## *Dispossession: Indigenous survival, land holding and loss in the midst of settler colonialism.*

**Alan Lester and Zoe Laidlaw: Introduction**

The edited collection and the symposium are focused on the experiences of communities of indigenous peoples in settler colonies (potentially including the USA) who managed to retain access to land and create viable farming communities through the early-mid nineteenth century, but who were very often subsequently persuaded, forced or obliged to abandon those enterprises and land holdings. We intend to analyse these communities in an interconnected and comparative way across various colonial sites within and beyond the British Empire during the long nineteenth century, teasing out both the trans-imperial/global, and the more locally generated relations, ideas and practices behind their stories.

The creation of communities such as Coranderrk and Rumahyuck in Victoria, the Kat River settlement and Farmerfield in the Cape Colony, and Metlakatla in British Columbia (to give just a few examples) was often the result of circumspect collaboration between indigenous family groups and individual white missionaries and Protectors in a context of rapid and violent land alienation. These episodes of creation will be placed in relation to the trans-imperial humanitarian projects and networks that were intended to mitigate the worst effects of settler colonisation in the early nineteenth century. The demise of such settlements often has to be seen in the context of the increasing control of local and colonial government by settler communities and the relative decline in humanitarian political influence from the mid-nineteenth century. However, each community will be seen as a conjunction of both these larger scale processes and the personalities and behaviours of indigenous and colonial individuals who can be 'known' only through fine-grained, localised research. Our intention is that the volume will deal in the intimate family histories, the economic and legal histories and the trans-imperial political histories of these places as a set of unique but interconnected sites.

**Sarah Carter and Adele Perry: Land, Dispossession and Colonialism in Nineteenth Century Western Canada**

This paper will explore the dispossession of Indigenous peoples in northern North America between the Great Lakes and the Pacific Coast over the course of the long nineteenth century. This history is marked by a number of significant transitions, including the establishment and expansion of the European fur-trade from the 1780s onward, the development of small British colonies in the first half of the nineteenth-century, and the sometimes violent reterritorialization of these colonial and Indigenous spaces as Canadian in the late nineteenth-century. A pattern of landholding, successful farming and decline is evident in the history of Indigenous agricultural settlements that pre-dated European contact, and in those of the fur trade and mission eras that reflected a combination of Aboriginal and European crops and technologies. This pattern is also discernible in the deliberate policy and legislative efforts to undermine agriculture on arable Indian reserves in the late nineteenth century through a ‘peasant’ farming policy that limited the acres under cultivation and required farmers to use only the most rudimentary technology. These developments were aided by convenient untruths including that Aboriginal ways of claiming land were weak and inadequate, and that Aboriginal people did not have the skills and dedication required to farm. This paper will draw on Sarah Carter and Adele Perry's knowledge of colonial and Canadian archives to ask how this history might be fit into

and help to shape a wide-ranging and transnational discussion of the layered histories of dispossession and empire.

**Patricia Grimshaw and Joanna Cruikshank: Anne Bon and the contradictions of settler humanitarianism**

Settlers who defended Aboriginal rights were in a morally ambiguous position: on the one hand, criticizing the dispossession of Indigenous people and on the other, benefiting from that dispossession. This chapter examines the activism of Anne Bon, a nineteenth-century advocate for Aboriginal rights to land, and the moral framework within which she understood this activism. Bon was an ally of the Aboriginal people who lived at Coranderrk Reserve and played an important role in ensuring that their voices were heard during the 1881 Inquiry. A wealthy landholder herself, she nonetheless identified the loss of land as the central injustice experienced by Indigenous people. By elucidating this apparent contradiction, we examine the kinds of religious and political frameworks that both sustained and challenged settler colonialism.

