



Rupturing settler time: visual culture and geographies of indigenous futurity

Amber Hickey

To cite this article: Amber Hickey (2019): Rupturing settler time: visual culture and geographies of indigenous futurity, World Art, DOI: [10.1080/21500894.2019.1621926](https://doi.org/10.1080/21500894.2019.1621926)

To link to this article: <https://doi.org/10.1080/21500894.2019.1621926>



Published online: 28 Jul 2019.



Submit your article to this journal [↗](#)



Article views: 9



View Crossmark data [↗](#)

Rupturing settler time: visual culture and geographies of indigenous futurity

Amber Hickey*

History of Art and Visual Culture, University of California - Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, USA

This article focuses on the implications of the work of two artists on discourses of temporality and Indigenous futurity. I analyze the work of Skawennati and Bonnie Devine, with particular consideration of their resistance to the hegemonic temporality of extractive and capitalist lifeways and what Mark Rifkin calls ‘settler time’ [Rifkin, Mark. 2017. *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination*. Durham: Duke University Press]. Skawennati provides a spiraling narrative of Indigenous pasts and futures in her machinima series, TimeTraveller™. In her sculptural installation, Letters from Home, Bonnie Devine calls upon the viewer to consider the stones from the Serpent River First Nation as elders. The casts of these stones are framed as texts, and viewers are encouraged to learn how to read these lessons, collapsing the divide between deep time and the present. Ultimately, I argue that these artists use emerging, experimental, and established media as a method of creating ruptures in Euro-Western notions of time, providing an embodied experience of a temporal otherwise and glimpses into decolonized futures.

Keywords: decolonization; settler time; futurity; indigeneity; deep time; visual culture

Beginnings

I look around, and see a landscape both familiar and unfamiliar – there is a museum, a longhouse,¹ a garden filled with corn, a comfortable home ... and a spaceship. I enter a building with iridescent walls, and see clothing from many different eras on display. As I move through this world with my avatar, I realize that it comprises elements from many different eras in Indigenous peoples’ history – past, present, and imagined. I walk through the museum and reflect on the pieces – Nadia Myre’s *Meditations on Red*, Richard Bell’s *Life on a Mission*, works by Rebecca Belmore and Sonny Assu, and a small statue of Kateri Tekakwitha (Figure 1).² This is a gallery of early twenty-first-century Indigenous art built by Skawennati

*Email: ammhicke@ucsc.edu



Figure 1. Skawennati and AbTeC team, AbTeC Island, machinimagraph, 2018 (courtesy the artist).

and her team within the Second Life world, *AbTeC Island*.³ The reference to the early twenty-first century suggests that we are now somewhere and sometime in the future, and that this is how humans will look back on Indigenous peoples' cultural production in this period. Or are we looking forward from the past? I turn and notice that the largest tree on the landscape has glowing branches (Figure 2). I realize I can fly. I move my cursor, select 'log out,' and find myself back in the here and now.

In *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination*, scholar Mark Rifkin (2017) asserts that simply insisting on the continued *existence* of Indigenous peoples is a flawed intervention. He argues that this intervention, while important, fails to address the hegemony of Western conceptions of temporality (2017, x). In a move to refocus the discourse, Rifkin notes:

Native peoples remain oriented in relation to collective experiences of peoplehood, to particular territories (whether or not such places are legally recognized as reservations or given official trust status), to the ongoing histories of their inhabitation in those spaces, and to histories of displacement from them. Such orientations open up 'different worlds' than those at play in dominant settler orderings, articulations, and reckonings of time (3).

In other words, these particular spatial orientations, as well as the continued commitment of Indigenous peoples to telling their own histories in their own ways, often rupture settler-colonial national narratives and dominant understandings of the trajectory of history.⁴ These Indigenous



Figure 2. Skawennati and AbTeC team, AbTeC Island, machinimagraph, 2018 (courtesy the artist).

remembrances and relationships are evidence of *othered* temporal and spatial experiences and knowledges. I call them *othered*, because I argue that just as bodies can be othered, so can these decolonial temporal orientations. I move Rifkin's argument forward by looking toward the work of two artists, Skawennati (Mohawk) and Bonnie Devine (Ojibwa/Anishinaabe), both of whom engage closely with notions of temporality. What might be the implications of these artists' work on discourses of temporality and Indigenous futurity? How might their work point us toward counter-hegemonic temporal realities and decolonial futures?

