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## Glyphing decolonial love through urban flash mobbing and *Walking with our Sisters*

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This article contributes to understanding multi-plexed Indigenous resistance through examining spatial tags. As symbolic, moving critiques, spatial tagging intervenes normative structures of settler colonialism and provides the space through which radical decolonial love can emerge. This discussion of the production of spatial glyphs has implications for new ways of thinking about the processes of solidarity building, social activism and the generation of new pedagogical practices of resistance. An analysis of Christi Belcourt's walking with our sisters commemorative art installation (2013–2019) and the urban flash mob round dance at the intersection of Yonge and Dundas streets in downtown Toronto, reveals how spatial tagging formulates Indigenous acts of creative solidarity. This article contributes to an analysis of Indigenous resistance strategies through focusing on the interstitial passageways as generative sites of knowledge production and possibilities for new ways of being in the world.

**Keywords:** activism; dance; feminism; indigenous knowledge; social justice; Urban American Indians

This article contributes a spatial analysis of two distinct forms of spatial tagging, the Idle No More<sup>1</sup> urban flash mob round dance and *Walking with our Sisters* (Belcourt, 2013–2019) commemorative art installation. The approach in this analysis is multi-faceted and explores new geographies of resistance through forms of *petroglyphing* urban landscapes. This discussion of the production of spatial glyphs has implications for new ways of thinking about the processes of solidarity building, social activism, and the generation of new pedagogical practices of resistance. I examine spatial tags created through embodied pathways of Indigenous motion as Indigenous artists (singers and dancers), dancing with non-Indigenous settler allies, produce urban flash mob round dances. I also demonstrate how strategically positioned vamps (the tongues of moccasins) and emergent pathways within the commemorative ceremony *Walking with our Sisters*, illuminate complex Indigenities where tagging produces glyphs as new geographies of resistance. Spatial tags carry on a legacy of glyph production as a key practice shaping Indigenous resistance, and thereby formulate the central focus of this article, which aims to recontextualize our understandings of Indigenous resistance in Canada.

To that end, in this article I situate the practices of spatial tagging within a larger framework of Indigenous resistance preceding the #Idle No More<sup>2</sup> and #MMIWG2P (missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls and 2 spirited) solidarity movements. Since the arrival of European settlers, Indigenous peoples have been engaged in embodied acts of defiance, producing intervening sovereign acts to challenge encroachments of non-Indigenous development and resource extractions on contested Indigenous territories within the Canadian nation-state. I propose that these embodied Indigenous acts assume

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the form of the spatial tag, thus contributing to a long-standing glyph-making strategy of resistance. I suggest that the current manifestation of spatial tagging and glyph making are extensions of past glyphs mobilizing Indigenous resistance towards settler-colonialist accumulation of capital through resource extraction on Indigenous land. The larger network of contemporary public acts of Indigenous resistance in Canada precipitating these manifestations of spatially glyphing Indigenous resistance include: the Temagami First Nation blockades of 1988 and 1989 in Ontario to challenge clear cut logging in their traditional territories; the Lubicon Cree struggle against oil and gas development in their traditional territories; and the 1990 defense of the Mohawk territories of Kanehsatake/Oka from settler colonial interests.<sup>3</sup> This 1990 Kanien'kehaka resistance was a major event informing Idle No More public acts in response to the colonial state.

In examining the mechanics of the spatial glyph, I describe the interstitial passageway as an important focal point for understanding the effects of spatial glyphing in shaping patterns of Indigenous resistance and Indigenous futurity. This article also illustrates how a radical pedagogy of decolonial love lies within the details of both the urban flash mob round dance, and in the commemorative act of *Walking with our Sisters*. I share that it is in the interstice, that space of in-betweenness, where practices of solidarity and significant pedagogies of resistance, such as the notion of radical decolonial love can emerge. Radical decolonial love is spatial and generative, made manifest in the glyph-making strategies of “creative solidarity” (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2010). As a relationship building strategy, this form of Indigenous love critiques the conditions of coloniality in the very act of love making (inclusive and beyond acts of sex) - as through living Audre Lorde's (1984) articulation of an erotic life. It produces a self-reflexive space, challenging the conception of love as a space of permanence, or as a strategy of containment. I offer this analysis of spatial tags to convey their nature as complex manifestations of radical decolonial love in working with and through this rupture and impermanence.

### **Exploring Multi-plexed Geographies of Indigenous Resistance through the Spatial Tag**

Amongst the key concepts mobilized within this article are the relationships between spatial tagging and urban glyphing as they produce new geographies of resistance. The notion spatial tagging describes the function of visual and aural symbols actuated within Indigenous hip-hop culture and round dance revolutions. As a practice, spatial tagging is in relationship to the old school practice of petroglyphing, a long-standing act of inscribing Indigenous collective memory on rock surfaces by knowledge holders and artists. In Cree/Métis visual artist, singer/songwriter Cheryl L'Hirondelle's view, tagging is a manifestation of petroglyphing, connecting us to ancient Indigenous travel across the land. As she describes, “the notion of tagging is so old school that it's ancient when one recalls the repeating petroglyphs and pictographs that make their own trail across the land” (L'Hirondelle, cited in Ritter & Willard, 2012, p. 86).

Traditionally achieved through the strategic application of *waabigan* (clay) on rock surfaces, petroglyphing functioned in the following ways: to record a critical occurrence, relationship or alliance; as signifiers describing a futurism; images demarcating a battle; and a modality through which to demarcate a sighting, or home space for sacred beings (I. Murdoch, personal communication, 2013).

Glyphing practices share a history of producing geographies of resistance, achieved through making visible an active Indigenous presence and futurity in otherwise contested

Indigenous territories. I utilize the concept of urban glyphing to accentuate the doing, and the intrinsic Indigenous motion entailed in producing symbols and narratives as forms of cultural production that are inherently political. I perceive how the collective and communal motion expressed within the dance form of the flash mob round dance produces significant spatial glyphs on urban concrete.<sup>4</sup> I acknowledge the relationship between petroglyphing and tagging, as both ascribe to surface an active presence of complex Indigenities (Vizenor, 1999). At the same time, when actuated in urban spaces, both practices formulate modalities of consciousness dissemination through the creation of Indigenous hub spaces. Indigenous hub spaces, such as the urban flash mob round dances, evoke spatial tags in a consciousness building exercise resulting in the creation of new spatial geographies of resistance.

