5-2020

Decolonization, Resurgence, and Climate Adaptation: Confronting Settler Colonialism in the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe's Climate-Induced Resettlement

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An Honors Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of the Program in Environmental Studies

Bates College

In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the

Degree of Bachelor of Arts

By

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Lewiston, Maine

April 1, 2020

Acknowledgements

There are far too many individuals who have shaped me into who I am today, and even shaped this thesis to what it is today than I will be able to name. However, I would be amiss not to try. First, to my advisor Sonja Pieck, I know without question that this piece of writing would not exist if it were not for your help in revising not only the writing but the squishy topic that finally became a solidified thesis. I am very grateful for the hours spent processing the topic together throughout the year, and even more, for your guidance that brought me to this point over the past four years. I would also like to thank the Professors that have met with me to discuss the challenging and complex ideas that are a part of this thesis and provide me with a number of resources that have shaped this work. In no particular order I would like to thank Professor Joe Hall, Professor Lynne Lewis, Professor Ethan Miller, Professor Ian Khara Ellasante and Professor Cassandra Shepard. I feel so fortunate to have had all of your insights and perspectives throughout this year. In addition to these individuals, I am very grateful for Professor Shepard, Professor Hall and Dr. Elizabeth Marino for all serving on my panel especially amongst the challenges of doing so this year. To the entire Environmental Studies department: I am eternally grateful for the truly life-shaping classes that characterized my Bates career and many of which informed this thesis, and even more, for creating a space and department of which I feel lucky to be a part.

To Danielle Ward, I cannot put into words the amount that you have contributed to this work, as a life advisor, a cheerleader and so much more. Similarly, to Bryce I am eternally grateful for the role you played in this work, I truly could not have written this piece without your advice, support and of course your willingness to listen to hours of my verbal processing. To all my friends with whom I share a home: I am so lucky to share that space with you wonderful, intelligent, silly human beings. Thank you to all my friends for supporting me, teaching me, laughing with me, and playing games with me- without your insights and never-ending willingness to play pictionary I would have hardly made it through these four years.

Last but not least, I am incredibly grateful for the family that has made me into the human being that I am today, and who have played such a critical role in me completing this work and these four years. I am so grateful to my whole family for teaching me how to be a member of this world that centers empathy and kindness. To my parents: Thank you for believing in me and pushing me to be the best person that I can be, and to be committed to equity and environment. This has absolutely transformed my life, my thesis, and all the work I will continue to do from here. To my siblings: Thank you for being my support system through all of these four years, I am so lucky to have three incredible role models.

There are so many others that have shaped me and this thesis and I am unable to list them all. Thank you to all of those that have kept Bates running, it is no small task to keep the printers running or houses cleaned. Thank you to everyone at Bates, home and abroad for supporting me and holding space for me during these four years.

Land Acknowledgement

I would like to begin by acknowledging the land on which I considered these issues and proceeded to write this Senior Thesis. What is now considered Lewiston, Maine is a part of Wabanaki Confederacy land. It has also been identified as Abenaki and Arosaguntacook land (Temprano 2015). This land was stolen from these peoples to establish the city and institution through which I have done this research. "[I] do not state this to signal a particular understanding of the complexity of issues, resistance and life that this statement entails, nor in belief of an (perceived and imposed) alliance with [Wabanaki] peoples" (Sium et al 2012, 2). I aim to disrupt the continued erasure of Wabanaki people from these lands and recognize the right of these peoples to the land.

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Abstract

The Isle de Jean Charles, home to the Isle de Jean Charles band of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe has lost 98% of its land since 1955, a phenomenon associated with nearby oil exploration and sea-level rise. This community has thus been seeking resettlement for nearly two decades and was granted the funds to begin this work through a resilience grant from the United States federal government in 2016. Due to the management of the project by settler government officials, the project ultimately perpetuated existing settler colonial structures and failed to support the adaptation efforts of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe. Through examining the history of settler colonialism, along with the current resettlement project, I expose the ways in which settler colonialism has facilitated this climate vulnerability and the failure of this adaptation project. I argue that in order to conduct an effective climate adaptation project, the project must more directly address colonial structures that have created this vulnerability in the first place. Informed by decolonization and resurgence as the means to address these colonial structures, I then offer three recommendations for improving the government's protocol in handling community resettlement projects: 1) Recognition and Understanding of the History and Present of the Community; 2) Emphasizing Process: Transformative Participatory Evaluation; and finally 3*)* Facilitating Land and Livelihood Access. These recommendations seek to inform a future of climate adaptation projects, particularly those conducted with and for Indigenous Nations, that addresses the root of climate vulnerability rather than perpetuates existing structures of settler colonialism.

Key Words: Settler Colonialism, Climate Adaptation, Resettlement, Decolonization, Resurgence

Introduction

By September of 2019, extreme weather had already displaced seven million people around the globe that year, predominantly due to extreme flooding (Yale Environment 2019). Flooding in Iran in 2019 displaced half a million people alone, and the impacts hardly begin there (Meneghetti 2019). Within thirty years it is predicted that 13 million citizens of Bangladesh will be forced to migrate due to climate-related disaster, many of these 13 million coming from the frequently flooded Sundarbans in the south of the country (Schwartzstein 2019). The island state of Tuvalu, a once colony of the British, sits on average less than two meters above sea level (McAdam 2010). At only ten square miles in size, leaders are forced to question whether the island Nation will survive or if it will disappear into the Pacific Ocean from coastal erosion, sea level rise, and extreme weather (Warne 2015). Tuvalu is not alone in this, as across the United States as well cities, towns, and communities are sinking, flooding, and moving. This thesis is an investigation of one such case.

The Isle de Jean Charles, a once lush and vast island, over 20,000 acres in size in the southern bayous of Louisiana, now sits surrounded by water with only 300 acres of land left (King 2017). The settler state of Louisiana lost a football field an hour of coastal land between 1932 and 2010. (Couvillion & Dewar 2017, Crepelle 2019a). The Island itself has lost 98% of its land since 1955 (Davenport & Robinson 2016, King 2017). Despite the tremendous land loss, however, many island residents are reluctant to move, and due to the desire to stay together, have made it clear that individual relocation programs such as those offered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) will not be sufficient in relocating their homes and lives to safer, higher ground (Louisiana Workshop 2012). The island is the home of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw people, and has served as a refuge from settler society for almost two centuries. It is

home to culturally significant landmarks, spiritual practices, and an island lifestyle passed down for generations (Maldonado 2018). Still, this Tribe is acutely aware of the harm that can come from lack of mitigation or adaptation strategies as the Gulf of Mexico slowly consumes their home. Thus, Tribal leaders have been seeking community resettlement for two decades, and were granted a large portion of the funding in 2016 through the Natural Disaster Resilience Competition (Jessee 2019, Katz 2003). This thesis focuses on this process of resettlement: one carried out by a settler government agency, the other articulating a more just future for community resettlement.

