was not part of the village or even physically present at the meeting, appropriately represented their needs. When conversations about the delivery of adaptation services are primarily conducted in this technical language, community members are disenfranchised, limited in their ability to self-advocate and critique decisions that are made on their behalf or with their partial consent (Rivkin et al. 2013). Third-party (and usually profit) firms become the de facto representatives of communities, but their ability to communicate priorities may be limited by a lack of attention to cross-cultural issues and an inability to frame Tribal priorities in technical language.

3.3.1.1 Policy recommendations Initiate federal-Tribal collaborations prior to the technical planning stage. This is already required in many cases by federal law (Consultation and Coordination With Indian Tribal Governments 2020). Where possible, encourage the use of plain-English documents for community consultation. Reduce requirements for pre-award technical planning.

3.3.2 Poor relationship-building limits trust

“Consent, trust, accountability, and reciprocity are qualities of relationships that are critical for justice-oriented coordination across societal institutions on any urgent matter,” writes Whyte (2020; p. 2). A long history of colonial harm has created a baseline level of distrust between Alaska Native communities and non-Native government officials (Bradshaw 2019). Many Alaska Natives working in Tribal government share the familiar experience of speaking to government staff thousands of miles away and learning that the person on the other line has a limited conception of these communities’ geography, history, and values. As one village president told me: “They’re clueless.” On a phone call with one FEMA representative, a city mayor patiently explained several times to the confused official that his village did not have street names.

The community leaders of an Iñupiaq village in Northwest Alaska (outside of this study area) note that private-sector representatives (e.g., from oil companies) tend to approach their community with more grace and respect than representatives from state and federal government (Kaktovik, Alaska, no date). This may be related to funding, but is likely linked to private-sector representatives feeling a need to build trust and goodwill. Government staff, by contrast, may feel already empowered, and therefore unincentivized to build goodwill or disrupt their position as gatekeepers to funding and resources.

Following cultural norms, Alaska Native communities place an emphasis on building relationships over time and in person. Many communities express frustration at the perceived lack of in-person visits by agency staff (Jensen et al. 2022; Pennington 2023). When visits do occur, they are often seen as too short. In interviews, exceptions to this general trend were spoken of warmly.

A resident of Shishmaref told an anthropologist, “let the federal agencies come here and experience a whole storm, not come for the day and leave… it always seems like they don’t believe us” (Marino 2012; p. 379). In the regional capital of Nome, law enforcement officers boast about successfully avoiding spending a night in Alaska Native villages by always taking the morning flight out and catching the evening flight back home. When one village received a multi-day visit from FEMA officials, eight months after Typhoon Merbok, the federal employees commuted each day from Nome on the local airline—a $585 round-trip ticket—rather than arranging local accommodation, such as by staying in the designated guest bedrooms at the Tribal office, or in the apartment maintained by the school.

3.3.2.1 **Policy recommendations** Federal agency staff often neglect the simple but essential practices required to build trust over time. Visiting in person, prioritizing effective communication, while taking the time to learn about Tribal communities are essential steps to overcoming a history of hostile federal policies and laying a foundation for effective collaboration. Building trust is a critical step in effective collaboration. As such, it requires time and resources that are rarely allocated today, to the detriment of Tribal-federal relationships. Pennington (2023) urges the importance of hiring more dedicated Tribal liaisons at FEMA—the same is true for many other agencies that routinely coordinate with Alaska Native communities.

3.3.3 A lack of collaborative norms hinders progress

The funding landscape for climate adaptation projects in Alaska Native communities is competitive by design (US GAO, 2022). Agencies often (but not always) assume the role of impartial referee. Their role is generally to judge the quality of funding applications rather than volunteer their help and expertise in partnership with vulnerable communities. In this configuration, Alaska Native communities and federal agencies suffer from a noncollaborative process (Bradshaw 2019). A putatively meritocratic system often rewards the communities who best meet agencies’ stated requirements and scoring rubrics, rather than the communities most in need of assistance. As a result, communities with greater access to certain resources generally produce more competitive applications.

Furthermore, many Alaska Native communities feel that competing with one another for scarce resources violates cultural norms (Jensen et al. 2022; Rock 2016). One Tribal presi- dent explained after Typhoon Merbok, “We’re related to everybody in [village A], [village B], and [village C]. All of our Tribes felt a tremendous sense of… *wow, we got really lucky*, while 24 of our family and extended families lost their homes altogether.” This sentiment is common across the Norton Sound region, where Tribal leaders fear that by applying for federal aid, they might be taking away from the neediest villages.

3.3.3.1 **Policy recommendations** Continue to develop joint federal-Tribal agendas (e.g., the EPA-Tribal Environmental Plan) that outline roles and responsibilities toward delivering on shared goals. Involve agency staff in the grant process as collaborators rather than referees. Prioritize *needs-based* assessment where feasible, to reduce the perception and reality of inter-Tribal competition.

3.4 Conclusion: environmental adaptation, trust, and sovereign futures

For Alaska Native villages — like many rural Indigenous communities — environmental adaptation is a multifaceted and more-than-infrastructural challenge. In many ways, it is inseparable from the broader effort to survive amid continued colonial pressures (Curley and Lister 2020; Whyte 2017). In this context, climate adaptation is not merely about coastal defense or erosion management; it is about creating livable futures that make space for Indigenous flourishing, self-determination, and prosperity, as defined by communities (Heise et al., 2017). These futures, in keeping with the Lakota axiom, Mitákuye Oyás’iŋ “All my relations,” (Black Elk 2016), extend far beyond the boundaries of most agency handbooks.

Generally speaking, micropolitical issues between Alaska Native communities and federal agencies arise because limited consideration is given to the historical and political contexts that led to the present conditions of environmental, social, and political precarity (Kashwan and Ribot 2021). These problems may be ameliorated with the introduction of new systems, such as government-funded technical planning centers, that can help bridge the capacity gap. But a commitment to Indigenous self-determination requires ensuring that programs themselves are designed to meet Alaska Native communities where they are, which in turn requires a shift from administering aid programs to rendering assistance and solving problems based on collaborative norms. When Alaska Native Tribal governments are perceived to fall short of what is asked or expected, settler governments need to ask themselves: *what did we get wrong?* rather than looking to Alaska Native communities to explain shortcomings.

Sociologists have long warned against the temptation to represent the state as something separate from a collection of people and technology (Abrams 1988). Governments do not communicate with each other; people do. In the case of Tribal and federal governments in Alaska, government representatives speak, email, text, fax, post on social media, and submit complicated online forms. The nation-to-nation relationship is ultimately person-to-person. The nation-to-nation relationship between the United States and foreign countries is conducted through the intimate human rituals of state dinners, gift exchanges, ambassadorships, and telephone calls. By contrast, the “domestic diplomacy” between Alaska Native Tribal governments and federal agencies could hardly be more different. The face-to-face connections that engender trust and mutual understanding are widely heralded as exceptions, rather than the rule. In interviews, Tribal leaders are quick to note the difficulty of explaining the dynamics of Alaska Native rural communities, such as the importance of subsistence, to outsiders.

It is not beyond the capacity of the federal government to create long-lasting relationships based on trust and shared objectives; it is routinely done with other sovereign governments. But building these relationships requires prioritizing a form of domestic diplomacy that continues to be neglected even at a time of renewed commitment to American Indian and Alaska Native communities. In rural Alaska, this requires building interpersonal connections, operating with reasonable expectations of Tribal bureaucratic capacity, rendering assistance in a collaborative manner, and meeting Alaska Native communities in an earnestly diplomatic fashion, by traveling some distance—politically, culturally, and geographically— to find a shared space where two very different governments can collaborate successfully. Researchers, advocates, policymakers, and career government officials must attend to these micropolitical forces in order to close the persistent gaps between ambition and outcome.

### 1AC — Framing

#### Contention 2 is Framing.

#### Utilitarian frames must be renounced – they justify the exploitation of indigenous communities in desire for Western gain

Smith 87 – Smith wrote extensively on the nature, language, history, and denial of genocide. He was also involved in the establishment and oversight of the Institute’s Genocide Studies and Prevention: An International Journal, which later evolved into the present-day Genocide Studies International (GSI), and served as a longtime founding co-editor (Roger Smith, Genocide and the Modern Age: Etiology and Case Studies of Mass Death, "Human Destructiveness and Politics: The Twentieth Century As An Age of Genocide," New York: Greenwood Press. 1987, pp 21–39)//SM

Genocide is almost always a premeditated act calculated to achieve the ends of its perpetrators through mass murder. Sometimes, however, genocidal consequences precede any conscious decision to destroy innocent groups to satisfy one's aims. This is most often the case in the early phases of colonial domination, where through violence, disease, and relentless pressure indigenous peoples are pushed toward extinction. With the recognition of the consequences of one's acts, however, the issue is changed: to persist is to intend the death of a people. This pattern of pressure, recognition, and persistence is typically what happened in the nineteenth century. Today, however, when indigenous groups come under pressure, the intention to destroy them is present from the outset; there are few illusions about the likely outcome. The distinction, then, between premeditated and unpremeditated genocide is not decisive, for sooner or later the genocidal is transformed into genocide. Rather than being simply an expression of passion, genocide is a rational instrument to achieve an end. While these ends have varied from perpetrator to perpetrator and, to a large extent, by historical period, they have typically included the following: revenge, conquest, gain, power, and purification/salvation. From these we can construct a grammar of motives which, in effect, asks the perpetrator: What are you trying to do and why is it so important that you are willing to sacrifice thousands, even millions of lives (including those of children) to achieve it? Formal, but nevertheless useful, answers to these questions are contained in the different types of genocide, arranged in terms of the grammar of motives. Classified in this manner, the pure types of genocide are retributive, institutional, utilitarian, monopolistic, and ideological. Retributive Genocide. Retribution may play a role in all genocide, but it does so mainly as a rationalization: it is a way of blaming the victim. Though it draws from the vocabulary of justice and of judicially administered punishment, genocide destroys persons most often for what they are rather than for anything they have done. In this sense, retribution flows from the dehumanization that has been fastened to the victims before they are attacked. As a principal motive in genocide, retribution is rare, but it does seem to figure prominently in accounts of conquerors like Chingis-khan (Genghis Khan).9 Nevertheless, it is difficult to see how the "Conqueror of the World," as he called himself, differed in his actions when inspired by revenge than he and others did when they engaged in the institutional genocide associated with warfare until about the fifteenth century. Institutional Genocide. Institutional genocide was the major source of politically sanctioned mass murder in the ancient and medieval worlds. The massacre of men, the enslavement of women and children, and, often, the razing of towns and the destruction of the surrounding countryside, were universal aspects of conquest: genocide was embedded in the very notion of warfare.10 As such, no explicit decision had to be made to commit genocide -it had become routinized. In part, institutional genocide was motivated by the desire to create terror, to display one's power, and to remove the possibility of future retaliation. But it was also due to a failure of political imagination: genocide was a substitute for politics. Instead of ruling a city or territory, extracting tribute from it, and perhaps even incorporating it into one's own system of power and authority, the society was devastated. By the late medieval period this practice had largely ended in the West (indeed, it had begun to change with the Romans, who understood that only through politics could one build an empire), yet it became a prominent part of the Crusades and was made all the more deadly because of religious passion.11 In any case, institutional genocide continued in the East with figures like Timur Lenk until the fifteenth century. For some 500 years thereafter, the genocide of conquest disappeared. It is possible, however, that both guerrilla warfare and the use of nuclear weapons signify a revival of this early form of genocide. If the means are different, the motives seem not that dissimilar, and the consequences include both widespread devastation and the massive taking of innocent life by those in authority. Utilitarian Genocide. If utility played a role in institutional genocide, it became particularly prominent in the genocide of the sixteenth and nineteenth centuries, when colonial domination and exploitation of indigenous peoples in the Americas, Australia, Tasmania, parts of Africa, and elsewhere became pronounced. It has continued in the twentieth century, especially in Latin America, where ~~Indians~~ [indigenous people] have been subjected to genocidal attacks in the name of progress and development. Apart from the more sadistic aspects of this kind of destruction, the object has been Indian land-for the timber it contains, the minerals that can be extracted, and the cattle it can feed-and, at the turn of the century, Indian labor to harvest, under conditions of forced labor, the sap of the rubber tree.12 Richard Rubenstein has recently argued that development leads to a population "surplus," which in turn leads to programs to eliminate the superfluous population.13 What is happening with the remaining indigenous population of Latin America, and what was the fate of millions in various areas of the world earlier, has nothing, however, to do with a surplus population (whatever that is, for Rubenstein never defines his basic term). They are being killed, were killed, because of a combination of ethnocentrism and simple greed. The basic proposition contained in utilitarian genocide is that some persons must die so that others can live well. If that proposition no longer claims a large number of lives, it is because the previous genocide was so effective and the remaining tribes so small, with at most a few thousand members each. Yet precisely because of the tenacity of the assaults against them, and the small size of the groups, utilitarian genocide, although somewhat rare in the twentieth century, tends to be total.

#### “Vote neg to prevent extinction” is a settler fantasy used to further Native dispossession. Reject that logic because it’s intimately tied to extermination.

Dalley 16 – PhD, Assistant Professor of English at Daemen College, Amherst, NY (Hamish Dalley, *Settler Colonial Studies, “*The deaths of settler colonialism: extinction as a metaphor of decolonization in contemporary settler literature,” 2016, 1-17, DOI: 10.1080/2201473X.2016.1238160 Accessed Online through Emory Libraries)//SM

Settlers love to contemplate the possibility of their own extinction; to read many contemporary literary representations of settler colonialism is to find settlers strangely satisfied in dreaming of ends that never come. This tendency is widely prevalent in English-language representations of settler colonialism produced since the 1980s: the possibility of an ending – the likelihood that the settler race will one day die out – is a common theme in literary and pop culture considerations of colonialism’s future. Yet it has barely been remarked how surprising it is that this theme is so present. For settlers, of all people, to obsessively ruminate on their own finitude is counterintuitive, for few modern social formations have been more resistant to change than settler colonialism. With a few exceptions (French Algeria being the largest), the settler societies established in the last 300 years in the Americas, Australasia, and Southern Africa have all retained the basic features that define them as settler states – namely, the structural privileging of settlers at the expense of indigenous peoples, and the normalization of whiteness as the marker of political agency and rights – and they have done so notwithstanding the sustained resistance that has been mounted whenever such an order has been built. Settlers think all the time that they might one day end, even though (perhaps because) that ending seems unlikely ever to happen. The significance of this paradox for settler-colonial literature is the subject of this article. Considering the problem of futurity offers a useful foil to traditional analyses of settlercolonial narrative, which typically examine settlers’ attitudes towards history in order to highlight a constitutive anxiety about the past – about origins. Settler colonialism, the argument goes, has a problem with historical narration that arises from a contradiction in its founding mythology. In Stephen Turner’s formulation, the settler subject is by definition one who comes from elsewhere but who strives to make this place home. The settlement narrative must explain how this gap – which is at once geographical, historical, and existential – has been bridged, and the settler transformed from outsider into indigene. Yet the transformation must remain constitutively incomplete, because the desire to be at home necessarily invokes the spectre of the native, whose existence (which cannot be disavowed completely because it is needed to define the settler’s difference, superiority, and hence claim to the land) inscribes the settler’s foreignness, thus reinstating the gap between settler and colony that the narrative was meant to efface.1 Settler-colonial narrative is thus shaped around its need to erase and evoke the native, to make the indigene both invisible and present in a contradictory pattern that prevents settlers from ever moving on from the moment of colonization.2 As evidence of this constitutive contradiction, critics have identified in settler-colonial discourse symptoms of psychic distress such as disavowal, inversion, and repression.3 Indeed, the frozen temporality of settler-colonial narrative, fixated on the moment of the frontier, recalls nothing so much as Freud’s description of the ‘repetition compulsion’ attending trauma.4 As Lorenzo Veracini puts it, because: ‘settler society’ can thus be seen as a fantasy where a perception of a constant struggle is juxtaposed against an ideal of ‘peace’ that can never be reached, settler projects embrace and reject violence at the same time. The settler colonial situation is thus a circumstance where the tension between contradictory impulses produces long-lasting psychic conflicts and a number of associated psychopathologies.5 Current scholarship has thus focused primarily on settler-colonial narrative’s view of the past, asking how such a contradictory and troubled relationship to history might affect present-day ideological formations. Critics have rarely considered what such narratological tensions might produce when the settler gaze is turned to the future. Few social formations are more stubbornly resistant to change than settlement, suggesting that a future beyond settler colonialism might be simply unthinkable. Veracini, indeed, suggests that settler-colonial narrative can never contemplate an ending: that settler decolonization is inconceivable because settlers lack the metaphorical tools to imagine their own demise.6 This article outlines why I partly disagree with that view. I argue that the narratological paradox that defines settler-colonial narrative does make the future a problematic object of contemplation. But that does not make settler decolonization unthinkable per se; as I will show, settlers do often try to imagine their demise – but they do so in a way that reasserts the paradoxes of their founding ideology, with the result that the radical potentiality of decolonization is undone even as it is invoked. I argue that, notwithstanding Veracini’s analysis, there is a metaphor via which the end of settler colonialism unspools – the quasi-biological concept of extinction, which, when deployed as a narrative trope, offers settlers a chance to consider and disavow their demise, just as they consider and then disavow the violence of their origins. This article traces the importance of the trope of extinction for contemporary settler-colonial literature, with a focus on South Africa, Canada, and Australia. It explores variations in how the death of settler colonialism is conceptualized, drawing a distinction between historio-civilizational narratives of the rise and fall of empires, and a species-oriented notion of extinction that draws force from public anxiety about climate change – an invocation that adds another level of ambivalence by drawing on ‘rational’ fears for the future (because climate change may well render the planet uninhabitable to humans) in order to narrativize a form of social death that, strictly speaking, belongs to a different order of knowledge altogether. As such, my analysis is intended to draw the attention of settlercolonial studies toward futurity and the ambivalence of settler paranoia, while highlighting a potential point of cross-fertilization between settler-colonial and eco-critical approaches to contemporary literature. That ‘extinction’ should be a key word in the settler-colonial lexicon is no surprise. In Patrick Wolfe’s phrase,7 settler colonialism is predicated on a ‘logic of elimination’ that tends towards the extermination – by one means or another – of indigenous peoples.8 This logic is apparent in archetypal settler narratives like James Fenimore Cooper’s The Last of the Mohicans (1826), a historical novel whose very title blends the melancholia and triumph that demarcate settlers’ affective responses to the supposed inevitability of indigenous extinction. Concepts like ‘stadial development’ – by which societies progress through stages, progressively eliminating earlier social forms – and ‘fatal impact’ – which names the biological inevitability of strong peoples supplanting weak – all contribute to the notion that settler colonialism is a kind of ‘ecological process’ 9 that necessitates the extinction of inferior races. What is surprising, though, is how often the trope of extinction also appears with reference to settlers themselves; it makes sense for settlers to narrate how their presence entails others’ destruction, but it is less clear why their attempts to imagine futures should presume extinction to be their own logical end as well. The idea appears repeatedly in English-language literary treatments of settler colonialism. Consider, for instance, the following rumination on the future of South African settler society, from Olive Schreiner’s 1883 Story of an African Farm: It was one of them, one of those wild old Bushmen, that painted those pictures there. He did not know why he painted but he wanted to make something, so he made these. […] Now the Boers have shot them all, so that we never see a yellow face peeping out among the stones. […] And the wild bucks have gone, and those days, and we are here. But we will be gone soon, and only the stones will lie on, looking at everything like they look now.10 In this example, the narrating settler character, Waldo, recognizes prior indigenous inhabitation but his knowledge comes freighted with an expected sense of biological superiority, made apparent by his description of the ‘Bushman’s’ ‘yellow face’, and lack of mental self-awareness. What is not clear is why Waldo’s contemplation of colonial genocide should turn immediately to the assumption that a similar fate awaits his people as well. A similar presumption of racial vulnerability permeates other late nineteenthcentury novels from the imperial metropole, such as Dracula and War of the Worlds, which are plotted around the prospect of invasions that would see the extinction of British imperialism, and, in the process, the human species. Such anxieties draw energy from a pattern of settler defensiveness that can be observed across numerous settler-colonial contexts. Marilyn Lake’s and Henry Reynold’s account of the emergence of transnational ‘whiteness’ highlights the paradoxical fact that while white male settlers have been arguably the most privileged class in history, they have routinely perceived themselves to be ‘under siege’, threatened with destruction to the extent that their very identity of ‘whiteness was born in the apprehension of imminent loss’.11 The fear of looming annihilation serves a powerful ideological function in settler communities, working to foster racial solidarity, suppress dissent, and legitimate violence against indigenous populations who, by any objective measure, are far more at risk of extermination than the settlers who fear them. Ann Curthoys and Dirk Moses have traced this pattern in Australia and Israel-Palestine, respectively.12 This scholarship suggests that narratives of settler extinction are acts of ideological mystification, obscuring the brutal inequalities of the frontier behind a mask of white vulnerability – an argument with which I sympathize. However, this article shows how there is more to settler-colonial extinction narratives than bad faith. I argue that we need a more nuanced understanding of how they encode a specifically settler-colonial framework for imagining the future, one that has implications for how we understand contemporary literatures from settler societies, and which allows us to see extinction as a genuine, if flawed, attempt to envisage social change. In the remainder of this paper I consider extinction’s function as a metaphor of decolonization. I use this phrase to invoke, without completely endorsing, Tuck and Yang’s argument that to treat decolonization figuratively, as I argue extinction narratives do, is necessarily to preclude radical change, creating opportunities for settler ‘moves to innocence’ that re-legitimate racial inequality.13 The counterview to this pessimistic perspective is offered by Veracini, who suggests that progressive change to settler-colonial relationships will only happen if narratives can be found that make decolonization thinkable.14 This article enters the debate between these two perspectives by asking what it means for settler writers to imagine the future via the trope of extinction. Does extinction offer a meaningful way to think about ending settler colonialism, or does it re-activate settler-colonial patterns of thought that allow exclusionary social structures to persist? I explore this question with reference to examples of contemporary literary treatments of extinction from select English-speaking settler-colonial contexts: South Africa, Australia, and Canada.15 The next section of this article traces key elements of extinction narrative in a range of settler-colonial texts, while the section that follows offers a detailed reading of one of the best examples of a sustained literary exploration of human finitude, Margaret Atwood’s Maddaddam trilogy (2003–2013). I advance four specific arguments. First, extinction narratives take at least two forms depending on whether the ‘end’ of settler society is framed primarily in historical-civilizational terms or in a stronger, biological sense; the key question is whether the ‘thing’ that is going extinct is a society or a species. Second, biologically oriented extinction narratives rely on a more or less conscious slippage between ‘the settler’ and ‘the human’. Third, this slippage is ideologically ambivalent: on the one hand, it contains a radical charge that invokes environmentalist discourse and climate-change anxiety to imagine social forms that re-write settler-colonial dynamics; on the other, it replicates a core aspect of imperialist ideology by normalizing whiteness as equivalent to humanity. Fourth, these ideological effects are mediated by gender, insofar as extinction narratives invoke issues of biological reproduction, community protection, and violence that function to differentiate and reify masculine and feminine roles in the putative de-colonial future. Overall, my central claim is that extinction is a core trope through which settler futurity emerges, one with crucial narrative and ideological effects that shape much of the contemporary literature emerging from white colonial settings.