Indigenous futurity and a third temporality

Currently, many theorists, activists, and artists are focusing on the spatial manifestations of coloniality and decoloniality. These analyses are important, but there is not enough discussion of the temporal elements of decolonial resistance – likely because temporality is often more abstracted and difficult to articulate. Some of the artists whose work I discuss have contributed notable scholarship on issues related to decolonial visual culture, new media, and Indigenous 'future imaginaries' (see, e.g. Lewis 2016). Jason Edward Lewis (Cherokee, Kanaka Maoli, Samoan), for instance, points out the lack of Indigenous characters in popular science fiction, stating:

Our absence from the future imaginaries of the settler culture should worry us. Absence implies non-existence, or, at the very least, non-importance. A people that are absent in the future need not be consulted in the present

about how that future comes about. A culture that is assumed not to be important one hundred years from now can be discounted now, for what are the consequences? (Lewis 2014, 58)

Skawennati and Lewis attend to this issue through asserting visions of thriving Indigenous peoples in the future. As Eve Tuck (Unangax) and Rubén A. Gaztambide-Fernández point out, ‘When we locate the present of settler colonialism as only the production of the past, we overlook how settler colonialism is configured in relation to a different temporal horizon: the future’ (2013, 80). They state, with reference to Andrew Baldwin, ‘Futurity refers to the ways in which, “the future is rendered knowable through specific practices (i.e. calculation, imagination, and performance) and, in turn, intervenes upon the present through three anticipatory logics (i.e. pre-caution, pre-emption and preparedness)”’ (80; citing Baldwin 2012, 173). Settler futurity, therefore, comprises the cultural structures and narratives that ensure and envision a future for settlers; Indigenous futurity comprises the structures and narratives that support and image a future for Indigenous peoples.

But Indigenous understandings of temporality are often not clearly linear – they may be spiraling, slipstreaming, or rhizomatic.⁵ If time is layered (or spiraling, or slipstreaming, or rhizomatic) rather than linear, perhaps we can think of all creative resistance happening at once and in alliance. Perhaps those who desire a decolonized future can travel through time to consult with movement makers of the past. As Skawennati learned when she consulted with a community member for feedback on her piece *TimeTraveller*TM, her community has ‘always use[d] time travel to figure out the answers to problems’ (pers. comm., March 15, 2018). In this article I ask: how might we image decolonial worlds, and how might othered notions of temporality be allies in envisioning and experiencing such worlds? What affective experiences emerge through these othered temporalities? How can we ensure that support of othered temporalities is a part of broader work in support of self-determination and environmental justice? The artists featured here are making work that opens up what Kevin Bruyneel (2007) might deem *third spaces of sovereignty* – spaces that are neither inside nor outside current hegemonic systems, but rather balancing precariously but productively on the edges. Here, I propose that art can open up a third space, and perhaps a *third temporality*.

This article devotes particular attention to instances in which resistance to the hegemonic temporality of extractive and capitalist lifeways, and to what Rifkin (2017) calls ‘settler time,’ is evident in these artworks. Skawennati provides a spiraling narrative of Indigenous pasts and futures in her machinima series *TimeTraveller*TM. In her sculptural installation *Letters from Home*, Bonnie Devine calls upon the viewer to consider the stones

from the Serpent River First Nation as elders. The casts of these stones are framed as texts, and viewers are encouraged to learn how to read these lessons, collapsing the divide between deep time and the present.⁶ These artists' approaches to using emerging, experimental, and established media function as methods of creating ruptures in Euro-Western notions of time, providing an embodied experience of a temporal otherwise and glimpses into decolonized futures.

Visualizing Indigenous futurity

Skawennati's TimeTraveller™

Skawennati's expansive practice connects the spheres of fine art, education, and cyber culture. I focus on her piece *TimeTraveller™*, identifying how it contributes to the re-envisioning of Indigenous histories, imagining Indigenous futurity, and considering how time travel might be a tool of creative resistance.

Throughout her career, Skawennati has explored notions of Indigenous temporality and the rewriting of dominant narratives, bringing historical figures and stories into the present through digital media. In one of her first forays into decolonial world-making in cyberspace, Skawennati experimented with the online platform The Palace to create *CyberPow-Wow*. The project, which was active from the mid-1990s to the early 2000s, was a collective effort towards building an online space determined by Indigenous peoples and their accomplices. This effort has continued with AbTeC Island, an 'Aboriginally determined territory in cyberspace' (Lewis and Fragnito 2005).

TimeTraveller™ is composed of a series of narrative videos called 'machinimas,' created on the AbTeC Island set Skawennati and her team built with the Second Life platform. In this wide-reaching series, Skawennati explores Indigenous pasts and futures. The series follows Hunter, a Mohawk man from the future, as he uses his *TimeTraveller™* glasses, which allow him to experience significant events in Indigenous peoples' history across physical and temporal geographies.