Through the case of community resettlement, this thesis begins by examining the central role that settler colonialism plays in not only climate vulnerability but also in climate adaptation projects. Ultimately, I will expose the importance of recognizing and addressing settler colonialism as a part of climate change adaptation measures and offer insight into policy measures for the future of climate adaptation and community resettlement, particularly those that involve Indigenous communities working in collaboration with the settler government.

Vulnerability to natural hazards is central to this thesis, and will be understood as the propensity to experience disaster impacts, dependent on "a society's social order and the relative position of advantage or disadvantage that a particular group occupies" (Bankoff 2004, 25, Kelman et al. 2015). The most critical piece of this definition in the context of my research is that vulnerability to hazards emerges from historically-rooted structures that marginalize, oppress, and render invisible some communities while advantaging others. Settler scholar Ben Wisner, Piers Blaikie, Terry Cannon and Ian David speak to this differential vulnerability, writing that it is a risk

> "...separating 'natural' disasters from the social frameworks that influence how hazards affect people, thereby putting too much emphasis on the natural hazards themselves, and not nearly enough on the surrounding social environment dependency on society and social position." (4).

Wisner et al. thus emphasize the need to no longer separate natural disasters from the social structures that create disaster. This differentiated vulnerability associated with societal structures is not only due to the ability or inability to respond to risk, rather, it refers to the social structures that have made a community or individual vulnerable. In other words, "...Vulnerability is rooted in social processes and underlying causes which may ultimately be quite remote from the disaster event itself" (Ibid., 50). I aim to take this framework further to not only include but emphasize settler colonialism as the central societal structure that creates vulnerability specifically for Indigenous communities.

Indigenous Nations within the United States settler state have been constantly battling forces of settler colonialism for centuries, which inherently impacts the social position relative to vulnerability. Settler colonialism is that which has brought communities to the frontlines of climate change impacts. It is the structure that most profoundly shapes and constrains (and often ends) the lives of Indigenous peoples. This thesis will expose how settler colonialism has created vulnerability for this community through the 1830 Removal Act and now through erasure of voice and agency in deciding the future of the Tribe. I understand settler colonialism here as the systemic, structural genocide of Indigenous peoples, characterized by land theft and a logic of elimination aimed to erase Indigenous peoples, individuals and cultures, so much so that it erases itself. (Preston 2017, Tuck & Yang 2012, Veracini 2011, Wolfe 2006, 2016). My understanding and analysis of settler colonialism draws heavily on Unangax Scholar Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's (2012) work on decolonization, specifically their conceptions of "internal" and "external" settler colonialism working alongside one another to eliminate and assimilate Native

People. External settler colonialism refers to the physical removal and exploitation of Indigenous Nations to further feed settler societies, which works alongside internal settler colonialism that utilizes "biopolitical modes of control" to assimilate and erase Indigenous Nations and people (Ibid., 4). It is these forces that facilitated Indigenous Nations' vulnerability to climate impacts rather than the changing climate itself.

This thesis examines land, the taking of it and the importance of it as described by Indigenous scholars. I utilize settler place names including Louisiana, and the United States. These terms are "a product of white settler state-craft which does not represent Indigenous place names, nations, or their jurisdiction in relation to their traditional territories" (Preston 2017, 371). Though I utilize these terms to situate the reader, I want to name the presence of settler colonialism in the place names that both appear here and have assisted in the erasure of Indigenous Peoples. Additionally, in this research I will use the term Tribe or Band in reference to the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw. This is the language that is used by Tribal leaders themselves and thus this research will follow the lead of the community. Decisions around terminology are very complex, as with certain words including Tribe there are primitivist associations and some individuals argue only the term Nation should be used to describe Indigenous communities (Newcomb 2018). Though this term is still used in this research, due to the lack of relationship with the community it is important to align with the terminology utilized by this community. Furthermore, this serves as a reminder of the complexities with federal recognition and the role that this has played in the mistreatment of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw people. The term Nation is often utilized by the settler government only when official recognition has been given to a community, and such recognition also entails a legal obligation to respect the Indigenous communities as independent governments. The State of Louisiana has recognized the Biloxi-

Chitimacha-Choctaw and has considered this title to entail government-to-government relationships (LA Indian Affairs 2018, Jessee 2019), yet the state has been inconsistent in actualizing or validating this type of relationship with the Indigenous Nations that are state but not federally recognized like the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw (Jessee 2019). Because of this, lack of federal recognition has been named as a reason that this community has been mistreated and undermined throughout the process of adaptation and relocation pursuits (Kats 2003). Thus, not using the term Nation both aligns with the language of the community themselves and serves as a reminder as to the impact of the federal government withholding recognition onto projects such as climate-induced resettlement. A full discussion of federal recognition and its impact on the community is outside the scope of this thesis, however this language indicates some of these complexities that may underly the treatment of unrecognized Indigenous communities in the United States settler state.

Finally, I frequently refer to climate-induced resettlement, which in this case refers to the ways in which communities are currently considering and resettling (or being resettled) due to the modern climate crisis. Communities have been resettling and migrating for centuries to adapt and remain resilient to climatic change (Piggott-McKellar et al. 2019). The resettlement that is occurring now becomes notable because of the ways in which settler colonialism forced communities and Nations to sedentarize or restricted their movement. Thus resettlement in the face of the current climate crisis is of great significance as it forces this settling to be reconsidered and shifted for coastal communities that must move inland.

It is incredibly important to this work, as I seek to support justice and anti-oppressive goals, to situate myself within it. I come to this research from the privileged position of existing within western academia, “an institution born from - and premised on- knowledge theft,

muzzling, and selective storytelling" (Sium et al. 2012, 4). As an individual, too, I hold a number of highly privileged identities, as I am a white, settler, cis-gender, upper-middle class woman. It is the same forces of settler colonialism that have caused such harm to communities that also facilitated my success in the United States, and even facilitated my ability to write this thesis. I understand that taking part in this work does not make me any less complicit in colonial injustices. These identities also inherently frame the ways in which I view the world and thus view this research. Such identities make up my research standpoint understood by the definition outlined by Indigenous scholars Maggie Walter and Chris Andersen (2016), which describes the researcher's social position, concept of self, values, understanding of knowledge construction, and all that makes up the place from which a researcher enters their work. For example, my identity as a white settler scholar may produce blind-spots in my ability to see or understand the full impacts of settler colonialism or represent fully the complexities of indigeneity not only within a case study, but also in my own writing and research. Furthermore, my position within the Euro-centric academy has inherently influenced my understanding of knowledge and knowledge production, which has been a central piece to the erasure of Indigenous Nations through the erasure or devaluing of Indigenous knowledge. Though I hope to highlight voices that do not necessarily live within white, western academia, blind-spots in this area are inherent to a researcher's standpoint in entering any work (Walter & Andersen 2016). It is through positioning myself within the research that I hope to call attention to the limits my identity might pose within the research, naming the ways in which the systems of power discussed here are present in my own life and my research standpoint. Ultimately, this work seeks to not further these systems of oppression, but, rather, to support progress towards deconstructing them.