Hip-hop visual and aural (sonic) culture provides an important framework through which to analyze the significance of flash mob round dances. For example, tagging could be interpreted as a manifestation of an Indigenous futurity through offering what graffiti scholar Anderson (2012) conceptualizes as counter-spaces. In discussing graffiti, Anderson remarks, “resisting this oppressive socio-spatial arrangement, graffiti in turn operates through space. This resistance, this creation of counter-spaces, gives graffiti its true artistic and emotional force” (p. 6). As such, when expressed as flash mobs or commemorative art installations, spatial tagging produces counter-spaces to resist oppressive socio-spatial arrangements of space. One of the outcomes of graffiti’s spatial presence is to lift the conceptual ghetto and the identities of its inhabitants from their invisibility, reaffirming the existence of the silenced ghetto residents by making their voices physical and concrete on the urban landscape. The act of visibility carries the potential to transform the street into a visionary space where new futurisms for Indigenous peoples might be possible.

Within hip-hop culture, tags are the displays of a chosen moniker for an artists’ graffiti identity and the space from which they come. A form of recognition throughout the city, tags reflect “a possibility for the sons and daughters of adults whose names were rarely mentioned outside the block where they lived” to have visibility (Austin, cited in Anderson, 2012, p.8). According to Anderson, “graffiti conceptually remaps urban spaces through a physical inscription of identity on the very landscape designed to pen in inner-city residents” (p. 8). As such, spatial tagging provides a freedom of motion within hyper-regulated urban spaces where marginalization and segregation are used as containment strategies.

Hip-hop scholar Tricia Rose (1994) explains that graffiti offers “aggressive public displays of counter-presence and voice” (p. 59). Hence tagging accommodates the creation of a counter space where a collective consciousness stemming from unexpected, hidden, furtive Indigenous youth presence, can be visually and sonically experienced. Tagging “inscribes one’s identity on an environment that seemed Teflon resistant to its young people of color; an environment that made legitimate avenues for material and social participation inaccessible” (Rose, cited in Anderson, 2012, p. 8). Urban flash mob round dances as tags (with symbolic and narrative functions) not only visibilize, but also intervene in public spaces by creating their own opportunities for material and social participation in contemplating radical difference and as such, can assist in decolonization projects.

An Indigenous act of solidarity, the spatial tag involves collective practices of inscribing embodied motion and creativity in visual, and in some instances, aural form. In the form of a flash mob round dance, tags actuate Indigeneity as a critical site of intervention to address systematic colonizing practices of the nation-state, such as community-rooted

practices protesting the over 1000 missing and murdered Indigenous women in Canada.<sup>5</sup> Spatial tag formation involves the creation process as a vehicle to inform an anti-colonial, moving critique of social injustices. For instance, as spatial glyphs of resistance, flash mob round dances have been mobilized as a form of participatory politics to challenge the disappearances of Indigenous women within Canada. These flash mob round dances have been an integral piece of the #MMIW (Missing and Murdered Indigenous women) social media campaign, which has actuated the use of spatial tags as a means of resisting systems and practices constitutive of gender violence.

The concept of spatial tag describes specifically-rooted Indigenous forms of creative solidarity in the sense that it generates fluxual/transformational symbols and narratives of resistance that can be intensely collaborative and communal (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2010). Creative solidarity can be described as an attempt to challenge the inherited coloniality of solidarity discourse as social practice through the production of spatial/symbolic arrangements that mobilize a radical turn towards relationality, difference, and interdependence. As modalities of creative solidarity, the spatial glyph's impermanence and fluidity produce symbolic socio-spatial rearrangements of material and social conditions of oppression. Within the context of the round dance, for instance, as new drummers are drawn to the inner circle and the bodies that pass by enter the round dance, the circuitous, rhizomatic nature of the round dance produces fluid Indigenous acts that transform and challenge boundaries, expressing "solidarity without guarantees" (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2010, p. 90). The spatial tag facilitates the exploration of tensions, contradictions, and the critical examination of how difference is both recognized and negotiated as mobilizing factors in the creation of solidarities. Multiple solidarities are expressed through this process, emergent within the interstices — those spaces between the beats and dancers.<sup>6</sup>

Gaztambide- Fernández (2010) describes creative solidarity as solidarity in constant flux of invention and reinvention. The mobilization of Indigenous spatial tags through the form of the flash mob round dance and *Walking with our Sisters* commemorative art installation embed dis-assemblages and reformations across vast spatial geographies. *Walking with our Sisters* is a touring installation that manifests unique symbologies and forms dependent upon the knowledge holder's vision in each traditional territory it enters. In Thunder Bay (September- October 2014), for instance, the vamps and pathways were assembled to manifest a turtle lodge.

This notion of creative solidarity lends itself to the conversation involving Indigenous futurities, in that it is a persistently dissatisfied form of solidarity, "one that is always imagining things differently, maybe even a bit better" (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2010, p. 90). This notion of creative solidarity allows for us to view glyphing as a modality through which to accentuate difference, including the complexities and tensions, as well as the new spaces of possibilities that this form of resistance provides. Spatial tags of Indigenous resistance are in relationship with a conceptualization of solidarity that "hinges on radical differences and that insist on relationships of incommensurable interdependency" (Gaztambide- Fernández, 2012, p. 46). Contextualized as urban glyphs, tags of Indigenous solidarities on urban spaces are visually archiving traces of actions engaged in the very process of transformation. This is time sensitive, in that they are archiving moments, and happenings of decolonial strategic solidarities. In such instances, the glyph *is* the Indigenous pedagogy.