It is the year 2121, and we meet Hunter in the first episode of nine. He lives in a storage locker and travels by jet pack through this hyper-consumerist society (Figure 3). Through the use of the *TimeTraveller™* interface, Hunter can search for and select which moments in history he would like to ostensibly visit. We follow Hunter on his journey to learn about these histories through engaging with this consumer technology. With the *TimeTraveller™* glasses, he is able to experience the events leading to the Dakota War of 1862, the entire Kanehsatà:ke resistance (also known as the Oka Crisis, 1990), and the Alcatraz reclamation of 1969.⁷ Here, one might wonder if Skawennati is imaginatively exploring



Figure 3. Skawennati, TimeTraveller™ Episode 01, 2008–2013 [screenshot].

the seemingly endless expanse of consumerism. Separated from his community, Hunter's most accessible option to learn about the history of his ancestors and other Indigenous peoples is through engaging with a consumer product.

Hunter puts on the glasses and enters the search terms 'Indian Massacre' into the digital interface. He is brought to a scene at Fort Calgary in 1875. Soldiers are being told the story of the Dakota War of 1862, through a highly biased lens, while Hunter is in 'fly on the wall' mode in the back of the room. He points out, 'If there's one thing every Indian knows it's this: when it comes to history, always get a second opinion.' Hunter then decides to visit the period that led to the 1862 Dakota War. In addition to providing Hunter with a more nuanced narrative of the events of 1862, this episode introduces several important features of the *TimeTraveller*™ glasses. After his disappointing experience at Fort Calgary, Hunter chooses to use 'Intelligent Agent Mode.' This feature allows him to interact with those involved with the events as well as to experience some of the affective and sensory elements of these histories.

Hunter next visits the Kanehsatà:ke resistance of 1990, one of the most iconic events in the history of Mohawk resistance movements. When he arrives, a young girl named Karahkwenhawi asks where he came from, to which he answers, 'the future.' The events that occur in this episode will be recognizable to anyone familiar with the Kanehsatà:ke resistance – from the opening shot that references Shaney Komulainen's well-known photograph 'Face to Face' (1990), to Louis Karoniaktajeh Hall's 'Mohawk Warrior Flag' (1974), to the unexploded bomb found on the

ground of the resistance camp. Hunter's time at the camp in the pines turns out to be an invaluable learning experience. He learns some Kanien'kéha words and gains a thorough understanding of what the protectors were struggling for.⁸ He stays throughout the resistance, and remains even after the protectors leave the pines, so that he can ensure Karahkwenhawi makes it safely to her grandmother's house after her mother is arrested. As we will see later on in the series, the kindness Hunter shows toward Karahkwenhawi at this time will also affect his own life.

The next episode brings us to a present-day church in Kahnawake, where we meet a grown Karahkwenhawi. She is visiting a statue of Kateri Tekakwitha for research related to an art history assignment on 'representations of aboriginal people in public spaces.' While at the church, she sees Hunter suddenly appear. After a moment, he disappears and she finds a pair of *TimeTraveller*TM glasses on the floor, observing that there may have been 'a rift in the space time continuum' (Figure 4).

Karahkwenhawi tries on the glasses and finds herself at a pow wow in the year 2112. Jingle dancers compete for 'his and hers matching Ferraris,' as viewers in the packed stadium cheer. Some may criticize the unashamedly consumerist bent of this imagined Indigenous future, but this, as Skawennati explained to me, is only one imagined future of many. In this piece, Skawennati was centrally interested in rupturing established stereotypes of Indigenous peoples in popular media. Namely, she was interested in challenging the notion that Indigenous peoples 'have to be poor to be truly Native' (pers. comm., March 19, 2018). For the sake of clarity, familiar



Figure 4. Skawennati, *TimeTraveller*TM Episode 04, 2008–2013 [screenshot].

frames of reference (capitalism, consumerism, etc.) remain in this constructed world. Of this choice, Skawennati states:

I am not showing *the* future, I'm showing *a* future. And I'm telling a certain story. The story I am telling is the story of how Native people got their groove back. [...] It's only 75 minutes long, and so when you're telling a story like that you need – I need anyway – some sort of shorthand. Certain things in there I decided to use because everyone would get it. And so when you see them dancing for the prizes, it's still a freakin' car, it's still exotic travel. I know that, I know how it looks. But it was important because you never see Native people rich. We have to be poor to be truly Native – fuck that. And you know what Wab Kinew said?: 'Imma live real lavish for all the times that you called my people savage.' And that's what I was thinking about (pers. comm., March 19, 2018).