Though it was outside of the scope of this work to build relations and work with the community on which this thesis is centered, I seek to highlight the voices of community-members, along with Indigenous scholars, as much as possible. Two semesters of an undergraduate thesis did not allow for deep relationships to develop and thus would have been exploitative rather than productive in the end. I hope this work acts as a starting point for reflection and respectful engagement and learning in the future. In order to understand the resettlement of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe, I read the documents released by the Tribe and Tribal leaders, and the Louisiana Office of Community Development. However, gathering information on the case study beyond these two official sources proved to be the greatest challenge of this research. While my other sections are deliberate in the use of peer-reviewed scholarship, especially Indigenous scholarship, this section was limited in finding the same type of scholarship beyond that which was released by the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe and the Louisiana Office of Community Development. Thus, I have relied on news sources, in which I looked for consistent information across news outlets. In addition to this, I sought out quotations from Tribal members within these to center the voices of the individuals as much as possible rather than relying on the reporter to provide the information. Finally, I relied upon videos and documentaries to provide context as to the land itself and a look into the community that is so central to this work. The complex situation continues to unfold even as I write this, but given the measures I have taken it is my hope that the information provided here is accurate and sufficient to provide evidence for this thesis. It is my hope that with this information I can paint a picture of what I understand to be the reality of this project and illuminate the relevance of settler colonialism not only for this project but in climate change more broadly.

My interest in such a topic was deeply informed by courses taken on settler colonialism and its continued impact on Indigenous Nations, complemented by environmental justice and feminist ideas that understand environmental degradation and climate change as symptoms of larger, systemic oppressions such as institutional racism and settler colonialism. I believe climate adaptation has the potential to be a tool for change that can begin to work towards addressing the issues that created the need for adaptation in the first place. However, it also can work towards furthering these harmful systems of oppression. Thus I contribute to the literature on the importance of holistic and effective climate adaptation policy and practices, adding another voice in support of intersectional, anti-oppressive, and decolonizing climate adaptation.

I have structured this thesis into four chapters. The first begins by outlining and discussing settler colonialism, not only defining the term but also what this definition means for individuals and Indigenous Nations today. This section informs the rest of the thesis, because through this framing it is possible to highlight the centrality of settler colonialism in the discussion of the case study, and in decolonization. This begins first with the discussion of the Removal Act of 1830, which led to the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe's formation on the Isle de Jean Charles since members of the three Nations in their name all fled to the "uninhabitable swampland" that encompassed their island refuge. As Potawatomi scholar Kyle Powys Whyte writes, "Climate injustice, for Indigenous peoples, is less about the spectre of a new future and more like the experience of déjà vu" (Whyte 2016b, 88); this portion of the thesis begins to unpack the déjà vu. In other words, my discussion of the Removal Act shows a traumatizing history that not only put this community on marshlands later to be eroded by ocean waters but also a history that may be at risk of being repeated in non-collaborative 'resettlement' endeavors. Within this discussion I highlight the common perceptions of removal at the time, not only

providing context as to how such a harmful policy came about but also to expose the presence of colonialism in the thought and culture of settlers. Chapter two uses the same tools, further exposing settler colonialism as the source of vulnerability for this Tribe, and its role in the current climate-induced resettlement project.

Following this, in chapter three, I examine decolonization and resurgence, both the theoretical underpinnings and the ways in which these ideas manifest specifically in relation to land. I emphasize land due to the centrality of it to settler colonialism, and as a key point of tension in the case of community resettlement for an Indigenous Nation with place-based cultural practices. Finally, the fourth chapter brings together these ideas and looks to the future of community resettlement. I utilize the case study along with the discussion of settler colonialism to highlight the mistakes made in the resettlement project. This then leaves space to offer recommendations for improvement, which I make based on the discussion of decolonization and resurgence alongside the experience of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe. It is in this final chapter that the heart of this thesis lies. In illuminating the relevance of settler colonialism in climate change and in this community resettlement, I contribute to the scholarship on resettlement by providing recommendations for federal and local government protocol in such projects. These are centered on the need to understand settler colonialism as the primary cause of climate vulnerability, and I allow that structural analysis to inform the recommendations for resettlement both in process and in outcome.

There is a dire need for disaster mitigation policies to include community resettlement, as seen by the tireless work of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw leaders raising funds for this rather than accepting the FEMA individual relocation funds. Yet, in the experience of this Indigenous community it is clear that these policies must address the issue at hand which is not climate

change itself, but instead the systems of oppression, understood here as settler colonialism, that forced some communities into vulnerable positions and others into safety.

Chapter 1: Settler Colonialism and the 1830 Removal Act

In order to contextualize climate adaptation within the settler colonial project, one must first examine settler colonialism as it has existed prior to or alongside this recent climatic change. I do so first through theoretical discussions of settler colonialism, drawing on scholars and ideas that informed my understanding of settler colonialism. Using these critical underpinnings, I then examine a poignant example of United States settler colonialism. This example, The Indian Removal Act of 1830, not only grounds the theoretical discussion of settler colonialism but also offers a case through which parallels can be drawn between the past removal and modern climate-induced resettlement. Further, an understanding of the Removal Act is critical to understanding the Isle de Jean Charles climate-induced resettlement, as there are clear links between this specific community, the Indian Removal Act, and the community's need to resettle.

Chapter 1.1: Settler Colonialism: The Theoretical Underpinnings

I understand settler colonialism as not only "a structure rather than an event" (Wolfe 2006, 390) but as *the* structure in which this thesis is written and in which this case study exists. It is the systemic, structural genocide of Indigenous peoples, characterized by land theft and a logic of elimination aimed to erase Indigenous peoples, individuals and cultures, so much so that it erases itself. (Preston 2017, Tuck & Yang 2012, Veracini 2011, Wolfe 2006, 2016). I first examine the different pieces of this framework for understanding settler colonialism, then address the ways in which they are intimately intertwined.

Naming the structural nature of settler colonialism undoes the misconceived notion that it refers to a period in history. Rather, Patrick Wolfe famously writes that settler colonialism is ongoing, it is historical and a part of our present day (Shepard Pers. Comm., Wolfe 2006). The understanding of members of settler states is often that settler colonialism was an era during which the United States expanded its territory, taking Indigenous Nations' land and resources, and because this is not occuring in as obvious ways as it once was, it is considered to be finished. However, as it has existed through time, settler colonial powers have "shape-shift[ed]" in order to adapt and conceal itself (Alfred & Corntassel 2005, 601). Thus settler colonialism is ongoing, and "the instruments of domination are evolving and inventing new methods to erase Indigenous histories and senses of place" (Ibid.). Alfred and Corntassel (2005) emphasize that it is an adaptable ongoing structure, evolving to achieve the same genocide of Native people that it has sought throughout history, though with methods that are novel and perhaps less recognizable. It is in this structure, aimed towards the erasure of Indigenous Nations, that the United States and other settler nations exist today.