Considering the shape and form of the flash mob round dance, in relationship to its interstitial/intersectional environment, the concept of multi-plexual describes Indigenous spatial tags in acts of creative solidarity building. Applied to the visual form of the round

dance, the notion of multi-plexed informs a key element of the spatial geography of Indigenous resistance. Multi-plexed geographies are actuated through the very form of the flash mob round dance as they create interstitial passageways within urban landscapes and temporarily reshape the main corridors of diasporic movement. Spatial tags visually symbolize the complexities of what it means to be rooted/uprooted in an urban space within a greater Indigenous diasporic community. Spatial tags are quite important as forms of resistance to the erasure of Indigenous presence and territorial sovereignty within urban contact zones such as downtown Toronto, which houses a collective history of Indigenous occupation that has been effaced from the public memory.<sup>7</sup> Multi-plexed Indigenous tagging challenges the multiple layers of occupation and representational practices that produce Toronto as a site of capital accumulation, rather than as an Indigenous territorial homeland and sovereign space.

The concept of multi-plexed describes complex articulations of Indigeneities and represents the contours of Indigenous resistance embodied in spatial tags. Hip-hop artist Daybi-No-Doubt mobilizes the concept of multi-plexed to describe the layered, synco-pated nature of the universe. Daybi's song "The Deep End" (First Contact, 2010) references this moment of recognition, "my multi-plexed universe gets very real," he tells us. According to No-Doubt, its categorical use references multiple staging areas for different works, as in a multi-plexed theatre (D. No-Doubt, personal communication, 2014).

Multi-plexed describes the diverse interactions and experiences of the social world (s) in which we live. This positioning informs and produces complex symbologies and spatial formations that help us understand the significance of the urban flash mob round dance. These multiple frequencies are metaphorical threads of diverse experiences of doing Indian identity in the now. When applied to the identity politics of present articulations of Indigeneity, the concept multi-plexed can be mobilized as an intervention, and an "opportunity to finally put the question of essentialism behind us" (Lyons, 2010, p. 59).

The creation of the interstitial passageway is another characteristic of Indigenous resistance through spatial tagging that is articulated through the forms taken on by the round dance and *Walking with our Sisters*. I first encountered this notion in the writings of Homi Bhabha (1994), and through Cheryl L'Hirondelle's (2012) mobilization of the concept to describe the fabric of complex Indigeneities. L'Hirondelle (2012) states, "I inhabit this thin, dotted interstice where colonial and Indigenous overlap as authentically as I can using the language that helps shape and guide my understandings of who I am and where I come from" (cited in Ritter & Willard, 2012, p. 86). As an active space in-between, Bhabha's (1994) conceptual use of interstitial passage between fixed categories can be understood in relationship to a more multi-plexed viewing of Indigeneities. Through accentuating a process of "wedging in" (Deiter-McArthur, 1987), and engaging the interstitial passageways (Bhabha, 1994), multi-plexed geographies of resistance inform fluid, creative solidarities, which focus on the possibilities of different kinds of futurities.

As a central component of the spatial tag, the interstitial passageway illustrates the rupturous nature of in-between spaces, where notions of belonging and home are renegotiated and challenged, and where articulations of various forms of difference come to the forefront. In describing the interstitial spaces of Indigeneity, Martineau and Ritskes (2014) identify the "fugitive spaces of Indigeneity" that are located in the "critical ruptures where normative, colonial categories and binaries break down and are broken open" (p. iii). As I will attempt to illustrate later in this article, practices like the urban flash mob round dance can be viewed as an interstitial articulation of solidarity emerging

from converging sites of difference that are generative in their capacity for social transformation.

Having contextualized the spatial tag within a broader framework of Indigenous resistance and highlighted its essential characteristics, in the next two sections I discuss how spatial tags are being mobilized through Indigenous resistance strategies by artists and community activists, beginning with a discussion of Christi Belcourt's *Walking with our Sisters* and then discussing the particular instance of an urban flash mob round dance at the intersection of Toronto's Yonge and Dundas.

### ***Walking with our Sisters* Commemorative Art Installation and the Production of Spatial Glyphs**

*Walking with our Sisters* (2014) is a commemorative act of resistance, resurgence, and love comprised of over 1,700 pairs of moccasin vamps, each representing one missing or murdered Indigenous woman. Award winning Métis visual artist and author Christi Belcourt is the lead coordinator for this commemorative exhibit, which has toured thirty-two locations across North America continuing through to the year 2019. The vamps are arranged in a winding path formation on red fabric, and viewers remove their shoes to walk the path alongside the vamps.

*Walking with our Sisters* can be viewed as a form of spatial tagging, imprinting Indigenous women and girls and the impacts of gendered, racialized violence into dominant consciousness. Amongst the important interventions of violence is the creation of a vocabulary to engage, visibilize, and build connections through our grief and collective resistance (Hunt, 2014). The *Walking with our Sisters* commemorative art installation embodies these elements by spatially mapping the unfinished lives of Indigenous women and girls. It creates a vocabulary of movement and form through which to engage in collective solidarity building by calling on our participation to actuate this walking glyph of resistance. Each vamp enacts a radical pedagogy of love through the very creative process of working with and through rupture, "as the artists created these works, many prayed and put their love into their stitching. Some shared stories of what their work means or who they made their work for" (Walkingwithoursisters.ca).

Spatial tags within the *Walking with our Sisters* commemorative exhibit enact complex representations of home, territoriality, and identity where functional and aesthetic choices in color, symbology, design, and textile actuate geographies of resistance. In some instances, they challenge normative white settler colonial depictions of Indigenous lives through visibilizing racialized, gendered violence within their material forms.<sup>8</sup>

The exhibit's pathway and the forms that the vamps collectively create manifest a spatial tag embodying a lodge. The focus on the pathway calls us to engage the active presence of a collective honoring through the embodiment of ceremony. This active presence gives the spatial tag its relevancy and meaning as a device for Indigenous self-determination, through a decolonial aesthetic whereby elders as ceremonialists and curators determine the form and protocol of the commemorative piece. The September, 2014 *Walking with our Sisters* commemorative art installation in Thunderbay, Ontario, has been described as a sacred bundle that was accompanied by community events such as a community bead and read, teach-ins unpacking settler colonialism, and art and decolonization, self-defense classes and other acts of resistance. Through such attention to physicality, *Walking with our Sisters* actuates a moving glyph focusing on the embodied sovereignty of Indigenous women. This particular glyphing practice actuates embodiment



as an intervention, a means of disrupting the marking of Indigenous women's bodies through various forms of violent actions.