Karahkwenhawi decides to continue her research on Kateri by using this tool from the future. She travels to the year 1680, where she uses 'intelligent agent' mode to directly interact with Kateri. We soon find, through the lens of Karahkwenhawi's *TimeTraveller*TM experiences, that prevalent understandings of Kateri's actions are sorely lacking in nuance. For instance, some members of the Mohawk community consider Kateri a traitor because of her commitment to the Catholic Church (pers. comm., March 15, 2018). However, in this episode it becomes clear that Kateri's actions may also suggest resistance and a commitment to continuing Mohawk practices from within the church. Here, we can see Skawennati's attempt to give voice to Indigenous women whom have been historically silenced. Of this episode, Skawennati spoke of the difficulty she had finding direct quotes from Indigenous women of the past. This episode is one of her attempts to allow us to listen to these women – or to allow these women to time travel to the present – and is heavily informed by Skawennati's own research, which included both written texts and oral histories held by community members (pers. comm., March 19, 2018).

Karahkwenhawi then travels to the Alcatraz reclamation of 1969, where she again bumps into Hunter. The two fall in love and begin to experience these histories together – despite the fact that Karahkwenhawi is from the present day and Hunter from the future. They meet prominent Indians of All Tribes activist Richard Oakes, contribute to daily activities, enjoy the company of the other activists at meals and group gatherings, learn about the motivation for the reclamation, and listen to Oakes read the Alcatraz Proclamation.

Also notable about this episode is that it returns to one of the issues highlighted by Skawennati in her earlier work – the representation of Indigenous peoples in love.⁹ Hunter and Karahkwenhawi's relationship grows during their time in Alcatraz, and the representation of their physical

relationship is on clearly different terms than many other representations of Indigenous peoples' sexuality. Rather than a romanticized representation of Indigenous bodies from a settler-colonial perspective, the representation of Hunter and Karahkwenhawi's relationship is realistic, sweet, consensual, and no-nonsense. Soon though, Hunter and Karahkwenhawi have to part ways – at least temporarily. They agree to meet again in the year 1490 in Tenochtitlan.

We briefly witness Hunter and Karahkwenhawi return to their lives in the future and present, respectively. When the two meet again in Tenochtitlan, they are dazzled by the beauty and efficiency of this pre-settler world. Karahkwenhawi remarks, 'It's like a vacation from colonialism.' This episode is most notable for its clear challenge to normative understandings of the trajectory from 'uncivilized' to 'civilized' culture. This, Skawennati stated during an interview, was one of her goals: 'I really wanted to show Native people as "civilized" before white people came; to show books and universities and temples and libraries, all the things that they had' (pers. comm., March 15, 2018). Episode 07 is a direct affront to narratives that privilege the trajectory put forward through dominant Western anthropological and art-historical studies, which often fail to acknowledge the achievements of Indigenous nations.

In the short interlude episode, time seems to be collapsing even further. Hunter and Karahkwenhawi travel back and forth between the present and future, with one foot in each world. The two begin to experiment with what might happen if they remove the *TimeTraveller*TM technology from their relationship, at least in part. Hunter first removes his own glasses and ends up back in his storage locker. However, he later removes Karahkwenhawi's glasses and her body remains in the year 2121 (Figures 5 and 6). This opens up an enticing field of possibility for the two protagonists. Karahkwenhawi's time travel has now moved beyond the virtual, into the physical.

In the next episode, Hunter and Karahkwenhawi continue to visit other parts of history – they meet Pocahontas and Sacagawea, and Karahkwenhawi learns about the trajectory of Indigenous sovereignty in the future (or Hunter's past). Hunter eventually asks Karahkwenhawi to live with him in the year 2121. Karahkwenhawi is faced with the conundrum of whose time period to live in, and whether or not such a longstanding temporal jump is possible. As she walks through the gallery of twenty-first-century Indigenous art, she sees Hannah Claus' *cloudscape* (2012). The artwork inspires her to consider the coexistence of myriad temporary realities. This reminder gives her solace as she decides to join Hunter in the year 2121. It seems clear now that all of these events are happening at the same time, and therefore her choice is simply what will be immediately visible in her lived experience.



Figure 5. Skawennati, TimeTraveller™ Episode 08, 2008–2013 [screenshot].



Figure 6. Skawennati, TimeTraveller™ Episode 08, 2008–2013 [screenshot].