This genocide of Indigenous Nations refers not only to the physical genocide of Indigenous people, but also to the cultural genocide. Wolfe (2016) describes this as he writes,

> "....the settler-colonial logic of elimination [is not] solely a drive to exterminate Native human beings...the irreconcilable Native difference that settler polities seek to eliminate can be detached from the individual, whose bare life can be reassigned within the set of settler social categories, a social death of Nativeness" (4)

Thus, Wolfe establishes that settler colonialism is characterized by a logic of elimination, of both Native people and "Nativeness." Unangax scholar Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang refer to these differing though connected strategies of settler colonialism through a framework of "internal" versus "external" settler colonialism. External colonial forces involve the dispossession of

Indigenous Nations, that is the genocide and forced removal of Indigenous people from lands in order to feed the settler society that can use and extract from that land. In this mode of colonialism Indigenous people are considered a part of the natural world, the settler state then aims to control both land and peoples through external colonialism (Tuck & Yang 2012). Internal settler colonial forces meanwhile are "biopolitical modes of control" such as the efforts to force Indigenous people into white society through boarding schools and other assimilative measures "to ensure the ascendancy of a nation and its white elite" (Tuck & Yang 2012, 5). Wolfe's consideration of the "social death of Nativeness" would be a part of this internal colonialism as it is a way in which to "manage" and thus erase Indigenous peoples (2016, 4). This framework places these two forms of settler colonialism alongside one another, highlighting that settler colonialism does not only refer to the physical removal or physical violence but also the efforts to erase and assimilate Indigenous peoples which are equally violent.

This framework offers a way in which to categorize settler acts, which helps to recognize the often overlooked practices and tactics that are indeed a part of the settler colonial project. The final important piece of this framework is the notion that they are intertwined and work alongside one another to create and perpetuate the settler state. Settler scholars Corey Snelgrove and Rita Dhamoon and Cherokee Scholar Jeff Corntassel outline the connection between these internal and external forces. They write that settler colonialism seeks to destroy Indigenous relationships to land (2014) as a central part of this destruction of "Nativeness". This suggests that physical removal of Indigenous Nations from ancestral lands serves both the physical component of removal to feed settler society, along with the erasure of Indigenous culture to serve the ascendency of the settler state. Native scholar Epeli Hau'ofa writes of the centrality of land and the significance of eliminating that relationship as he writes,

> To remove a people from their ancestral, natural surroundings or vice versa...is to sever them not only from their traditional sources of livelihood but also, and much more importantly, from their ancestry, their history, their identity, and their ultimate claim for the legitimacy of their existence ...Such acts are therefore sacrilegious and of the same order of enormity as the complete destruction of all a nation's libraries, archives, museums, monuments, historic buildings, and all its books and other such documents (2008, 75).

In this way the taking of Indigenous land, what may be referred to as external settler colonialism, is equated to the taking of what Wolfe terms "Nativeness," that is, Indigenous culture and identity which would be associated with internal settler colonialism. As Hau'ofa describes, the physical removal cannot be set as distinct from the removal of identity or "Nativeness" but rather the physical and cultural violence occur and exist alongside one another. Scholars Tuck and Yang (2012) acknowledge this as well, as they write "the disruption of Indigenous relationships to land represents a profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence" (2012, 5). Thus, taking a people from the land or the land from a people separates individuals and communities from not only recognizable resources but even more, their culture, history, and identity.

Furthermore, Western concepts of land relations, specifically private property, were imposed on Indigenous Nations serving as another tactic in the ethnocide of Indigenous Nations: "Indeed, the project of making white men out of Native Americans was, to a large extent, predicated on the injunction to 'own' property individually" (Mikdashi 2013, 222). Thus, the physical movement to the new land with new laws again intertwines external and internal settler colonialism. Certainly assimilative policies can occur without the physical components, however it is not the case that these internal and external categories always exist apart from one another. Still, this framework of external versus internal offers a way in which to identify settler colonialism within systems or case studies.

Ultimately, the final aim of settler colonialism's logic of elimination is to eliminate itself. Settler scholar Lorenzo Veracini (2011) writes this as he writes that the goal of settler colonialism is always to ultimately suppress the existence of itself. He utilizes this idea to distinguish settler colonialism from colonialism as he writes "colonialism reproduces itself, and the freedom and equality of the colonized is forever postponed; settler colonialism, by contrast, extinguishes itself" (2011, 3). Settler colonialism, in his view, operates as if it will one day no longer exist, it will succeed in erasing the peoples that it "settled" (Ibid., Tuck & Yang 2012). In other words, "the settlers' aspirations are to transform Indigenous homelands into settler homelands" (Whyte 2018, 13). It is this logic that allows for the genocide of Indigenous peoples, which then allows "non-Native peoples [to] become the 'rightful' inheritors of all that was Indigenous- land, resources, Indigenous spirituality, and culture" (Smith 2012, 57), thus achieving the settler colonial aims of Indigenous erasure and the taking of Indigenous resources. Potawatomi scholar Kyle Powys Whyte (2018) emphasizes this taking of land and resources, as he writes that settlers seek to create their own ecologies at the expense of pre-existing Indigenous ecologies. This is through physically bringing in new species, but also altering the treatment of the current environment through extractive industries like mining and foresting (Ibid.). These concepts help to serve the overarching idea as well, emphasizing the ongoing Indigenous-settler relationship that is characterized by domination of people, cultures and land (Coulthard 2014).

Chapter 1.2. A History of Removal

The Removal Act of 1830 serves as an example that highlights many of these manifestations of the settler colonial project even beyond removal, and provides a piece of the history of the

Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe.[1] It was this act that Tribal ancestors were escaping as they moved to the Isle de Jean Charles, which was considered a part of "uninhabitable swampland" (Isle de Jean Charles 2019b, Jessee 2019). Because of this, the Removal Act can be considered a factor in creating profound vulnerability to extreme climate impacts since the bayous and coastlines of the Gulf of Mexico are becoming increasingly uninhabitable. Thus, I will discuss the Indian Removal Act through the lens of settler colonialism which will ultimately provide context as to why this Indigenous community escaped to the Louisiana marshes. It will then also allow parallels to be drawn between this Act to the resettlement pursuits today, as the government resettlement program risks replicating parts of the Removal Act which the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe has already endured.

There was and is an insatiable desire for Indigenous land as it is the taking of land that characterizes settler colonialism.[2] The Removal Act was but one of the tools used by the settler government to achieve the aims of settler colonialism, and was carried out by President Andrew Jackson in May of 1830. I will outline the written law of the Removal Act to provide

[1] I choose this act rather than a history more specific to the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe because this specific history has been debated between two Indigenous communities in the Southeast especially in relationship to these applications for federal recognition by the United States Government. (Crepelle 2018b, Squint 2018, Bureau of Indian Affairs 2008). Because I do not aim to validate or invalidate one history over another, I will attempt to provide historical background that circumvents any claim on whether one understanding of their history is more accurate than another.