**Julie Evans & Giordano Nanni: Coranderrk**

Established in 1863 as a means of containing a portion of Victoria's surviving Indigenous population, the Coranderrk Aboriginal station gradually became a thriving and economically self-supporting community; but by the early 1870s was targeted for dispersal in order to make way for white settlement. This paper focuses on the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry that ensued, in 1881, in response to several petitions and demands for justice brought forth by the Aboriginal inhabitants of Coranderrk Aboriginal Station in a bid to prevent the station's closure. Unique in that it took evidence from several Aboriginal people – men, women and children – as well as European witnesses, both proponents and opponents of the Coranderrk community, the 1881 Coranderrk Inquiry offers a snapshot of the struggle, not just between Aboriginal and Europeans, but also within settler-colonial society, at a crucial historical moment in Victoria, when policies towards the Indigenous population were shifting from containment on missions and reserves, to forced assimilation. Our paper draws on the official testimonies given at the Inquiry in order to illustrate the kinds of claims to justice invoked by Coranderrk's Aboriginal population – and the responses from their critics and opponents. In so doing, we aim to highlight the structural nature of the relationship between Aboriginal and European agents, to discuss how this structure continues to makes itself manifest today, both in public discourse and policy, and to signal the significance of the Coranderrk Inquiry to justice claims that might be advanced in the present.

**Kelli Mosteller: A Face of Brotherhood or a Face of Death**

In 1838 Governor David Wallace of Indiana assigned General John Tipton the task of removing the state's remaining Potawatomi population.  Settlers were flooding into the area and the Governor feared the conflicts and violence he believed inevitable if Indian nations lived alongside a more "civilized" American population.  In early September, General Tipton called for a council at Menominee's village near Twin Lakes to discuss the issue of removal with tribal leaders.  For years hundreds of families resisted removals west arranged by treaties signed in 1834 and 1836 between the United States and their Potawatomi kinsmen.[1]  When the Potawatomi

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[1] More than a dozen individual land cession treaties were signed in those years.  They are commonly referred to as the Whiskey Treaties because alcohol was supplied to certain individuals to induce them

arrived at the village's chapel Menominee, Black Wolf, and Pee-pin-ah-waw were bound and chained as prisoners.2 The rest of the tribal members present were informed that they were removing to new lands in the West in a few days. Under the watchful eye of military guards they were not given the opportunity to gather personal belongings or adequately prepare for the daunting journey. The volunteer militia of roughly one hundred men accompanying General Tipton scoured the surrounding forests, indiscriminately gathering every Indian they found within a radius of a few dozen miles from the camp.

On the morning of September 4, 1838, a band of 859 Potawatomi, with their leaders restrained in the back of a wagon, set out on a forced march from their homeland in northern Indiana for a small reserve in present-day Kansas. To minimize the temptation for the Potawatomi to try to escape and return home their fields were burned and houses were destroyed.3 The journey was a 660 mile trek for which the Potawatomi were not properly prepared and through a terrain to which they were not accustomed. The heat during the day was oppressive and water was often scarce. They only had a few hundred horses for both people and supplies, and promised wagons did not arrive before their departure; so, even the weak and elderly were forced to walk. The pace and conditions of the march were debilitating to the health of the travelers. A day rarely passed that a member of the party did not die, usually a child, forcing their bereft and exhausted families to leave the bodies behind in hasty shallow graves. In the end more than forty people died on the removal, lending to its moniker, the Potawatomi Trail of Death. On November 4, exactly two months after they set out for the reservation in the West, the ragged group arrived in Osawatomie, Kansas.4

This opening account of the Trail of Death, though the best documented Potawatomi removal, tells only a fraction of the story of the tribe's removal from their ancestral homes in the woodlands of the Great Lakes.5 The history of Potawatomi displacement is filled with awe inspiring stories of triumph and infuriating accounts of tragedy. They were constantly faced with pressure to adapt to the customs of the settlers or simply disappear in the face of encroaching Euro-American civilization. There is not a single, master narrative of Potawatomi removal. Unlike the well-documented Cherokee Trail of Tears (which occurred the same year as the Potawatomi Trail of Death) and removals of other southeastern tribes, Potawatomi removals were rarely coordinated by a militia and never included thousands of tribal