Amongst an array of meaningful interventions, artistic contributions create spatial tags to visually map and delineate specific sites as cartographies of violence. *Walking with our Sisters* includes graffiti tagged vamps and vamps that map out the stroll and other sites of colonial, racialized, and gendered violence. For example, one pair of vamps created by artist Miranda Huron utilizes ribbon and beadwork to materially reproduce a road and the sign that hangs over the Balmoral Hotel in East Vancouver, a racialized/ spatial geography marked by dispossession, neglect, and violence against Indigenous women (Razack, 2002). The artist describes her intentions that "more and more women find their way home from such beacons" (Huron, 2014 cited in walkingwithoursisters.ca). Functioning as a signifier, the Balmoral hotel signage physically maps out a stroll as a racialized geography of gender violence. Actuating an urban pathway, the stroll physicalizes the interstitial spaces where settler colonialism, heteropatriarchy, racism, sexism and Indigeneity come into contestation to produce cartographies of violence. Consequently, the intersection has been mobilized within Indigenous solidarity glyphing forms such as the urban round dance, as argued in the next section.

Creating a spatial tag, artist Erin Konsmo's birch bark vamps map out the Eastside of Vancouver in juxtaposition with a mountainous British Columbian landscape. Again, the images of streets and pathways are used to represent the city, one such street formulated out of a white line leading down the curve of a street light, with a possible reference to red light districts as strategies of urban containment, ghettoization, and trafficking, shaping the complex lives and realities of many Indigenous women and girls.<sup>9</sup> Further these images elevate the conversation to focus on the structures, systems, and their role in producing marginalization and poverty that make Indigenous women victims of colonial, gendered, and racialized violence.

The commemorative vamps in *Walking with our Sisters* are manifestations of complex Indigeneities and the spaces they inhabit. Many of the works represent floral designs reflecting fluidity and a generative capacity for resiliency and motion as ways to map Indigenous futurity. The urban glyph created through *Walking with our Sisters* uses embodiment in the process of envisioning a world(s) transformed and looks forward as a way to recall our past. Resembling lodges, the formation of the vamps (as spatial tags) symbolically and literally, transform the landscape of gendered, racialized violence against women through making visible unfinished lives. Evoking processes of reclamation, *Walking with our Sisters* and the urban flash mob round dance illustrate various forms of spatial tagging to mark contested spaces. Embodying new ways of theorizing political protest and struggle, the glyph as a new geography of resistance, creates a vocabulary to speak new worlds into being — lending itself to the creation of Indigenous futurisms.

### Urban Flash Mob Round Dances as Geographies of Resistance

As a Cree adoptee, I returned to my community in 1993, during which time my birth mother brought me to a series of round dances as a way to get to know each other through dance and enjoy the company of a collective Cree community. Since I had experienced cultural and symbolic displacement as a Cree adoptee, it was important that I engage in a practice embodying a round dance to find connection to place and to access collective memory. I perceive the embodiment of a round dance as a spatial tag of resistance and am intrigued by the affect it produces in spaces I now choose to call home, such as Toronto, and other parts of southern Ontario. The round dance has been conceptualized as

*Piciciwin*, the moving slowly, or crooked legged dance<sup>10</sup>; *pīhci-ciḥcīyī*, which translates to “reach your hands in,” to describe the process of “people reaching into the circle to grab onto life and blessings”<sup>11</sup>; and *wasakamesimowin* to describe the round dance ceremony (Deiter- McArthur, 1987).

Plains Cree scholar Patricia Deiter-McArthur (1987), describes the round dance as originating with Stoney people. Hosted by different societies, round dances were held in times of sickness, but today are hosted by families and communities in celebration for graduations, anniversaries, and marriages. As well, they take shape as memorials for deceased loved ones and for fundraising initiatives for families and communities. There was certainly a ceremonial element to the round dances that I attended with my mother as we participated in protocols that I sensed spanned generations. Hand drummers formulate the center of the concentric circles, singing songs whose rhythmic structure follows a double beat and four push-ups led by a lead singer. The dancers shape concentric circles, holding hands, and dance in a shuffle-step movement accentuated by the down beat.

According to Deiter-McArthur (1987), the round dance included a practice of relationship or alliance building expressed as *kiskipocikek* (which translates into the English verb, to “wedge in”), an idiom, which means to dance with a woman who is not a relative or a cross-cousin. This would have taken the shape of one who enters the space between two dancers holding hands with the purpose of relationship building. In this way, engaging the interstice through “wedging in” has a history in the structure of the round dance, representing the interstitial passageway, which, I would argue, increases the range of possibilities for an Indigenous futurity. *Kiskipocikek* can be viewed as an important process within alliance and relationship building as it encompasses one of the foundational elements of spatial tagging expressing a form of Indigenous resistance.

Within the context of decolonization, *kiskipocikek* — to “wedge in” and to fill a between space — can be perceived as a form of syncopation produced as an act of love. This is manifest in the reverb that is produced between the drum-beats (the hand drummers act of using their finger to produce a vibration on the hides of the hand drum). Shaping the aural kinesthetic of the space (Kai Johnson, 2009), circuitous motion enacts a radical pedagogy of love through the singing of love songs, which effectively embed between spaces for the wedging in of dancers, thoughts, reconceptualizations, and renegotiations of space. Being an Indigenous adoptee, my own pathway has been informed through this wedging in movement, as I was raised within a family not inherently my own. Indigenous round dances that produce spatial tags are symbologies of Indigenous motion. As such, they become tremendously meaningful as filling rupturous spaces with love.