[2] Of course, the history of removal of Indigenous Peoples does not begin with the Removal Act of 1830. Prior to the act, between 1492 and 1692, the Native population in what is now the southeast region of the United States fell from over a million to 200,000 (Woods 2000). By 1790, this population dropped to 60,000 due to the impacts of war and disease in this region (Ibid.). Over the first century of the United States existence, between 1776 and 1887, 1.5 billion acres were stolen from Indigenous Nations (Williams & Holt-Giménez 2017). Though this number includes those lost during removal, it also exhibits the widespread removal of Indigenous Peoples even beyond the removal act.

background, then the settler context that led to the enacting of this law and finally the impacts that were felt by Indigenous Nations.

The Act itself divided the lands purchased from the French colonists in the Louisiana Purchase that were west of the Mississippi into "districts," which would then each be chosen to receive different Indigenous Nations that lived east of the Mississippi (U.S. Congress 1830). It references the United States' rights to "exchange" the Indigenous lands that were within state territories east of the Mississippi for the new "districts", though this exchange was not a mutual, willful one when carried out by settlers (Figure 1.1) (Ibid., King 2013). Prior to the official policy of removal, white settlers were vying for Indigenous land, particularly rural landless white people (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014, King 2013, Scheckel 1998). The policy as a whole aimed to remove, by any means necessary, the Indigenous Nations that were still east of the Mississippi to lands west of the Mississippi, as to allow settlers to use all of the eastern land to which they believed they had a right.

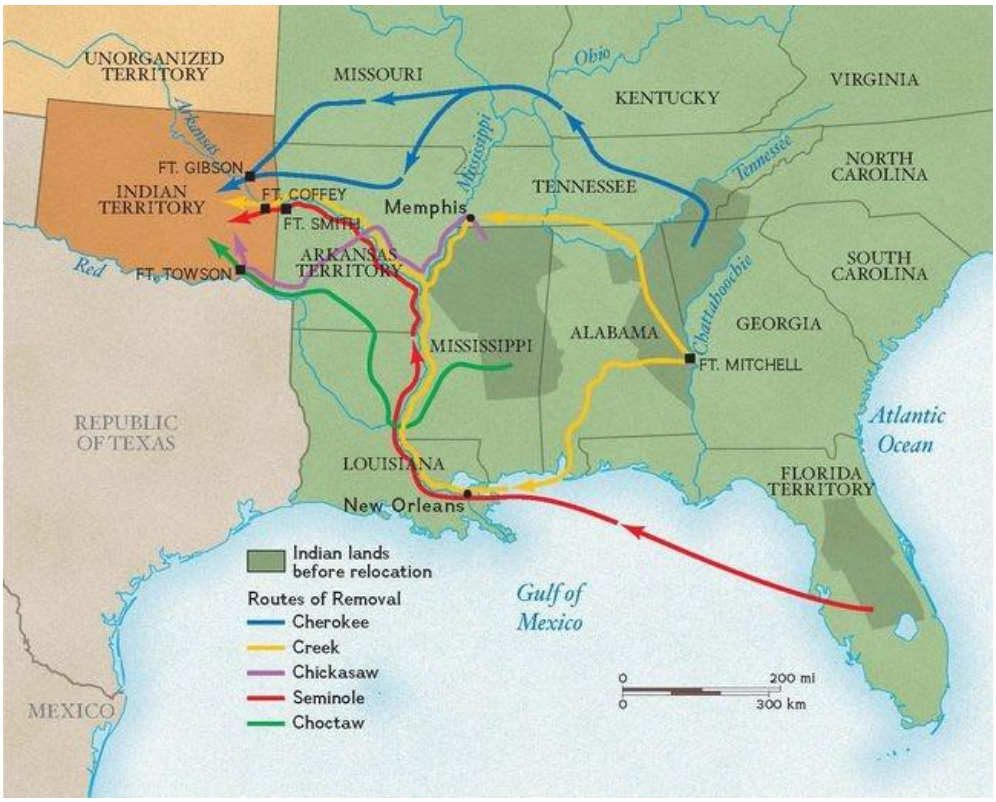

Figure 1.1: Map of Routes of Removal forced through the Indian Removal Act of 1830. (Micalizio 2014)

These rural landless white people in particular believed they would be the receptors of this evacuated land, however in reality the benefits of the land-grabbing were predominantly the owners of large plantations who would add it to the already large and profitable plantations (King 2013). Scholar Clyde Woods (2000) names this plantation regime as the driving force that led to the official policy of the removal of Indigenous Nations. The plantation regime represents a type of settler colonialism that "imposes upon social landscapes a distinct regime of political, economical, and ethnic regulation", central to which is the monopolization ethic that requires the "total elimination, marginalization, or exile of Indigenous peoples" (Woods 2000, 41). As land began to be ceded by some Indigenous Nations through violence and war in the early 19th century, particularly during and following the War of 1812, "farmers and planters from Georgia and South Carolina flooded into the Black Belt, the 320-mile long crescent-shaped swath of

extremely fertile black soil extending from western Georgia through Alabama to northeast Mississippi" (Woods 2000, 44). It is this fertile land and the plantation regime that sparked the discussion of the "Indian Problem" (Huntington & Episcopal Church 1800, King 2013, Welsh 1887). The United States government began seeking an official policy that could further dispossess Indigenous Nations and allow the resulting land to be transformed into economically valuable cotton plantations (King 2013, Woods 2000).

Thus the "Indian problem" sought to find the best strategy to "move Native people off prime land and push them out of the way of white settlement" (King 2013, 98). There were two prominent ideas amongst these white settlers, especially those seeking plantations or plantation growth, as to how best to manage these Indigenous Nation-United States relations. These two sides of the debate are referred to as the "gradualists" and "removalists" (Maddox 1992, Mitchell 1996, Weeks 2016). These seemingly different factions in the settler population both sought to achieve the settler colonial project, an example of what Kahnawake Mohawk scholar Gerald Taiaiake Alfred and Cherokee scholar Jeff Corntassel call "shape-shifting colonial powers" (2005, 601). Each group, through different means, offered their own way to continue the settler colonial project, one through what Tuck and Yang (2012) would deem internal settler colonialism and the other through external settler colonialism. As they offer a more concise description, I will refer to these groups using Tuck and Yang's ideas of "internal" versus "external" settler colonialism (discussed on p. 17-18), in order to accentuate the settler colonial system that underlies these ideologies.