#### Prioritize structural violence – it’s a pre-requisite to addressing other modes of destruction

Mitchell 17 – CIGI Chair in Global Governance and Ethics, Balsillie School of International Affairs, and Associate Professor at Wilfrid Laurier University, former Senior Lecturer in International Relations, department of Politics, University of York (Audra Mitchell, Worldly, "Decolonizing against extinction part I: extinction is violence," July 28, 2017, https://worldlyir.wordpress.com/2017/07/28/decolonizing-against-extinction-part-i-extinction-is-violence/)//SM

Western scientists are proclaiming the start of a ‘sixth mass extinction event’ that may involve the destruction of more than three quarters of earth’s currently-existing life forms. In their attempts to explain this phenomenon, most scientists have converged around four major, interlinked drivers: climate change, habitat destruction, species exchange, and the direct killing of plants and animals. In most cases, these drivers are understood as the unintended consequences of generic ‘human’ activity, and as a result of desirable trends such as development or urbanization (Wilson 2002; Barnosky 2014; Ceballos 2016). A crucial driver is missing from this list: transversal structural violence against Indigenous peoples and their relations, and colonial violence in particular. ‘Structural violence’ involves systemic forms of harm, exclusion and discrimination that disproportionately affect particular groups, and which can take many forms (physical, psychological, economic, gendered and others). They are embedded in and expressed through political, cultural, economic and social structures (Farmer 2009) that can persist across large spans of time and space. I use the term ‘transversal’ to refer to forms of structural violence that extend across multiple boundaries – not only those of nation-states, but also other kinds of nations (human and otherwise), communities or kinship groups, and temporalities. Prime examples of transversal structural violence include: settler colonialism, colonial genocides (Woolford et al 2014); environmental racism or ‘slow violence’, including toxification and pollution; and complexes of sexual, physical, communal, spiritual and land-based violence associated with the extractive industries. Each of these forms of violence is ecologically devastating, and their convergence in European projects of colonisation is even more so. Many formations of transversal structural violence are significant causes of the so-called ‘four horsemen’ of extinction mentioned above. For instance, ‘direct killing’ is carried out to clear land for settlement, and it occurs as a result of ecological damage caused by resource extraction. Settler colonialism, carbon-based economies and regimes of environmental racism also support forms of socio-economic organization (for instance, carbon and energy-intensive urbanized societies) that intensify climate change and increase habitat destruction. Meanwhile, colonization has played a significant role in the ongoing transfer of life forms across the planet – whether unintentionally (e.g. the transfer of fish in the bilge water of ships); as an instrument of agricultural settlement (e.g. cattle ranching), or as a deliberate strategy of violence (e.g. smallpox). However, transversal structural violence is a driver of extinction in itself, with its own distinct manifestations. First, it involves the disruption or severance of relations and kinship structures between human communities and other life forms, and the dissolution of Indigenous systems of governance, laws and protocols that have co-created and sustained plural worlds over millennia (Borrows 2010; Atleo 2012; Kimmerer 2013). Second, the destruction of Indigenous knowledges through policies of assimilation, expropriation, cultural appropriation and other strategies undermines these forms of order and the relationships they nurture. Third, the displacement of and/or restricted access to land by Indigenous peoples interferes with practices of caring for land or Country that are necessary for the survival of humans and other life forms (Bawaka Country 2015). Colonial genocides embody all of these forms of destruction by killing or displacing Indigenous communities, undermining Indigenous modes of governance and kinship systems, systematically destroying relationships between life forms and erasing knowledge. All of these modes of violence weaken co-constitutive relationships between Indigenous communities, other life forms and ecosystems that have enabled their collaborative survival. This results in disruptions to ecosystems – and climate – that Potawatomi scholar Kyle Powys Whyte (2016) has recently argued would have been considered a dystopia by his Ancestors. In other words, transversal structural violence, and colonial violence in particular, are fundamental drivers of global patterns of extinction. It stands to reason, then, that responses to extinction that focus on managing endangered species or populations, or ‘backing up’ genetic material, are insufficient: they leave the structures of violence intact and may add to their power. Instead, efforts to address extinction need to focus on identifying, confronting and dismantling these formations of violence, and on restoring or strengthening the relations they sever.

# Case Extensions

## Energy Justice Advantage

### They Say: “Renewables Solve Now”

#### Only 10% of rural Alaska has renewable energy

Rebecca Meadows, 2025 – National Renewable Energy Lab “Renewable Energy Integration in Remote Alaska Communities” January <https://docs.nrel.gov/docs/fy25osti/90685.pdf> //DH

**PCE = Power Cost Equalization, a program run by the State of Alaska that reimburses utilities that have high costs, lowering energy prices for consumers**

There are approximately 200 remote Alaska villages that are not connected to a larger grid and that primarily rely on diesel generators for electricity. From 2019 to 2020, the annual electricity generation consumed in the rural communities that participate in Alaska’s Power Cost Equalization (PCE) Program1 was 475 gigawatt-hours, approximately 10% of the electricity consumed in the area from Fairbanks to Anchorage, known as the Railbelt. Renewably generated electricity accounted for approximately 10% of the total generation consumed in these rural communities and was primarily from wind and hydropower resources (Meadows et al. 2023).

PCE reimburses rural utilities for eligible expenses, reducing residential electrical rates in the communities they serve. In 2023, 188 communities participated in the PCE program (Alaska Energy Authority 2023). Because of the high cost of transporting diesel fuel to remote locations, residential electricity rates for remote communities can still be significantly more than the Railbelt, even with PCE (Allen et al. 2016). Communities often use more diesel fuel for heating than for electricity, with heating fuel bills consuming up to half of the total household income in some communities (Holdmann n.d.).

As of 2020, approximately 70 rural Alaska communities had deployed a renewable energy system to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and reliance on costly imported diesel fuel (Huang 2020). However, in many of these communities, renewable energy contribution levels have been limited (typically around 20%) by insufficient integration systems and maintenance obstacles (Jimenez 2018).

#### Trump just cut renewable energy incentives in Alaska. That will cause diesel prices to skyrocket for Native Alaskans

Mark Moran, 2025 – editor, Public News Service “Federal cuts threaten already challenged Alaskan power grid” 7/10,

<https://www.publicnewsservice.org/2025-07-10/energy-policy/federal-cuts-threaten-already-challenged-alaskan-power-grid/a97576-1> //DH

Despite last-minute concessions in the Trump administration's budget, which removes alternative energy tax incentives, rural Alaska power providers now face huge obstacles to distributing power to the most rural and isolated parts of the state.

Investments in wind and solar power now face an uphill battle. Alaska's extreme weather and challenging geography already make power generation difficult and expensive. Now, with fewer incentives to diversify, the state's most isolated places will be forced to continue relying on fossil fuels for their electricity.

Pierre Lonewolf, board member of the Kotzebue Electric Association, said the loss of tax incentives means critical alternative energy programs are dead in the water.

"That has put the kibosh on our wind projects, which we are partnering with the local tribe to install two more megawatt wind turbines, another megawatt or so of solar," Lonewolf explained.

Sen. Lisa Murkowski, R-Alaska, voted for the budget bill but only after she worked to secure some alternative energy tax incentives and funding for Native whale hunters back into the measure in the debate's eleventh hour.

Lonewolf added village and tribal members have worked to move away from diesel fuel for power generation and said a lack of incentives to diversify to wind and solar will fall directly on rural Alaska's consumers who need affordable power to heat their homes.

"We don't want to have to raise our prices on electricity but we have to cover our costs to pay our people," Lonewolf acknowledged.

Kotzebue is a gateway for the diesel fuel powering 10 villages in rural Alaska. What Lonewolf called a war on renewable energy will only cause prices to keep rising in parts of the state that can least afford it.

### They Say: “Federal Assistance Fails”

#### The Denali Commission is the federal agency in charge, and it has in-state capacity to interact with tribes directly and streamline federal grant delivery

Alaska Venture Fund, 2023 – philanthropic organization in Alaska dedicated to funding sustainability. “Energy & Infrastructure Funding in Rural Alaska Barriers & Potential Solutions “ <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2024-04/Energy-and-Infrastructure-Funding-in-Alaska-Barriers-Potential-Solutions.pdf> //DH

Stakeholders identified many significant barriers and challenges related to federal (and, in a few cases, state) funding. They also had many ideas for addressing these barriers, and overall, interviewees conveyed a solution-focused attitude. Stakeholders expressed appreciation for the efforts of some agencies to reduce barriers. Still, overall, the grantmaking system is viewed as broken - not just inequitable but siloed, time-consuming, costly, inefficient, and, in some cases, ineffective.

Interviewees also acknowledged the need for a sense of local ownership and accountability; otherwise, a project may not be completed, hurting a community's chances at future funding, or a project may be completed but not well maintained, leading to a shorter useful life. As several stakeholders wondered, how do you create a process that significantly reduces barriers but still meets the need for transparency and accountability?

The main body of this report expands on the themes most frequently heard in the course of information gathering. More complete lists of barriers and potential solutions are provided as appendices.

Overarching Themes and Potential Solutions

One overarching theme is the need to balance transparency and accountability measures with equitable access to federal funding opportunities. While some of the potential solutions presented below may have a policy or other issues to overcome, many do not and could, as the GAO and a recent study both assert, "be enacted through executive and agency action" (Lezak, 2023). All are, ultimately, actionable. In fact, many suggested solutions come from agencies that have already implemented them.

One stakeholder suggested that rather than trying to write "just in case" regulations and restrictions "for every possible scenario," which put a substantial burden on small entities, federal agencies place more emphasis on monitoring and auditing to identify and address issues as they arise. (The example given in an interview was private industry, which prioritizes precautionary measures based on a cost-benefit analysis of each potential measure.)

Stakeholders also overwhelmingly favored in-state management and distribution of federal funds due to Alaska's many unique circumstances, which are difficult to fully comprehend unless you live in the state or spend an extensive amount of time here. In-state decision-makers are more in tune with Alaska's day-to-day realities, resources, and challenges and the unique local and cultural knowledge Alaska Native/American Indian residents bring. The challenge is determining a set-aside for Alaska; however, there are existing models, including the method developed by the Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD) for allocating federal funds by region and designating Alaska as a distinct region. Ideas for facilitating this approach included the Denali Commission as a federal agency that is located in and focuses on the state; other in-state entities with high capacity, such as statewide nonprofits and tribal entities, were also mentioned.

Interagency collaboration is another consistent thread running through stakeholder feedback. Lack of communication and collaboration among federal agencies hits applicants hard, especially with large infrastructure projects that require multi-agency funding. Differing restrictions and compliance requirements lead to increased project complexities (such as having to form an Independent Power Producer (IPP) to meet regulatory requirements rather than being able to partner among local entities), longer timelines, and higher project costs.

The Denali Commission

Sec. 311 of the Denali Commission Act of 1998 (42 U.S.C. 3121) provides that "any federal agency authorized to carry out an activity that is within the authority of the Commission may transfer any appropriated funds for the activity to the Commission." The purposes of the Commission include "to deliver the services of the Federal Government in the most cost- effective manner practicable by reducing administrative and overhead costs" (Sec. 302(1)) and "to promote rural development, provide power generation and transmission facilities, modern communications systems, water and sewer systems, and other infrastructure need." Key components of the Commission's transfer authority could support streamlined delivery. For instance, pooling funds from various agencies that can then be used more efficiently would allow one agency to issue an award covering an entire project rather than multiple agencies issuing awards, each covering portions of a project. Additionally, the authority turns "year- limited" fluids into "no-year" funds, allowing for longer-term projects. Finally, the Commission's authority removes limitations on other agencies' funds, reducing the administrative burden facing Alaska Native communities.

A successful example of the highest level of meaningful collaboration cited was a group of Alaska funders and other entities well versed in the state's needs that partnered to conduct a needs assessment of sanitation conditions in every community in the state. Together, the group developed ranking criteria, analyzed the needs assessments, and prioritized projects. Rather than using a competitive application process, this collaborative has consolidated public and private funding to address communities' needs in order of the agreed-upon prioritization.

Replacing the competitive process ensures needs are addressed in a timely fashion; reduces the tribal and community burden of developing an application and complying with reporting and administrative grant requirements; and maintains cost-effectiveness, transparency, and accountability. This approach can improve the ability to address infrastructure and energy needs in order of urgency. It also aligns more strongly with Native values; "many Alaska Native communities feel that competing with one another for scarce resources violates cultural norms."2 Additional frequently cited barriers and potential solutions are described below, with further detail in Appendix A (barriers) and Appendix B (potential solutions).

### They Say: “Collaborative Assistance Fails”

#### The plan empirically works and expands Native self determination. Federal grants just need expansion

Camille Andrew, 2024 – Panhandle Power Solution’s Native Clean Energy Research Analyst “OP-ED: Renewable Energy & Energy Stability in Alaska’s Rural Villages” 9/10, <https://www.panhandlepower.us/op-ed-renewable-energy-energy-stability-in-alaskas-rural-villages/#:~:text=It's%20in%20the%20long%20summer,the%20face%20of%20future%20challenges>. //DH

**The Rural or Remote Areas Grant is a program run by the Department of Energy**

In rural Alaska, the cost of electricity is staggering, reaching three to five times those in urban areas. Despite programs like the Power Cost Equalization Program, which aims to reduce rural fuel prices, many villages remain vulnerable to energy disruptions due to their reliance on fuel being flown or barged in. These communities face high energy costs and energy insecurity due to logistical challenges.

A transformative solution lies in harnessing the abundant renewable energy resources in these areas. With the help of the Energy Improvements in Rural or Remote Areas Grant, villages like Kokhanok are leading the way in this transformation. This grant enables them to install battery energy storage systems, solar PV, and wind turbines to create a more sustainable microgrid. Based on an energy analysis, Kokhanok anticipates reducing its diesel use by 70% within the first two years of operation, saving each household an estimated $850 to $1,000 annually. As someone who grew up in a village not too far from Kokhanok, I can recall my parents’ and grandparents’ conversations about diesel. I remember spending days helping my dad with storing chopped wood so that we could have our fireplace going instead.

Alaska’s villages have the most reliable energy right there. It’s in the long summer days with nearly 24 hours of sunlight, the winds sweeping across the tundra, and in the water flowing through the rivers. The clean energy potential just needs to be tapped in to. Research and statistics support the argument for renewable energy investment. A study by the University of Alaska’s Institute of Social and Economic Research found that renewable energy projects in rural Alaska could significantly reduce energy costs and improve reliability. These projects preserve the pristine environment and provide communities with energy security, freeing them from the constraints of costly and unpredictable fuel supply chains.

Alaska Native communities have always been resilient and innovative. By leveraging available grant funding and technology, they can achieve energy sovereignty. This is not just about reducing costs—it’s about empowering these communities to harness the resources at their disposal and ensuring a sustainable, secure energy future for generations.

The transition to clean energy in rural Alaska is not just an opportunity—it’s a necessity. It offers a path to economic savings, environmental preservation, and energy independence, ensuring these communities can thrive in the face of future challenges. By supporting and investing in renewable energy projects like those in Kokhanok, we can pave the way to a brighter and more sustainable future for all rural villages.

### They Say: “Paternalism Turn”

#### Tribes WANT the plan – they see it as reducing federal barriers to grants and making it easier to apply for

Alaska Venture Fund, 2023 – philanthropic organization in Alaska dedicated to funding sustainability. “Energy & Infrastructure Funding in Rural Alaska Barriers & Potential Solutions “ <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2024-04/Energy-and-Infrastructure-Funding-in-Alaska-Barriers-Potential-Solutions.pdf> //DH

Barriers

Many rural communities face significant economic challenges due to limited opportunities for revenue generation; this is particularly true for small Tribes and communities located off the road system. The remoteness, low population, and challenging environmental conditions often restrict economic activities available to other parts of the state, such as tourism, commerce, and natural resource extraction, all of which face further difficulties due to complex land ownership (detailed below).

Communities' limited financial resources create substantial hurdles in funding projects and meeting cost-share requirements for a grant. Cost share, cost-benefit ratio requirements, and high costs of construction have all been identified as barriers to federal funding for small rural Alaska communities by the U.S. Government Accountability Office, Lezak, and other researchers. Economic challenges are further exacerbated by the high cost of living in rural Alaska, which is significantly higher than in the rest of the country.3 This financial burden can make it even more challenging for Tribes to set aside the necessary funds for matching contributions. The smallest and most remote communities, many of which are Alaska Native villages, are not indexed for cost of living, but it is common knowledge that costs there are even higher: "[E]xpenses depend on how remote they are. Everything costs more in rural Alaska, and shipping plays a primary role in those higher costs."4 Costs in the smallest remote communities are commonly understood to be higher than those in the remote "hub" communities.

Reimbursable-only grants compound these challenges by requiring small grantees to incur upfront costs and wait to be compensated. This leads to serious cash flow issues for small awardees, negatively impacting project timelines and putting other projects and programs at risk due to cash shortages. An undue burden is placed on grantees, who have generally been awarded because they have demonstrated feasibility and a solid implementation plan - what they need is money.

Matching requirements, too, are largely viewed as having a "one size fits all" approach to a widely diverse array of applicants with vastly differing economic situations and access to funds. Since public infrastructure is generally government-funded, requiring a non-federal match strikes many as unrealistic. Villages in Alaska also rely heavily on subsistence economies, and many lack a tax base or local economic opportunities to generate revenue for cost share, which can reach tens of millions of dollars for large construction projects.

Potential Solutions

Energy and other infrastructure projects are typically funded with government resources. Yet there are substantial restrictions on using "other federal funds" as a match for federal grants. Removing these restrictions would allow for more realistic project funding strategies. Additional ideas for making match requirements more realistic include offering advance decisions for match waiver requests to avert the burden of complex applications if a waiver request is denied; offering a sliding-scale match based on criteria related to local circumstances (EDA offers this, for example); and accepting as match an applicant's commitment to startup, ramp-up, and/or maintenance funds, which gives the community a sense of ownership as well as greater assurance of project sustainability.

Alaska's High Energy Costs

More than one in four (27%) households in Alaska, mostly rural, use heating oil as their primary heating source, versus 4.1% in the U.S. overall. This past winter (2023), the average cost of heating fuel among the many communities that rely on it was $6.41/gallon, with a high of $ 13/gallon. Heating oil is more prevalent because many rural Alaskan communities currently pay more than $l/kWh for electricity, more than four times the average residential electricity rate in the state as a whole. Additionally, "Alaska's per capita energy consumption is the second highest in the nation" due largely to the small population and harsh climate. (U.S. Energy Information Administration, Alaska State Energy Profile, https://www.eia.gov/state/print.php?sid=AK)

It should also be noted that while the State of Alaska has historically helped meet some non- federal match requirements, recent budget constraints and policy choices have reduced the state's contributions. Multiple federal and state officials, along with representatives from tribal organizations, have expressed that exempting or reducing match requirements for Native villages would greatly enhance their access to federal assistance. The Alaska Energy Security Task Force recognized this challenge and included among its draft preliminary potential solutions (as of November 7, 2023) to "identify a funding or financing mechanism for rural communities, including a 'local match' for federal grants."

Reimbursable-only grants, in the context of strong funding proposals with demonstrated feasibility and a strong implementation plan, could do away with the reimbursement aspect. Reporting requirements will still serve as a means of demonstrating compliance with fiscal requirements. Three stopgap measures until reimbursement-based grants can be eliminated include:

* A system in which the funder disseminates funds directly to vendors and contractors. The Alaska Energy Authority has in the past used this approach with grantees with whom there were capacity or other concerns.
* With tribal approval, a larger entity with more robust accounting and reporting systems might serve as the fiscal agent for a grant.
* Establish a revolving loan fund for grant advances, in which loans serve as an advance on project costs and loans are repaid upon receipt of grant reimbursements.

#### Paternalism is the status quo.

R. McMaster, 2024 – Department of Geography and Planning, 117 Science Place, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon “Assessing local capacity for community appropriate sustainable energy transitions in northern and remote Indigenous communities” Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews, Volume 191, March 2024, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1364032123010900> //DH

Energy systems across the circumpolar north are a mix of centralized grids, regional grids, and off-grid (or micro-grid) systems. Across may parts of the north, low population densities limit the viability of large-scale energy infrastructure [24]. Most communities are remote, not connected to a centralized grid, and are powered by diesel generators that rely on seasonal fuel delivery, resulting in high energy costs [6,25]. In Canada's northern territories, for example, electricity prices are significantly higher than the rest of the country – even with large government subsidies [8]. The Canadian average electricity price is approximately CDN $0.12 per kWh. In Nunavut, where power generation is diesel-based and homes are heated primarily by fuel oil, subsidized residential rates range from CDN $0.60 per kWh to over CDN $1.15 per kWh. The Qulliq Energy Corporation, which powers 25 communities across Nunavut (38,000 people), requires approximately 55 million litres of diesel annually [26]. The challenge is similar in the Northwest Territories, where 25 of the 33 primarily Indigenous communities powered by the Crown energy provider are off-grid and diesel dependent [27].

High fuel prices, limited seasonal fuel supplies, and aging and costly energy infrastructure operating at or near capacity can impose significant social and economic constraints for many northern and remote Indigenous communities [28,29]. Meeting basic energy needs in the North is a significant financial burden on many households, with implications for food-security – residents are often forced to choose between “heating or eating” [23]. In the remote Alaskan community of Galena, Menghwani et al. [8] show that the high cost of diesel-based power generation was a primary driver behind the community's pursuit of a bioenergy facility. The bioenergy facility subsequently led to reduced power costs, increased reliability, and the training of a local workforce resulting in new employment and income opportunities [111]. In other regions, high government subsidies for diesel-based generation to offset high energy costs – subsidies that range between $300 and $400 million annually in Canada's North [70] – translate to the loss of resources that could otherwise be used to invest in community infrastructure and social services [16].

There is increasing government interest in renewable energy in the north, as illustrated by state commitments to renewable energy infrastructure and pursuit of a low carbon future [30,31]. High energy costs coupled with fuel price volatility and seasonal supply vulnerability also mean a growing interest in renewable energy amongst northern and remote communities to ensure access to affordable, reliable, and secure energy solutions [6,32]. Across the state of Alaska, for example, 69 communities have integrated some form of renewable energy [112]. Renewable energy systems (e.g., solar, wind, biomass) are also being deployed to offset diesel-based generation in some regions across Canada's north. For example, in the Northwest Territories, an 85-kW biomass boiler was installed in the community of Fort McPherson in 2013 [33], and the Hamlet of Aklavik currently offsets a portion of its diesel dependency with a 52-kW solar system.

Community energy planning is an emerging trend globally, where local communities are increasingly involved in planning their energy future [32,34]. However, most energy planning processes in rural and remote regions continue to rely on top-down, externally driven approaches, often without consideration of local socio-cultural context, values, and capacities [9,21]. The pursuit, design, and implementation of community energy projects that fail to incorporate local values and the capacity of communities to transition and maintain their energy system are less likely to succeed [18,35,36]. Yet, despite a growing literature examining Indigenous community involvement in renewable energy [18,36], there is limited to no attention to community socio-technical capacity for energy transition among northern Indigenous communities [6,24,28,37].

#### The plan changes this model by incorporating flexibility and collaboration

Alaska Venture Fund, 2023 – philanthropic organization in Alaska dedicated to funding sustainability. “Energy & Infrastructure Funding in Rural Alaska Barriers & Potential Solutions “ <https://www.energy.gov/sites/default/files/2024-04/Energy-and-Infrastructure-Funding-in-Alaska-Barriers-Potential-Solutions.pdf> //DH

A myriad of unique challenges stand in the way of Alaska’s rural, remote, and tribal communities’ access to federal funding. Despite efforts to prioritize the equitable administration of funding through Justice40 Initiative targets, the communities most in need are often the ones least able to overcome barriers to grant opportunities.

Alaska Venture Fund (AVF) contracted with DeerStone Consulting to:

1. Identify barriers to tribal energy and other infrastructure funding opportunities in Alaska.

2. Develop actionable potential solutions for reducing identified barriers.

This discussion paper shares findings on these barriers and potential solutions gathered from stakeholder interviews. This paper is intended to serve as a catalyst for meaningful conversations with the ultimate aim of guiding changes at the policy and agency levels.

This paper emphasizes the need for an equitable approach to grant funding, particularly in rural, remote, and tribal communities in Alaska. Improving the efficiency and effectiveness of funding mechanisms will have the dual benefits of advancing the goals of rural Alaska communities and better meeting federal program and policy goals.

Key Findings

Taken together, interviewees described a situation where the communities most likely to need funding support for infrastructure projects are the least likely to have funds to provide the required cost share, the specialized expertise needed to prepare complex applications, and the resources to hire outside help for grant writing or technical studies required for some grant applications. Grant processes tend to favor applicants with more capacity and money for grant writing over those with the highest need, undermining the goal of equity in access to infrastructure funding.

An overarching recommendation is to increase flexibility to better account for the unique and varied structures, capacities, and circumstances in rural Alaska communities.

This paper describes barriers and shares suggestions for addressing them, including some ideas that have been tested or implemented on a limited scale. These are summarized below and expanded upon later in this document. Additional barriers, examples, and potential solutions are provided in an appendix.

Upfront and Matching Costs

Barriers: Limited revenue generation opportunities and high costs make it difficult for rural remote Alaska communities to provide the matching funds most federal grants require and up-front funds for grants designed as reimbursable.

Potential Solutions: Reduce the burden of match requirements by allowing use of other federal funds as match, providing advance decisions for match waiver requests, offering a sliding-scale match, and accepting alternative ways of demonstrating community “stake” in a project. Eliminate reimbursable grants and/or provide bridge loans and other ways of accessing up-front cash.

Complexity and Capacity Constraints

Barriers: Grant writing and compliance have demanding administrative obligations, posing disproportionate challenges for communities with limited staff and resources. Other challenges include confusing, complex, or missing guidance; federal rules sometimes interpreted as a prohibition on answering applicant questions; and funding agency capacity constraints.

Potential Solutions: Use models such as HUD’s High Energy Cost Grant program, which simplified its application process and uses flexible needs-based criteria, broad rather than narrowly prescribed goals, and a streamlined application process. In addition, significant investment in capacity-building and technical assistance is needed.

