

Unified Policy

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Indigenous resurgence is a movement away from oppressive settler states, and towards Indigenous sovereignty and cultural renewal. While many people agree that Indigenous resurgence is important, there are different ways to go about achieving the goals of freedom and self-governance, with some people believing in action against the government, while others believe in cultural regeneration. This essay will discuss two articles. The first, by Audra Simpson titled “The ruse of consent and the anatomy of ‘refusal’: cases from Indigenous North America and Australia,” discusses how Indigenous people should use the strategy of refusal to reassert Indigenous governance structures. The second, by Michelle Daigle titled “Awawanenitakik: The spatial politics of recognition and relational geographies of Indigenous self-determination,” discusses how Indigenous people should reassert their cultural and environmental connections. These two articles are similar in that they both discuss Indigenous-led regeneration. They emphasize how individual people and small communities are best placed to reclaim Indigenous heritage. However, they are also different in how they interpret what the role of government should be in Indigenous communities going forward, with Simpson believing in refusal, and Daigle believing in reconnecting with culture individually. These two articles are strong and complement each other well. They discuss two different topics but are both future-facing in that they look for what the next steps Indigenous communities can take. This essay will argue that by using these two articles, while they discuss slightly different topics and have some differences when used in conjunction, together, they form a good policy for Indigenous-settler interactions.

The first article, by Audra Simpson titled “The ruse of consent and the anatomy of ‘refusal’: cases from Indigenous North America and Australia,” discusses the protest method of refusal. Refusal is a non-cooperative method whereby Indigenous people refuse to make

agreements with the settler government.¹ This refusal signals their non-recognition of the state and its power and allows them to then make claims of sovereignty and maintain their traditional systems.² This act of refusal is in opposition to the cooperative nature currently present in Indigenous-settler relationships. This cooperative relationship implies that Indigenous nations make full and informed consent and arises out of historical treaty relationships.³ However, this consent has not always been present and agreement was often forced or coerced, making the agreements invalid.⁴ Current attempts to allow Indigenous groups to make full and informed consent often do not go far enough as they force them to recognize the legitimacy of the settler state, and offer concessions to it.⁵ Through the method of refusal, Indigenous people are able to maintain their lands and their sovereignty.

The second article by Michelle Daigle titled “Awawanenitakik: The spatial politics of recognition and relational geographies of Indigenous self-determination” discusses how through assimilation policies Indigenous people have lost connections to each other and the land. To get these connections back they must reconnect and gain self-determination. Assimilationist policies such as viewing Indigenous people as a homogeneous group, residential schools, forced treaty-making, forced removal or cessation of land and a variety of other methods, resulting in Indigenous people becoming shameful of their heritage and culture.⁶ Many Indigenous people assimilated into settler society and did not continue to pass down Indigenous knowledge and ways of living.⁷ This means that they are no longer in touch with their heritage, culture or

¹ Audra Simpson, “The Ruse of Consent and the Anatomy of ‘Refusal’: Cases from Indigenous North America and Australia,” *Postcolonial Studies* 20, no. 1 (2017): 19, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13688790.2017.1334283>.

² *Ibid*, 19.

³ *Ibid*, 27.

⁴ *Ibid*, 25.

⁵ *Ibid*, 28.

⁶ Michelle Daigle, “Awawanenitakik: The Spatial Politics of Recognition and Relational Geographies of Indigenous Self-determination,” *The Canadian Geographer* 60, no. 2 (2016): 7, <https://doi.org/10.1111/cag.12260>.

⁷ *Ibid*, 9.

spirituality which distances them from each other and the land.⁸ These policies broke pre-colonial treaties between groups and kinship relations were weakened and forgotten.⁹ They were distanced from the land as they were no longer able to live off of it or respect it in the traditional way.¹⁰ Daigle suggests that they should reconnect with the land by learning from each other, other groups, their elders, and the land itself.¹¹ She suggests that they visit other groups, re-form pre-colonial relations, and learn from these nations.¹² Daigle also suggests that they participate in self-determination to restore traditional power structures and ensure that the decisions about how they live are made from within the community, rather than by a colonial society that participates in assimilationist policies.¹³ Through reconnecting with each other and the land Indigenous people can break the negative effect of assimilationist policies.