The power of the round dance can be mobilized in the context of public protest. For instance, the Idle No More round dance situated at the intersection of Yonge and Dundas streets in downtown Toronto expresses a symbolic dissidence towards colonial capital and accumulation. The urban flash mob round dance at Yonge and Dundas challenged settler colonialisms claim over Mississauga and Huron-Wendat territorial jurisdiction. Along with marches taking place on main highways and streets in downtown cores to protest violence against Indigenous women and girls, the Idle No More urban round dance flash mob on the intersection of Yonge St. and Dundas St. in downtown Toronto was one of many locales for strategic actions of solidarity.

Within the context of the Idle No More Movement, the round dance has been mobilized as one way of symbolically *tagging* the contours of Indigenous acts of resistance



Figure 1. Idle No More round dance at Yonge and Dundas in Toronto.  
(Photo courtesy of Anishinaabe scholar/activist Hayden King).

and displaying solidarity between Indigenous nations and the colonial nation-state. Dene scholar Glen Coulthard (2012) differentiates Idle No More from other forms of political protest, such as the Kanien'kehaka resistance of 1990 and Temagami blockades, citing the absence of widespread economic disruption by Indigenous direct action during the movement.<sup>12</sup> Yet, according to Coulthard, Idle No More has provoked clashes between Indigenous activism and non-Indigenous settler colonialism that have fostered Indigenous acts of resistance strategically enacted in the “thoroughfares of colonial capital” (2012). These include blockades on several major Canadian transportation corridors, including highways and railways, where spatial tags function as Indigenous acts that formulate a resistance specifically engaged in efforts to challenge and “un-settle settler-colonialisms sovereign claim over Indigenous peoples and our lands” (Coulthard, 2012). The urban flash mob round dance intervenes colonial capital by symbolically tagging communal collective action on main thoroughfares that are symbolic of globalization.

Urban flash mob round dances are central to the activities that are part of Idle No More, which include teach-ins, marches, rallies, blockades, and other forms of strategic protest. The flash mob round dance, mobilized in urban malls, intersections, and other public spaces, is shaped by the aural kinesthetic of the dance form (Kai Johnson, 2009). This means that the sonic production and physicality exercised through the dance creates the affect of the spatial tag of resistance. The urban flash mob round dance encompasses a public gathering in which dancers and singers perform and embody an *in the moment* Indigenous act. This act evades permanency and will be followed by dispersal.

Interventionist-pictographing or urban glyph-making is achieved through the creation of spatial tags, which imprint urban thoughts through circuitous song and motion. As acts of multi-plexed Indigenous resistance, their spatial formations are layered modalities capable of reconfiguring power. Spatial tagging becomes an expression of defiant Indigeneity through which artists “perform a configuration of Indigeneity that constantly

deconstructs, resists, and recodifies itself against and through state logics” (Teves, 2011, p.77). The urban flash mob round dance can also be viewed as a socially/culturally constructed space with potential alliance building capacity for settler peoples, and provides opportunities for settlers to reflect upon their own difference and the privileges afforded to them within society. Yet, this raises the question: can we deconstruct whiteness at the same time as we enact, perform, and embody the dance form?

I return to hip-hop culture to illuminate the form of resistance that this particular form of spatial tagging takes on. In expressing hip-hop’s principles for social change, Tricia Rose (1994) articulates that social change is actuated within hip-hop culture through the building of sustaining narratives, layering these narratives through repetition and the embellishment of these stories. We can apply these same layers to the spatial mechanics of the urban flash mob round dance: with hand drum singers formulating the inner most cypher/circle; layered with double beat drum soundscape; syncopated with the reverb interstice (created through a technique hand drummers use to aurally accentuate the interstice, or space between the beats); layered with hand embraces, love songs, and a stride-and-shuffle to the left. This formula within the Indigenous dance is an important element for creating a geography of resistance. The form of the round dance highlights layers through generatively expressing the interstices in acts of reclamation of urban Indigenous space. The layering and syncopation achieved via the concentric circularity of the round dance carries the potential to unmark bodies of difference and instead, to inscribe multiplexed Indigenities as a product of the reverb interstice created through the drum. As ethical spaces these interstitial spaces formulate a reconfiguration and dislocation of power (Ermine, 2007).

The urban flash mob round dance offers a geography of resistance that maps out the intersectional nature of the social discourses and practices within a heteropatriarchal system that reproduces and normalizes racialized and gendered violence. The urban flash mob round dance does this through its concentric circularity, layering, and creation of interstitial spaces. Critique and analysis are embedded within the very form of the urban flash mob round dance. Basically, the structure provides the *spaces between* within which self-reflective anti-colonial critique can manifest.<sup>13</sup> The round dance actuates a consciousness that is always in flux, representing an important pedagogical moment of self-reflexivity and temporal repositioning wherein the past is in the future. Pausing to reflect, challenges us to consider how the past is being negotiated and constructed, while also asking: whose past?; and how are we implicated in the past? These questions are essential to thinking through the spatial mechanics of the round dance as a tag.

The intersections and interstices house the conditions for the most profound solidarity acts that carry transformative potential. It is important to be attentive to the multi-layered strata of such conditions. A spatial positioning in various interstices of difference requires a constant self-reflexivity that carries the potential of problematizing one’s own location as part of the cypher. In a process of conscientization (Freire, 1970/2005) through one’s embodied action within the dance, one is also engaged in a “paradoxical continuity of self mapping, and transforming” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 122). Consequently, resistance is generated within an interstitial space located at the convergence point of various articulations of difference. A *beyond-the-border* consciousness begins to formulate through the embodiment of the urban flash mob round dance (embedded in the concentric circularity of the dance form), whereby we may be flung into the now as a result of a temporal and spatial shift. Through this act of solidarity exists the possibility that we may exceed the boundaries of our encased Indian identities and be propelled into the beyond as a new generation of “post-Indian” protestors (Vizenor, 1994).