Applicant Eligibility

Barriers: With nearly half the nation’s Tribes, Alaska has a unique range of entities serving and representing indigenous people, such as tribal governments, regional tribal nonprofits, and Alaska Native regional and village corporations. Federal programs that restrict eligibility to certain types of entities can limit access for Alaska Native communities.

Potential Solutions: Include regional tribal consortia and nonprofits as eligible applicants for federal grant opportunities. Adopt the U.S. Department of Energy’s recently expanded definitions to provide for more inclusive eligibility, including the definition of “Indian Tribe” to include Alaska Native Regional Corporations, Alaska Native Village Corporations, Tribal Energy Development Organizations (TEDOs), intertribal organizations, tribal consortia, and other tribal organizations.

Lack of Interagency Collaboration

Barriers: Many projects in rural Alaska require multiple funding streams, which are almost impossible to sync. For example, if a community needs to rebuild a road and also needs to install underground infrastructure (e.g., broadband or utility improvements), it would be most efficient to do them all at the same time, but there is no way to apply for an integrated set of projects because funding for each component comes from a different program with different processes, requirements, timing, and rules.

Potential Solutions: A multi-agency shared application would allow for integrated funding between programs and more efficient use of federal funds. This approach has been recommended in multiple forums, and the Denali Commission, a federal agency with a mandate to improve conditions in rural Alaska, has been identified as an entity that could help manage integrated funding streams and processes.

### They Say: “Wet Stacking Turn”

#### New technology solves. Existing renewable integration shows Alaskan utilities can manage intermittence and can adjust diesel loads automatically

Gwen P. Holdmann et al, 2019 – Alaska Center for Energy and Power, University of Alaska, Fairbanks “Renewable Energy Integration in Alaska’s Remote Islanded Microgrids: Economic Drivers, Technical Strategies, Technological Niche Development, and Policy Implications” Proceedings of the IEEE, IEEE Xplore database //DH

Alaskans have had to solve the challenge of capturing maximum economic value from integrating variable renewable generation in small grids with very little inertia while maintaining grid reliability. This situation is inherently more challenging than in a larger interconnected grid. Within the framework of a larger grid, as long as the percentage of intermittent resources is relatively low, the system can absorb fluctuations. Achieving this balance becomes more difficult as systems become smaller. In small grids, all typical loads are much greater relative to generation capacity and/or total demand level than in large grids. Starting a 1-kW appliance (e.g., a small electric oven) in a 100-kW system is an immediate 1% load change, which requires ramping of the load following generation. In contrast, the same 1-kW load is lost in the noise on a 100-MW grid. The same is true with generation. If a wind farm experiences a sudden gust or drop-off in wind speed, the potential impact will be much more dramatic on a small grid, and Alaskans have employed a variety of strategies to cope with this and other grid integration challenges.

Alaska utilities have adopted several general strategies to achieve their renewable energy integration goals, such as centralized and distributed dispatchable thermal loads, strategic use of energy storage, including flywheels and battery systems, and innovative grid-forming systems. Examples of renewable integration in Alaska are outlined in Table 1 based on data found in [14] and [16]–​[28] and discussed in Sections IV-A–​IV-E.

A. Dispatchable Thermal Loads—Centralized

Using a dispatchable load to increase the instantaneous load on a local grid has become a go-to strategy for Alaska utilities, employed in over 20 systems to date. Often, this dispatchable load is located in the powerhouse and connected to an existing space-heating loop that utilizes rejected heat from the diesel generator to heat the power plant and nearby community buildings, such as a school, tribal hall, or washeteria. For example, the AVEC provides power to 58 remote communities across Alaska. These communities are not connected to a regional grid and, with a few exceptions, are not interconnected. As in most remote Alaska communities, diesel generators provide the bulk of electrical generation. Eleven of these communities also have wind power installed. The average load ranges between 100 and 400 kW, and the installed wind power capacity ranges between 80% and 170% of the average load. Due to the small size of the communities and the relatively high wind power capacity, most of the utilities have installed a controllable thermal load to absorb fast fluctuations in wind and use excess wind power. These controllable loads respond to frequency changes to maintain stability on the grid and take power set points to utilize excess wind power.

In other cases, the dispatchable load is located away from the powerhouse and provides heat to critical infrastructure. For example, in Kotzebue, the dispatchable load is an electric boiler installed in the community’s hospital, resulting in the displacement of a significant amount of the facility’s heating oil requirements. Due to the success with the hospital, plans are being made to install another electric boiler in the National Parks Service headquarters. Kotzebue has an average load of 2.5 MW and an installed wind power capacity of 3 MW.

#### Diesel generators can accept lower load requirements due to technological innovation

J. Hamilton et al, 2015 – School of Engineering, Centre for Renewable Energy and Power Systems, Hobart Tasmania “Low load diesel perceptions and practices within remote area power systems” IEEEXplore database, University of Michigan //DH

An important future outcome of the survey will be to demystify knowledge of these legacy trials via both broad industry survey and broad distribution of survey results. Additionally, low load capabilities of diesel generators have significantly improved since 2008, facilitated in part by the rapid development of efficient automotive diesel engine technologies. As such, the timing of the survey was also appropriate to re-engage with industry, to explore current perceptions and practices surrounding low load diesel operation, given improvements in diesel low load capabilities.

#### New studies show that greater renewable integration with diesel microgrids is feasible – one Alaska community is already successfully deploying it

Paul Cheng McKinley et al, 2025 – Alaska Center for Energy & Power, University of Alaska Fairbanks “Learning from Arctic Microgrids: Cost and Resiliency Projections for Renewable Energy Expansion with Hydrogen and Battery Storage” Sustainability, v17 issue 3, Summer, <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/17/13/5996> //DH

Electricity in rural Alaska is provided by more than 200 standalone microgrid systems powered predominantly by diesel generators. Incorporating renewable energy generation and storage to these systems can reduce their reliance on costly imported fuel and improve sustainability; however, uncertainty remains about optimal grid architectures to minimize cost, including how and when to incorporate long-duration energy storage. This study implements a novel, multi-pronged approach to assess the techno-economic feasibility of future energy pathways in the community of Kotzebue, which has already successfully deployed solar photovoltaics, wind turbines, and battery storage systems. Using real community load, resource, and generation data, we develop a series of comparison models using the HOMER Pro software tool to evaluate microgrid architectures to meet over 90% of the annual community electricity demand with renewable generation, considering both battery and hydrogen energy storage. We find that near-term planned capacity expansions in the community could enable over 50% renewable generation and reduce the total cost of energy. Additional build-outs to reach 75% renewable generation are shown to be competitive with current costs, but further capacity expansion is not currently economical. We additionally include a cost sensitivity analysis and a storage capacity sizing assessment that suggest hydrogen storage may be economically viable if battery costs increase, but large-scale seasonal storage via hydrogen is currently unlikely to be cost-effective nor practical for the region considered. While these findings are based on data and community priorities in Kotzebue, we expect this approach to be relevant to many communities in the Arctic and Sub-Arctic regions working to improve energy reliability, sustainability, and security.

#### 70 out of 200 rural Alaskan communities are successfully integrating renewables into microgrids now

Paul Cheng McKinley et al, 2025 – Alaska Center for Energy & Power, University of Alaska Fairbanks “Learning from Arctic Microgrids: Cost and Resiliency Projections for Renewable Energy Expansion with Hydrogen and Battery Storage” Sustainability, v17 issue 3, Summer, <https://www.mdpi.com/2071-1050/17/13/5996> //DH

Energy reliability, affordability, and resiliency have emerged as key criteria for economic and societal stability [1,2]. In the electricity sector, these are often highlighted at the large-scale grid level, where interconnected transmission and distribution networks comprise an essential means of providing electricity to consumers [3,4]. However, a case of equal importance exists at the smaller, community microgrid level, comprised of standalone systems that may not have the option to connect to major grid networks [5,6]. In Alaska, more than 200 microgrids constitute the primary means of supplying electricity to rural areas [7], and nearly all depend predominantly on diesel generators to produce electricity [8]. However, fuel supply is often limited to infrequent aircraft and barge deliveries throughout the year. The resulting utility diesel fuel costs can reach USD 9.50 per gallon, with electricity costs often exceeding USD 1.00 per kilowatt-hour (kWh) [9]. Alaska additionally has the highest energy consumption per capita in the country, which further exacerbates this energy burden [10]. In addition to high costs, market volatility and aging infrastructure have driven increasing deployments of local power generation via renewable resources.

The trend of rural renewable energy adoption follows an accelerated global pursuit of emissions reductions and sustainable energy technology deployment, which has spurred a near-doubling in both wind and solar generation and installed capacity between 2018 and 2023 [11]. Over 70 isolated Alaskan communities have seen successful deployments of renewable energy technologies as of 2020; these include installations of wind turbines, solar photovoltaic (PV) modules, hydropower facilities, and battery energy storage systems (BESS) [12,13,14]. The hub community of Kotzebue is located thirty-three miles north of the Arctic Circle on the coast of northwest Alaska and has been a leader in deploying early-stage energy technologies in the state [15]. The local cooperative utility, Kotzebue Electric Association (KEA), successfully installed its first wind turbines in 1997. Subsequent upgrades and iterations have led to an energy system today that includes 1800 kilowatts (kW) of wind power, 1206 kW of solar photovoltaic (PV) power and a 950 kilowatt-hour (kWh) lithium-ion battery system to supplement the existing six diesel generators, ranging from 725 kW to 3100 kW in generation capacity (Figure 1).

The incorporation of renewable energy generation and storage technologies alongside conventional generators comprises a “hybrid renewable microgrid” (HRM) architecture. In 2024, the HRM system in Kotzebue allowed the community to reduce diesel consumption by over 20% relative to a 2005 baseline according to state reporting, equivalent to 300,000 gallons annually (it should be noted that electricity demand dropped by 6% over the same time period) [9,15,16]. KEA is actively working with the local tribe, the Native Village of Kotzebue (NVOK), to build on the current renewable generation assets to reach the goal of 50% renewable power in the next five years. Further capacity expansion of renewables is dependent on projected cost-savings, comprising a key focus of this analysis.

### They Say: “Spinning Reserve Turn”

#### Batteries solve. Some rural Native villages are using them to achieve 100% renewables and provide spinning reserve

Gwen P. Holdmann et al, 2019 – Alaska Center for Energy and Power, University of Alaska, Fairbanks “Renewable Energy Integration in Alaska’s Remote Islanded Microgrids: Economic Drivers, Technical Strategies, Technological Niche Development, and Policy Implications” Proceedings of the IEEE, IEEE Xplore database //DH

Alaska communities have experimented with varying technologies and strategies for integrating energy storage. Alaska has one of the largest battery systems in the world, which is installed to support the GVEA grid located in interior Alaska. This utility is an electrical cooperative that is connected at the far northern end of the Railbelt electric grid and serves an average electrical load of around 142 MW. The main local fuel sources for power generation are oil and coal. Whenever possible, GVEA purchases up to 70 MW of cheaper electricity from natural gas and hydropower over the transmission line [28]. The 40-MW NiCad battery came online in 2003 (the largest capacity storage battery in the world at the time) to increase grid reliability by providing a spinning reserve in case a generator drops offline or there is a fault on the transmission line. In 2017, the battery system responded to 72 events preventing over 280 000 member outages [28]. Chugach Electric is another electrical cooperative on the Railbelt electric grid; it has installed a hybrid 2-MW/0.5-MWh Li-ion battery and 1-MW flywheel system to help balance the fluctuations from the 17-MW Fire Island wind farm [27], [32].

Remote Alaska communities that are not connected to a regional grid have used energy storage systems to stabilize islanded grids and provide spinning reserve to help integrate renewable energy and supply large reactive loads. In total, eight remote communities in Alaska have installed battery systems to help integrate renewable resources and several communities are in the process of procuring systems. Kodiak Electric Association has installed a 3-MW Li-ion battery system to help manage variability on its 9-MW wind farm and two 2-MW flywheels, placed “in front of” the battery to manage inrush currents from a large electric crane in the harbor and to protect the battery from excessive charge/discharge cycles. Combined with a storage hydro asset, these systems have allowed the Kodiak Electric Association to achieve close to 100% of annual generation from renewable resources.

Some remote communities without access to cheap hydropower use large amounts of other renewables, such as wind power to offset their diesel consumption. Use of wind energy requires a source of spinning reserve in the event of a drop in wind power. Alaska-based Intelligent Energy Systems has used 250-kW Li-ion batteries in Kongiganak and Kwigillingok, which have installed wind power capacities of 457 kW and average loads of around 135 kW. The batteries help stabilize the grid and provide spinning reserve; they are even able to operate in diesel-off mode with wind power and support from the batteries. Kotzebue is another example, with a 1.2-MW Li-ion battery to help integrate close to 3 MW of wind power onto a grid with an average load of 1.5 MW (see Fig. 9).

#### Energy storage allows much higher renewable penetration

Jim McDowall, 2018 – IEEE Fellow, cited for leadership in stationary battery standards “Energy Storage in Remote Arctic Communities: Driving Down Diesel Consumption with Batteries” IEEE Electrification Magazine >Volume: 6 Issue: 3, IEEE Xplore database at University of Michigan //DH

The cost of diesel generation has prompted Arctic communities to embrace renewable energy resources such as wind and solar power. The Arctic area of Canada is one of the world leaders in the uptake of alternative energy sources, providing almost half of its power from renewable resources, which is more than double the global average.

However, the unpredictability of weather conditions means that the output of wind turbines and solar panels will always be highly variable and intermittent. Therefore, to ensure a stable and reliable supply of electricity, a certain level of diesel generation is still required. Essentially, these remote communities are creating their own microgrids.

Using standard grid controls, renewable sources can contribute up to 20–30% of the overall power at any time. Adding special controls can increase renewable penetration to approximately 50%.

When an energy-storage system (ESS) is added, an operator can maximize the contribution of renewables, increasing penetration and harvesting more of the available power. With the capability to shut down diesel generators, it is possible to realize fuel savings of 50–75%.

### 1AR – They Say: “Batteries Fail in Arctic”

#### Battery innovation allows cold weather adaptation

T&D World, 2015 – a trade publication for utilities “Cold Weather Energy Storage System Delivered in Arctic Alaska” 11/11

https://www.tdworld.com/renewables/article/20965869/cold-weather-energy-storage-system-delivered-in-arctic-alaska

Saft has delivered a containerized Battery Energy Storage System with “Cold Temperature Package” on schedule during Q3 2015, to Kotzebue Electric Association, an electric cooperative based in Kotzebue, Alaska.

The system will allow the existing hybrid wind-diesel power system to achieve its full potential, providing cleaner, more reliable and less expensive power to Kotzebue, located above the Arctic Circle in Alaska’s Northwest Arctic Borough (an area the size of Illinois). Kotzebue is not connected to an electrical transmission grid or to any road system, and has historically been dependent on diesel powered generators for electricity. The annual average temperature is 22°F and area residents face some of the highest costs for energy anywhere in the nation.

### 1AR – They Say: “No Maintenance”

#### Remote Alaskan communities have a culture of innovation – they’ll learn to operate more complex grids

Gwen P. Holdmann et al, 2019 – Alaska Center for Energy and Power, University of Alaska, Fairbanks “Renewable Energy Integration in Alaska’s Remote Islanded Microgrids: Economic Drivers, Technical Strategies, Technological Niche Development, and Policy Implications” Proceedings of the IEEE, IEEE Xplore database //DH

Alaskans tend to view themselves as relatively independent and self-reliant. The residents of most remote Alaska communities are Native Alaskans whose ancestors have lived sustainably in one of the harshest places in the world for millennia. When the nearest hardware store is two plane rides and at least a day’s journey away, the incentive to figure out solutions locally is significant. This need has fostered an underlying “culture of innovation” that has been critical to keeping equipment operational over time. For example, local operators are often willing to learn new skills, such as maintaining wind turbines installed in their community and thus have been key to long-term project success (see Fig. 10). In addition, most projects have been designed and implemented by Alaskans within the reach of technical assistance when necessary and appropriate.

## Framing

### They Say: “Consequences Good”

#### Utilitarianism is self-defeating---it can be used to justify any atrocity

Holt 95, Jim Holt, commentator for the BBC, writes frequently about politics and philosophy, August 5, 1995, New York Times, “Morality, Reduced To Arithmetic,” p. Lexis

 Can the deliberate massacre of innocent people ever be condoned? The atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki on Aug. 6 and 9, 1945, resulted in the deaths of 120,000 to 250,000 Japanese by incineration and radiation poisoning. Although a small fraction of the victims were soldiers, the great majority were noncombatants -- women, children, the aged. Among the justifications that have been put forward for President Harry Truman’s decision to use the bomb, only one is worth taking seriously -- that it saved lives. The alternative, the reasoning goes, was to launch an invasion. Truman claimed in his memoirs that this would have cost another half a million American lives. Winston Churchill put the figure at a million. Revisionist historians have cast doubt on such numbers. Wartime documents suggest that military planners expected around 50,000 American combat deaths in an invasion. Still, when Japanese casualties, military and civilian, are taken into account, the overall invasion death toll on both sides would surely have ended up surpassing that from Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Scholars will continue to argue over whether there were other, less catastrophic ways to force Tokyo to surrender. But given the fierce obstinacy of the Japanese militarists, Truman and his advisers had some grounds for believing that nothing short of a full-scale invasion or the annihilation of a big city with an apocalyptic new weapon would have succeeded. Suppose they were right. Would this prospect have justified the intentional mass killing of the people of Hiroshima and Nagasaki? In the debate over the question, participants on both sides have been playing the numbers game. Estimate the hypothetical number of lives saved by the bombings, then add up the actual lives lost. If the first number exceeds the second, then Truman did the right thing; if the reverse, it was wrong to have dropped the bombs. That is one approach to the matter -- the utilitarian approach. According to utilitarianism, a form of moral reasoning that arose in the 19th century, the goodness or evil of an action is determined solely by its consequences. If somehow you can save 10 lives by boiling a baby, go ahead and boil that baby. There is, however, an older ethical tradition, one rooted in Judeo-Christian theology, that takes a quite different view. The gist of it is expressed by St. Paul’s condemnation of those who say, “Let us do evil, that good may come.” Some actions, this tradition holds, can never be justified by their consequences; they are absolutely forbidden. It is always wrong to boil a baby even if lives are saved thereby. Applying this absolutist morality to war can be tricky. When enemy soldiers are trying to enslave or kill us, the principle of self-defense permits us to kill them (though not to slaughter them once they are taken prisoner). But what of those who back them? During World War II, propagandists made much of the “indivisibility” of modern warfare: the idea was that since the enemy nation’s entire economic and social strength was deployed behind its military forces, the whole population was a legitimate target for obliteration. “There are no civilians in Japan,” declared an intelligence officer of the Fifth Air Force shortly before the Hiroshima bombing, a time when the Japanese were popularly depicted as vermin worthy of extermination. The boundary between combatant and noncombatant can be fuzzy, but the distinction is not meaningless, as the case of small children makes clear. Yet is wartime killing of those who are not trying to harm us always tantamount to murder? When naval dockyards, munitions factories and supply lines are bombed, civilian carnage is inevitable. The absolutist moral tradition acknowledges this by a principle known as double effect: although it is always wrong to kill innocents deliberately, it is sometimes permissible to attack a military target knowing some noncombatants will die as a side effect. The doctrine of double effect might even justify bombing a hospital where Hitler is lying ill. It does not, however, apply to Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Transformed into hostages by the technology of aerial bombardment, the people of those cities were intentionally executed en masse to send a message of terror to the rulers of Japan. The practice of ordering the massacre of civilians to bring the enemy to heel scarcely began with Truman. Nor did the bomb result in casualties of a new order of magnitude. The earlier bombing of Tokyo by incendiary weapons killed some 100,000 people. What Hiroshima and Nagasaki did mark, by the unprecedented need for rationalization they presented, was the triumph of utilitarian thinking in the conduct of war. The conventional code of noncombatant immunity -- a product of several centuries of ethical progress among nations, which had been formalized by an international commission in the 1920’s in the Hague -- was swept away. A simpler axiom took its place: since war is hell, any means necessary may be used to end, in Churchill’s words, “the vast indefinite butchery.” It is a moral calculus that, for all its logical consistency, offends our deep-seated intuitions about the sanctity of life -- our conviction that a person is always to be treated as an end, never as a means. Left up to the warmakers, moreover, utilitarian calculations are susceptible to bad-faith reasoning: tinker with the numbers enough and virtually any atrocity can be excused in the national interest. In January, the world commemorated the 50th anniversary of the liberation of Auschwitz, where mass slaughter was committed as an end in itself -- the ultimate evil. The moral nature of Hiroshima is ambiguous by contrast. Yet in the postwar era, when governments do not hesitate to treat the massacre of civilians as just another strategic option, the bomb’s sinister legacy is plain: it has inured us to the idea of reducing innocents to instruments and morality to arithmetic.

### They Say: “Extinction First”

#### ‘Extinction’ is an empty superlative. Forgo improbable impacts – they re-entrench humanity into Western frames that manifest colonial genocide

Mitchell 17 – CIGI Chair in Global Governance and Ethics, Balsillie School of International Affairs, and Associate Professor at Wilfrid Laurier University, former Senior Lecturer in International Relations, department of Politics, University of York (Audra Mitchell, Worldly, "Decolonizing against extinction part II: Extinction is not a metaphor - it is literally genocide," September 27, 2017, https://worldlyir.wordpress.com/category/extinction/)//SM