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to sign away the land rights for their entire village. Others were signed by Potawatomi who wanted to distance themselves from the onslaught of Euro-American settlers and needed little persuasion. Menominee and leaders close to him signed a treaty on October 26, 1832 ceding certain portions of their land in exchange for twenty-two sections of land for them to remain on and live in Indiana. He never signed a treaty promising to remove from the state. Charles Joseph Kappler, *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties* (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1904), 428–472.

[2] RCIA, 1838, 437. Spelling is taken from the Potawatomi treaty signed on August 5, 1836 at the Yellow River found in Kappler, 462–463.

[3] Cite from removal article

[4] Roughly six hundred and fifty people arrived in Kansas of the more than eight hundred that left Indiana. About forty died and the rest deserted. Irving McKee, *The Trail of Death: Letters of Benjamin Marie Petit* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1941), 106.; Dwight L. Smith, ed., "A Continuation of the Journal of an Emigrating Party of Potawatomi Indians, 1838, and Ten William Polke Manuscripts," *Indiana Magazine of History* 44, no. 4 (December 1, 1948): 393–408.; a more antiquated account can be found in Otho Winger, *The Potawatomi Indians*, Reprint. (The Elgin Press, 1961), 43–54.

[5] The experiences on the Trail of Death are well documented in the travel diary of Fr. Benjamin Petit, a Jesuit priest who lived with and ministered to the Potawatomi in Indiana. At the last minute he was granted permission from Bishop _____ to accompany the Potawatomi to Kansas to tend to the spiritual needs of the Catholics among them. Irving McKee, *The Trail of Death: Letters of Benjamin Marie Petit* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1941). More?

members.6 Instead, the peoples known collectively as the Potawatomi endured dozens of removals, each predicated by circumstances unique to each village or geographic area. Some removals only consisted of a few dozen family members, and others of several villages.

The removals of the 1830s through the early 1850s are important catalysts in the historical narrative of the Potawatomi's history that follows. The social upheaval that resulted from their displacement led to three decades of chaos, uncertainty and struggle for survival that shaped the Citizen Potawatomi's existence in Kansas and Indian Territory from the 1860s to the 1890s. The tribe's history during these years is dominated by a narrative of tribal members' attempts to rebuild their lives after leaving behind everything comfortable and familiar. Understanding the circumstances by which they came to live in the unfamiliar surroundings of their western homes helps one to appreciate the varied responses individual Potawatomi had when pressured by the federal government to make political and social decisions about the futures of their families and community.

**Angela Wanhalla**

**Living on the Rivers' Edge: Dispossession at Taieri Native Reserve, New Zealand**

Māori land dispossession in New Zealand took place through a variety of mechanisms, the most well-known and notorious being the Native Land Court, which was established on a national basis in 1865. But for Māori living in the South Island their experience of dispossession is very different, for most of their land was gone by 1864, a year before the Land Court began operating. This paper examines the history of New Zealand Company and Crown land purchases in the South Island, before focusing on one community to explore their long-term impact. In 1844 a native reserve was created out the Otago Deed of Purchase. It was one of three reserves set aside for Otago Māori, and is known as the Taieri Native Reserve. Rather than focus specifically on the reserve alone, this paper draws connections between the Taieri river (which bordered the reserve), land settlement, and dispossession. The river was vitally important to the survival of the community, but the river was equally essential to the local farmers who sought to change its direction and drain the associated wetlands. Debate about the fate of the river and wetland played out in multiple forums: local councils, drainage boards, the board of conservators, as well as in central government. For colonists the river was a barrier to economic development. Draining the wetlands, and redirecting the route of the river were at the forefront debates amongst the river communities who were affected by the periodical flooding of the river. Little thought was given the impact of flood control or drainage upon the one community that depended upon it for survival due to the poor quality of the reserve land. In the first two decades of the twentieth century a number of inquiries were held and a series of laws were passed that affected the future of the river and lakes, which eventually resulted in the Taieri River Improvement Act 1920. This law extinguished Māori fishing rights over Lake Tatawai, part of the wetland system, in the name of 'improvement' and 'progress'. By that stage the community living at the reserve had dwindled from 170 people in the early twentieth century to just a handful of families. Tracing the history of the Taieri community illuminates the