Bonnie Devine's Letters from Home

Bonnie Devine is an artist based in Toronto and the Founding Chair of the Indigenous Visual Culture program at the Ontario College of Art and Design University (OCADU). Devine explores othered temporalities through very different means – primarily sculpture. Devine is known for her incorporation of story and longstanding Anishinaabe materials and

practices into her work, much of which explores the impact of uranium mining on her home, the Serpent River First Nation. The Serpent River First Nation is situated along the Canadian Shield, which comprises some of the oldest stones on Turtle Island.¹⁰ These stones, shaped over billions of years, are highly contested. They are sites both of Anishinaabe teachings and of mineral extraction (Devine 2017). Devine grew up with an awareness of the tensions between these two qualities of the stones. When I asked her what the legacy of uranium mining at the Serpent River First Nation looks and feels like, she responded by sharing an experience from when she was five or six years old. I quote Devine at length here, as this experience continues to shape her artistic approach and interests today:

[W]e were driving along the Trans-Canada Highway, Highway 17, which cuts right through our territory and our reserve. And I remember seeing on the side of the highway a giant pile of yellow powder – a *giant* pile of yellow powder. And all around the pile of yellow powder, the ground had been burned black. The very rocks were burned this charcoal black, and it was a really beautiful image because the color of the pile of powder was electric yellow. I had never seen a color like that before. It was accentuated further by the fact that it was surrounded by this black background, it was like a triangle against this black background. It looked like a drawing. And I really do believe that it was seeing that drawing-like landscape that made me an artist. It made me begin immediately to attach meaning to image, and to seek meaning in images. And that was early on. I remember asking my grandfather who was driving his pickup truck what that was, and he wouldn't tell me. It became this mystery that I held close. And I remember they put me to bed that night and I'm lying there, and the silence up there is immense – we didn't live in the village of Serpent River, we lived along the river in a house that was isolated from everything else and surrounded by forest, hills, and just a little dirt road that you got to that house by. And I'm lying there in the dark in my little bed and I remember making a promise to myself that I would find out what that was, and that I would tell the story of that. And I did find out what it was, it was sulfuric acid, and that's why it was burning the land around the pile. The sulfuric acid was used in the refining process for the raw uranium ore (pers. comm., October 5, 2017).

This sulfuric acid wreaked havoc on the Serpent River First Nation. The water became unsafe, and the community is still on a boil-water advisory. The pow wow grounds are no longer useable as they are directly adjacent to the sulfuric acid plant. Dancers were unable to use their moccasins after three days of dancing – they were covered in holes burnt into the material by the sulfuric acid (pers. comm., October 5, 2017). Devine's mention of the devastating impact of sulfuric acid surprised me to an extent, because she had not yet mentioned the impact of the uranium tailings.¹¹ This, I believe, is evidence of the breadth of challenges this extractive project continues to

present to the Serpent River First Nation. Regulatory systems to ensure the safety of small communities are lacking across Turtle Island. The number of communities with unmarked uranium tailings ponds is astounding, until one reflects upon the capitalist, white-supremacist, colonial foundations on which all of these projects were put forward. This is clearly the intended outcome within this violent framework.¹²

Letters from Home is a sculptural work created in 2008, part of a broader project called *Writing Home*.¹³ *Letters from Home* comprises four glass casts of stones within the Serpent River First Nation (Figure 7). As mentioned before, these stones are known for being some of the oldest in Turtle Island. Amid the controversy in the Serpent River First Nation regarding the legacy of uranium mining, Devine wondered what these stones, these elders, would say of the matter. Could she find a way to make the arguments of the stones visible and legible? Devine decided to take casts of the stones, and consider them as texts or messages. In this act, Devine also framed the stones as elders, questioning Western notions of agency and expertise.

Many scholars have recently been considering the animacy of the non-human – from Bruno Latour’s Actor-Network-Theory (2005) to Jane Bennett’s writings in *Vibrant Matter* (2010). As Zoe Todd (Métis/otipemisiw) points out, the authors of this ‘ontological turn’ often fail to acknowledge the influence of Indigenous knowledges on such theories of animacy and non-human agency (2014). Gregory Cajete (Tewa) calls this notion of more-than-human animacy *ensoulment*: ‘Everything is viewed as having energy and its own unique intelligence and creative process, not only obviously animate entities, such as plants, animals, and microorganisms,



Figure 7. Bonnie Devine, *Letters from Home*, 2008. Cast glass, birch plinths. Each glass piece 8.5 inches × 11 inches × 4 inches. Photo credit: Bonnie Devine.