Extinction is not a metaphor… Extinction has become an emblem of Western, and white-dominated, fears about ‘the end of the(ir) world’. This scientific term is saturated with emotional potency, stretched and contorted to embody almost any nightmare, from climate change to asteroid strikes. In academic and public contexts alike, it is regularly interchanged with other terms and concepts – for instance, ‘species death’, global warming or ecological collapse. Diffused into sublime scales – mass extinctions measured in millions of (Gregorian calendar) years, a planet totalized by the threat of nuclear destruction – ‘extinction’ has become an empty superlative, one that that gestures to an abstract form of unthinkability. It teases Western subjects with images of generalized demise that might, if it gets bad enough, even threaten us, or the figure of ‘humanity’ that we enshrine as a universal. This figure of ‘humanity’, derived from Western European enlightenment ideals, emphasizes individual, autonomous actors who are fully integrated into the global market system; who are responsible citizens of nation-states; who conform to Western ideas of health and well-being; who partake of ‘culture’; who participate in democratic state-based politics; who refrain from physical violence; and who manage their ‘resources’ responsibly (Mitchell 2014). Oddly, exposure to the fear of extinction contributes to the formation and bolstering of contemporary Western subjects. Contemplating the sublime destruction of ‘humanity’ offers the thrill of abjection: the perverse pleasure derived from exposure to something by which one is revolted. Claire Colebrook detects this thrill-seeking impulse in the profusion of Western blockbuster films and TV shows that imagine and envision the destruction of earth, or at least of ‘humanity’. It also throbs through a flurry of recent best-selling books – both fiction and speculative non-fiction (see Oreskes and Conway 2014; Newitz 2013; Weisman 2008). In a forthcoming intervention, Noah Theriault and I (2018) argue that these imaginaries are a form of porn that normalizes the profound violences driving extinction, while cocooning its viewers in the secure space of the voyeur. Certainly, there are many Western scientists, conservationists and policy-makers who are genuinely committed to stopping the extinction of others, perhaps out of fear for their own futures. Yet extinction is not quite real for Western, and especially white, subjects; it is a fantasy of negation that evokes thrill, melancholy, anger and existential purpose. It is a metaphor that expresses the destructive desires of these beings, and the negativity against which we define our subjectivity. But extinction is not a metaphor: it is a very real expression of violence that systematically destroys particular beings, worlds, life forms and the relations that enable them to flourish. These are real, unique beings, worlds and relations – as well as somebody’s family, Ancestors, siblings, future generations – who are violently destroyed. Extinction can only be used unironically as a metaphor by people who have never been threatened with it, told it is their inevitable fate, or lost their relatives and Ancestors to it – and who assume that they probably never will. This argument is directly inspired by the call to arms issued in 2012 by Eve Tuck and Wayne K. Yang and more recently by Cutcha Risling-Baldy. The first, seminal piece demonstrates how settler cultures use the violence of metaphorical abstraction to excuse themselves from the real work of decolonization: ensuring that land and power is in Indigenous hands. Risling-Baldy’s brilliant follow-up extends this logic to explain how First People like Coyote have been reduced to metaphors through settler appropriation. In both cases, engagement with Indigenous peoples and their relations masks moves to innocence: acts that make it appear as if settlers are engaging in decolonization, while in fact we are consolidating the power structures that privilege us. In this series, want to show how Western, and white-dominated, discourses on ‘extinction’ appear to address the systematic destruction of peoples and other beings while enacting moves to innocence that mask their culpability and perpetuate structures of violence. As I argued in Part I of this series, extinction is an expression of colonial violence. As such, it needs to be addressed through direct decolonization, including the dismantling of settler colonial structures of violence, and the resurgence of Indigenous worlds. Following Tuck, Yang and Risling-Baldy’s lead, I want to show how and why the violences that drive extinction have come to be invisible within mainstream discourses. Salient amongst these is the practice of genocide against Indigenous peoples other than humans. …it is literally genocide. What Western science calls ‘extinction’ is not an unfortunate, unintended consequence of desirable ‘human’ activities. It is an embodiment of particular patterns of structural violence that disproportionately affect specific racialized groups. In some cases, ‘extinction’ is directly, deliberately and systematically inflicted in order to create space for aggressors, including settler states. For this reason, it has rightly been framed as an aspect or tool of colonial genocides against Indigenous human peoples. Indeed, many theorists have shown that the ‘extirpation’ of life forms (their total removal from a particular place) is an instrument for enacting genocide upon Indigenous humans (see Mazis 2008; Laduke 1999; Stannard 1994). Specifically, the removal of key sources of food, clothing and other basic materials makes survival on the land impossible for the people targeted. Nehiyaw thinker Tasha Hubbard (2014) makes a qualitatively distinct argument. She points out that the Buffalo are First People, the elder brothers of the Nehiyaw people (and other Indigenous nations – see Benton-Banai 2010). Starting in the mid-1800s, the tens of millions of buffalo that ranged across Turtle Island were nearly eliminated through strategic patterns of killing carried out by settler-state-sponsored military and commercial forces. Their killing was linked to governmental imperatives to clear and territorially annex the Great Plains by removing its Indigenous peoples. As Hubbard points out, methods of destroying buffalo herds included large-scale killing, but also the disruption of their social structures, the destruction of the ecosystems on which they rely, and the removal of calves. These acts involve each of the components of the definition of genocide enshrined in the UN Genocide Convention: (a) Killing members of the group; (b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; (c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; (d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; (e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. From Hubbard’s viewpoint, rooted in Nehiyaw philosophy and ethical-legal principles, the systematic destruction of the buffalo is not like genocide, nor is it exclusively a tool for carrying out genocide against human peoples. It is genocide in its own right: an attempt to destroy a particular First People and the possibilities of its continuity. In other words, the deliberate and systematic attempt to eliminate the buffalo, enacted by settler states, simultaneously enacted genocide against Indigenous peoples and their nonhuman relatives. Genocides of Indigenous peoples (human and otherwise) continue apace in contemporary settler states, transformed into multiple manifestations. For instance, they are integral to ‘biosecurity’ strategies designed to police the biological boundaries of these states and their citizens. Laced with racializing and xenophobic rhetoric (Subramaniam 2001), strategies such as culling or planned eradications are intended to remove ‘invasive’ or ‘foreign’ life forms in order to protect ‘Native’ ones. Many of the ‘invasive’ life forms targeted for destruction were transported to unfamiliar lands through colonial patterns of settlement and global trade flows. However, this logic of elimination (Wolfe 2006) is often perverted, turned against Indigenous\* beings whose flourishing impedes the expansion or consolidation of the colonial state. For instance, Deborah Bird Rose (2011 a, 2011 b) shows how this form of violence is continually waged against flying foxes, who are framed by the settler state as “pest[s] whose extinction is [deliberately] sought”. This act of elimination involves explicit genocidal ideation, or the imagination of the destruction of a people. Rose characterizes it as a “matter of imagining a world without [dingoes or flying foxes], then setting out to create it” (Rose 2011a). The Australian settler state has used multiple tactics to induce terror and preclude flourishing amongst flying foxes, from the emission of high-pitched electronic signals to smearing trees with python excrement (Rose 2011b). Indeed, in 2014, I lived near to the roosting site of a group of flying foxes in Turrbal and Jagera Country (suburban Brisbane to settlers). Such nesting places are called ‘colonies’ , reflecting a Western scientific rhetoric that frames Indigenous peoples as ‘invaders’ of the settler state. The trees that housed the nesting site backed onto a municipal facility, whose fence had been covered with barbed wire, in which many of the bats snared their wings and starved to death. This ‘security’ measure – designed to protect the facilities relied upon by urban settlers from the intrusion of flying foxes – is a powerful weapon for precluding ongoing flourishing of Indigenous other-than-human peoples. I learned from neighbours that this ‘colony’ had previously been ‘moved’ from several other sites around the city, suffering significant declines in population each time. Indeed, despite reported declines of 95% in flying fox communities in Queensland and neighbouring New South Wales, the Queensland settler state legalized the shooting of the bats in 2012 by fruitgrowers. Of course, in some cases, the elimination of life forms is not as targeted or intentional – it may take the form of land-based extractive violence, the creep of ocean acidification, the decimation of rainforests by climate change. Proponents of a Eurocentric definition of genocide could argue that these events lack intention. Indeed, within international law, intention to commit genocide is a necessary criteria for conviction. However, theorists of critical genocide studies have long argued that this definition is inadequate: it brackets out a great many of the acts, logics and structures that produce the destruction of unique peoples. According to Tony Barta, definitions of genocide that focus on ‘purposeful annihilation’, and in particular on physical killing, have “devalu[ed] all other concepts of less planned destruction, even if the effects are the same” (Barta 2000, 238). For this reason, he shifts the focus from ‘genocidal intention’ to ‘genocidal outcome’ – that is, from the abstract assignation of genocidal agency to the felt and embodied effects of eliminative violence. It is the focus on intent, he contends, that allows white Australians to imagine that their relationship with Aboriginal people is non-genocidal despite overwhelming evidence of systematic and deliberate racialized destruction over several centuries. In contrast, an approach based on ‘genocidal outcomes’ makes it possible to account for complex causality and weak intentionality – that is, for myriad acts mediated by subtle, normalized structures that, together, work to eliminate a people. I want to argue that the same logic applies to nonhuman peoples: the destruction of a life form, its relations with other beings and its possible futures is a genocidal outcome, whether or not intention can be identified. Similarly, Christopher Powell (2007) argues that, since a ‘genos’ is a “network of practical social relations, destruction of a genos means the forcible breaking down of those relationships…these effects could be produced without a coherent intent to destroy. They could result from sporadic and uncoordinated actions whose underlying connection is the production of a new society in which there is simply no room for the genos in question to exist. They might even result from well-meaning attempts to do good” (Powell 2007, 538) As I have argued elsewhere, extinction is defined by the breaking of relations and the systematic destruction of the conditions of plurality that nurture co-flourishing worlds. Whether inflicted out as a deliberate act of extirpation, or as the convergent effect of eliminative logics expressed over centuries and enormous spatial scales, extinction is the destruction of relations and the heterogenous societies they nurture. Understood in this way, ‘extinction’ is not a metaphor for genocide or other forms of large-scale violence: it is a distinct manifestation of genocide. Masking the genocidal logics that drive extinction involves several moves to innocence (Tuck and Yang 2012). Treating extinction as something short of genocide entrenches Eurocentric understandings of personhood that are limited to homo sapiens, which is itself an act of violence against these peoples. Ironically, the entrenchment of this dichotomy also enables the logic of ‘dehumanization’, in which human communities are likened to reviled nonhumans (for instance, cockroaches) in order to motivate violence against them. As I have argued elsewhere (Mitchell 2014), the logic of generalised ‘dehumanisation’ is uniquely effective in Western frameworks in which the lack of ethical status for beings other than humans removes obstacles to their mass destruction. Within worlds in which human and nonhuman persons are linked through complex systems of law, treaties, protocols and long-standing relations, this claim is illogical. Within Western settler states, however, it functions as a means of justifying ongoing violence against Indigenous peoples and their relations. In addition, by framing extinction as a problem for a universal figure of ‘humanity’ (more on this to follow…) mainstream discourses of extinction obscure its profound entwinement with race and racializing structures. These examples make it clear that eliminative violence is targeted on specific groups of people and their other-than-human relations, as defined by the aggressors. Indeed, patterns of genocidal violence extend racializing categories, hierarchies and eliminative impulses to other-than-human peoples. Just as approaching gender violence separately from race effaces their intersection, understanding extinction as distinct from race is deeply misleading. This is not only because racialized people are more likely to suffer from the effects of ‘extinction’ and other forms of environmental racism (which they are). It is also because the eliminative violence that drives extinction extend and enact race beyond the category of homo sapiens by defining particular groups against white settler norms and as threats to the settler society. To approach extinction separately from issues of race is, therefore, to miss one of its most defining features.

#### Prioritize ongoing impacts – magnitude based risk assessment is impossible and can be used to justify any situation or it’s opposite

John Mueller and Mark Stewart, 2011 – John Mueller is Woody Hayes National Security Studies and Professor of Political Science at Ohio State University; Mark Stewart is Professor of Civil Engineering and Director of the Centre for Infrastructure Performance and Reliability at the University of Newcastle in Australia (Terror, Security, and Money: Balancing the Risks, Benefits, and Costs of Homeland Security, p. 14-16

Focusing on Worst-Case Scenarios

Cass Sunstein, who seems to have invented the phrase “probability neglect,” assesses the version of the phenomenon that comes into being when “emotions are intensely engaged.” Under that circumstance, he argues, “people’s attention is focused on the bad outcome itself, and they are inattentive to the fact that it is unlikely to occur.” Moreover, they are inclined to “demand a substantial governmental response—even if the magnitude of the risk does not warrant the response.” 3 It may be this phenomenon that Treverton experienced.

Playing to this demand, government officials are inclined to focus on worst-case scenarios, presumably in the knowledge, following Sunstein’s insight, that this can emotionally justify just about any expenditure, no matter how unlikely the prospect the dire event will actually take place. Accordingly, there is a preoccupation with “low probability/high consequence” events, such as the detonation of a sizable nuclear device in midtown Manhattan. The process could be seen in action in an article published in 2008 by Secretary of Homeland Security (DHS) Michael Chertoff . He felt called upon to respond to the observation that the number of people who die each year from international terrorism, while tragic, is actually exceedingly small. “This fails to consider,” he pointed out, “the much greater loss of life that weapons of mass destruction could wreak on the American people.” 4 That is, he was justifying his entire budget—only a limited portion of which is concerned with weapons of mass destruction (WMD)— by the WMD threat, even while avoiding assessing its likelihood.

 It is sometimes argued that conventional risk analysis breaks down under extreme conditions because the risk is now a very large number (losses) multiplied by a very small number (attack probability). But it is not the risk analysis methodology that is at fault here, but our ability to use the information obtained from the analysis for decision making. A “high-consequence” event has been defined to be a “disaster” or “catastrophe” resulting in “great human costs in life, property, environmental damage, and future economic activity.” 5 However, depending on how one weighs the words in that definition, there may have been only one terrorist event in all of history that qualifies for inclusion. Moreover, the vast bulk of homeland security expenditures is not focused on events that fi t a definition like that, but rather on comparatively low-consequence ones, like explosions set off by individual amateur jihadists.

Analyst Bruce Schneier has written penetratingly of worst-case thinking. He points out that it

involves imagining the worst possible outcome and then acting as if it were a certainty. It substitutes imagination for thinking, speculation for risk analysis, and fear for reason. It fosters powerlessness and vulnerability and magnifies social paralysis. And it makes us more vulnerable to the effects of terrorism.

It leads to bad decision making because

it’s only half of the cost-benefit equation. Every decision has costs and benefits, risks and rewards. By speculating about what can possibly go wrong, and then acting as if that is likely to happen, worst-case thinking focuses only on the extreme but improbable risks and does a poor job at assessing outcomes.

It also assumes “that a proponent of an action must prove that the nightmare scenario is impossible,” and it “can be used to support any position or its opposite. If we build a nuclear power plant, it could melt down. If we don’t build it, we will run short of power and society will collapse into anarchy.” And worst, it “validates ignorance” because, “instead of focusing on what we know, it focuses on what we don’t know—and what we can imagine.” In the process, “risk assessment is devalued” and “probabilistic thinking is repudiated in favor of possibilistic thinking.” 6

# Answers to Alaska Counterplan

### 2AC – Alaska Counterplan

#### 1. Permute: do both. Increasing both Alaskan and federal resources is double solvency.

#### 2. Spending deficit. Alaska can’t afford to do the plan, and they’ll cut vital programs to pay for it. That’s worse for rural Alaska

Alaska Budget, 2025 - a website developed by Commonwealth North's Fiscal Policy Study Group. “Alaska’s Budget Deficit: Breaking Down the Crisis” 5/9

<https://alaskabudget.com/alaskas-budget-deficit-breaking-down-the-crisis/> //DH

Alaska is staring down a deepening budget gap. For fiscal year 2025, the state is looking at a $200 million deficit. By 2026, that hole could balloon past $1.5 billion. While oil revenue bumps and federal aid have created short-term relief, the long-term problems haven’t gone away. Underneath the surface lies a structural imbalance — one that’s been ignored for too long. So what’s really driving this crisis? What are the common misconceptions? And what happens if nothing changes?

Main Causes Behind the Budget Deficit

Alaska’s budget issues aren’t just a matter of bad luck. They stem from long-term dependencies and spending patterns that no longer match the economic reality. Let’s unpack the two biggest culprits.

Dependence on Oil Revenue

Oil remains Alaska’s financial backbone. Roughly 40% of the state’s entire budget depends on oil income. The problem? It’s unpredictable. For every $1 drop in oil prices, the state loses an estimated $35–40 million. That’s a massive hit for a single dollar shift. With global markets fluctuating and fossil fuel demand evolving, basing the budget on oil is like betting your paycheck on the stock market.

Rising Costs of Social Programs

Healthcare, education, and welfare aren’t getting cheaper. Alaska has seen costs for Medicaid and other public services rise sharply, while federal contributions shrink. When federal funding for programs like Medicaid dips, the state has to make up the difference. That’s pushed spending higher without a corresponding increase in revenue. The result? A widening gap between what the government wants to fund — and what it can actually afford.

Popular Myths About the Deficit

Budget crises always come with oversimplified solutions. In Alaska’s case, a few myths keep popping up — but they don’t hold up under scrutiny.

Myth 1: Just Cut the Dividends

Some argue that cutting the Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD) would fix everything. Sure, it might shave off a portion of the deficit, but it’s a temporary patch. More importantly, dividends are a vital source of income for many Alaskans — especially those in rural communities. Reducing or eliminating them would hit those residents the hardest, without addressing the core issue: a budget model built on volatile income.

Myth 2: Raise Taxes and the Problem Disappears

Sounds simple — just tax more. But Alaska is one of the few states without a personal income or statewide sales tax. Introducing new taxes would be a political minefield, and any such move would face serious opposition. There’s also the risk of slowing down economic activity or driving residents and businesses out of the state. In short: taxes might be part of the solution, but they’re not a silver bullet.

The Real-World Impact of Budget Shortfalls

So what happens when a state runs out of money? It’s not just numbers on a spreadsheet — people feel it in their daily lives.

Education gets hit first. Schools are already facing budget tightening. Larger class sizes, fewer programs, and strained resources are becoming the norm.

Healthcare access declines, especially in rural areas. Budget cuts can lead to closures of clinics and hospitals, forcing residents to travel further for basic care — or go without.

Savings get drained. Alaska continues dipping into its reserve funds to fill the gap. That’s like covering rent with your emergency savings — it works for a while, but eventually, you run dry.

These consequences don’t just affect the poor or unemployed. They ripple across the entire state, touching everyone from teachers to small business owners.

#### 3. A sales tax reduces revenue and is regressive, harming rural Alaskan communities more

Jessica Holden Braunlich, 2020 – A capstone project submitted to Johns Hopkins University in conformity with the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts in Public Management “PROGRESSIVE INCOME TAX FOR ALASKA: A PROPOSAL TO HELP ADDRESS THE STATE’S FISCAL CRISIS” December, <https://jscholarship.library.jhu.edu/server/api/core/bitstreams/de4538dd-31a4-4f87-9e2d-ff05843d3d0c/content> //DH

With respect to local communities, an income tax would be fairer than a sales tax would be, particularly when it comes to rural Alaska. More than 100 local jurisdictions in

the state rely heavily on local sales taxes, most of them small (the two largest cities do not have a sales tax).58 Rural Alaska pays significantly more for basics like groceries and fuel than urban Alaska59, and a state sales tax could significantly reduce both spending and local revenues for communities when combined with a local sales tax. On the other hand, a state income tax would reduce the amount of money people have to spend in the economy. Because the reduction in household income would be so much smaller for lowincome (often rural60) families, however, the impact to smaller, rural communities would still likely be smaller with an income tax than a sales tax.

#### 4. Trust deficit. Native Alaskan prefer the federal government due to distrust of the state

Karen Bridges, 1998 – JD, College of William and Mary, “Uncooperative Federalism: The Struggle over Subsistence and Sovereignty in Alaska Continues Sovereignty in Alaska Continues” 19 Pub. Land & Resources L. Rev. 131 (1998) <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1219&context=plrlr> //DH

At the other extreme, many Native Alaskans would prefer to rely on Federal management, which they consider generally more responsive to their communal and cultural subsistence needs than state management.29 The state has not acted decisively in the past to protect local resources from the pressures of non-resident and urban, commercial and sport hunting and fishing, and Natives fear the state would not in the future.30 Natives also see a broad rural priority guaranteed by the federal government as the best protection for their traditional way of life,31 which to them encompasses far more than the mere gathering of food for survival, a purpose Title VIII specifically embraced.32 At minimum, Natives want strong federal oversight of any state subsistence program.

#### 5. Collaboration deficit. State consultation requirements are much weaker

Annika Krafcik, 2024 - Annika Krafcik graduated from UCLA School of Law in May 2024 with specializations in Native Nations Law, Environmental Law, and International & Comparative Law “The Fight Against Graphite: What Tribal Opposition to a Mine in Alaska Teaches Us about The Importance and Limitations of Consultation in the Green Transition” JOURNAL OF ENVIRONMENTAL LAW V42:2, <https://escholarship.org/content/qt3n55r2j8/qt3n55r2j8_noSplash_7ac875d50d34fa76b8b999dc1deafa55.pdf> //DH

Most pressing in the context of Tribal opposition to the Graphite One project is the fact that Tribal consultation requirements are typically only triggered for the federal government when an activity takes place on federal land or when there is a “federal undertaking” such as a Clean Water Act permit, on non-federal land.130 What constitutes a “federal undertaking,” as will be discussed in depth in Section V, is disputed. If there is no federal undertaking on projects on State land, then those projects could be subject to less (and potentially no) federal oversight. Without federal jurisdictional hooks, Tribal consultation requirements disappear or are replaced with the much weaker state consultation policy. Unlike the federal government, States do not have a trust responsibility to Tribes. In fact, historically, State interests are directly at odds with Tribal interests.131 So, even if the State or state agency has a Tribal consultation policy, it should be treated with a grain of salt.132

### 1AR – Spending Deficit

#### New spending priorities will force budget cuts to other programs, specifically the Permanent Fund Dividend. Alaska has no extra money

Eric Stone, 2025 - is Alaska Public Media’s state government reporter “State lawmakers face tough budget choices as faltering oil revenue turns a surplus into a deficit” Alaska Public Media, 2/6, <https://alaskapublic.org/news/politics/alaska-legislature/2025-02-06/state-lawmakers-face-tough-budget-choices-as-faltering-oil-revenue-turns-a-surplus-into-a-deficit> //DH

State lawmakers have tough choices ahead as they look to balance the budget while also pursuing the priorities of the House and Senate’s Democrat-dominated majority caucuses.

That’s according to legislative budget analysts, who recently told House and Senate budget writers that the same old, same old won’t cut it this year.

Back in December, Gov. Mike Dunleavy proposed his version of the budget. It came with a full, statutory Permanent Fund dividend of about $3,800 per Alaskan. It also came with a $1.5 billion deficit — which, as it happens, is about half of the balance in the state’s primary savings account.

Dunleavy’s budget director, Lacey Sanders, told the Senate Finance Committee last month that the governor doesn’t see much choice but to propose mega-dividends, given that the formula remains in state law. But even Sanders said the billion-and-a-half-dollar deficit isn’t ideal.

"The fiscal picture is not looking great when you are depleting over half of it in one year," she said.

Senate Finance Committee co-chair Sen. Bert Stedman, R-Sitka, characteristically, put it a bit more bluntly.

"In private enterprise, it would be called a company-ending event," he said. "In government, it's called, I don't know, stupidity."

Lawmakers haven’t followed the PFD formula for nearly a decade. Since oil prices dipped in the mid-2010s, and a court case in 2017, the Legislature has set the PFD on a basically ad-hoc basis — whatever the state can afford that year.

For the last two years, though, lawmakers have settled on something of an informal formula for setting the PFD amount: 25% of the state’s annual drawdown from the Permanent Fund goes to dividends, with the other 75% going to regular state services like state troopers, roads and public schools.

This year, using that same 75-25 formula would leave the state with a $30 million surplus — basically balanced, but right on the edge. However, that’s before counting some baseline priorities for the Legislature.

After adding in status quo education funding to keep up with one-time funding last year, plus some expected increases in Medicaid expenses and labor contracts, Legislative Finance Division Director Alexei Painter said lawmakers are facing a $197 million deficit in the coming fiscal year's budget.

"You're going to have to either find other budget reductions, reduce the dividend further, or explore new revenue options," Painter told the House Finance Committee last month. "You can't just do that one thing and it's solved, which has worked kind of the last two years."

To be clear — this is not the situation lawmakers thought they would find themselves in when they left town last year. Legislative leaders said they had balanced the budget, and even left a small surplus.

#### The PFD has a substantial effect on reducing poverty for Alaskan Natives

Matthew Berman, 2024 - Institute of Social and Economic Research, University of Alaska Anchorage, Anchorage, USA “A rising tide that lifts all boats: Long-term effects of the Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend on poverty” Poverty & Public Policy, <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/pop4.398> //DH

Although not designed as a social program to redistribute income, the Alaska Permanent Fund Dividend (PFD) has been reducing poverty by providing equal annual payments to nearly all state residents for over 40 years. We examine direct effects of the PFD on Alaska poverty rates since 1990, using US Census and American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample records to adjust for under-reporting of children's PFD income in official statistics. We estimate that the PFD reduced the number of Alaskans with incomes below the US poverty threshold by 20%–40%. We measure only a small effect on income distribution: a 0.02 reduction in the Gini coefficient. The effect of the PFD has been even larger for vulnerable populations. The PFD has reduced poverty rates of rural Indigenous Alaskans from 28% to less than 22%, and has played an important role in alleviating poverty among seniors and children. Aside from the special case of 2020, up to 50% more Alaska children—15% instead of 10%—would be living in poor families without PFD income. The poverty-ameliorating effects of the PFD have lessened somewhat since 2000, as dividend amounts adjusted for inflation have been declining.

#### Alaska is already going to face massive future budget pressure from federal Medicaid cuts. Further budget pressure from the counterplan will devastate tribal health care

Rachel Cassandra and Liz Ruskin, 2025 - Alaska Public Media “How major cuts to Medicaid could be ‘catastrophic,’ even for Alaskans with private insurance” 3/11,

<https://alaskapublic.org/news/health/2025-03-11/how-major-cuts-to-medicaid-could-be-catastrophic-even-for-alaskans-with-private-insurance> //DH

Congress is contemplating huge cuts to Medicaid, the government-funded health insurance program that covers nearly 40% of Alaskans. If federal funding is substantially reduced, many Alaskans could lose their insurance and the strain would be felt throughout the health care system, potentially reducing services and raising costs for Alaskans with other types of insurance, too.

What is Medicaid?

It’s an insurance program for low-income Americans and those with disabilities. The costs are split between the federal government and the state, 50-50 for the regular medicaid program. A few programs, like for pregnant women, have a higher federal match.

As part of the Affordable Care Act, Congress expanded Medicaid to serve people whose income is slightly higher. Alaska adopted the program in 2015. Medicaid expansion now covers 76,000 Alaskans. It has the highest federal match of all Medicaid programs in the state at 90%.

The Childrens’ Health Insurance Program, CHIP, is Medicaid for kids, and in Alaska it’s called Denali KidCare.

How many Alaskans have health insurance through Medicaid?

About 38% of Alaskans, 279,000 people, were on Medicaid in 2024, according to the state’s Department of Health. That includes 57% of Alaska children, 35% of Alaska adults and 15% of Alaska seniors.

Alaska is heavily dependent on the program. Last year, only New Mexico had a greater percentage of its population on Medicaid, and Alaska was a close second.

More than 1 in 3 births in Alaska were covered by Medicaid in 2024, according to the state vital statistics report. That’s partly because of increased eligibility for pregnant and postpartum women.

Most beneficiaries (64%) live in Anchorage, the Mat-Su Borough and in the Interior combined. 36% live outside of those most-populated areas.