Reading the spatial tag as an act of creative solidarity allows for a freedom of motion whereby resistance itself evades being located completely in one space, and at one time, thus challenging overly simplistic categories and conditions of resistance. Interpreting the urban flash mob round dance as a spatial tag reflecting the in-flux nature of a creative solidarity reminds us of the possibilities for new ways of being in the world and provides opportunities for us to reflect upon our differences within an impermanent spatial geography. The round dance eventually distills as participants continue to walk the urban space, or move to another intersection to manifest another spatial glyph. *I reflect upon the conditions that we are apt to change . . . this moment is apt to change, and we can reconfigure the spaces between these differences as we honor them through the dance.*

The urban flash mob round dance is characterized as shifting and temporal in enacting its own refusal to be white-washed, and painted over by municipal authorities and state law enforcement anti-graffiti campaigns. The tag articulates a difference that is constantly changing, forcing us to reconsider who is our community. What does community look like in the urban Indigenous diaspora, in downtown Toronto? We can witness the in-flux nature of creative solidarity in spatial tagging itself as this particular form of tagging is literally taking circuitous, ever-changing form in the intersecting lines of the Yonge and Dundas urban space. The spatial tag as an act of creative solidarity is dissatisfied, in the sense that it is constantly changing and challenging form, causing us to reflect upon the compulsion for sameness in shaping solidarity (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2010, 2012).

It might be important to consider how the symbology of the spatial tag can be appropriated to drive certain interests that undermine Idle No More's scope and direction, thereby limiting the possibility of solidarity. Flash mobbing a round dance also generates potential for settler peoples to reflect upon their own constructions and assumptions of Indigeneity. Consequently, some of the tensions might lay in the possibility that these same constructions become reproduced through this act of solidarity. Creative solidarity honours the generative capacity of difference (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2010).<sup>14</sup> As Gaztambide-Fernández (2012) describes, "most relevant to projects of decolonization, yet more rare and complicated to theorize, is a conception of solidarity that hinges on radical differences, and that insists on relationships of incommensurable interdependency" (p. 46). As a practice of creative solidarity, the urban flash mob round dance, can be mobilized to generate critique and evoke critical participation in a movement that looks for transformation within the interstices of those differences. What processes do we employ in our resistance struggles to bravely build upon differences? Tensions may arise through uncritically claiming perceived common experiences as the main driving force determining the nature of the solidarity. However, it is important to also acknowledge the political power derivative from such solidarities built upon common experiences.

Urban flash mob round dances, as manifestations of creative solidarity are attempts to shift socio-spatial symbolic arrangements of inequality. However, symbolically positioned in a nexus of colonial power and capitalistic accumulation, the Yonge and Dundas round dance reveals that spatial tags are actuated as "extensions and manifestations of larger social, economic, political, as well as cultural arrangements" (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2012, p. 57). In these instances, the mobilization of *Kiskipocikek* produces a generative transitional space. For instance, Pile (1997) describes the interstice as an important site invoked through the round dance in creating geographies of resistance. He notes, "material effects of power are everywhere . . . but wherever we look power is open to gaps, tears, inconsistencies, ambivalences, possibilities for inversion, mimicry parody, and so on; open that is to more than one geography of resistance" (p. 27). As a practice

related to cultural production, mimicry can also create tensions that need to be explored in order to negotiate, and locate, Indigenous resistance.

Potential pitfalls of this form of spatial tagging include the appropriation of Indigenous ceremony, as well as undesirable claims to authenticity in an over-determining practice of cultural fundamentalism. Creating new socio-spatial possibilities, creative solidarity insists upon a more complex and accurate conception of culture that challenges multiculturalism's desire to contain cultural difference, and reinscribe colonial essentialisms. For instance, as Gaztambide-Fernández (2012) explains, creative solidarity embraces multi-plexed approaches to culture and identity "countering the versions of 'culture' and 'identity' that are imposed by the colonial project of modernity" (p. 57). In mobilizing this form of spatial tagging, we run the risk of impeding our solidarity through reproducing narrowly essentialist Indigenous identities. Can we create alternative articulations of Indigenous protest that challenge such expectations?

Round dance revolutions may be perceived as a process of enacting a collectively inspired radical pedagogy of love onto urban spaces through embodied motion. This embodied motion offers a critique of the conditions of coloniality, while simultaneously challenging the colonial practice of using love as a strategy of containment and permanence. However, we should be mindful of potential tensions evoked through a form of cultural revitalization that "encourages Aboriginal people to seek out and *perform* [my emphasis] cultural authenticity as a compensation for exploitation and oppression" (St. Denis, 2007, p. 1080). Within the context of the Idle No More round dance revolution it becomes important to acknowledge the counter-narratives that perceive its practice as an appropriative act that challenges traditional protocol. For example, Cree hand drum singer Marc Longjohn, of Sturgeon Lake First Nation, Saskatchewan shares the view that round dances have their own set of teachings and protocols that activists may not be honoring. As Longjohn suggests, "some are opposed to Indians using hand drums and round dance music for this purpose." He further states, "the round dance is a ceremony with specific purposes. They never had Idle No More flash mob round dances twenty years ago" (M. Longjohn, personal communication, 2014).

Although flash mob round dances function to include non-Indigenous peoples into the concept of relationality, Sherman cautions that it could have unintended consequences if people do not consider the cultural and spiritual implications of displacing its purpose and context (P. Sherman, personal communication, 2014). These shared perspectives illustrate tensions involved in the practice of evoking ceremony as a form of political protest.<sup>15</sup> How, for instance, does performativity function in relationship to urban flash mob round dances; and what are some of the implications of evoking ceremony in spatially tagging resistance?

Perhaps what is being made visible is an alliance in solidarity with multi-plexed Indigenities including broader, more complex recognitions of Indigenous peoplehood. This visibility can also be problematized in a spatial reading of urban flash mob round dances, when we consider what is and who are made visible through this process; how, for instance, are drums, skirts, and dancing being interpreted within a broader context?; is this form of protest an appropriation of an Indigenous cultural aesthetic?; and how does this particular form of visual/aurally compelling Indigenous protest aesthetic function as a tag, inscribing identity, and as a form of recognition throughout the city? Perhaps it is important to consider the implication of the shifting temporal and spatial nature of the tag as a practice of Indigenous/settler solidarity. The very texture of the tag as a creation of Indigenous motion propels our reading of the flash mob as a forging in multiple directions evading permanency and therefore intervening authenticity discourses.