One similarity that both of these articles share is their belief in Indigenous-led cultural regeneration. They believe that for Indigenous communities to get back the culture, self-governance, sovereignty and connections that were lost during the colonial period, these communities need to reconnect with their history and break away from settler-led systems.¹⁴ These articles do not propose top-down solutions, or solutions brought about by the government, but rather they propose solutions created and put in place by individual Indigenous people and their communities. The Simpson reading discusses how they need to individually refuse to participate in settler society and under settler rules to break away from settler systems and establish Indigenous sovereignty.¹⁵ Daigle discusses how they should work to reform

⁸ Ibid, 4.

⁹ Ibid, 6.

¹⁰ Ibid, 8.

¹¹ Ibid, 8.

¹² Ibid, 9.

¹³ Ibid, 2.

¹⁴ Ibid, 9.

¹⁵ Simpson, "The Ruse of Consent and the Anatomy of 'Refusal': Cases from Indigenous North America and Australia," 29.

pre-colonial relationships with other Indigenous communities, the environment, and their culture.¹⁶ This is in opposition to the reconciliation approach pushed forward by the Canadian government that focuses on renegotiating treaties and creating new terminology and systems. The current government approach puts Indigenous peoples' power below the power of the government. Through a mixture of refusal and heritage reclamation, these articles argue that Indigenous people can gain self-determination and sovereignty.

The biggest difference between these two articles is their focus. The Simpson reading focuses on structures of governance, whereas the Daigle reading focuses on issues of culture and environment. Both are very important, but they require different actions. In terms of governance structure, the focus needs to be on the current colonial and settler structure and how to subvert that. The current governance structure relies on the oppression of minority groups, and the superiority of capitalism.¹⁷ Capitalism focuses on profits over people, and thus permits Indigenous lands to be taken away as long as the use of these lands will provide profit. Indigenous government structures as discussed by Simpson are ones that put the needs of Indigenous people ahead of capitalism, to allow them to maintain control. The Daigle reading focuses on culture and environment rather than governance structures. This shows the difference between the current system of encouraging assimilation and the proposed system of Indigenous cultural reclamation.¹⁸ This is different from governance structures because rather than a full refusal of settler cultures and governance, it is a reordering in terms of superiority, putting Indigenous issues above the settler government. Daigle believes that since the *Statement of the Government of Canada on Indian Policy* (The White Paper) the government has made many

¹⁶ Daigle, "Awawanenitakik: The Spatial Politics of Recognition and Relational Geographies of Indigenous Self-determination," 9.

¹⁷ Ibid, 29.

¹⁸ Daigle, "Awawanenitakik: The Spatial Politics of Recognition and Relational Geographies of Indigenous Self-determination," 2.

strides in offering self-governance to Indigenous communities.¹⁹ These also accompanied treaty recognition in the Canadian constitution, which ensures that these treaty rights come before other laws. These two moves Daigle believes have made significant strides towards Indigenous recognition, but further progress needs to be made in terms of cultural reclamation. These two articles have different focuses, but they are still both important and make complementary points.

Together these two articles present a coherent policy of Indigenous-settler relations. Simpson discusses how self-governance could function through a policy of refusal. This would provide a structure for relations between the two groups, a way of protesting badly made treaties, and ensure self-governance will be respected by the Canadian government.²⁰ Daigle suggests a way to reinvigorate Indigenous culture and relationships which provides a structure for Indigenous relations to be healthy and stable.²¹ Through the integration of these two policies Indigenous communities would move towards positive resurgence as they move towards self-governance and restoration of their culture and community relations.

In conclusion, both of these articles were strong and clearly explain the concepts so readers can understand them without much background knowledge. The authors' own Indigenous experiences added weight to the points made. This is particularly valuable as the general public can understand the concepts, enact proposed policies and participate in the process of rebuilding Indigenous communities and cultures. When read together these two articles present a well-rounded view of Indigenous issues and provide a way to address them. The issues that Indigenous people face are not going to disappear, and they are unlikely to be fixed through

¹⁹ Ibid, 4.

²⁰ Simpson, "The Ruse of Consent and the Anatomy of 'Refusal': Cases from Indigenous North America and Australia," 29.

²¹ Daigle, "Awawanenitakik: The Spatial Politics of Recognition and Relational Geographies of Indigenous Self-determination," 2.

top-down policy-making, but through political refusal and the actions of individuals, progress can be achieved.

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