How much money does Medicaid in Alaska cost the federal government?

Medicaid spending is a substantial pillar of Alaska’s health care funding. Total spending was $2.7 billion for health care services in Alaska last year, and the state paid just 24% of that, or $634 million. Medicaid costs in the state are also projected to increase over the next two decades.

Jared Kosin, president and CEO of the Alaska Hospital & Healthcare Association, said if Congress makes substantial cuts to Medicaid, the impact on people who use Medicaid in Alaska, as well as the hospitals and providers that serve them, would be enormous.

“It would be catastrophic, not only for the health care system, [but] for Alaskans across our entire state,” Kosin said recently on KFSK in Petersburg.

Almost every corner of the health care system in the state relies heavily on Medicaid. That includes hospitals, clinics and private practice offices, and the tribal health care system.

If Medicaid is cut, what happens to the Alaska beneficiaries?

Depending on how the cuts are rolled out, the state could disenroll categories of people, leaving them without coverage. Or the state could make up the funding difference, but that would be an enormous hit to the state budget, which is already strained. There is no simple way to cut the state’s Medicaid budget without increasing health care costs for the state down the line.

One way to cut the funding that’s been floated is that the expansion program could change from a 90% federal match to a 50% match, the same as regular Medicaid.

Kosin said just that one cut would cost the state millions.

“So if the Feds say, ‘Hey, we're going to roll this back, and we're going to only cover half of Medicaid expansion. You cover the rest,’ that means we'd have to come up with $330 million,” Kosin said.

The latest numbers show the expansion program covers 76,000 Alaskans, over a quarter of the Medicaid population in the state. The expansion population includes a wider swath of Alaskans, including single people and those with incomes slightly above cutoffs for regular Medicaid. Since Alaska introduced the program in 2015, the state has seen unpaid hospital bills decline by almost half.

With major federal cuts, the expansion population could lose coverage entirely. But Kosin said leaving more Alaskans uninsured would be more costly long term. Kosin said all Alaskans would feel the result of those uninsured residents. Wealthier Alaskans may still have a choice of care, but for the uninsured who can’t afford to pay out-of-pocket, their only choice will be ER care.

“Hospital emergency rooms will always serve you,” Kosin said. “We're required by law to do so.”

He said the ER is the most expensive place to receive medical care. Average emergency room bills run in the thousands of dollars, compared to hundreds of dollars for most urgent care or doctors’ visits. And if people can’t afford to pay those bills, they just won’t, driving up the cost of care for all Alaskans, even those with private insurance.

What else might be cut?

The state could cut so-called “optional” Medicaid services, like dental care, vision care or in-home care.

Monique Martin, vice president of intergovernmental affairs for the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, said the services aren’t really optional and cutting them won’t save the state money in the long run.

“Most ‘optional services’ are offered in lieu of a much more expensive mandatory service,” she said.

In-home care, for instance, allows more rural Alaskans to stay in their home towns or villages, instead of having to move to urban areas for live-in care.

Lawmakers have also talked about adding work requirements to Medicaid, which would be a default way to force some people out of the program. But if people aren’t well enough to work and they can’t get health care to get well, it could keep them out of the workforce indefinitely, or, again, keep them from getting care until it’s an emergency.

“If we want people to be productive, we should provide health coverage,” said Valerie Davidson, a former state health commissioner who championed Medicaid expansion under former Gov. Bill Walker. “Because if people can't work, they can't hunt, they can't fish, and they can't learn if they're not healthy enough to do so. Being healthy is a prerequisite to being able to be productive.”

The Trump administration has also discussed incentivizing states to switch to using “block grants” as a way to cap Medicaid spending by state. Davidson said that won’t work well for Alaska because the state doesn’t have a robust and well-established health care infrastructure. And she said rationing care through block grants would cause all the same issues as the other possible cuts, making health care more expensive for all Alaskans in the long term.

Why is Congress considering cutting the program, and what exactly would lawmakers cut?

The U.S. House passed a budget blueprint that calls for cutting a lot of money — $880 billion — from a section of the budget that includes Medicaid. Budget experts say there’s no way to slice that much out of spending without cutting into Medicaid. But we don’t know exactly where the cuts will come from.

It’s worth noting that President Trump and other Republicans have said they won’t cut Medicaid, but that seems to conflict with the House-passed budget resolution.

Is it true that Republicans in Congress are trying to cut Medicaid so that wealthier people can get a tax break?

That’s one way to frame it. The Republicans are trying to enact many of President Trump’s priorities. Among them is the continuation of the 2017 tax cuts, which are about to expire. Extending them increases the deficit by $4.5 trillion. Republicans are looking to make cuts elsewhere to partially offset the cost. The House budget, as written, would still increase the deficit by about $2.5 trillion.

How might major Medicaid cuts impact the whole health care system in Alaska?

The entire health care system in Alaska is dependent on Medicaid funding. For Providence Alaska, it’s 25% of the revenue. At Anchorage Neighborhood Health Clinic, it’s 34%, and the Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium gets about 40% of its income from Medicaid.

Medicaid is hugely important for the tribal health care system.

The Indian Health Service provides less than 15% of ANTHC’s funding, Monique Martin said. Medicaid and Medicare together provide about 70% of payments.

So, in the long term, while experts say big Medicaid cuts likely wouldn’t shut down tribal health care, it would be a huge financial blow.

And if hospitals with emergency rooms have to treat a lot more uninsured patients, they also may not be able to survive.

### 1AR – Taxes Fail

#### Sales tax won’t generate enough revenue and harms Alaska’s economy

Rea S. Hederman Jr, 2019 - executive director of the Economic Research Center and vice president of policy at The Buckeye Institute. “Unsustainable Spending The State of Alaska’s Budget and Economy” 4/17, <https://www.buckeyeinstitute.org/library/docLib/2019-04-17-Unsustainable-Spending-The-State-of-Alaska-s-Budget-and-Economy-policy-report.pdf> //DH

In 2016, the Alaska legislature proposed introducing a new three percent sales tax with exemptions on a variety of goods and services.29 As a type of consumption tax, sales taxes are less distortionary than more disruptive taxes on labor or capital income. The proposed sales tax, however, would still be expected to reduce Alaska’s economic output and lower expected job creation relative to a baseline of a balanced budget.

A static estimate using Alaska’s fiscal notes predicted that the proposed sales tax would generate approximately $244 million in state revenue. Static estimates, however, do not account for how the new tax will influence the behavior of workers, families, and businesses, which will in turn affect the estimated revenues.

By contrast, as shown in Table 1 on the following page, the ERC’s dynamic model accounts for behavioral changes and estimates that under the proposed new sales tax Alaska will see 1,700 fewer jobs created in the first year, trending toward 1,900 fewer jobs created within three years. The more reliable dynamic model also estimates that the proposed sales tax will only generate approximately $200 million in state revenue, or 18 percent less than the static estimate.

#### Taxes slow the economy and shrink the revenue base

Bruce Tangeman, 2025 - Gov. Mike Dunleavy’s first commissioner of the Department of Revenue. “Does Alaska have a revenue problem or spending problem?” Alaska Beacon, 2/3, <https://alaskabeacon.com/2025/02/21/does-alaska-have-a-revenue-problem-or-spending-problem/> //DH

The bottom line is, we have reached a tipping point as it becomes undeniable that our current revenue streams cannot support future spending trends. Our fiscal mindset based on “free” revenue began five decades ago and, for now, we still enjoy a healthy annual PFD. Whether that can or should continue will be a crucial element to any discussion to align revenues with spending.

A recent Division of Legislative Finance presentation was a wake-up call on the steep challenges facing Alaska today. Their analysis highlighted that even a 75/25 Permanent Fund earnings split — 75% for state spending, 25% for PFDs — would leave a $200-plus million deficit before any new spending is considered, such as the hundreds of millions being debated in additional spending for education and pensions. Now that we know even a 75/25 split will not balance our budget, what’s next?

Not exactly a revolutionary statement: Taxes will soon be required to balance our budgets going forward, but it will mean a seismic shift for the Alaskan economy. My deep concern is with the impact on the economy by attempting to extract enough revenue from the working Alaskans through an income and/or sales tax to satisfy our constitutionally required balanced budget.

We are already seeing a net outmigration of working-age Alaskans for economic opportunity elsewhere. And, according to numerous nationwide studies, our state struggles to attract new investment and jobs. It’s now up to our elected leaders to make the hard decisions about the long-term structural changes that must happen. They must take advantage of the runway in front of them or risk having Alaska’s economic train go off the rails.

#### Alaska lacks a large enough tax base for the CP to generate revenue

Bethany L. Marcum, 2019 - Executive Director Alaska Policy Forum . “Unsustainable Spending The State of Alaska’s Budget and Economy” 4/17,

https://www.buckeyeinstitute.org/library/docLib/2019-04-17-Unsustainable-Spending-The-State-of-Alaska-s-Budget-and-Economy-policy-report.pdf //DH

Some have proposed raising taxes to cover current budget shortfalls. But new taxes come with new burdens, for both the taxpayer and the state, including significant administrative costs associated with standing up new bureaucracies. Perhaps Alaska will need to raise taxes someday, but not today. Alaska lacks the proper tax base of businesses and wage earners to sustain higher taxes. The state’s economy is too unstable, its budget too erratic, and its business environment too unpredictable for job creators to seriously consider Alaska and provide the tax base needed for responsible tax increases. Until that changes, policymakers must find another path to a prudent budget and sound economy.

### 1AR – Trust Deficit

#### Alaskan Natives fear state-led projects – the history of state regulation of subsistence hunting proves

David Case, 2010 – staff writer, Cultural Survival “Will Federal or State Management Afford Alaska Natives a More Effective Voice?” Cultural Survival, 3/26

<https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/will-federal-or-state-management-afford-alaska-natives#:~:text=The%20rationale%20for%20this%20position,any%20guide%2C%20they%20are%20right.&text=Case%2C%20David.,Alaska%201989>. //DH

Corporate, commercial, and sports interests in the state have supported a weak constitutional compromise that would have consigned the subsistence preference to the discretion of the Alaska legislature and the existing state fish and game boards. The rationale for this position is often that federal management will mean distant management, influenced by outside environmental and conservation interests. Other Alaska Native regional institutions and tribes fear that state management will mean what it has meant in the past: increasingly individualized and regulated hunting and fishing primarily to protect commercial and sports interests. As the population of Alaska grows, the influence of these interests will only get stronger. Alaska Natives and other rural residents fear that where Native rights and culture are pitted against states rights and the culture of the individual, Native rights and cultures will lose. If history is any guide, they are right.

#### Community trust is empirically pivotal to successful wind and solar projects

Ben Anderson et al, 2023 - National Renewable Energy Laboratory, this report is based on interviews with six Arctic communities in Alaska, most are Native. “Distributed Renewables for Arctic Energy: A Case Study” January, <https://alaskarenewableenergy.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/Distributed-Renewables-for-Arctic-Energy.pdf> //DH

3.2 Human Capital Needs

Community buy-in and ownership is essential. Projects must be community-driven and supported, with community members understanding and participating in the value proposition of moving to a stronger reliance on renewable energy. It is critical to include and receive buy-in from key stakeholders like utility managers, operators, project champions, and local government officials. Beyond project development, community engagement must be ongoing, and continue after the project is deployed to maintain community support and ownership. Long-term engagement is an essential element of sustainability. For example, a strong community focus enabled a successful project in Kongiganak: the community trained and retained a local workforce, built community trust through presentations in village meetings, and received community leader and tribal council support. In Galena, hiring and training an all-local workforce provided enhanced job satisfaction, increased local capacity, and strengthened the community overall.

Proposed systems should be commensurate with the training, education, and availability of the local workforce. The use of community-appropriate technology reduces system failures and the community’s dependence on long-term, expensive, external assistance. Local capacity should determine how simple or complex the system should be, and what assets it can include. Robust operations and maintenance plans must be considered from the start. Communities have found that small, easy-to-maintain pilot systems with solar photovoltaics (PV), batteries, and/or wind can be a good stepping stone to larger, more complex systems with higher contributions of renewable energy. Community-based technical capacity may be increased over time through community education and expanded experience from operating power systems. Many communities have been successful in engaging local youth, with energy providers gaining traction by speaking through credible, community-based educators. In Kotzebue, installing small wind turbines provided the technical capacity for subsequent installations of much larger wind turbines, batteries, and solar PV systems. In Galena, a focus on community education and training allowed the community to perform increasing portions of system maintenance locally and has enabled it to set its sights on future solar projects.

Having a regional or statewide pool of support resources increases the likelihood of success. Having a network of knowledgeable people actively engaged in operating projects, such as an energy cooperative, that can provide targeted education or technical knowledge, increases the likelihood of project success, and can allow communities to install systems that they may not be able to support on their own. Allowing a process for communities to access this network will streamline the renewable energy development process including planning, financing, installation, and operations. Such a network is especially helpful for small communities with limited human capital. A face-to-face knowledge sharing network would increase the number and success rate of community projects. Kongiganak is part of the Chaninik Wind Group (CWG), which helps secure wind energy project funding, shares training expenses, builds local capacity, and reduces energy costs. The CWG has built projects in each of its member communities, leveraging the capacity built from each successful project.

### 1AR – Collaboration Deficit

#### Collaboration is a prerequisite to solvency. Adoption and maintenance of renewables requires community self determination, it can’t be imposed from above

R. McMaster, 2024 – Department of Geography and Planning, 117 Science Place, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatoon “Assessing local capacity for community appropriate sustainable energy transitions in northern and remote Indigenous communities” Renewable and Sustainable Energy Reviews, Volume 191, March 2024, <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S1364032123010900> //DH

First, building capacity for community energy transition starts with people, not technology [102], and the end goal for many Indigenous communities extends beyond affordable and secure energy to include energy sovereignty and self-determination [9,11]. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples recognizes Indigenous peoples' right to self-determination, including the right to “freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.” Self-determination necessarily implies policy and planning shifts toward greater authority in the institutions that enable Indigenous peoples to pursue such rights [103]. This includes the development and use of resources and the delivery of public services and, arguably, the development and ownership of local energy. Hoicka et al. [18], for example, report that the motivations for Indigenous communities pursuing local energy projects typically include socio-economic development opportunities, and the pursuit of self-sufficiency and autonomy. As such, Stefanelli et al. [56] argue that many communities are engaging in local, renewable energy development projects as a means to assert self-determination, and “gain long-term sustainable benefits from economic development projects” as recognized under Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action [104]. At the same time, current vertically integrated energy systems, characterized by central utilities and government ownership pose significant constraints to community empowerment to pursue alternative energy futures [109]. Understanding these deeper and longer-term goals for energy transition, coupled with new opportunities for more flexible energy ownership and generation models, provides communities and energy planners with a more nuanced understanding of local capacity limits, needs, and opportunities to pursue renewable energy as a pathway to social and political objectives.

### They Say: “Constitutional Budget Reserve”

#### CBR money will be drained now due to the current deficit

Dermont Cole, 2025 – Alaskan newspaper columnist “Dunleavy's giant deficit puts state on trajectory to spend savings down to zero in two years” 4/18, https://www.dermotcole.com/reportingfromalaska/2025/4/18/j5y1olvuk89axnxw8c2yw24oti5aoo

On December 12, 2024 Gov. Mike Dunleavy proposed a budget with a giant $1.5 billion to $2 billion deficit, which would have to be filled with half or more of the remaining balance in the Constitutional Budget Reserve.

Outside the Permanent Fund, the Constitutional Budget Reserve, now listed at $2.8 billion, is about all that is left. This is the unspoken emergency in our state government.

When Dunleavy first became governor he claimed he had a “permanent fiscal plan” and he promised he would never propose to spend “massive amounts of savings” to pay for the state budget.

“Those days are over. We can no longer spend what we don’t have, and we can’t pretend otherwise,” Dunleavy said in a press release on February 11, 2019.

“The foundation of my budget is based on the principle that expenditures cannot exceed revenues,” Dunleavy said, claiming his would always be an “honest budget.”

What Dunleavy has been offering for years now—big dividends, no major spending reductions, no taxes and a giant draw on savings—is thoroughly dishonest.

On Thursday, Dunleavy snarled his way through a press conference in which he failed to take any responsibility for planning to spend $2 billion more than the state is taking in—pushing the state toward a real crisis by the time his term ends.

#### Cuts to federal spending and declining oil prices mean Alaska will need to use the CBR to manage fiscal crisis

Eric Stone, 2025 – reporter for Alaska Public Media “Alaska Senate approves budget with $1,000 PFD amid warnings of lean times to come” Alaska Public Media 5/9

<https://www.kyuk.org/politics/2025-05-09/alaska-senate-approves-budget-with-1-000-pfd-amid-warnings-of-lean-times-to-come> //DH

In an effort to avoid using the state’s $2.8 billion savings account, the Constitutional Budget Reserve, senators stripped out nearly every budget increase requested by the governor and those approved by the House in its version of the budget last month.

In total, the Senate’s version of the budget is $350 million less than was approved by the House, and $1.7 billion less than Gov. Mike Dunleavy proposed, according to the Legislature’s nonpartisan budget analysts.

“Now is the time to preserve our rainy-day fund for the coming storm,” Hoffman said.

Winds from that coming storm are already buffeting the current year’s budget.

One particularly stiff headwind is the worsening outlook for oil prices. As of May 5, a barrel of Alaska North Slope crude went for $65.63, according to the Alaska Department of Revenue, below the $68 figure state forecasters said they expected in their March revenue forecast.

And it’s not looking like that headwind will let up anytime soon. The federal Energy Information Administration, in a forecast released May 5, said it expected oil prices to fall further due in part to slowing global economic growth fueled by President Donald Trump’s tariffs. A boost in OPEC production is expected to push prices down further. And though Trump has sought to expand oil production in Alaska, that’s not likely to provide relief in the short term, since drillers’ capital investments count against their tax bills.

State officials warned Hoffman and other legislative budgeters that prices could average as low as $64 a barrel in the coming fiscal year, Hoffman said.

Another headwind Hoffman identified is federal spending. The federal government is the biggest single source of state revenue.

“The state's budget has over $6 billion in federal revenues that help pay for many services, from Medicaid and heating assistance, to fish and game research and K-12 education,” Hoffman said.

Even a 5% cut to federal spending would leave the budget reeling, Hoffman said.

“Time will sort out what funds are cut in Washington, [D.C.],” Hoffman said. “If only 5% of the federal revenues are cut to the $6 billion that we receive, that would leave an impact of over $300 million to our budget.”

# Answers to Green Colonialism Critique

### 2AC – Green Colonialism

#### Framework: The negative has the burden of rejoinder by proving there’s a unique opportunity cost to the plan. Two impacts:

#### FAIRNESS. Setting a lower standard for the link or the alternative is unfair judging, which you should reject on principle.

#### CLASH. Lower burdens of rejoinder encourage avoiding the controversy in favor of “you-link-you-lose” frameworks or unpredictable utopian alts that affs can’t effectively prep for. Centering competition on the plan refines critique by encouraging engagement.

#### CLASH TURNS THE K. Focusing on the epistemic consequences of the plan over the material ones weakens anticolonial struggle.

David Meyer Temin, 2024 - Department of Political Science, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, Ann Arbor “A decolonial wrong turn: Walter Mignolo's epistemic politics” Contellations, March 2025, p. 139-153, Wiley //DH

The goals of more radical union membership and anticolonial movements must be to present compelling political–economic alternatives based on massive decarbonization. This means reorienting non-Indigenous working people toward the ways that their freedom and well-being also depend—albeit differently than Indigenous peoples themselves—upon securing and enhancing Indigenous sovereignty (Klein, 2014, pp. 398−407). To be sure, such union leaders and some rank-and-file union members certainly do participate in the pervasive colonial epistemic erasure of Indigenous peoples and the perpetuation of intensely gendered forms of colonial violence when they seek to construct new pipeline infrastructures to secure their livelihoods. I want to suggest, however, that is not obvious at all that critical political theorists should primarily (let alone, only) foreground this colonial epistemic arrogance per se as the primary obstacle to an alternative anticolonial coalition praxis. Indeed, a key goal of worldly anticolonialism would be to reconfigure this framing of the political situation at hand, by imagining more robust and compelling affinities, if not convergences, between projects of decolonization and decarbonization that would enhance the well-being of people and the planet.9

This is so because politics requires persuasion and organizing that can reorient the interests and horizon-making capacities of political subjects. The obstacles to this are not simply epistemic in the sense of diagnosing and deconstructing colonial worldviews. Instead, they are rooted in real interests, fears, hopes, and so on that make decolonization unsettling and fraught—anxiety-provoking—for those with power and for those without it but who see no other path beyond current arrangements of power (Bosworth & Chua, 2021). Such investments are both more stubborn and more mediated by genuine political conflict than the epistemological mechanisms that Mignolo proposes to dislodge.

To be sure, I would agree with Mignolo were he to suggest in response that colonial epistemic logics are clearly at work in the political situation I have described here. No one has to look far to find the frequent racist representations of denigrated Indigenous “tradition” as an obstacle to “progress” taking the form of ever-more environmentally ruinous fossil fuel extraction (Mignolo, 2010a, p. 326). Nevertheless, there is no necessary relationship between the diagnosis of such colonial logics and the aspirations that drive many modalities of critique (including anticolonial critique) to grasp the possibilities of transformation inherent in struggles over possible futures. Put bluntly, forcing open those alternative possibilities will not come from epistemic disobedience. It will more likely unfold through impure, “unlikely alliances” that bind together interested constituencies who come to imagine an “otherwise” to carbon-intensive colonial capitalism from different entry points. This might happen by reconfiguring their constitutive identities and “interests” via mobilization and new forms of solidarity—that is, through politics.10

#### Mining is improving and stopping it would ruin the lives of the world’s poorest

Bill McKibben, 2023 - Schumann Distinguished Scholar at Middlebury College, Fellow of the American Academy of Arts and Sciences “To Save the Planet, Should We Really Be Moving Slower?” The New Yorker, 7/5, <https://www.newyorker.com/news/daily-comment/to-save-the-planet-should-we-really-be-moving-slower> //DH

The problems of green tech may be somewhat easier to address. At the moment, about half the world’s cobalt comes from Congo, and up to a fifth of it is mined “artisanally,” which is to say by hand, in small pits—child labor is not uncommon in a practice that has been called “modern-day slavery.” But, as advocates and journalists have reported those stories (Amnesty International released a pair of key studies), change has begun to happen. The Business and Human Rights Center set up a “transition minerals tracker” to investigate supply chains; it’s building on work done in Congo on the “3TG conflict minerals” (tin, tantalum, tungsten, and gold), which were being used to support warring factions in the region’s conflicts. Donations have built five schools for children who used to be employed in the mines; after tech companies were sued last fall, Microsoft’s chief of staff for tech and corporate responsibility visited Congo in December to declare that the company would help build a coalition to monitor mining. Tesla has been trying to switch away from cobalt in its car batteries, out of fears both for its supply chain and its image—a move that also puts pressure on the mining industry to improve practices. “If we get this wrong, cobalt probably will cease to be in batteries in twenty years’ time,” the head of communications at the Cobalt Institute said this winter. Mark Dummett, Amnesty International’s director of business, security, and human rights, said, “These are examples of how companies and the government are looking for ways to make artisanal mining safe and responsible and fair. Maybe they haven’t got there yet, but they’re heading in the right direction.” He also notes that simply doing away with artisanal cobalt mining would cut “a lifeline for millions of the world’s poorest people, [so] we don’t want to see it outlawed.”

#### Fossil fuels are worse

Timothy Q. Donaghy et al, 2023 - Senior Research Specialist at Greenpeace “Fossil fuel racism in the United States: How phasing out coal, oil, and gas can protect communities” Energy Research & Social Science Volume 100, June 2023 Science Direct //DH

Essential to the development of the fossil fuel economy have been the creation of sites of concentrated harm. Pulido [29] outlines that, in general, manufacturing and industry require ‘sinks’ — typically land, air, water, or racially devalued bodies where pollution can be deposited. More specifically, fossil fuels require “sacrifice zones” [48] – places that are heavily polluted or damaged by industry activities, and whose inhabitants are subject to elevated health risks, for the “supposed greater good of economic progress” [49]. The global fossil fuel industry creates multiple such sacrifice zones, often geographically distant from each other, but linked together by global fossil fuel supply chains.