First, those that advocated for an internal settler colonial strategy, referred to as the gradualists by historians, believed that Indigenous Nations could and should be transformed to practice the lifestyles that white settlers practiced. In other words, this group promoted

acculturation and assimilation of Indigenous Peoples into white-settler lifestyles (Weeks 2016). This was especially in reference to land use, as the non-agriculturalist Indigenous Nations required significant territory to hunt. By forcing these Nations to practice western agriculture, less land would be required for food production. White settlers believed this strategy would allow them to force Indigenous Nations to agree to land cessions as the land would no longer be needed, and wealthy plantation owners could expand their business (King 2012, Weeks 2016, Woods 2000). These beliefs extended beyond land use to include religious assimilation through missionaries along with governmental change, founded upon the idea that in order for Indigenous Nations to survive, they had to abandon their own culture (Cooper & United States 1842). Settlers believed they could thus eliminate Indigenous Nations, specifically their "Nativeness," and then claim sovereignty on this stolen land (Shepard Pers. Comm., Wolfe 2006). These ideas for Indigenous Nations-US policy held by those that advocated for internal settler colonialism came to fruition, briefly through the Indian Civilization Act of 1819 which was ultimately was considered "not...satisfactory" because Indigenous Nations resisted assimilation and thus maintained land rights (Cooper & United States 1842, 3), though more prominently through the Allotment Act, or Dawes Act of 1887 (See Ellinghaus 2017, Merjian 2011, Senier 2000). Initially, throughout the early 19th century the internal settler colonial perspective was the most prominent across the settler nation and in US-Native policies. Yet this idea of gradual assimilation is of course resisted entirely by most Indigenous Nations, with some adopting some western practices as an international relations tactic to ensure good relations with the United States (Weeks 2016). Thus, white settlers began to seek alternative policies in order to erase Indigenous Nations.

Those that advocated for external settler colonialism (the removalists), in contrast, disagreed with the gradual assimilation technique and instead believed that Native Nations could not assimilate, and rather must be moved west in order to facilitate peaceful relations. This was deemed a peace-promoting route because white settlers were eager to take Indigenous land by force particularly if there was no policy that did this for them, thus risking further battles over land and potentially more "bloodshed" (Weeks 2016). "Bloodshed" here refers to white settler bloodshed, as the Removal Act killed thousands of Indigenous people and "broke the backs of the communities" (King 2013, 98). These ideas surrounding removal were founded in the colonial idea that the two groups, Indigenous Nations and white settlers, could not live alongside one another due to racial incompatibility, not two equal groups that are incompatible but rather the "superior" white settlers incompatible with Indigenous Nations (Cave 2017, Maddox 1992).

The pressure to create a policy that would force land away from Indigenous Nations came mostly from the state of Georgia which desired the land of the Cherokee and Creek nations which existed as pockets in Georgia's land base (Banner 2005). Indigenous leaders had been resisting expropriation while the settlers were becoming increasingly frustrated by Indigenous resilience (Ibid.)

The first proposal of such a removal policy by President James Monroe in 1824 emphasized that the removal must be voluntary, and that the land that would be taken from Indigenous Nations must be equal in size and quality to the land on which they moved (Monroe 1825, Weeks 2016). Monroe added in his message to his constituents that removal "would not only shield [Indigenous Nations] from impending ruin, but promote their welfare and happiness" (Monroe 1825, 39). The "impending ruin" that Monroe refers to here is the belief that

Indigenous peoples will go extinct without the help of white settlers, a harmful and unfounded idea, and also a commentary that does not acknowledge that it was settlers' vigorous and insatiable desire for Indigenous land that threatened Indigenous lives.

While white settlers were engaged in these debates, many Indigenous leaders were cognisant of the potential losses. For example, by 1810 Choctaw leaders decided to no longer trade land with white settlers as it was clear these demands for land would only escalate (Akers 2011), and six years later the Cherokee Nation followed suit (Mankiller & Wallace 1993). At this time there were other Nations who were unable to do so, and through coercion using alcohol or limiting food sources by mass-killings of buffalo U.S. government officials forced these Nations into signing land away through treaties, even prior to the Removal Act (Kappler 1975, King 2013). However, it was with the election of President Andrew Jackson that forced and violent removal was condoned and even celebrated by the United States government. Because Indigenous Nations like the Choctaw Nation fought alongside General Andrew Jackson in the War of 1812, many believed that Jackson's presidency would in fact bring about further protections for Indigenous Nations' land as was promised in their treaties with the United States (Akers 2011). Still, others were not under the same impression, many Nations were aware of his white supremacy and embrace of genocide as they called him "Sharp Kife," and were rightfully wary of his newfound power in the United States (Cave 2017). It was with these values that "Sharp Knife" created the Removal Act, which in turn created profound crises for Indigenous Nations, particularly those that were so intimately tied to their homelands both culturally and spiritually. It was "an official U.S. policy of death and destruction that created untold human pain and misery" (Akers 2011, 116).

The language in the act itself did not specify that the land would be forcibly taken from Indigenous Nations, but instead claimed to be "an Act to provide for an exchange of lands with the Indians residing in any of the state or territories and for their removal west of the river of Mississippi" (U.S. Congress 1830). However, what the seemingly benign "exchange of lands" amounted to was far more violent and destructive. During President Jackson's reign 86 treaties were made with Indigenous Nations between New York and the Mississippi River, all of which were in reference to the taking of Indigenous land (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014). These were not entered into freely, but rather through military force or the use of alcohol to convince a few members of the Tribe to sign which would then allow the treaty to be applied to the entire Nation (King 2013). One hundred million acres of Indigenous land was taken by the United States, and traded for 32 million acres west of the Mississippi during this time (Weeks 2016).

The Choctaw Nation, for example, was coerced into signing a treaty through deceptive means by the United States representatives (King 2013). Despite protests, the United States was quick to ratify the treaty that required all Choctaw to be forcibly removed from their homes within three years (Akers 2011). Following this treaty the Choctaw Nation fell into despair, with families no longer growing crops due to feelings of hopelessness, alcoholism becoming rampant, and the entire Nation in mourning (Ibid.). This despair was rooted in cultural belief systems that valued their homelands as sacred and saw any movement away from these lands, particularly a movement west, as death (Ibid.). The Choctaw Nation was not alone in their suffering. Soldiers appeared at the homes and communities of Indigenous Nations across what is now the American Southeast, and forced the young and old to walk west, away from their physical and spiritual homelands (Figure 1.1). The Cherokee Nation calls this journey "Nunnna daul Tsunyi," meaning "the trail where we cried" (Thornton 1987). Thousands of people died before, during, and after

this removal (Thornton 1987, Wright 1992). Choctaw scholar Donna Akers describes the impact and memory of this time period as she writes,

> Indian Removal cannot be separated from the human suffering it evoked- from the toll on the human spirit of the Native people. It cannot be remembered by Americans as merely an official U.S. policy, but must be understood in terms of the human suffering it caused and the thousands of lives it destroyed. (2011, 116)

The impacts of this violence on both individuals and communities are still felt today, almost two centuries later, speaking to the gravity of Akers words and the reality of the Removal era (Evans-Campbell 2008).