but also rocks, mountains, rivers, and places large and small ... this is the Indigenous view of “animism” (Cajete 2003; cited in 2bears 2010). Devine points out that in Anishinaabemowin, the Anishinaabe language, ‘the way that nouns are separated is not by gender as it is in French or Latin, but by animate or inanimate’ (pers. comm., October 5, 2017). So there is, within the language and the interconnected Anishinaabe knowledge systems it supports and is rooted in: an acknowledgement of the power of non-humans, or more-than-humans. She continues:

[I]n western culture of course, human is at the pinnacle of nature. Human is the perfected manifestation of biology. Whereas in Anishinaabe thought, humans are somewhere in the middle of this pyramid of progressively perfected beings. We are by no means at the top. We are rather near the bottom, actually. And there are whole ranges of creatures and substances and manifestations that are regarded as our elder brothers, they are much much more evolved, much more capable, much more important than we are (pers. comm., October 5, 2017).

These stones are, in this sense, far wiser than any humans. Devine wanted to listen to these stones, but she had to consider a method of doing so. She spent some time with the stones, took photographs of them, took several casts, and listened (Figure 8).

Letters from Home has been displayed in gallery spaces such as Urban Shaman and Connexion Artist-Run Centre for Contemporary Art, far from the Serpent River First Nation where the images and casts were gathered. In spite of this distance, the piece brings the stones supporting Devine’s childhood home into presence in the gallery space. Through the explicit



Figure 8. Bonnie Devine making casts of the rock, Serpent River First Nation, 2007. Photo Credit: Sean McCullough.

insertion of evidence of this contested landscape into gallery spaces, Devine refigures these spaces. She also disrupts Western notions of time, through reminding viewers of the expansive scope of the stones' existence. Of the ways in which temporality informs this work, Devine states:

I was considering the fact that this particular geographical location has an ancient geological age. It is the place where, in geological time, the Niagara Escarpment butted up against the metamorphic rock of the Canadian Shield – which was an immovable object and the Niagara Escarpment was moving north. And they embraced, they kissed, they copulated, there was a penetration, there was a cataclysm there. And this is what caused the ripples or the folds in that rock. And as I was considering that I did begin to think about something very old, and something magnificent ... to liken an embrace like that that takes millions of years to accomplish. To consider that as a human life telescopes everything suddenly, and you recognize that the process of this extends way before your birth and will continue in an unbroken process way after you're gone. And we're just like these little leaves that drift across it from time to time, in the long span of time. I was also remembering that this is an ancient trade route that goes through that north channel and leads eventually to Sault Ste. Marie. And if you go through Sault Ste. Marie, you get to Lake Superior. It is really a route to the heart of the continent, and that for probably 12,000 years, since the last ice age receded this has been used as a route that people have walked there and people have canoed there. Traders have passed there. And I began to think in terms of trying to communicate also with that, with that memory of all of the footsteps that had gone through there. And how it is in some ways a vein, an artery, a road, you know. So [...] it is really directly because of that rock that I began to think in those terms. Because here in Toronto you just don't get a sense of that. Everything is so immediate and so right now, that's all, and it's as much as you can cope with, the right now. But there, there is a spaciousness that opens, and it's like a giant gulf, and you find yourself drifting in it (pers. comm., October 5, 2017).

The pace of extraction differs drastically from the deep time of mineral and fossil fuel formation. If deep time turns our attention to the expansive timescale of this lifeworld, extraction turns our attention towards the possible end of time. This juxtaposition makes Devine's work all the more compelling. Perhaps being reminded of these deep timescales may result in greater sensitivity toward these geological processes, and to the knowledge of the beings that have been here far longer than us. At the very least, the fact that Devine is attempting to make deep time visible is an affront to the timescales we are often encouraged to prioritize and operate within across Turtle Island. In this piece, Devine presents us with another option, bringing the wisdom of the stones into visibility and legibility. Perhaps listening to the stones is a step toward resisting extractive time.

Devine qualified *Letters from Home*, noting that though it may seem metaphorical, it should be taken seriously:

When I speak of the land as containing a narrative, it's not really an abstraction. It really is this idea that in fact the land remembers. And where our faulty human memory fails, the rocks actually contain a record. And of course it's imaginative and it might strike some people as fanciful. But for me it's deadly serious (pers. comm., October 5, 2017).