#### Permute do both. The perm solves; collaborative decision-making under indigenous-led governance acknowledges colonialism’s political role and only provides assistance when requested

Sarah Kehler and S. Jeff Birchall, 2025 – \*Ph.D. student at the University of Alberta; her general area of study is Urban and Regional Planning. She is currently a research assistant with the Climate Adaptation and Resilience Lab, AND \*\*Associate Professor of Urban and Regional Planning in the Department of Earth and Atmospheric Sciences, University of Alberta, where he serves as Director of the Climate Adaptation and Resilience Lab. “Why history matters to planning: Climate change, colonialism & maladaptation” Environmental Science & Policy Volume 169, July 2025, Science Direct //DH **MPDs = Maladaptive path dependencies**

Understanding planning history – one often deeply rooted in colonialism – is therefore a key aspect of addressing adaptation today (Porter et al., 2017, Sandercock, 2004). Colonialism continues to take many forms globally with systemic impacts. Settler colonialism – where colonial states appropriate Indigenous Land, displace Indigenous Communities, and replace Indigenous Culture with settlers' – has played a unique role in planning history (Barry et al., 2018). Planning institutions, such as private property and development priorities, now globally employed, were initially shaped by settler colonialism’s focus on erasure, replacement, and permanent settlement to facilitate upward wealth transfer (Alexander, 2010, Moreton-Robinson, 2015, Sandercock, 1998, Sandercock, 2004). Today, capitalism functions as a driving force of colonial wealth transfer on a global scale, perpetuating resource extraction, land commodification and community displacement (Porter, 2017; Tlostanova, 2017; Coulthard, 2014). This history has left behind distinct maladaptive path dependencies (MPDs) that continue to constrain planning decisions and adaptation today.

Why does adaptation often fail to effectively address vulnerability? There is an increasing body of research dedicated to exploring answers to this question (e.g., Benevolenza and DeRigne, 2018; Cinner et al., 2018; Eriksen et al., 2021; Field, 2018; Malik and Ford, 2024; Naylor et al., 2020; Teebken, 2024). Here we further explore this question, employing a post-structural and critical theory lens to elucidate MPDs as a potential link across adaptation research and planning history. Crucially, this framework enables exploration of how maladaptation and settler colonialism are intrinsically linked through MPDs, and how this ultimately constrains adaptation planning. Lastly, we delve into alternative paths offered through Indigenous worldviews, the importance of biocultural relationships to adaptation, and decision-making barriers that prevent a shift away from MPDs.

The authors of this paper sit within substantial privilege as settlers and academics. They are informed through multidisciplinary backgrounds across environmental science, urban policy and planning, climate change resilience and economics, and cultural geography. The impacts of colonialism and climate change on Indigenous Peoples have been, and continue to be, immeasurable. Our intentions are never to summarize or act as an authority on this subject. Rather, our intention is to leverage our own privilege to increase awareness on how, despite tokenistic attempts at reconciliation, colonial MPDs continue to direct planning decision-making. As advocated by Latulippe and Klenk (2020), this is an attempt to “make room” and invite further collaboration on decolonizing adaptation research. We aim to, by juxtaposing colonial and Indigenous land management practices, expose the ongoing failures within the colonial planning regime and its impact on adaptation.

Often adaptation is perceived as an issue of how society should change, yet the preponderance of maladaptation suggests that a more pertinent question is – what needs to change and why isn’t it changing?

2. Maladaptive path dependencies

Climate change adaptation in theory often paints a utopian image: abundant green infrastructure, effective public transportation, diverse economies, scarce poverty and equitable public engagement. Here, decision-making benefits the well-being of all, by addressing both the physical and social sources of vulnerability. However, only through transformation of social institutions, decision-making regimes and infrastructure can this vision become reality – a task requiring careful planning (Barnett et al., 2015, Wilson et al., 2020). Yet, a considerable gap exists between understanding adaptation in theory and its implementation in practice (Rogers et al., 2023). Below we explore the consequences and potential sources of this gap.

2.1. Maladaptation

Planning for climate change adaptation is most effective when resilience is fostered prior to impacts occurring, making long-term strategic policy an ideal means to address anticipatory adaptation (Field, 2018, Noblet and Brisson, 2017, Tyler and Moench, 2012). However, many communities, overwhelmed by the sheer cost and magnitude of future adaptation demands, lack consistent public support and bureaucratic efficiencies necessary to plan for and implement adaptation (Bowden et al., 2019, Dale et al., 2020, Shi, 2019, Singh and Birchall, 2019). Delayed decision-making often results in planning that is ineffective, slow or lacking adaptation (Cinner et al., 2018, Eriksen et al., 2021; IPCC, 2022; Kehler and Birchall, 2021). Without deliberate planning, unintended consequences can lead to maladaptation, when adaptation measures result in increased risk and vulnerability to climate change (Birchall et al., 2022a, Bonnett and Birchall, 2020). In practice, adaptations, when they occur, consist largely of mitigating physical exposure through expensive gray infrastructure, such as sea walls (Bonnett and Birchall, 2020). More often than not, adaptation is reactionary, occurring after a climate-related event when local governments are overwhelmed by recovery needs (Birchall et al., 2021, Bonnett and Birchall, 2020, Siders, 2017). Hard infrastructure adaptations may provide a tangible barrier to oncoming change, yet they also encourage new development in hazardous areas, foster public complacency to climate risks, and increase long-term risk and maintenance costs (Kehler and Birchall, 2023). While there is unequivocal need for occasional reactionary infrastructure adaptations, reliance on only this approach (and discounting community or infrastructure resilience) is leading to maladaptation.

There is a theoretical understanding that conventional adaptation approaches are not sufficient. In general, resilience is best approached through a dynamic socio-ecological systems approach that weaves together both people and place (Davoudi et al., 2013, Tyler and Moench, 2012). Anticipatory soft adaptation tends to be more effective at mitigating physical vulnerability, as it shifts human behavior to reduce exposure and increase resilience before an extreme event occurs. This can be achieved, for example, through strict land-use bylaws in hazardous areas or by bolstering ecosystem services (Bonnett and Birchall, 2020; IPCC, 2022). Community resilience, built through policy that deliberately addresses low adaptive capacity, can facilitate equitable decision-making and address the social and economic factors that perpetuate vulnerability (Cinner et al., 2018, Field, 2018). However, equitable use of these approaches is not yet widespread.

2.2. Adaptation & path dependence

To avoid maladaptation, climate change adaptation, above all, must be contextually appropriate (Eriksen et al., 2021). Climate change impacts and a community’s perception of them are unique to that place and time; therefore, an adaptation approach that works in one place is not guaranteed to work in another (Tyler and Moench, 2012). Local adaptation approaches can vary significantly: Culture, values, access to resources, and exposure to climate stressors influence how local governments plan for adaptation (Adger and Barnett, 2009, Cinner et al., 2018). Yet, the source of this diversity is often found in local history. Historical context impacts how a community chooses to adapt through path dependency (Cameron, 2012, Van Assche et al., 2022b).

In governance, path dependencies form over time as institutions around land-use and political actors co-evolve to shape the landscape around them (Van Assche et al., 2018). This co-evolutionary process is cyclical and self-reinforcing, for better or worse. Land-use decisions are made through formal institutions (such as policy), which reflect the informal institutions (such as social norms) of the political actors that make them. In turn, the landscape itself begins to reflect and perpetuate the worldviews of dominant actors, historical informal institutions are legitimized through formal policy, and the path dependency persists.

As communities scramble to adapt to climate change, MPDs suppress necessary transformation. Past planning decisions constrain decision-making capacity, reinforce institutions and maintain historical status quo. Historical events and planning decisions engender long-term, and often negative, impacts on local resilience, manifesting unique local adaptation challenges (Van Assche et al., 2022a). Often, past land-use decisions assumed perpetual ecological stability and, as climate change worsens, old development resides in a newly hazardous area; these short-sighted decisions compound vulnerability and constrain effective adaptation (Birchall et al., 2025). Adaptation decisions tend to be maladaptive, serving to justify historical approaches through short-term economic productivity, rather than foster long-term resilience (Kehler and Birchall, 2023).

Systems of governance often lack the necessary capacity to address such complex spatial and temporal issues, and so MPDs deepen (Birchall et al., 2023, Ford and King, 2013). Indeed, centralized, hierarchical governance and top-down decision-making restrict local capacity to adapt contextually (Bousema et al., 2022, Williams et al., 2020). Moreover, legislative discretion in formal policy facilitates inaction through blame avoidance and subjective risk perception (Birchall and Kehler, 2023). Consequently, political priorities such as short-term economic development (which lower taxes and secure votes), take precedence over adaptation, and maintain informal institutions that perpetuate inaction (Andrew, 2008, Kniveton et al., 2015, Truong and Truck, 2016).

2.3. The burden of colonialism in adaptation planning

While there has been an exclusion of colonialism from adaptation research, there is increasing, yet sporadic, awareness of its role as a source of climate vulnerability and constraint on adaptation planning (Cameron, 2012; Leal Filho et al., 2022; Tran et al., 2021; Van Assche et al., 2022b). There is, however, a much larger breadth of knowledge on the legacy of settler colonialism as a barrier to good planning: It endures through infrastructure, planning and governance processes, and frames the way individuals interact with the world around them (Kunstler, 1993, Osborne, 2013, Porter et al., 2017, Sandercock, 2004). By leveraging MPDs, it is possible to connect research on colonialism and climate change adaptation, enabling a better understanding of the institutional and physical landscapes that perpetuate vulnerability today.

As settler colonialism was largely driven by extraction of local resources (such as timber, minerals, animal pelts, etc.), Indigenous Peoples were displaced or assimilated to enable settlements in resource-rich areas (Barry et al., 2018, Moreton-Robinson, 2015). At the time, planning was a tool wielded to impose colonial institutions (e.g., private property rights, deontological ethics and hierarchical governance systems) onto stolen land, and to build infrastructure networks that enable upward wealth transfer (Alexander, 2010, Moreton-Robinson, 2015, Sandercock, 1998, Sandercock, 2004). Ultimately, this process required a string of unfathomable wrongs – including land dispossession, cultural genocide, Indigenous Knowledge erasure – which formed a colonial MPD that planning continues to grapple with today (e.g., Barry et al., 2018, Hibbard, 2022, Porter, 2004, Sandercock, 2004).

Despite the “end” of traditional settler colonialism, it is ongoing and remains the primary path dependency of western communities. Informal colonial institutions covertly drive maladaptive decision-making, subsisting as a worldview and system of governance (Sandercock, 2004). These institutions persist despite frequent conflict with planning initiatives (Campbell et al., 2014, Kehler and Birchall, 2021). Colonial land and resource management practices contribute significantly to anthropogenic climate change, yet remain deeply embedded in planning theory and decisio n-making (Cameron, 2012; Cameron et al., 2021; Sandercock, 2004). Communities and infrastructure systems were built for, and continue to rely on, the resource extraction and wealth transfer that drove early settler colonialism (Birchall et al., 2022b, Van Assche et al., 2022b). To expedite resource extraction from appropriated land, formal systems of colonial decision-making evolved as top-down, hierarchical and siloed (Mauro and Hardison, 2000, Zurba et al., 2019). This form of decision-making facilitates fixed goals of exponential wealth transfer, stripping profit from the communities that generate it, while also leaving them with the exponential cost of maintaining inadequate infrastructure (Birchall and Kehler, 2023, Thomas and Twyman, 2006). Facing such challenges, short-term economic pressures lock planning processes into further land appropriation for resource extraction and development, thus perpetuating MPDs indefinitely (Barry et al., 2018, Birchall and Kehler, 2023, Moreton-Robinson, 2015, Tugjamba et al., 2021).

3. Alternate paths

Colonial systems of land and resource management have severed connections between people and place, perpetuating MPDs, by shaping the landscape to reflect anthropocentric worldviews (Battiste, 2005, Nygren, 1999, Tlostanova, 2017). Beyond the colonial status quo and amidst vast diversity, Indigenous worldviews facilitate countless holistic perspectives of knowing and understanding place (Dallman et al., 2013, James, 2014, Tlostanova, 2017). Critically, for adaptation, this provides an opportunity to explore alternate approaches to informal and formal social institutions, resource management systems and knowledge systems that predate the current colonial MPD (Mcmillen et al., 2014, Redvers et al., 2020). Indigenous worldviews offer critical insights into adaptation by emphasizing relational governance, ecological stewardship, and context-specific resilience building through biocultural relationships and adaptive learning (Davidson-Hunt and Berkes, 2003, Redvers et al., 2020).

3.1. Biocultural relationships for adaptive learning

Indigenous understanding of variability within socio-ecological systems offers a nuanced perspective on climate change and adaptation (Cameron et al., 2021, Mcmillen et al., 2014, Tugjamba et al., 2021). Holistic perspectives of socio-ecological frameworks provide both a better understanding of ecological systems and facilitate sustainable practices and values (Brondízio et al., 2021). Critically, for adaptation planning, this perspective reveals how biocultural relationships between people and place facilitate adaptive learning.

Biocultural relationships are formed through a deep and personal relationship with all living and non-living things (Leal Filho et al., 2022, Redvers et al., 2020). This relationship begins by acknowledging the complex system of interdependencies between sacred and secular realms, accepting humanity’s place within it, and valuing, above all, reciprocity through a land-based ethic (Redvers et al., 2020). Emotional connections to place provide an intimate understanding of the interconnectedness of people and place within socio-ecological systems (Tugjamba et al., 2021).

Biocultural relationships facilitate adaptive learning, a unique knowledge building process that, through short-feedback systems between knowledge generation and social institutions, is tightly coupled with decision-making (Davidson-Hunt and Berkes, 2003). Indigenous Knowledge is contextual, intergenerational and inherently adaptive within socio-ecological systems (Davidson-Hunt and Berkes, 2003, Leal Filho et al., 2022). In constant co-evolution with Indigenous Knowledge, Indigenous institutions facilitate adaptive learning and produce a resource management system that quickly responds to environmental change (Davidson-Hunt and Berkes, 2003). Indigenous institutions, not strictly formal or informal as in colonial governance, are built within biocultural relationships, prioritizing ecological stewardship and a bottom-up, adaptive approach to decision-making (Brondízio et al., 2021, Tugjamba et al., 2021).

The short-feedback systems within adaptive learning provide a regionally contextual understanding of, and response to, the socio-ecological effects of environmental variability (Mcmillen et al., 2014). However, adaptive learning is not a response to the environment, but rather a personal, emotional process that emerges as one journeys with the land (Davidson-Hunt and Berkes, 2003). Adaptive learning is not a means of applying or creating knowledge in a scientific sense, but rather the outcome of a healthy relationship with place.

3.2. Making “use” of adaptive learning

The knowledge produced through adaptive learning is deeply contextual, relational, and rooted in biocultural relationships, which substantially enhance community resilience and adaptive capacity (Mcmillen et al., 2014). In fact, in many cases, Indigenous Knowledge has offered profound insights into complex ecosystems, shaped by generations of adaptive learning and interdependence with the land (Fernández-Llamazares et al., 2021, Reyes-García and Benyei, 2019). However, Indigenous Knowledge is not a set of discrete skills or data that can be slotted into existing western planning frameworks, and consequently, efforts to recreate, extract or appropriate this knowledge have been largely unsuccessful (Latulippe and Klenk, 2020).

Informal colonial institutions that disrupt biocultural relationships and perpetuate MPDs also constrain Indigenous Knowledge inclusion in planning decisions. Knowledge "co-production" is extractive, allowing colonial resource management to further development goals by appropriating and misrepresenting Indigenous Knowledge (Latulippe and Klenk, 2020). Anthropocentric perceptions of nature misunderstand the role of biocultural relationships in adaptive learning and discount the importance of Indigenous institutions (Whyte and Cuomo, 2017). Design of the built environment inherently separates humans and nature – reflecting colonial perceptions of progress as linear, hierarchical and segregated – extinguishing the validity of holistic worldviews and forcing assimilation into this status quo (James, 2014, Tlostanova, 2017, Van Assche et al., 2014). Overwhelmingly, planning such spaces prioritizes development for economic goals and efficiency, at the cost of public well-being (Kehler and Birchall, 2023, Tsoukala, 2011). Consequently, human-made spaces reflect this position, re-engineering complex and interconnected natural spaces into a rigid and organized socio-ecological system that inherently lacks resilience and suppresses biocultural relationships (Davoudi et al., 2013, James, 2014). Irrevocably, anthropocentric colonial perspectives of place perpetuate the technocratic, reactionary approaches to adaptation that underlay maladaptation.

Appropriating and injecting Indigenous Knowledge into colonial systems for adaptation will fail. For adaptation, the value of Indigenous Knowledge does not stem from discrete historical data, but rather from understanding the world through biocultural relationships (Fernández-Llamazares et al., 2021, Mcmillen et al., 2014). Yet, informal colonial institutions continue to erase the Indigenous history, worldviews and institutions that biocultural relationships foster (Latulippe and Klenk, 2020). Therefore, without Indigenous Leadership and consent, the potential for adaptive learning is lost.

To truly make “use” of adaptive learning there must be a deep and concerted effort to decolonize planning institutions, infrastructure and governance. Indeed, there is an understanding that colonialism, and planning’s part in it, is unethical, and efforts are being made to “unsettle” planning theory (Barry et al., 2018, Watson, 2003). However, mirroring issues within Indigenous Knowledge inclusion, settler colonial MPDs shroud the depth of the issue and attempts to decolonize have been unsuccessful. For example, the Indigenous right to self-determination, as required by the UN declaration of Indigenous rights, has largely gone unrecognized across North America (French et al., 2020, United Nations, 2008). While many countries have set clear goals for reconciliation, Canada, for example, has consistently failed to meet its own expectations and, all too frequently in planning decisions, development priorities take precedence over ongoing Indigenous injustices (Van Assche et al., 2022b, The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Deep colonialism – where informal colonial institutions are embedded in formal decolonizing institutions (Rose, 1996) – renders planning processes unable to “unsettle.” White supremacy, privilege and token allyship perpetuate colonial dynamics and unfulfilled obligations (Porter, 2004, Regan, 2010), while conflicting rationalities and colonial planning regimes intertwine to maintain this status quo indefinitely (Alexander, 2010, Watson, 2003).

3.3. Community-led pathways to address MPDs

For communities, addressing the systemic and structural nature of MPDs remains a challenge, yet it is not impossible. By setting aside economic priorities and development goals in planning decision-making, it is possible to redefine success beyond material or economic terms and prioritize the primary planning ambition: the well-being of entire communities. To do so would challenge all settler planners to “make room and move over” by co-creating inclusive spaces for Indigenous Leadership and Governance (Latulippe and Klenk, 2020). A critical first step is passing, and upholding, local bylaws or policies that formally recognize Indigenous Sovereignty and treaty-rights.

Beyond this, communities (both rural and urban) must avoid extraction or appropriation of Indigenous Knowledge. Practical actions could include allocating funding for Indigenous-led community initiatives and mandating the inclusion of Indigenous planners, consultants and knowledge-holders in all community planning projects. To center biocultural relationships in local decision-making, Indigenous-led land stewardship boards with decision-making authority could be established. Above all, ‘using’ adaptive learning to address MPDs necessitates non-Indigenous planners cede authority and collaborate under Indigenous Leadership, recognizing their role, not as equals, but as participants in an Indigenous-led planning process.

#### The link is a pessimism trap that understands the settler state as immutable. That demobilizes Indigenous resistance

Sheryl R. Lightfoot, 2020 - Canada Research Chair of Global Indigenous Rights and Politics and Assistant Professor in both First Nations and Indigenous Studies and Political Science at the University of British Columbia “The Pessimism Traps of Indigenous Resurgence” Pessimism in International Relations, Springer Nature Link //DH

Concerning the state in relation to Indigenous peoples on the international level, Corntassel argues that states and global organisations, for years, have been consistently framing Indigenous peoples’ self-determination claims in ways that ‘jeopardize the futures of indigenous communities’.31 He claims that states first compartmentalise Indigenous self-determination by separating lands and resources from political and legal recognition of a limited autonomy. Second, he notes, states sometimes deny the existence of Indigenous peoples living within their borders. Thirdly, a political and legal entitlement framing by states deemphasises other responsibilities. Finally, he claims that states, through the rights discourse, limit the frameworks through which Indigenous peoples can seek self-determination. Like Alfred and Coulthard, Corntassel has concluded that states are deliberate and never changing in their behaviour. With this move, Corntassel limits and actually demeans Indigenous agency, overlooking the reality that Indigenous organisations themselves chose the human rights framework and rights discourse as a target sphere of action precisely because, as was evident in earlier struggles like slavery, civil rights or women’s rights, these were tools available to them that had a proven track record of opening up new possibilities and shifting previous state positions and behaviour. Indigenous advocates also cleverly realised, by the 1970s, that the anti-discrimination and decolonisation frames could be used together against states. States did, in no way, nefariously impose a rights framework on Indigenous peoples. Rather, Indigenous organisations and savvy Indigenous political actors deliberately chose to frame their self-determination struggles within the human rights framework in order to bring states into a double bind where they could not credibly claim to adhere to human rights and claim that they uphold equality while simultaneously denying Indigenous peoples’ human rights and leaving them with a diminished and unequal right of self-determination. But, because he is caught in the pessimism trap of seeing the state only as unified, deliberate and unchanging, Corntassel overlooks and diminishes the clear story of Indigenous agency and the potential for positive change in advancing self-determination in a multitude of ways.

Pessimism Trap 3: Engagement with the Settler State is Futile, if Not Counter-Productive

Since the state always intends to maintain, if not expand, colonial control, and is seeking to co-opt as many Indigenous peoples as possible in order to maintain or expand its dispossession and control, it is therefore futile, at best, and actually dangerous to Indigenous existence to engage with the state. Furthermore, all patterns of engagement will lead to co-optation as the state is cunning and unrelenting in its desire to co-opt Indigenous leaders, academics and professionals in order to gain or maintain control of Indigenous peoples.

Alfred argues, in both his 2005 and 2009 books, that any Indigenous engagement with the state, including agreements and negotiations, is not only futile but fundamentally dangerous, as such pathways do not directly challenge the existing colonial structure and ‘to argue on behalf of indigenous nationhood within the dominant Western paradigm is self-defeating’.32 Alfred states that a ‘notion of nationhood or self-government rooted in state institutions and framed within the context of state sovereignty can never satisfy the imperatives of Native American political traditions’33 because the possibility for a true expression of Indigenous self-determination is ‘precluded by the state’s insistence on dominion and its exclusionary notion of sovereignty’.34 Worst of all, according to Alfred, when Indigenous communities frame their struggles in terms of asserting Aboriginal rights and title, but do so within a state framework, rather than resisting the state itself, it ‘represents the culmination of white society’s efforts to assimilate indigenous peoples’.35

Because it is impossible to advance Indigenous self-determination through any sort of engagement with the state, Coulthard also advocates for an Indigenous resurgence paradigm that follows both his mentor Taiaiake Alfred but also Anishinaabe feminist theorist Leanne Simpson.36 As Coulthard writes, ‘both Alfred and Simpson start from a position that calls on Indigenous peoples and communities to “turn away” from the assimilative reformism of the liberal recognition approach and to instead build our national liberation efforts on the revitalization of “traditional” political values and practices’.37 Drawing upon the prescriptive approach of these theorists, Coulthard proposes, in his concluding chapter, five theses from his analysis that are intended to build and solidify Indigenous resurgence into the future:

1.On the necessity of direct action, meaning that physical forms of Indigenous resistance, like protest and blockades, are very important not only as a reaction to the state but also as a means of protecting the lands that are central to Indigenous peoples’ existence;

2.Capitalism, No More!, meaning the rejection of capitalist forms of economic development in Indigenous communities in favour of land-based Indigenous political-economic alternative approaches;

3.Dispossession and Indigenous Sovereignty in the City, meaning the need for Indigenous resurgence movements ‘to address the interrelated systems of dispossession that shape Indigenous peoples’ experiences in both urban and land-based settings’38;

4.Gender Justice and Decolonisation, meaning that decolonisation must also include a shift away from patriarchy and an embrace of gender relations that are non-violent and reflective of the centrality of women in traditional forms of Indigenous governance and society; and

5.Beyond the Nation-State. While Coulthard denies that he advocates complete rejection of engagement with the state’s political and legal system, he does assert that ‘our efforts to engage these discursive and institutional spaces to secure recognition of our rights have not only failed, but have instead served to subtly reproduce the forms of racist, sexist, economic, and political configurations of power that we initially sought…to challenge’.39 He therefore advocates expressly for ‘critical self-reflection, skepticism, and caution’ in a ‘resurgent politics of recognition that seeks to practice decolonial, gender-emancipatory, and economically nonexploitative alternative structures of law and sovereign authority grounded on a critical refashioning of the best of Indigenous legal and political traditions’.40

Corntassel also demonstrates the third pessimism trap, that all engagement with the state is ultimately futile. For the most part, however, Corntassel’s observation is that the UN system operates like a reverse Keck and Sikkink ‘boomerang model’ and ‘channels the energies of transnational Indigenous networks into the institutional fiefdoms of member countries’, by which an ‘illusion of inclusion’ is created.41 He argues that, in order to be included or their views listened to, Indigenous delegates at the UN must mimic the strategies, language, norms and modes of behaviour of member states and international institutions. Corntassel finds that ‘what results is a cadre of professionalized Indigenous delegates who demonstrate more allegiance to the UN system than to their own communities’.42 In his final analysis, he charges that the co-optation of international Indigenous political actors is highly ‘effective in challenging the unity of the global Indigenous rights movement and hindering genuine dialogue regarding Indigenous self-determination and justice’.43

Finding that states deliberately co-opt and provide ‘illusions of inclusion’ to Indigenous political actors in UN settings, Corntassel comes to the same conclusion as Alfred concerning the futility of engagement, arguing that because transnational Indigenous networks are ‘channeled’ and ‘blunted’ by colonial state actors, ‘it is a critical time for Indigenous peoples to rethink their approaches to bringing Indigenous rights concerns to global forums’.44

Imagining a Post-Colonial Future: Pessimistic ‘Resurgence’ Versus the Optimism and Tenacity of Indigenous Movements on the Ground

All of these writers advocate Indigenous resurgence, through a combination of rejecting the current reconciliation politics of settler colonial states, coupled with a return to land-based Indigenous expressions of governance as the only viable, ‘authentic’ and legitimate path to a better future for Indigenous peoples, which they refer to as decolonisation. While inherently critical in their orientation, these three approaches do make some positive and productive contributions to Indigenous movements. They help shed light on the various and subtle ways that Indigenous leaders and communities can become co-opted into a colonial system. They help us to hold leadership accountable. They also help us keep a strong focus on our traditional, cultural and spiritual values as well as our traditional forms of governance which then also helps us imagine future possibilities.