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[6] The literature on the Cherokee Trial of Tears is extensive. A few of these works include John Ehle, *Trail of Tears: The Rise and Fall of the Cherokee Nation* (Anchor Books Doubleday, 1988); Theda Perdue and Michael D. Green, *The Cherokee Removal: A Brief History With Documents* (Bedford/St. Martin's, 2005) and Theda Perdue and Michael Green, *The Cherokee Nation and the Trail of Tears*, Reprint. (Penguin Books, 2008).

politics of water in colonial life, highlights the importance of rivers to colonial development and improvement, and demonstrates the destructive impact of legislation upon Māori access to key food resources (known as mahinga kai), which essentially shaped the fate of a community.

**Cecilia Morgan**
**Site of Dispossession, Site of Persistence: The Haudenosaunee (Six Nations) at the Grand River Territory in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries**

Formed out of its residents' dispossession in the aftermath of the American Revolution and the purchase of land from the Anishinabe people by the colonial government, the territory of the Haudenosauenee people at the Grand River is Canada's largest reserve and, quite possibly, one of its oldest such communities. Yet the Grand River Territory has received relatively little detailed attention from Canadian historians of Indigenous people: certainly far less than those of the western provinces or British Columbia. To be sure, 'Six Nations' and the Iroquois had long been of interest to nineteenth-century anthropologists and was the subject of McMaster University anthropologist Sally Weaver's intensive fieldwork and subsequently published studies in the 1990s. Nevertheless, the historiography is patchy, as it is focused on particular episodes, themes, and individuals. Apart from Weaver's three articles, to date (and to the best of my knowledge), we lack a comprehensive, historically grounded study of the reserve that stretches from its foundation in the 1784 to the post-World War Two years. While this paper makes no pretensions to undertake such a study - and may perpetuate the historiography's episodic character - nevertheless the Grand River territory's nineteenth and early twentieth century's history intersects with and complicates the themes of the Dispossessions project.
To be sure, from its earliest incarnation the territory was a site of refuge: first for members of the Haudenosaunee forced to leave their traditional territories in the Mohawk Valley (present-day upstate New York) and then for those displaced by the pressures of settler society in Upper Canada, such as the Mississaugas, the Delaware, and others, including some white settlers and escaped slaves. As well, the Grand River territory was seen by the colonial government as a suitable site in which Haudenosaunee people might be contained, their energies devoted primarily to full-time farming. In a number of ways, then, the Grand River territory may well have resembled the Kat River settlement. However, the Haudenosaunee persisted on the Grand River territory: they were not persuaded, forced, or obliged to abandon it, and an agricultural economy developed throughout the reserve (albeit not always in the ways that colonial and Dominion officials wished). If there is a 'grand narrative' of this indigenous agricultural community, then, it is not one of a rise and fall. Rather, the community's story is perhaps instead one of continuous negotiations, both with settler society and within the community itself. Moreover, unlike places that were more isolated, often because of colonial and missionary authorities' desires to remove Indigenous people from white society, the Grand River reserve was (and is) notable for its proximity to settler society, close to Ontario's commercial, industrial, and political centres. It saw continuous forms of traffic, whether that of poachers and land speculators or anthropologists and archaeologists. Equally importantly, the experiences of a number of individuals from this community also testify to the community's multiple levels of interactions with settler society and, in many cases, colonial and imperial circuits outside British North America. Starting with individuals such as the Brant family and John Norton (1774-1820s?), the Scottish-Cherokee-Mohawk translator, political negotiator, and military officer, and ending with Mohawk performers John Brant-Sero and E. Pauline Johnson in the early twentieth century, this paper will explore the multifaceted ways in which members of the Grand River territory were connected to humanitarian and other networks, projects, and circuits