During this time, some individuals resisted this move west. Though they were still forced from their homelands, and certainly still endured the violence of removal, rather than moving west these individuals and groups fled to nearby areas that were undesirable to white plantation owners (Dunbar-Ortiz 2014, Evans-Campbell 2008). This allowed small groups to remain with their homelands in sight, however they were forced to learn the new lifestyles associated with surviving in the mountains or the swamplands, landscapes that were considered uninhabitable by settlers. It is here, in these "uninhabitable swamplands" that many Indigenous Nations' fleeing members settled, as the "isolated swamps of Terrebonne and Lafourche [Parish] offered a good place for Indians to seek refuge" (Crepelle 2018b, 159)- including those from the Biloxi Nation, the Chitimacha Nation, and the Choctaw Nation. Over the past two hundred years the Indigenous Nations that fled to this area began living together in this space away from settler society, as settlers did not show interest in these marshes until oil exploration began in the middle of the 20th century (Katz 2003). Thus communities formed, and began rejuvenating and sharing their cultural practices and ultimately, through collective experience and livelihoods in these areas, formed into conglomerate groups including the United Houma Nation, the Tunica-Biloxi Tribe, and, on the Isle de Jean Charles, the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe.

Chapter 2: The Case of the Isle de Jean Charles Band of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe

After fleeing the Removal Act's forced migration west, ancestors of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe found solitude and peace in the bayous of southeast Louisiana, on the Isle de Jean Charles. This land provided a temporary refuge, with close proximity to ancestral homelands. Still, this community has not been immune to the impacts of settler society. Oil exploration and climate change have begun to impact the landscape that this Tribe calls home. I will first discuss these impacts and then begin to unpack the adaptation measures being taken on by or for the Isle de Jean Charles community. This will highlight the active settler colonial structures that facilitated the need for resettlement even beyond the forced removal to the Isle de Jean Charles. Further, I show how these structures are still active in the resettlement project, especially relying upon Tuck & Yang's (2012) external and internal colonialism as foundational to settler colonialism.

The Isle de Jean Charles Band of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe is an island community living in the southeast corner of what is now Louisiana. This community has lived on the Isle de Jean Charles since the 19th century. The residents on the island are descendants of individuals who escaped the forced and violent relocation of southeastern Tribes during the Indian Removal Act of 1830, coming together in the marshes of Louisiana (Isle de Jean Charles 2019b). The island has served as an escape from settler society (Jessee 2019), and remained a refuge in this way for many years as it was exclusively accessible by boat until 1953 (Isle de Jean Charles 2019b). The population on this island historically had grown to as high as 600, though began to drop as low as 300 in the early 2000s, and down to less than 100 individuals in 2017 (Jessee 2019, Katz 2003, King 2017). This reduction in island population has been

predominantly due to flooding, both of homes and of the road that connects the island to the mainland (Boyd 2019). There is only a single causeway that allows island residents to reach emergency services, schools, and often jobs. Such access has been limited not only during storms, but also through sunny day flooding events on the road and erosion of the road itself. Individuals and families have found the island unsafe as flooding worsens, and especially as the flooding of the single road to the island becomes more frequent (LDOA 2017). The island itself has lost 98% of its land over the last 50 years, shrinking from a five mile long, lush and vibrant island to the ¼ mile-long state it is in today (Figure 2.1) (Boyd 2019, Ferris & Marshall Ferris 2015, King 2017, USGS 2017).

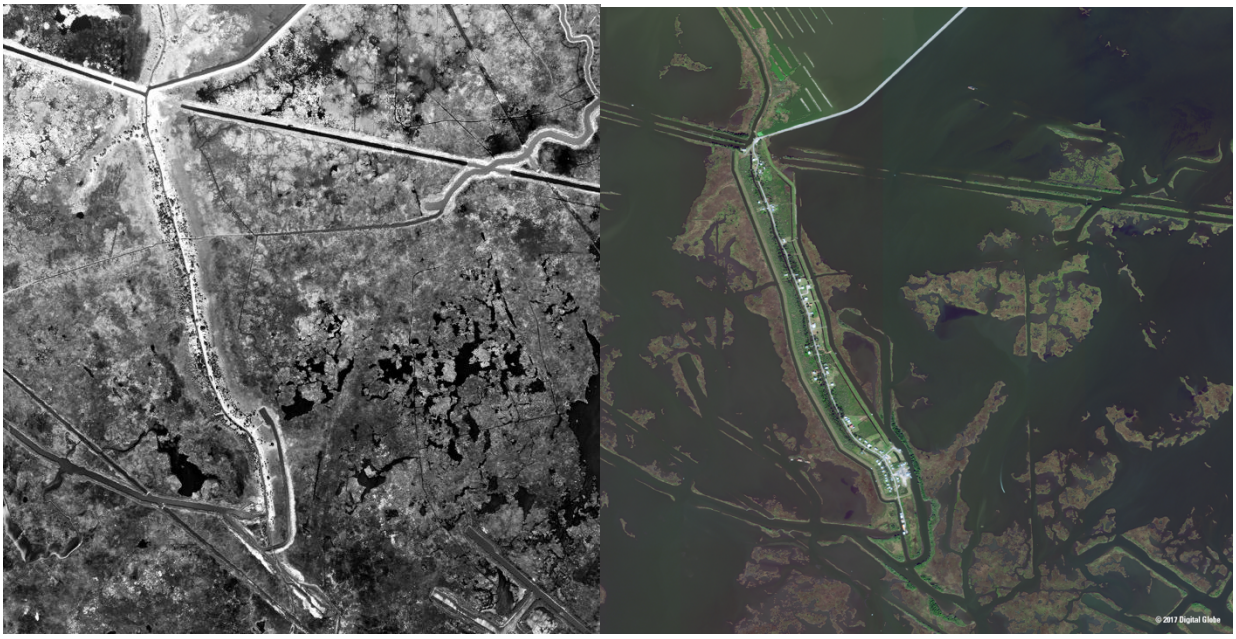

Figure 2.1: Two photos of the Isle de Jean Charles, together exhibiting the extreme land loss over time. Aerial photo February 5, 1963 (left); WorldView November 16, 2016 (right) (USGS 2017).

Residents of Isle de Jean Charles say that there was once grass and forests that stretched from the island to Pointe-Aux-Chiens which is roughly three miles east of the Isle de Jean Charles (Vaughn-Lee 2014). The island was once five miles wide and characterized by cow

pastures and cypress groves, facilitating the predominantly agrarian lifestyles of island residents (USGS 2017). Older residents of the island and Tribal elders recall that they were not aware of the Great Depression until it had ended, due to the reliance on fishing and farming that allowed the Indigenous Nation to live off the land rather than rely on settler diets (Yawn 2020). The cyprus groves surrounding the island once were a critical part to the upbringing of the island youth, providing space to explore and play "Tarzan" as described by resident Edison Dardar (Vaugn-Lee 2014). Now all that surrounds the homes is water and ghost forests, the results of saltwater inundation and land subsidence. The island today looks very different, from a landscape covered in lush green marsh and forests to now dead trees and views of the open ocean. In losing the land there has been a significant loss in the ability to grow traditional foods and medicines, and with this loss a loss in memory of some of these traditional names and knowledges (Yawn 2020). As the land continues to disappear, so too is the culture put at risk, the changing climate facilitating the erasure of livelihoods and culture.