As I have pointed out here, however, all three theorists are also caught in the same three pessimism traps: authenticity versus co-option; a vision of the state as unified, deliberate and never changing in its desire to colonise and control; and a view of engagement with the state as futile, if not dangerous, to Indigenous sovereignty and existence. When combined, these three pessimism traps aim to inhibit Indigenous peoples’ engagement with the state in any process that could potentially re-imagine and re-formulate their current relationship into one that could be transformative and post-colonial, as envisioned by the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. The pessimism traps together work to foreclose any possibility that there could be credible openings of opportunity to negotiate a fairer and just relationship of co-existence with even the most progressive state government.

This pessimistic approach is not innocuous. By overemphasising structure and granting the state an enormous degree of agency as a unitary actor, this pessimistic approach does a remarkable disservice to Indigenous resistance movements by proscribing, from academia, an extremely narrow view of what Indigenous self-determination can and should mean in practice. By overlooking and/or discounting Indigenous agency and not even considering the possibility that Indigenous peoples could themselves be calculating, strategic political actors in their own right, and vis-à-vis states, the pessimistic lens of the resurgence school unnecessarily, unproductively and unjustly limits the field of possibility for Indigenous peoples’ decision-making, thus actually countering and inhibiting expressions of Indigenous self-determination. By condemning—writ large—all Indigenous peoples and organisations that wish to seek peaceful co-existence with the state, negotiate mutually beneficial agreements with the state, and/or who have advocated on the international level for a set of standards that can provide a positive guiding framework for Indigenous-state relations, the pessimistic lens of resurgence forecloses much potential for new and improved relations, in any form, and is very likely to lead to deeper conflicts between states and Indigenous peoples, and potentially, even violent action, which Fanon indicated was the necessary outcome. The pessimism traps of the resurgence school are therefore, likely self-defeating for all but the most remote and isolated Indigenous communities. Further, this approach is quite out of step with the actions and vision of many Indigenous resistance movements on the ground who have been working for decades to advance Indigenous self-determination, both domestically and globally, in ways that transform the colonial state into something more just and may eventually present creative alternatives to the Westphalian state form in ways that could respect and accommodate Indigenous nations. Rather, it aims to shame and blame those who wish to explore creative and innovative post-colonial resolutions to the colonial condition.

The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (the Declaration or UN Declaration) was adopted by the General Assembly in 2007 after 25 years of development. The Declaration is ground-breaking, given the key leadership roles Indigenous peoples played in negotiating and achieving this agreement.45 Additionally, for the first time in UN history, the rights holders, Indigenous peoples, worked with states to develop an instrument that would serve to promote, protect and affirm Indigenous rights, both globally and in individual domestic contexts.46

Many Indigenous organisations and movements, from dozens of countries around the world, were involved in drafting and negotiating the UN Declaration and are now advocating for its full implementation, both internationally and in domestic and regional contexts. In Canada, some of the key organisational players—the Grand Council of the Crees (Eeyou Istchee), the Assembly of First Nations, and the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, or their predecessor organisations—were involved in the drafting and lengthy negotiations of the UN Declaration during the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. In the United States, organisations like the American Indian Law Alliance and the Native American Rights Fund have been involved as well as the Navajo Nation and the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, who represent themselves as Indigenous peoples’ governing institutions. From Scandinavia, the Saami Council and the Sami Parliaments all play a key role in advancing Indigenous rights. In Latin America, organisations like the Confederación de Nationalidades Indígenas del Ecuador (CONAIE) and the Consejo Indio de Sud America (CISA) advocate for implementation of the UN Declaration. The three, major transnational Indigenous organisations—the World Council of Indigenous Peoples, the International Indian Treaty Council and the Inuit Circumpolar Council—were all key members of the drafting and negotiating team for the UN Declaration, and the latter two, which are still in existence, continue their strong advocacy for its full implementation.

Implementation of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples requires fundamental and significant change, on both the international and domestic levels. Because implementation of Indigenous rights essentially calls for a complete and fundamental restructuring of Indigenous-state relationships, it expects states to enact and implement a significant body of legal, constitutional, legislative and policy changes that can accommodate such things as Indigenous land rights, free, prior and informed consent, redress and a variety of self-government, autonomy and other such arrangements. States are not going to implement this multifaceted and complex set of changes on their own, however. They will require significant political and moral pressure to hold them accountable to the rhetorical commitments they have made to support this level of change. They will also require ongoing conversation and negotiation with Indigenous peoples along the way, lest the process becomes problematically one-sided. Such processes ultimately require sustained political will, commitment and engagement over the long term, to reach the end result of radical systemic change and Indigenous state relationships grounded in mutual respect, co-existence and reciprocity. This type of fundamental change requires creative thinking, careful diplomacy, tenacity, and above all, optimistic vision, on the part of Indigenous peoples. The pessimistic approaches of the resurgence school are ultimately of little use in these efforts, other than as a cautionary tale against state power, of which the organisational players are already keenly aware. Further, by dismissing and discouraging all efforts at engagement with states, and especially with the blanket accusations that all who engage in such efforts are ‘co-opted’ and not ‘authentically’ Indigenous, the resurgence school actually creates unnecessary negative feelings and divisions amongst Indigenous movements who should be pooling limited resources and working together towards better futures.

#### The alternative fails. Epistemic resistance to colonialism gets coopted in the service of neoliberalism and ethno-nationalism

Michalinos Zembylas, 2025 - Open University of Cyprus, Programme of Educational Studies, Latsia, Cyprus & Chair for Critical Studies in Higher Education Transformation, Nelson Mandela University, Gqeberha, South Africa “Decolonial pathways in education: Walter Mignolo, epistemic delinking, and the risks of ethno-essentialism” Globalisation, Societies and Education, Taylor & Francis Online Journals //DH

These criticisms turn our attention to some important distinctions between decolonial theory and anticolonial thought and politics (Naicker Citation2023). Anticolonialism is generally understood as an intellectual and political endeavour aimed at exploring diverse forms of resistance to colonialism and imperialism across the globe (Zembylas Citation2024). Contrary to this understanding, decolonial theory often attributes coloniality exclusively to ‘the West’ as a monolithic source of oppression (Naicker Citation2023). However, this anti-Western reductionism, points out Naicjer, may fall short in addressing the complexities of contemporary global inequalities and injustices. More concerningly, such perspectives have, in some cases, been co-opted by authoritarian regimes, such as those in Russia and India, to reinforce education policies that subvert the ideals of equity and the recognition of marginalised groups (Lewis and Lall Citation2024; Mochizuki Citation2023; Vickers Citation2020). These regimes, write Lewis and Lall,

capitalise on grassroots and academic calls for increased freedom from Western neoliberal hegemony, linking to and co-opting the work of decolonial national philosophers who call for the empowerment of local knowledge producers and the reinstatement of traditional ways of being and knowing within these contexts. (2024, 1472)

Analysing recent development in the Indian education landscape, Mochizuki (Citation2023, 2) shows how delinking strategies actually undermine justice and equality, ‘unwittingly or deliberately supporting exclusivist nationalism and a neoliberal agenda’. Similarly, Vickers laments that ‘The neoliberal cadres of the OECD or World Bank, along with nationalist autocrats from Beijing to Budapest, will be more than happy for ‘critical scholars’ to fulminate against a vaguely-defined ‘West’ while embracing ‘epistemological diffidence’’ (2020, 184).

This article critically examines Walter Mignolo’s influential framework of ‘epistemic decolonisation’, particularly his concept of ‘delinking’ from Western epistemologies. While Mignolo’s approach has inspired substantial decolonial scholarship in education, I argue that his emphasis on breaking away from Western knowledge systems can inadvertently lend itself to ethno-essentialist and authoritarian interpretations. I borrow the term ‘ethno-essentialism’ from Naicker (Citation2023) to denote the reduction of diverse cultural and epistemological practices to a singular, fixed essence attributed to a particular ethnic or cultural group. In this sense, one can speak about a ‘pure’ Afrocentric, American-centric, or other localised epistemology, framing them as homogenous and unchanging rather than dynamic, contested, and plural. By invoking a generalising anti-Western rhetoric of ‘returning to local roots’ that draws on decolonial arguments, I argue that right-wing nationalist and authoritarian regimes seek to suppress dissent and delegitimise domestic critics in various educational settings. This dynamic raises critical questions about the complexities and risks of implementing decolonial theory in different political contexts.

### 1AR – Framework

#### Theorizing coloniality as epistemological defuses anticolonial struggles by downplaying material factors.

David Meyer Temin, 2024 - Department of Political Science, University of Michigan-Ann Arbor, Ann Arbor “A decolonial wrong turn: Walter Mignolo's epistemic politics” Contellations, March 2025, p. 139-153, Wiley //DH

More broadly still, it is precisely attention to a (intersubjective but no less “real”) domain of reality—which includes the imaginary as a product of social life—that matters when considering the political stakes of decolonization. Critical social and political theory is about “resisting reality,” in the words of feminist philosopher Sally Haslanger (2012). Without this kind of orientation to material realities, the valuable project of remedying deep colonial epistemic injustice (see Bhambra, 2021b) becomes highly attenuated from the sociality and claims-making at issue in mobilization around anticolonial demands, such as enforcing Indigenous sovereignty and treaties and returning stolen land (“land back”).

My second criteria, point (2), focuses on the way that those who benefit from intergenerational projects of colonial erasure—“settlers”—are far more inclined to disavow those structures by denying the constitutive structural antagonisms in which we/they are situated. Mignolo aims to distance epistemological questions from what he casts as a more conventional sociological way of tracking the reproduction of power in and through discursively generated knowledge claims. To return as a case in point to a formulation I have already quoted: “What matters is not economics, or politics, or history, but knowledge. Better yet, what matters is history, politics, economics, race, gender, sexuality, but it is above all the knowledge that is intertwined in all these practical spheres that entangles us to the point of making us believe that it is not knowledge that matters but really history, economy, politics, etc.” (Mignolo & Walsh, 2018, p. 135) (my emphasis). Here, I take it that Mignolo is arguing that a central obstacle to remedying colonial epistemic injustice is an overfocus on patterned material practices to the point that they are reified as social reality. The issue with this claim is that it downplays the real dilemmas faced by differently situated constituencies, when they seek to undo their practical participation in and/or subjection to structures of colonial violence. Undoubtedly, unlearning certain epistemological biases comprises part of the latter project—say, for example, hierarchies that place formalized written histories over oral histories as valid evidence in juridical forums (Nichols, 2020). Yet, it is the partially interest-based constitution of differentiated, power-inflected perceptions of social phenomena that critical theorists assess in diagnosing why certain pathological knowledge-forms are so difficult to dislodge and why they are reproduced in time and space. More concretely stated, the turn to coloniality as a purely epistemic register of critique directs significant interpretive attention away from the crucial fact that settler epistemic and aesthetic disavowal of the grounds of Indigenous mobilization and critique are part-and-parcel of settlers’ long-term accumulation of material and intergenerational wealth through removal and displacement.

Indeed, one of the most powerful targets of critical thought sorely lacking here is the challenge to narratives, alibis, ideologies, and so on as practices that both enable distorted moral truth-bending and systemically function as legitimation devices for material hierarchies that the dominant beneficiaries of those systems refract through their seemingly unrelated (and, for them, benign) subjective, affective, cultural, and social investments. Tuck and Yang (2012) have aptly insisted that “decolonization is not a metaphor” so as to move away from the loose use of decolonization as an overly capacious analytic, because it is then deployed institutionally as a symbolic gesture that defuses demands for specific material follow-up (see Okoth, 2021), such as restitution (e.g., land back) and respect for Indigenous sovereignty and self-determination. Likewise, an analysis that dismisses the expression of colonial thought-forms through specific material systems of domination will end up blurring beyond recognition the very emancipatory goals of the enterprise of social and political criticism. In short, the outsize work of the epistemic in Mignolo's thought tends to wrest these motivating horizons away and to place them instead far in the background. These are the unfortunate political effects of the “epistemic decolonization” that Mignolo foregrounds.

A key implication of my argument here is that the problem of settler disavowal—or settler attachment and constitution through violence (Kotef, 2020)—cannot exclusively or even primarily be attributed to the epistemic “arrogance” that Mignolo (2011, pp. 90−91, 2012) identifies with “the hubris of the zero point” epistemology, claims to “truth without parentheses,” or the universalizing of “local” European knowledge projects as “global designs” onto the local histories of the world. My claim here is not only that this is a misguided way of doing critical social theory, but also that it has negative implications for doing critical political theory. Specifically, it is not clear that claiming to—even genuinely seeking to—live this “decolonial” epistemological openness leads in any particularly liberating political direction, especially without sustained attention to the real-world constituencies in play. More bluntly stated, this prescription does little to directly analyze and/or unsettle epistemic or other attachments insofar as they function as enabling investments in institutionalized and structural forms of power and domination, such as those relating to sovereignty and land in settler-colonial contexts.

### 1AR – Mining Good

#### Mining isn’t unjust and pales in comparison to oil and gas.

Aron and Jacobson 22, \*Professor in the Department of Psychology at the University of California San Diego, \*\*Professor at Stanford University (\*Adam R. Aron, \*\*Mark Jacobson, 2022, “Chapter 9: A Technical and Social Framework for Action,” in *The Climate Crisis: Science, Impacts, Policy, Psychology, Justice, Social Movements*, pp. 221-252, Oxford University Press, University of Kansas Libraries, ILL)

AA: Yes, sure, but if you keep growing the economy and you need more and more energy, even from 100 percent renewables, you’re going to have to do a lot more mining to keep pace with that, and is that really going to make the emissions go down? All that neodymium and lithium and aluminum?

MJ: First of all, when you transition to electrifying the energy sector, you have a 57 percent reduction of demand just by electrifying. And if you reduce that much, you’re not going to grow energy demand worldwide that much. People are also going to be using energy-efficient technologies. I use a heat pump in my home [in California]. The home is all electric. It hardly uses any energy. Consider, Texas uses two and a quarter times the electricity per capita as California. Why is that? It’s just because they’re inefficient. There are no regulations in Texas to make their homes and buildings more efficient. Sure, you could have a completely inefficient world in the future and just waste energy. But if you actually use energy-efficient appliances and have energy-efficiency standards and electrify everything, then your demand will go down a lot.

Now, in terms of mining, I mean that’s just a red herring. In the USA alone there are 50,000 new oil and gas wells drilled every year. That’s what you need to compare with. And there are 1.3 million active oil and gas wells and 3.1 million inactive ones. You know the entire gas and oil industry and fossil fuel industry in the USA takes up 1.3 percent of the land. So the renewable shift requires orders of magnitudes less mining, no matter how much lithium you mine.

And there are many batteries that aren’t lithium. Yes, you need lithium for transportation, because it’s light. But for stationary you can use sodium, sulfur, basalt. Neodymium is needed for permanent magnets. And even if you wanted to power everything by wind by 2050, that’s only one-seventh of the neodymium we know exists. Plus you don’t have to use permanent magnet generators [which have neodymium]. You can use induction generators [without neodymium]. For lithium, there’s enough for five billion cars. We now have 1.1 billion. I certainly hope we don’t have more than that, but there’s certainly enough resources for that.

AA: What about Jevon’s paradox, or Jevon’s effects – as you get more efficient, you just use more of the resource? Are you concerned about that?

MJ: A little. I’m thinking about it in my own home context. I haven’t paid an electric bill or a gas bill or a gasoline bill for four years. But I also get paid for the extra solar electricity I produce. I get paid about $1,000 per year. And even though I’m using way less electricity, the more electricity I save, the more money I get paid at the end. So that’s one thing. [He explained that this is because he’s going through Community Choice Aggregation and not the local utility.] I think there are other reasons. I’m not going to drive around more just because my car is more efficient.

AA: Ok, so we need to get off the fossil fuels as soon as possible. Now even if 100% WWS happened very soon, it’s an enormous need for new materials, hundreds of thousands of turbines, and so on. We’ll have ships coming from across the oceans. This will increase our emissions, right?

MJ: Yes, you’re going to get an increase in emissions in the short term, before it decreases. It also speaks to the strategy – what should you electrify first? In California, they wanted to use all this energy to build the high-speed rail – to dig and drill with fossil fuels. Why not electrify everything first, and then do that at the end and build the railway with renewable energy? So there’s a strategy to minimize emissions by transitioning industry. In fact, in Texas there’s a plan to make a lithium mine 100 percent renewable so they’re not emitting from the mining. You make sure the electric input to the mine is renewable. Ideally, you do it for the machines, too. I’m not sure they’re going that far, but they should.

AA: What about the justice issues around extraction of rare earth metals from the Global South? Even if one can replace neodymium with other materials to some extent, there needs to be a huge up-scaling of mining, and that will have damaging effects there.

MJ: First of all, rare earths are not rare, they’re everywhere. They’re not rare elements, but they are dispersed and not found in many concentrated deposits that are economically exploitable. And for something like lithium, every time they look, they find more; it’s a question of looking. Sure, it’s partly related to where these things are mined now, and things don’t change overnight. But there are a lot of choices of materials for batteries. Lithium is being recycled already for car batteries. The former CEO of Tesla started his own battery recycling program. He made a statement that the largest lithium mine may be in the drawers of America.

#### It’s vastly improved, and local opposition prevents unwanted extraction.

Roberts and House 23, \*Interviewer, Climate and Renewable Energy Reporter for Vox for over 15 years, host of the Volt podcast, \*\*Ph.D., Earth and Planetary Sciences from Harvard University, Professor at Stanford University (\*David Roberts, \*\*Kurt House, December 20, 2023, “Getting better at mining the minerals needed for clean energy,” Volts, https://www.volts.wtf/p/getting-better-at-mining-the-minerals)

David Roberts: Okay, and final question, and this is, I'll get yelled at by my audience if I don't ask you this, which is just, we've been discussing all this as a sort of purely mechanical kind of a technical challenge, but obviously, anytime you talk about mining, I'm sure you're very familiar, having been in the space for a while, first thing that leaps to people's mind is environmental degradation and social problems. The mining there are, quite famously, a lot of bad mines, a lot of bad conditions at a lot of mines. How do you think about the equity justice angle in your work?

Kurt House: Yeah, I'm so glad you asked. It's so, so important. Right. So the mining industry has a spotted history, for sure. For sure. There's some good stories and there's some very bad stories, for sure. These are things we take enormously seriously for a whole host of reasons. Sort of with the giant picture, the big picture, which, of course, we started with in the beginning, which is just humanity has a choice, right? We either get off fossil fuels or we fry the planet. And I don't think that's an acceptable choice. And so what does it mean to get off fossil fuels?

It means massive electrification, and that, just because of physics, requires a lot more of these key materials. If we're going to solve climate change, we need to find and develop these materials one way or another. My view is very strong, that if the mining industry doesn't act exceptionally well in development over the next ten years, then reasonable local stakeholder opposition to any projects will thwart that effort. Right. It'll thwart the effort to get the materials. So we have to be absolutely best in class, and we strive to lead in that way. So most companies will start a major community relations program once they're there to actually develop a deposit.

We start it earlier. We start when we're exploring. Right. Even though we know most of our projects won't actually come to fruition, we want to make sure the places we are exploring are places that we are welcomed and we want to be, we want to be welcomed by the locals and we want to work with the locals so that we remain welcomed by the locals. And that means a huge number of things. But it means fundamentally, it means a really serious investment, right. With an entire group inside the company that's dedicated exactly to that. And people that spend all day, every day talking to the local community about their concerns.

At this point, KoBold, the majority of KoBold employees are actually in Zambia. And so one of the things we are trying to lead on heavily is to mostly hire Zambians for our major project in Zambia. It is kind of standard operations that when there's a big project like this, western companies move in and bring in a lot of expats to do the high priced jobs. We have a strong commitment to not do that. Right. We have some expats, of course, for very specific technical expertise, but mostly we're hiring local and we're training local very aggressively. And that's in our long term interest.

We want to have the best Zambian workforce that we can possibly have because we don't want to just develop one project in Zambia. We want to develop ten projects in Zambia. And we're investing in all the neighboring countries. And so the more capabilities we have in that country, the more effective we'll be in the neighboring countries.

#### The mining industry is using renewable energy to mine

Diesendorf 22, Faculty of Arts, Design, and Architecture, UNSW Sydney (Mark Diesendorf, 2022, “Can energy descent be justified by critiquing 100% renewable energy scenarios? A reply to Floyd et al.” Futures, Vol. 137, University of Kansas Libraries, Science Direct) [Acronyms expanded]

3.6. Will RE [renewable energy] technologies always depend on fossil fuels?

An assertion by Floyd et al., that could be described as lacking ‘knowledge humility’ and credibility, is: ‘For the foreseeable future the deployment of RE [renewable energy] infrastructure will remain locked via innumerable path dependencies to fossil-fuelled industrial production and distribution systems’. While stranded assets do inhibit rapid change in some industries and businesses, the mining and minerals processing industry is rapidly installing its own solar and wind farms to provide the majority of their energy use, because it’s cheaper than continuing with diesel electricity (Parkinson, 2016; Parkinson, 2021b; Parkinson, 2021c). Meanwhile, demonstration plants are under development and/or operating for low-carbon steel-making (Parkinson, 2021d) and aluminium smelting (Hill, 2021). Thus the life-cycles of RE [renewable energy] technologies are slowly but surely becoming independent of fossil fuels. Already several hundred large corporations have committed to 100% [renewable electricity] RElec by specified dates (RE100, n.d.), with some aspiring to 100% RE.

### 1AR – Permutation

#### The plan’s collaborative approach is an experimental act of decolonization that reverses state power and gives more control to Indigenous peoples

Timothy Neale et al, 2019 – Deakin University, Australia; Bushfire and Natural Hazards Cooperative Research Centre, Australia “Walking together: a decolonising experiment in bushfire management on Dja Dja Wurrung country” Cultural Geographies, Volume 26, Issue 3, Sage Journals – University of Michigan //DH

Discussion and conclusion

Recent critiques of ‘collaboration’ and ‘participation’ in the fields of Science and Technology Studies (STS) and Indigenous Studies have drawn attention to how these terms have risen to the status of generically ‘good’ things in diverse fields of governance and public policy-making.47 As several STS scholars note, the turn to participatory approaches emerged out of ‘constitutional changes’ in the relationships between expert groups and wider society during the 1970s and 1980s, and was ostensibly pursued in order to transform those relationships.48 This arguably parallels moves within international policy-making to encourage collaboration between state governments and ‘local peoples’, or, more recently, Indigenous peoples, particularly in forms of natural resource management and natural hazard management.49 To cite one prominent example, the UN’s Sendai Framework states that ‘through their experience and traditional knowledge’ Indigenous peoples ‘provide an important contribution to the development and implementation of plans and mechanisms’ for disaster risk reduction.50 This demonstrates a set of problems relevant to our concerns. There are many reasons why traditional knowledge is a problematic basis for recognition or inclusion, in part because, as Karuk fire ecologist Frank Lake argues, it should not be assumed that Indigenous peoples have traditional knowledge ready at hand or that they are willing or able to share it (particularly with the settler state).51 A fixation on traditional knowledge embeds our understanding of Indigenous peoples less within their lives and experiences and more within their apparent alterity or ‘timeless cosmological difference’.52 Such prescriptions on the grounds for Indigenous recognition illustrate a key problem of participatory governance more generally, namely their failure to reconfigure power relations. The many techniques, programmes and forums devised to include or collaborate with both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities or publics affected by a given policy matter have often simply reconstructed the ‘dynamics of closure and control that they seek to overcome’.53 By deploying a participatory approach, state actors may often gain a social licence while continuing to retain the power to parse between stakeholders, excluding some and including others who will then have their demands diffused through exhausting consultative processes.