### Spatially Tagging Radical Decolonial Love

*You are the breath over the ice on the lake. You are the one the grandmothers sing to through the rapids. You are the saved seeds of allies. You are the space between embraces . . . you are rebellion, resistance, re-imagination* (Simpson, 2013, p. 21).

As multi-plexual sites of Indigenous creative resistance, spatial tags like the urban flash mob and the *Walking with our Sisters* commemorative installation contribute a critical praxis, which can be implemented in urban Indigenous life to achieve social justice. In this concluding section, I would like to illuminate some observances or practices that might shape urban protocols for spatial tagging. Reflecting the notion of creative solidarity, these observances inform practices that would need to be interpreted as fluid, impermanent, and apt to change (Gaztambide-Fernández, 2010; 2012). These practices emerge from within the creases of the spatial tags themselves and reflect strategies useful to relationship building.

The first strategy is to *create the space for multi-plexed Indigeneities within the vocabularies that we use to frame and build solidarity*. The visual and sonic interpellative pathways produced in *Walking with our Sisters*, and the Yonge and Dundas round dance provide symbolic textual metaphors for a multi-plexed/intersectional reading of resistance and create the interstitial passageways to mobilize difference as a decolonial strategy. Shaping cartographies of resistance, spatial tags mobilize difference as a way to be creative about the immense possibilities for the future. The enactment of spatial tags allows us to critique whiteness as a construction that continues to affect our spatial relationships within a settler colonial condition.

Another practice stemming from an analysis of spatially tagging Indigenous resistance, is to *enact a radical pedagogy of decolonial love within the context of the everyday in order to assure a freedom of motion; to imbue the streets with love, and enact this as a radical form of everyday protest*. Tahltan artist Peter Morin posited the question, “where do you carry your sacredness when you have been exiled?” (Indigenous Acts: Arts and Activism Gathering, Vancouver, B.C., 2014). In this sense, radical decolonial love requires a shift from conceiving of love as a holding space of permanence, or a vehicle of containment; towards an embrace of its molten lava-like properties, as it flows within and through our bodies to connect with others. The glyph can be useful as a way to kiss the urban space, imprinting a form of radical decolonial love that presents itself in all of its flaws, inconsistencies, imperfections, ruptures, and pauses.<sup>16</sup> This is a form of love that is unfinished and indeterminate, attributes that resonate with creative solidarity. In its surfaces and surges it finds strength and solitude within its own impermanence. The spatial tag’s impermanent nature strengthens an Indigenous futurity through radically asserting that our past is in our future.

To extend the conversation, I would also suggest that we *circle as we would cypher-it’s all about flow; and to acknowledge rupture in our solidarity building. We can work with, and through rupture to create Indigenous futurisms*. Glyphing Indigenous solidarity relies on the formation of intimate relationships with rupture and impermanence. These two conditions inform Indigenous motion necessary for radical decolonial love and are mobilized through acts of *kiskipocikek* (wedging in), or rupturous movement. Like hip-hop, the creation of spatial glyphs accommodates rupture in its very aural/sonic form. In short, this kind of creative solidarity relies on rupture as a generative practice. The urban spatial tag propels decolonial love where it is possible to “love one’s broken-by-the-coloniality of power self through holding the hand and walking with another broken-by-the-

coloniality-of-power person” (Diaz, cited in Simpson, 2013, p. 7). Working within and through the ruptures, the new spatial geographies produced through the urban flash mob round dance and *Walking with our Sisters* offer alternative world(s) through the act of infusing pathways, intersections and other spaces with this very specific form of love. Spatial tagging uses wedging in a generative capacity to shift, unsettle and generate new futurisms for Indigenous peoples. Both *Walking with our Sisters* and the urban flash mob round dance invite our own body narrative as part of the solidarity creation. As Leanne Simpson writes in the above spoken word poem, *you are the space between embraces*, you become that space between the honoring of the missing and murdered women as you are invited to walk with our sisters; you are the one that mobilizes the interstices of solidarity through wedging in at a round dance.

Finally, the practice of spatial tagging reminds us to *pay attention to Indigenous futurisms embedded in the vocabularies and the praxis of our next generation of visionaries*. Youth engagement in Indigenous participatory politics has been a crucial thread of the Idle No More movement, where youth develop a critical consciousness through the creation of new media and the use of technology to mobilize. Flash mobbing is typically organized via social media. Idle No More has impacted settler-colonial consciousness and “now encompasses a broad range of conversations calling for recognition of treaty rights, revitalization of Indigenous cultures, and an end to legislation imposed without meaningful consultation” (Kinew, 2014, p. 96). The mobilization required for interventionist forms of urban pictoglyphing are contingent upon social media and youth organizing. As a consequence of the movement, youth are producing Indigenous new media hub spaces to actuate reclamation and generate complex reassertions of urban territoriality. We need to pay attention to these youth visionaries as they spatially map their own forms of resistance with vibrancy, brilliance, and much love. They are the next generation of glyph makers.

As this article makes explicit, the concepts of spatial tagging and urban glyphing describe the generative production of Indigenous solidarity through forms and practices such as *Walking with our Sisters* and the urban flash mob round dance. Evoked through the spatial tag, creative solidarity challenges the influence of multiculturalism’s narrowly defined Indigeneity, and offer up geographies of resistance which manifest in relationship with traditional caretakers of the land -within distinctive Indigenous urban spaces. This form of spatial tagging posits an extension of Belcourt’s ethical practice of changing the form of the *Walking with our Sisters* commemorative pathway to reflect local Indigenous pedagogy in the now; it situates this process as an urban protocol. This mobilization would be inclusive of Indigenous urban identified youth and grassroots organizations such as the Native Youth Sexual Health Network,<sup>17</sup> and Indigenous hip-hop collectivities with whom to ascertain the appropriate abstraction through which to codify Indigenous protest rooted within a particular spatial geography.