Conclusions

I want to propose that decolonization is perhaps not only about the return of land, but equally and importantly the return of time. The rematriation of time would allow Indigenous peoples to situate themselves temporally in whatever way they wish, rather than being relegated to the past.¹⁴ It would also open up an envisioning of the future – as is clear in the work of Skawennati. The return of time means a resurgence of ways of thinking about and experiencing time that stand up to temporal divisions enforced by colonial and capitalist norms. It means an embracing of slow, overlapping, and spiraling time. It means returns, renewals, and resurgences. Perhaps attuning ourselves to othered temporal realities evident in the work of Indigenous artists and activists may lead us toward decolonial realities that are both spatially and temporally decolonized. In other words, decolonizing time may lead to decolonizing territory – and this is not proposed purely as a metaphorical argument (Tuck and Yang 2012).

The aforementioned works are starting points for considering how creative practices may rupture settler time, and how non-hegemonic notions of temporality may support decolonial world-making. Devine points toward the scale and work of deep time upon our geological realities and acknowledges the wisdom of non-humans that have experienced far more of the earth's history than we have. She asks us to consider how we might learn from non-human elders, particularly amid the threat of additional fossil fuel and mineral extraction. Skawennati imagines Indigenous peoples in the future, while experimenting with the potentialities of othered time-scales. Her work encourages viewers to consider the flexibility and multiplicity of temporality, and challenges tired notions of 'progress.' These two artists are featured to illuminate how creative practices are a space for inserting othered temporalities into broader discourses and frameworks of the future imaginary. It is my hope that we can continue this conversation in visioning and building worlds that are both spatially and temporally liberated from current hegemonic frameworks.

I log back into AbTeC Island, and visit the longhouses. The first is a longhouse that resembles those of centuries past; the second is composed of iridescent poles that form a skeletal shell in the shape of a longhouse. Inside, two multicolored wampum belts are on display. The coexistence of these two structures in one cyber-topography is illustrative of an approach to time that challenges the relegation of each to either past or

future spaces. Their coexistence reminds those visiting AbTeC Island that we need to look towards the past and the future in order to construct radically decolonial nows.

Notes

1. A longhouse is a style of communal home that was often used by nations of the Haudenosaunee confederacy (Mohawk, Oneida, Tuscarora, Seneca, Onondaga, and Cayuga).
2. Kateri Tekakwitha is a well-known Mohawk woman from the seventeenth century.
3. Second Life is a virtual world that was created in 2003. Users can add to the virtual world and interact with each other and their virtual environment using avatars. AbTeC Island, a location in the online platform, was built by Skawennati and her collaborators, and also serves as the set for Skawennati's machinima films. Additions to the territory are regularly made in preparation for these films, and the location is sometimes open to guests. For more information on interacting with AbTeC Island, see: <http://abtec.org/iif/activating-abtec-island/>.
4. For an excellent introduction to how settler-colonial national narratives are communicated through American visual culture, see Truettner (1991).
5. It would be unwise to generalize Indigenous conceptions of temporality, so I want to emphasize here that each nation has particular epistemologies regarding time. Here, I am simply trying to state a few of the most prominent othered conceptions of time. For more on what Grace L. Dillon has termed 'Native Slipstream' writing, I highly recommend the anthology *Walking the Clouds*, edited by Dillon (2012).
6. Deep time is the scale with which gradual geological changes are often understood.
7. The Kanehsatà:ke resistance saw Mohawk protectors and their allies reclaim an area slated for golf course expansion during a 78-day encampment. The Alcatraz reclamation of 1969–1971 saw hundreds of Indigenous activists create a temporary community on Alcatraz Island, following the closure of the federal prison. Both of these events are important in the history of creative resistance led by Indigenous peoples.
8. Kanien'kéha is the Mohawk language.
9. See, for instance, Nation to Nation (2005).
10. I use the term 'Turtle Island' to refer to the North American continent as a nod to the multiple Indigenous nations that use that name – including the Mohawk and Anishinaabe, who are discussed most closely in this article. I also acknowledge that there are many other names given to the continent (and parts of the continent) by Indigenous nations.
11. Uranium tailings are a byproduct of the uranium extraction process. They are highly radioactive and difficult to contain.
12. For more on these interconnected structures, see, for instance, Pulido (2017).
13. *Writing Home* was curated by Faye Heavyshield and first exhibited at Connexion Artist-Run Centre. It features several related pieces, including *Letters from Home*.