Rather than take participatory governance as a banal good, Chilvers and Kearnes suggest, we should approach each instance of participation as an empirical and contingent ‘experiment’ that can be assessed according to its strategies and results; such experiments are not pre-given but ‘actively produce publics, public issues, material commitments and forms of democratic engagement’.54 This is a useful and novel basis from which to approach the collaborations that are emerging in Australia, Canada, the United States and elsewhere between Indigenous peoples and state agencies in relation to the governance of country and, more specifically, bushfire management. Existing framings imply either that such collaborations necessarily actualise Indigenous peoples’ aspirations, repress and coerce them to follow settler state imperatives, or are a straightforward expression of Indigenous peoples’ traditional knowledge.55 These three responses position collaborations as a predetermined expression of something innate rather than, as they are often experienced by those involved, an emergent and pragmatic experiment in exploring the bounds of what is possible. While we are apt to be suspicious of the institutions of settler governments, and the motives of different actors, such summary analyses can obscure the pragmatics and unexpected transformations that emerge through doing collaborative or participatory work.

To return to Dja Dja Wurrung country, while it is possible to examine collaborative bushfire management and detect the presence of familiar influential forces, and colonial language, these tell us little about what it has produced. Based on the narratives of those who have been involved, the difficult work of ‘walking together’ has involved far more than a contract, resourcing, traditional knowledge or government policy. Even with many factors in its favour – motivated actors, motivated institutions, financial backing and so on – it has been demanding on those involved. While ongoing, we can say that this experiment has produced three key hypotheses of relevance to other similar engagements. First, recognised legal rights to country are not sufficient but may be necessary for Aboriginal parties. Such rights not only place an obligation on government agencies, but they also provide crucial leverage for actors both within and outside those agencies to attract resources and push back against institutional inertia and active resistance. Second, both Aboriginal and non-Indigenous individuals have to seek and gain trust from one another. Overcoming institutional and historical barriers to creating such trust seems to be essential, in part because it produces further commitment from peers and reduces opposition. Third, and finally, agency employees have to go beyond their official roles in order to sustain such collaborations. Strategic improvisation may be required to make and protect space for Aboriginal partners within such culturally White and institutionally conservative contexts.

What does it mean to look at ‘walking together’ in bushfire management as a decolonising experiment? Our framework is not meant to imply that at some point this ‘experiment’ could come to an end and, finally, be objectively assessed as successful (or not). Engagements between Indigenous peoples and the settler state do not have clear temporal or spatial boundaries as might be found in a laboratory; rather, they involve interminable manoeuvring and agonistic wrangling towards what seems like a better horizon for the subjects involved. Calling engagements by Dja Dja Wurrung peoples with settler government and its institutions ‘experimental’ is a way to remain attuned to their open-ended and contingent character. Celebrations of this particular collaboration’s achievements, by agencies and news media alike, can give a misleading impression of their material and practical basis in a set group of sites, individuals, practices and relationships within Dja Dja Wurrung country. These sites, individuals, practices and relationships have been transformed or, to use Chilvers and Kearnes’ phrasing, actively produced through the collaboration. They will continue to be actively produced together – or cultivated – as more sites are chosen for traditional burning, as more of these sites are integrated into agency plans and documents, as more traditional burns are conducted, as DDWCAC invests more in its natural resource management capacities and as more Dja Dja Wurrung people become central to the everyday business of bushfire management.56

This makes apparent the decolonising character of the experiment, as, to return to Tuck and Yang’s definition, the collaboration is materially and structurally redistributing greater control over country into the hands of Aboriginal traditional owners. What is occurring is not decolonisation in the sense of a complete and irreversible transfer of authority, or withdrawal of settler colonial government, but rather the iterative decolonising renovation of the political and practical dominance of settler agencies. These are modest but real gains with nascent and unpredictable effects on those involved. Slowly, resources and authority are less solely on the side of the government and its agencies. Here, we arrive at a synthetic understanding of the decolonial and the experimental. A decolonising experiment is one that allows for ‘the emergence of questions that could not be asked before’ because Indigenous peoples are leading the management of their country. Such experiments materially alter ecologies, the political and economic position of Indigenous peoples, and give rise to new ideas about possible futures and new debates about how country might be cared for differently. Perhaps, as some interviewees wondered, Dja Dja Wurrung peoples will have an executive position within bushfire agencies in the future? Or, as one Dja Dja Wurrung person said, ‘I don’t know why we don’t run our own DELWP?’

#### We can direct the green transition towards sustainability by incorporating indigenous voices into mining

Anna K. Bidgood and Jessica Hall, 2024 – \*Earth and Planets Laboratory, Carnegie Institution for Science AND \*\*Centre for Sámi Studies, UiT The Arctic University of Norway “We Need to Talk About Mining in the Arctic” Earth Science, Systems and Society, v.4 <https://www.lyellcollection.org/doi/full/10.3389/esss.2024.10117> //DH

Looking to the future of mining in the Arctic: can this industry provide an opportunity for sustainable development and reconciliation? Sustainable development has been defined as “development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (Brundtland Commission, 1987). Whilst sustainable mining may be an oxymoron, sustainability in mining leading to the development of sustainable outcomes, is a legitimate concept that we should be working towards. Sustainability within the mining industry can be multifaceted, encompassing projects which aim to not only reduce the environmental and social impacts of mining through stewardship of the natural environment but to also add value, creating something sustainable in the long term. Sustainable goals must also include the development of, and continued effort towards, building long-term relationships with communities who are impacted by the mining process. Ensuring that mining is sustainable is not just reliant upon ethical extraction but also protecting the long value chain that occurs after the mining has taken place. This process creates environmental, social, and economic value which can positively benefit the local communities.

For example, despite being built on environmental disaster, Faro mine in Canada is now home to the Faro Mine Remediation Project, a government and Indigenous-led program. This program provides employment and training opportunities for Kaska and other Indigenous citizens (FARO Mine Remediation Project, 2022) and is an example of a long-term project which provides opportunities for locals whilst at the same time rehabilitating the environment. Incorporating sustainability principles into the lifecycle of a mining operation and beyond, has the potential to have a positive impact on communities and, if incorporated into the early planning stages, could contribute to the long-term sustainability of the local area.

These questions are also particularly pertinent in Greenland, a country with 92% Indigenous population, a great potential for mineral resources, a large expanse of unexplored land and a limited history of resource development (In 2020 there were 2 active mines in Greenland compared to 1001 in Canada). Despite the small number of mines in Greenland, some areas (such as in South Greenland) have been mined for more than a century and a significant proportion of the population of Greenland have some experience of exploration and mining operations and are positive towards mining (e.g., Agneman, 2018; Thaarup et al., 2020). As Greenland continues to be explored, coastal regions are becoming more and more prospective, and the number of exploration licences is slowly increasing.

The government and people of Greenland are currently battling with questions of environmental, economic, and political opportunities. For example, the controversial Kvanefjeld rare earth deposit is one of the most significant rare earth deposits globally and presents an opportunity for Greenland to become an internationally significant supplier of raw materials and perhaps establish economic independence from Denmark. Many local residents support the project as it offers greater employment whereas other have raised concerns about disruptions to the environment and the lack of adequate information, particularly surrounding the potential radioactive pollution, and failure to consult and seek local community’s free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) (Orellana et al., 2021). It should be noted, however, that the main concerns around the Kvanefjeld deposit are related to the presence of uranium in the ore. This is not reflective of the “typical” concerns to other exploration and mining operations elsewhere in Greenland, many of which are seen largely positively. A recent report on sand mining in Greenland surveyed almost 1,000 Greenlanders (>1.5% of the population) and found that large majorities support extraction but oppose foreign involvement (Bendixen et al., 2022).

Examples of Indigenous Collaboration and Ownership

A direct result of oil and gas extraction throughout the Arctic has seen the increase in co-management structures between Indigenous communities and developers. The legacy of oil and gas extraction in Canada has led to a historical relationship of distrust between Indigenous communities and extractive industries. The oil and gas industry in Canada had a significant impact on Indigenous communities through the ever-increasing wave of Europeans arriving to be a part of the extractive industries’ growth (Alberta’s Energy Heritage). The 1850s in Canada saw a dramatic increase in the production of oil, with the Mining and manufacturing Company of 1854 being the first dedicated oil company in North America (Alberta’s Energy Heritage). Furthermore, projects developing access and acquisition of gas, such as Coastal GasLink in British Columbia, have been accused of violating FPIC principles, thus continuing the challenges navigating these forms of extractivism and the Indigenous right to self-determination (StandEarth, 2022).

Whilst mining and Indigenous relations are typically portrayed in a negative light, there are examples, particularly in the Canadian Arctic, which can inform future exploration and mining. Red Dog mine in Alaska is a major world producer of Zn and Pb and is co-owned by Teck Alaska and the NAANA Indigenous corporation, providing an example where typical approaches to western business deals were challenged, resulting in a potential new approach to business in the Arctic. Raglan mine in northern Quebec is another example of a major world producer of Ni and the location of Canada’s first Impact Benefit Agreement with Indigenous communities, promoting political, social, and economic development of the region. Indigenous knowledge, in collaboration with two neighbouring Inuit communities, was incorporated into the environmental impact assessments prior to the Raglan mine operation, resulting in a shortened shipping season to aid conservation relating to Arctic char and seal populations (Natural Resources Canada, 2007).

Indigenous collaboration and ownership is increasingly common in Arctic development. For example, First Nations, Métis, and Inuit entities were partners or beneficiaries in nearly 20% of Canada’s existing electricity-generating infrastructure in 2022 (Gall et al., 2022), most of which produces renewable energy, reducing reliance on diesel generators in these remote regions. The Nechalacho rare earth project, located on the traditional lands of several Metis and Dene First Nations groups in the Northwest Territories, involves a 51% joint venture ownership by the Yellowknives Dene First Nations, who will control mining operations at the site. This project provides significant potential for Indigenous and northern employment and economic benefit and is the first example of a First Nations business entity contracting for a mine operation on traditional lands in Canada.

Prior to the formation of international instruments, such as UNDRIP, FPIC and ILO No. 169, the decisions and legislation made in the Arctic mining sector were widely done so by corporations with very little to no Indigenous involvement in the decision-making processes. In 2018 the BC Regional Mining Alliance (BCRMA) was developed, an industry-led strategic partnership between Indigenous groups, industry and provincial government, that focuses on bringing investment through collaborative partnerships. The Golden Triangle region in British Columbia has been a hotspot for mineral and geological exploration for the last 150 years and investments and developments made by BCRMA has ensured that this region is becoming increasingly accessible (BCRMA, 2023).

Additionally, in 2021, Suncor Energy announced an unprecedented step forwards in terms of Indigenous and industry collaborations. They announced a new partnership with eight Indigenous communities in Wood Buffalo, this partnership allows the eight Indigenous communities to acquire all of TC Energy’s 15% equity interest in the Northern Courier Pipeline Limited Partnership (Foulis, 2021). This partnership is a reification of reconciliation attempts and exemplifies the wanted change from communities, within extractive sectors.

Examples of Indigenous/Community Led Initiatives

Since the introduction of international instruments such as UNDRIP, FPIC and the ILO Convention No. 169, there has been an increase in Indigenous-led initiatives. Many of these have been focused specifically on the green transition. Securing Indigenous Peoples’ Rights in the Green Economy (SIRGE coalition) is one example of an Indigenous-led initiative. This coalition is led by an Indigenous Steering Committee which is made up of two representatives of Indigenous Peoples from each of the seven socio-cultural regions across the globe. SIRGE implements transformative solutions to secure the rights of Indigenous Peoples in the global transition to a green economy. This organisation has recently released a guide for Indigenous leaders to develop FPIC protocols and to implement these to ensure self-determination is reified for all Indigenous community members.

Another example of Indigenous communities heading initiatives within the extractive sector is in Alberta where the Frog Lake First Nations and the Kehewin Cree Nation are proposing an Indigenous-led carbon capture and storage (CCS) hub located on their traditional territory. Whilst these communities are partnered with Kanata Clean Power and Climate Technologies Corp. and Vault 44.01 Ltd., it is expected that the Indigenous majority ownership share will be opened to other Treaty Six First Nations as the development progresses (Jaremko, 2023).

Considerations for Future Exploration and Mining in the Arctic

Industries, such as the extractive industries, have a long history in the Arctic which is intertwined with the development of social movements and legislation in the region. In parallel to these movements, we are also in the midst of the green transition which, if not managed correctly, could have unintended consequences for local communities and the environment.

The motivation for this article came from the inspiring conversations between a diverse group of young and open-minded emerging leaders from across or working in the Arctic who share a common vision of creating a sustainable north, where voices and decisions of the North are from the North and planetary and human welfare are at the forefront of our actions. These conversations highlighted that the topic of mining is not as taboo as originally assumed, but instead, is a part of our history and a part of our future. However, it is up to us to reimagine the future of mining and how, and if, this might form a part of the future of the Arctic.

This article does not attempt to find a single solution when it comes to the future of mining in the Arctic. In fact, many of our examples draw upon solutions from a wide range of groups such as Indigenous communities, government organisations, legislation, as well as the mining industry itself. In acknowledgement of the inherent interconnectedness of mining and the UN’s sustainable development goals, we aim to encourage conversations about mining in the Arctic, such that a variety of voices can be heard. We have focussed on providing a range of examples of mining and exploration in the Arctic that have the potential to bring about positive benefits to local communities and the environment. These examples include the involvement of multiple different voices, particularly in the early stages of a project, and led to design and implementation that braided indigenous knowledge or ownership. What all of these examples have in common is initially a conversation, something that underpins FPIC and provides culturally and community specific solutions.

We hope that showcasing more positive examples of mining in the Arctic will bring about more constructive conversations that help to reimagine mining. We hope that by sharing these stories we can promote learning and collaborations which will positively impact the future of the Arctic.

Conclusion

Mining is a major industry in the Arctic with huge potential to bring about a sustainable and just transition. But perhaps the potential that these projects can bring to the Arctic and the positive examples that we can learn from need to be better communicated and realised in the context of mining. We are at a critical moment in time and, to achieve this vision, we must incorporate a diversity of voices, be open to stepping away from “business as usual” and develop a new practice for mining in the Arctic. As noted previously, there are many positive examples of co-management schemes, braided knowledge systems and shared ownership of projects throughout the Arctic and circumpolar North. Sustainability must reach beyond a solely environmental focus and encourage the development of collaborative relationships and benefit sharing. By talking about this more, we can not only help engage more people in the conversation but also in the solutions for bringing about a Just Transition. After all, what happens in the Arctic does not stay in the Arctic.

#### History shows progress has been achieved, and cooption risks run equally in the other direction – Indigenous movements can use the state to manipulate it from within

Michael Murphy, 2019 – Professor, Faculty of Indigenous Studies, University of Northern British Columbia “Indigenous Peoples and the Struggle for Self-Determination: A Relational Strategy.” Canadian Journal of Human Rights 8(1): 67-102, <https://cjhr.ca/indigenous-peoples-and-the-struggle-for-self-determination-a-relational-strategy/> //DH

Resurgence theorists take this criticism a step further. Not only do they argue that existing reforms have failed to promote Indigenous self-determination. In addition, they argue that the reforms are part of a deliberate state strategy aimed at co-opting Indigenous leaders and containing Indigenous demands while ensuring that truly empowering, and authentically Indigenous, alternatives to existing economic and political power structures are never seriously considered.119

I resist this stronger conclusion for several reasons. First, while it is wise to maintain a healthy level of skepticism towards the transformative potential of existing modes of Indigenous empowerment, there is simply no denying that Indigenous peoples have made important progress in their quest for self-determination. For all their noted limitations, the reforms discussed in this article – recognizing Indigenous nations, languages and cultures; empowering Indigenous governments, legislators and political parties; and increasing the influence of Indigenous decision-makers over their lands, resources and economies – have tracked a slow, but inexorable decline, of the era of Indigenous assimilation. For example, in the span of three or four decades, Indigenous peoples in Latin America have progressed from a place where they were almost completely excluded from political power and had their very existence denied to one where their leaders exercise power at all levels of government and where their identities and collective rights to language, culture, land and self-government are entrenched in national constitutions.120 Similar stories of transformative change have been unfolding over the last five decades in Canada, the United States, New Zealand and Scandinavia.

My second objection speaks to the authenticity argument. This argument cannot be reconciled with the fact that Indigenous peoples manifest identities, cultures, traditions and institutions that are incredibly diverse and subject to change and transformation over time.121 Attempting to define some authentic core of indigeneity from this rich and shifting diversity is not only bound to fail, it may also carry consequences for Indigenous peoples that are unduly restrictive and even oppressive.122 In the end, to fully embrace the idea of self-determination is to accept that Indigenous communities must be the ones to decide whether the social, political and economic pathways they follow are consistent with their individual and collective sense of indigeneity.

Third, and finally, while I agree that the danger of cooptation is real, many resurgence theorists underestimate Indigenous peoples and their ability to successfully subvert and manipulate the very institutions and legal regimes that were intended to limit or undercut their claims to self-determination. In Latin America, for example, neoliberal reforms have been widely criticized as antithetical to Indigenous self-determination, yet Indigenous peoples have capitalized on one of the key planks of that reform program – decentralization – to gain increased access to resources and political power at the local level in Ecuador, Bolivia and Colombia. Local empowerment was a key factor that helped Evo Morales, and his Indigenous supporters, capture the Bolivian presidency in 2006 and again in 2014.123 Further, in New Zealand, the dedicated Maori seats were originally conceived as a temporary measure aimed at coopting the Maori leadership and undermining the movement in favour of Maori self-determination. However, the Maori declined to follow the script provided for them by the colonial state. Instead, successive generations of Maori representatives have used their voices in Parliament to extend the authority of the Maori people over their language, cultures, lands and resources, and to further increase their influence over the affairs of the nation as a whole.124

In these cases, as in all of the cases discussed in this article, Indigenous peoples have steadfastly refused to be contained by the colonial state. Through the adoption of a broad, flexible and relational strategy of accessing and exercising political power, Indigenous peoples have both challenged and engaged with states to advance their individual and collective human rights and well-being. In doing so, Indigenous peoples have slowly brought to life their aspirations for self-determination.

### 1AR – Alternative Fails

#### The risk of authoritarian elites coopting the alternative is high

Michalinos Zembylas, 2025 - Open University of Cyprus, Programme of Educational Studies, Latsia, Cyprus & Chair for Critical Studies in Higher Education Transformation, Nelson Mandela University, Gqeberha, South Africa “Decolonial pathways in education: Walter Mignolo, epistemic delinking, and the risks of ethno-essentialism” Globalisation, Societies and Education, Taylor & Francis Online Journals //DH

In this section, I discuss and analyse two recent publications in the field of education that examine the implications of approaches that advocate epistemic delinking from the West. The first is Lewis and Lall’s (Citation2024) investigation into how right-wing nationalist elites in Russia and India have co-opted the decolonial agenda within higher education. The second example comes from Mochizuki (Citation2023), who critiques how delinking strategies in India can be appropriated to undermine equality and recognition for marginalised populations, thereby reinforcing a nationalist and neoliberal agenda. These examples were selected for two reasons: first, they support the argument presented in this article; and second, they both reference Mignolo’s concept of delinking, examining its implications for decolonisation efforts within their respective contexts. In the following discussion, I will elaborate on each of these articles and highlight the risks of ethno-essentialist claims that arise from decolonisation efforts across various cultural and national contexts.

Lewis and Lall (Citation2024) argue that authoritarian leaders like Vladimir Putin, Narendra Modi, and Xi Jinping exploit calls for decolonisation to legitimise their anti-democratic reforms. These leaders co-opt the rhetoric of local intellectuals advocating for empowerment and the rejection of Western knowledge, framing their authoritarian measures as necessary to resist Western hegemony. As Lewis and Lall write:

These leaders capitalise on grassroots and academic calls for increased freedom from Western neoliberal hegemony, linking to and co-opting the work of decolonial national philosophers who call for the empowerment of local knowledge producers and the reinstatement of traditional ways of being and knowing within these contexts. (2024, 1472)

This appropriation undermines grassroots movements and suppresses dissent, as universities become complicit in promoting government narratives and silencing critiques through various repressive tactics. Lewis and Lall’s analysis show that while decolonisation aims to amplify diverse voices, authoritarian regimes have distorted this discourse to stifle opposition, reinforcing power dynamics and discrimination against minorities. Ultimately, this dynamic illustrates the challenges faced by decolonial efforts in contexts where democratic institutions are eroding, particularly in India and Russia. As Lewis and Lall explain further:

[T]he weakening of democratic institutions in India and Russia, which reinforces the infringements of rights and freedom of expression, is legitimised through association with over-simplified decolonial ideas, where to shut down critiques of the regimes in power, authoritarianism accuses Western liberal thought of creating the ills of a globalising world. Universities are made to toe this line (willingly or unwillingly) through various repressive tactics, such as political appointments, curriculum reform, control of finances, policing of students, and dismissal or arrests of staff. (2024, 1472)

In particular, Lewis and Lall (Citation2024) mention Mignolo’s concept of decolonial de-linking as an example of how anti-Western discourse can be potentially co-opted within Russia and India’s nationalist frameworks. However, unlike Hull (Citation2022), who highlights only the dangers of ethno-nationalism in decolonial theory, Lewis and Lall provide a more balanced critique and argue that Mignolo’s work is ‘far more nuanced than anti-Westernist co-option indicates’ (2024, 1475). They underscore that while both decolonialism and Eurasianism critique modernity, they differ in their receptiveness to pluralism: decolonialism promotes diverse dialogue and self-critique, whereas Eurasianism, especially within Russian state structures, stifles dissent and advocates a Russo-centric model aligned with state authority. This distinction reinforces my earlier argument that anti-Western rhetoric in decolonial theory cannot be simply equated with decoloniality itself. However, it also serves as a critical reminder for education scholars to examine how their theoretical frameworks might be appropriated or misinterpreted in ways that can support nationalist or exclusionary agendas, underscoring the need for vigilance in contexts where anti-Western sentiments may be mobilised for repressive purposes.

In the second example, Mochizuki (Citation2023) illustrates how delinking strategies in education could unintentionally or strategically serve nationalist and neoliberal agendas, undermining the goals of inclusion and equality. His analysis highlights the complexities of implementing decolonial frameworks in India’s educational system and suggests that there is a need for approaches that mitigate potential misuse of decolonial concepts in education. In particular, the author examines India’s new National Education Policy, which entails the agenda of the ruling nationalist party for dewesternization. This policy, points out Mochizuki, echoes the sentiment that India has suffered from ‘the colonial matrix of power’ and now it is the time to break from that. The author warns though that the efforts to decolonise India’s education ‘must not be reduced to positing a simplistic West–East/North–South/White-Nonwhite dichotomy’ (Citation2023, 14). This binary framing, according to Mochizuki, casts India as either uniformly oppressed by Western forces (from a decolonial view) or as a monolithic, irrational, and religious society (from a modernist/colonialist view). A more nuanced approach is needed, argues Mochizuki, one that recognises the need for epistemic discontinuity with the colonial past, yet one that does not buy into simplistic and superficial arguments of decolonisation.

All in all, both of these publications emphasise that when nationalist agendas co-opt decolonialism, they strip it of its critical complexity and turn it into a tool for reinforcing national power structures, rather than questioning hierarchical knowledge systems. This co-opted version of decolonialism superficially opposes Western influence but avoids engaging with nuanced critiques of power dynamics and social inequalities. Instead, decolonial principles are reshaped to support exclusionary, nationalist identities, often sidelining minority voices that challenge the singular national narrative. In countries like India and Russia, as shown in these articles, de-linking from Western academic discourse is used to justify policies that suppress dissent by categorising certain critiques as ‘Western-influenced’ and therefore undesirable. These actions serve nationalist objectives by promoting a homogenous national identity based on state-defined ‘traditional’ values, while silencing diverse perspectives within the nation. Universities, for example, are targeted as potential sources of Western thought or critical views, leading to restricted academic freedom (Dillabough Citation2022; Rubin and Bose Citation2023). This creates an environment where students and academics who question the current administrations face limited avenues for open debate. Consequently, the co-opted decolonial discourse diminishes the democratic and pluralistic ideals it originally sought to promote, instead entrenching authoritarian governance under the guise of protecting national identity.