This form of creative solidarity offers new possibilities for Indigenous resistance, and the creation of spatial tags through shifting the focus away from the performance of cultural appropriation. In stating this, effective solidarity building disrupts comfortable notions of Indigeneity and Indigenous protest while maintaining a radical pedagogy of decolonial love through acknowledging multi-plexed Indigeneities stemming from rich and complex interstitial urban Indigenous pathways.

### Notes

1. Founded in December 2012, Idle No More has been a sustained, coordinated, strategic national-now global movement originally led by Sheelah McLean, Jessica Gordon, and Sylvia



- McAdam in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan. Idle No More began as a voice to oppose Bill C-45, omnibus legislation, which would significantly impact water and land rights under the Canadian Indian Act.
2. The hash tag formulates an Indigenized digital spatial glyph, and informs a significant mobilizing force within contemporary Indigenous solidarity movements. Within the Idle No More movement, the hashtag has been an integral component of what has been described as a #RoundDanceRevolution. According to spoken word artist, performer, and radio producer Jamaia DaCosta, “Social media networks, prove that Indigenous resistance and resurgence is alive and well, and continues to flourish and express itself in dynamic ways, most of which can be followed via a hashtag revolution” (#HASHTAG #REVOLUTION, Muskrat Magazine, March 14, 2014).
  3. The Kanien’kehaka resistance involving a 78-day armed standoff between the Mohawk nation of Kanesatake Quebec, the Quebec provincial police (SQ) and the Canadian armed forces near the town of Oka, Quebec. This standoff, informing the shape and form of Indigenous resistance, was an effort to defend Indigenous sacred lands from resource development on land that the Mohawk nation had been struggling to have recognized for almost 300 years. The land, known as the pines, was slated for the expansion of a golf course. This act was part of a decade of Indigenous resistance leading to the federally sanctioned Royal Commission on Aboriginal People (RCAP), which produced 440 recommendations calling for a renewed relationship based on the core principles of “mutual recognition, mutual respect, sharing and mutual responsibility.” RCAP was the most expensive public inquiry in the nation’s history intended to pacify the decade of Indigenous protest. For brief descriptions of these Indigenous acts of resistance, and a how they fit within a contextual history of IdleNoMore please see Glen Coulthard’s (2012) #IdleNoMore in Historical Context (<http://decolonization.wordpress.com/2012/12/24/idlenomore-in-historical-context/>).
  4. I would like to extend this conversation through future research to include the context of visual tagging through graffiti and mural creation on urban street spaces as part of this larger decolonization project of spatially tagging Indigenous resistance.
  5. A 2014 R.C.M.P (Royal Canadian Mounted Police) report on missing and murdered Aboriginal women in Canada reported that 1,181 Indigenous women and girls have gone missing over the past 30 years.
  6. Participants of urban flash mob round dances represent a variety of perspectives and interests that may include those embracing an Indigenous feminist, and/or environmental justice, reproductive justice ethic, non-governmental organizations and those who oppose legislation threatening resources and livelihoods, as well as community allies and people of color advocating for social justice for Indigenous peoples.
  7. Previous to the 1793 British occupation at York (which was to become the city of Toronto in 1847), for instance, the Mississauga (Anishinaabek/ Ojibway) of the New Credit River, and the Wendat Haudenosaunee nations had territorial jurisdiction within the area. The Toronto Purchase expropriated approximately 250,880 acres of land from the Mississauga’s in 1805.
  8. Herein, I utilize the term white settler in its function as it “evokes a nexus of racial and colonial power” (Morgenson, 2014; see also Razack, 2002).
  9. We need a careful consideration of the historical context of colonization and the tensions in settler –Indigenous relations that contribute to practices of state-sanctioned racialized and gendered violences. Additionally, please see Hunt and Kaye’s (2014, Sept. 24) discussion of the misunderstood stigmatism towards sex work that are cast in the broad category of trafficking.
  10. Description provided by Cree storyteller, musician, language speaker Joseph Naytowhow (Sturgeon Lake First Nation, Saskatchewan).
  11. Translation provided by Cree musician, language speaker Jason Chamakese (Chitek Lake First Nation, Saskatchewan) in conversation with a knowledge holder from Ocean Man First Nation, Saskatchewan.
  12. Coulthard (2012) strategically claims, “if history has shown us anything, it is this: if you want those in power to respond swiftly to Indigenous peoples’ political efforts, start by placing Native bodies (with a few logs and tires thrown in for good measure) between settlers and their money, which in colonial contexts is generated by the ongoing theft and exploitation of our land and resource base. If this is true, then the long term efficacy of the #IdleNoMore movement would appear to hinge on its protest actions being distributed more evenly between the

- malls and front lawns of legislatures on the one hand, and the logging roads, thoroughfares, and railways that control to the accumulation of colonial capitol on the other.”
13. Anzaldúa (1987/2012) conceptualization of the borderlands is quite meaningful to this exploration of the temporality of the space between the break beats.
  14. A focus on similarities rather than difference could stifle an otherwise emergent critique of the conditions of oppression. Is it possible that some of these problematic positionings of Indigeneity get reaffirmed as settler peoples bask in the glow- and peer through the hand drums to connect with other settlers-holding hands in circuitous motions, as if, in solidarity.
  15. In preparation for the Yonge & Dundas urban flash mob round dance Anishinaabe artist, activist, and curator Wanda Nanabush, and Cree/Métis coordinator for Idle No More Toronto Charm Logan sought permission to host round dances within Idle No More demonstrations. In consultation, Cree elders supported the dance as a public performance, given that it was not intended to be ceremonial. Outside of its ceremonial context, this urban flash mob round dance was understood as a public performance of political unity, maintaining its meanings of unity and mourning towards missing and murdered Indigenous women (W. Nanabush & C. Logan, personal communication, 2014).
  16. New spatial geographies created out of radical decolonial love are also expressed through the aural/visual/narrative glyph manifest in Leanne Simpson’s *Islands of decolonial love* (2013).
  17. The Native Youth Sexual Health Network (NYSHN) is an organization by and for Indigenous youth that works across issues of sexual and reproductive health, rights and justice throughout Canada and the United States.

### Notes on contributor

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