within British North America and Empire. It also will seek to tease out the ways in which members of this community also were linked to other Indigenous communities - the most obvious being those Haudenosaunee communities on the other side of the Canada-United States border.

The paper will pay particular attention to the ways in which local conditions, local circuits of knowledge and practice, helped shape these dynamics. The paper will be based on my own research on the Grand River, which has tended to take a biographical approach; it also, though, will make use of the work of scholars such as James Paxton, Elizabeth Elbourne, Carl Benn, Susan M. Hill, Michelle A. Hamilton, and Alison Norman, whose broader-based studies will help counterbalance my closer focus on individuals. I believe that this paper will speak to the project's goal of seeing these communities 'as a conjunction of . . . larger scale processes and the personalities and behaviours of indigenous and colonial individuals who can be 'known' only through fine-grained, localised research.'

**Robert Ross**
**The Kat River Settlement**
This paper discusses the history of the Kat River settlement in the Eastern Cape of South Africa during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. The Kat River valley was on the border between the Cape Colony and Xhosaland. In 1829, the British expelled the amaXhosa from the valley, and settled the valley with Khoekhoe families who were to form a "bulwark" against subsequent Xhosa attacks. THe Khoekhoe built up a society in the valley, bringing the land into cultivation and, in their conversations with the missionaries, developing a political theology which lay at the basis of black South African nationalism. Nevertheless, their success led to considerable jealousy on the part of the British settlers, whose actions, coupled with the destruction of property, and the lack of recognition, in the War of the Axe, led to a proportion of the Kat River people going into rebellion during a subsequent frontier war. The result was the break-up of the exclusively Khoekhoe settlement, although a proportion of the settlers maintained their land well into the twentieth century.

**Fiona Vernal**
**Farmerfield as Local and Global History**
As outposts of metropolitan evangelicalism, mission stations like Farmerfield provide an instructive lens through which to view the interplay of local and global ideologies and personalities. Founded in 1838 as a Methodist mission on South Africa's turbulent eastern frontier, Farmerfield's history reveals how Africans used missionaries and missions in their attempts to reconstitute their economic livelihoods, political resources, and social structures in the face of colonial dispossession. Ideologies drawing on antislavery, evangelicalism, and the "civilizing mission" drew Africans, missionaries, and white settlers into tendentious debates about land rights, land use, the meaning of humanitarianism, the indigenization of Christianity, and the relationship between the metropole and colony. At the center of these debates rested a host of fundamental questions about land. Who owned the land? Would usufruct rights devolve into ownership? How did the notion of indigenous land rights shift in the face of migration and war? Should missions be viewed as part of a humanitarian program to address African land loss? Could Africans prove or vindicate their character as farmers? Could local African knowledge of the land trump European technocratic approaches to agriculture? Should land be used to compensate Africans loyal to the colonial government? Could nineteenth century dreams about land as a pivotal part of African economic development survive under apartheid's racial logic? Where did land restitution fit into the post-apartheid attempts to achieve economic justice?  Could a hybridization of trust and individual property titles protect restituted

land from speculators and opportunities wanting to buy out impoverished residents in contemporary South Africa? The multiple generations of residents who sought land access at Farmerfield, lost the land in the 1960s and regained it the 1990s made these questions all the more profound as they sought to hedge their economic strategies on agriculture, education for their children and circumspect relationship to the local and international Methodist bureaucracy and now, the post-apartheid government.

**Damon Salesa**

**Mark Mcmillan**
Afterword