14. Here I use the term ‘rematriation’ as a nod to the work of Eve Tuck and Rubén A. Gaztambide-Fernández (2013). They emphasize the pedagogical potential of rematriation. I extend this notion more broadly to that which has been constantly threatened through settler colonial efforts. For instance: cultural practices and land, as well as understandings and experiences of temporality.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Skawennati and Bonnie Devine for taking the time to speak with me about their work, trusting me with this material, and offering generous feedback on this article before publication. I am also thankful to Barry Anderson, Hank Rudolph, and Dave Jones for stimulating conversations that deeply influenced this article during a Signal Culture residency in March 2018. I appreciate the thoughtful questions posed by the audience members present for a panel I organized on ‘Decolonial Geographies’ at the American Association of Geographers Annual Meeting (2018), and the support and feedback offered by Suzanne Fricke, editor of this volume. Finally, I acknowledge the contributions of my partner and family, who always make time to read and rigorously critique my work.

Funding

This work was supported by Visual Studies Travel and Research Grant (University of California – Santa Cruz); Signal Culture Researcher in Residence Program in Owego, NY; University of California President’s Dissertation Year Fellowship.

Notes on contributor

Amber Hickey recently received her PhD in Visual Studies from the University of California, Santa Cruz. Her writing explores decolonial aesthetics, art activism, visual technologies and the military, landscape politics, and radical pedagogy. Amber is an affiliate of UCSC’s Center for Creative Ecologies, and a member of the Education Working Group at the Interference Archive, a volunteer-run archive and gallery space. Her forthcoming publications include a chapter entitled ‘Pathways towards Justice: Walking as Decolonial Resistance’ in the edited volume, *Violence & Indigenous Communities: Confronting the Past, Engaging the Present* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press).

References

- 2bears, Jackson. 2010. ‘A Conversation with Spirits Inside the Simulation of a Coast Salish Longhouse.’ *CTheory, Code Drift: Essays in Critical Digital Studies* (April 2010). <http://www.ctheory.net/articles.aspx?id=640>
- Baldwin, Andrew. 2012. “Whiteness and Futurity: Towards a Research Agenda.” *Progress in Human Geography* 36 (2): 172–187. doi:10.1177/0309132511414603.
- Bennett, Jane. 2010. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press.

- Bruyneel, Kevin. 2007. *The Third Space of Sovereignty: The Postcolonial Politics of U.S.-Indigenous Relations*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Cajete, Gregory. 2003. *Native Science: Natural Laws of Interdependence*. Santa Fe: Clear Light.
- Devine, Bonnie. 2017. *The Enduring Power of Anishinaabe Art*. Toronto, Canada: Royal Ontario Museum.
- Dillon, Grace L., ed. 2012. *Walking the Clouds: An Anthology of Indigenous Science Fiction*. 2nd ed. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Latour, Bruno. 2005. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network-Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Lewis, Jason Edward. 2014. "A Better Dance and Better Prayers: Systems, Structures, and the Future Imaginary in Aboriginal New Media." In *Coded Territories: Tracing Indigenous Pathways in New Media Art*, edited by Steven Loft, and Kerry Swanson, 55–77. Calgary: University of Calgary Press.
- Lewis, Jason Edward. 2016. "Preparations for a Haunting: Notes Toward an Indigenous Future Imaginary." In *The Participatory Condition in the Digital Age*, edited by Jonathan Sterne, 229–249. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.
- Lewis, Jason, and Skawennati Tricia Fragnito. 2005. "Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace." *Cultural Survival Quarterly*, 29 (2). <https://www.culturalsurvival.org/publications/cultural-survival-quarterly/aboriginal-territories-cyberspace>.
- Nation to Nation. 2005. "Native Love." *CyberPowWow*. <http://www.cyberpowwow.net/nation2nation/love.htm> (accessed March 22, 2018).
- Pulido, Laura. 2017. "Geographies of Race and Ethnicity II: Environmental Racism, Racial Capitalism and State-Sanctioned Violence." *Progress in Human Geography* 41 (4): 524–533. doi:10.1177/0309132516646495.
- Rifkin, Mark. 2017. *Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Todd, Zoe. 2014. "An Indigenous Feminist's Take on the Ontological Turn: 'Ontology' Is Just Another Word for Colonialism." *Urbane Adventurer: Amiskwacî*. October 24. <https://zoeandthecity.wordpress.com/2014/10/24/an-indigenous-feminists-take-on-the-ontological-turn-ontology-is-just-another-word-for-colonialism/>.
- Truettner, William H., ed. 1991. *The West as America: Reinterpreting Images of the Frontier*. Washington: Smithsonian.
- Tuck, Eve, and Rubén A. Gaztambide-Fernández. 2013. "Curriculum, Replacement, and Settler Futurity." *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* 29 (1): 72–89.
- Tuck, Eve, and K. Wayne Yang. 2012. "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor." *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1 (1): 1–40.