The drastic reductions in land mass are at least partially attributed to the impacts of a warming planet, from the sea level rise to the increase in major storms. However, it is important to note that much of this land loss is also due to oil and gas activity in the surrounding area. Oil companies, like Apache, BP, Texaco, Chevron & Shell have extracted in the area surrounding the island, consequently destroying the stable ecosystem that once existed there (Maldonado 2018). As canals were dug in the land surrounding the Isle de Jean Charles for this industry, the saltwater was given a route to intrude into and destabilize the marsh (McKee & Mendelssohn 1989, Turner & McCelnachan 2018). Island resident Edison Dardar recalls that prior to the 1960s and 70s the island was surrounded by green, but "after they cut that pipeline, we started having water in our yard" (In Vaughn-Lee 2014). Chris Brunet shares in experiencing the significant

change from the oil industry in the area, saying "What you see of the island now is a skeleton of what it used to be" (In Vaughn-Lee 2014). Settler scholar Julie Maldonado calls the Isle de Jean Charles a "sacrifice zone", as these companies were permitted to operate in ways that make the land and people of the Isle de Jean Charles valued less than the resource beneath them (Buckley & Allen 2011, Lerner 2010, Maldanado 2018). Isle de Jean Charles Tribal member Babs Bagwell speaks to this:

> First the White Man took our women and tried to make them White,
> Next they took our lands for their profits.
> They have cut thru our marshes,
> Our ancestral mounds,
> And have left our once fertile lands barren from salt water intrusion.
> They have poisoned our bounty from the waters with their quest for monetary gain from oil,
> Not only with the oil itself but the chemicals they used to cover up their mistakes,
> They have killed our trees which were once plentiful and marked our lands
> And left in their place a shadow that once was. (in Maldonado 2018)

Bagwell is stating the ties between oil extraction and the settler colonial project. The tearing apart of their marshes is not unique nor new. Rather, extractive industries mirrors the same erasure of Indigenous voices, lives, and culture, in order to help the ascendancy of the settler state. Settler scholar Anna Willow (2015) writes that extractivism exposes a way of thinking that is inherently settler colonial, as it is a part of what Wolfe (2016) has termed the logic of elimination in settler colonialism, particularly in the way that it positions itself in relationship to the natural world, a positioning that is characterized by domination of people and land. Tuck & Yang (2012) might classify the resource extraction as a form of external settler colonialism as it destroys and displaces "Indigenous worlds… in order to… build the wealth, the privilege, or feed the appetites of the colonizers" (2012, 4). In this way, the external settler colonialism, seen in the early 1800s during the Removal Act, continues during this time of resource extraction.

Members of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe speak to the personal impact from this as they write of being "viewed as disposable people, with our lands left to perish and our way of life with them" (Isle de Jean Charles 2019c). Even more, the means through which the oil company stole Indigenous land mirrored exactly the practices that were prolific during the 1800s to force Indigenous communities to sign away their lands through unfair treaties acquired deceptively (Crepelle 2018b). Historically, settlers used alcohol to force Tribal leaders or members to sign treaties that gave up their land rights. Similarly, during the 20th century Indigenous communities living in the bayous of Louisiana have memories of "oil companies ma[king] people sign leases they could not read or understand, as most did not speak or read English, to lease their land for drilling" (Maldonado 2014, 69). Not only is the structure of settler colonialism present from removal to oil extraction, but it is clear that even the practices through which these pursuits were achieved were nearly the same- land grabbing through deception and, here, through disregard for informed consent. Thus, it is clear oil exploration "continue[s] a form of violent white settler colonialism that… continue[s] exploiting the natural environment while attempting to erase Indigenous forms of legal jurisdiction, government and ultimately life" (Preston 2017, 370). It is the same structure that allows this to happen, as a part of the structural genocide that overlooks Indigenous land rights, imposes western relationships to the land onto Indigenous lands, and extracts all the resources without taking care to see the impacts on the ecological system or the lives of the Tribe (Willow 2015). Of course, this can be tied to present-day climate change as a whole, as it is these same companies that also produced the bulk of fossil fuel emissions that are warming the planet and, further, deceived the public and hid information surrounding climate change to further settler exploitative relationships to land for economic gain (See: Beder 2011, Beder 2014, Cook 2019, Gelbspan 2005, Oreskes & Conway 2011).

Resource extraction to this Tribe has also forced the removal of community members from the Isle de Jean Charles as a result of the flooding and loss of land that it creates. This not only fragments the community, but also draws Indigenous individuals into settler society from which the island was once an oasis, with the constant pressures of assimilation associated with living within settler society (Maldonado 2018, 2019). Even more, 90% of the United States' offshore oil comes from or passes through this area and as the land mass shrinks, so too does the ability for individuals to live independently on the island without taking part in a settler job, thus a large number of Tribal members are forced to rely on the jobs provided by the oil and gas companies to survive (Clipp et al. 2017, Jessee 2019). Kahnawake Mohawk scholar Gerald Taiaiake Alfred (2009) names this forced dependency on the settler government and settler lifestyles as fundamental to settler colonialism (2009) in that it is tied to the "social death of Nativeness" (Wolfe 2016, 4). Dependency furthers the assimilative goals of settler colonialism, mirroring internal settler colonialism, as it limits Indigenous communities' abilities to practice their own livelihoods and forcing upon them the extractive work of a settler (Jessee 2019). This presence of settler colonialism and "colonial infrastructure," that is oil rigs and canals, established the conditions for the current climate crisis and the current Tribal need to resettle (Jessee 2019, 164, King 2017, LDOA 2017). As Wisner et al. (2003) describes, "vulnerability is rooted in social processes.. which ultimately may be quite remote from the disaster event in itself" (50). In this case, however, these social processes are not remote from the disaster event at all, rather, settler colonialism in the removal act and in oil extraction facilitated the disaster almost entirely.

Given the impacts of the colonial infrastructure and rising seas due to climate change, the island as it stands today will face "total obliteration if a high category hurricane makes landfall at

its tip" (Katz 2003). Even more, the 2017 USGS map of flooding shows the Isle de Jean Charles entirely submerged in less than a decade (Figure 2.2). The flooding that has already occurred has not only made the community physically unsafe but has also already put at risk the culture of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe. Significant burial lands have been lost due to flooding, many of which individuals are trying to recover despite loss of property rights to submerged land (Maldonado 2015). Because the land mass has decreased significantly, community members are also no longer able to grow traditional foods, nor fish in the marsh which is now lost almost entirely (Maldonado 2015, USGS 2017). The transition to settler diets has been associated with health impacts and with great cultural loss as many traditional diets are closely tied to important cultural practices (Earle 2013).[3] On the Isle de Jean Charles traditional diets are associated with the sharing of food and meals, a practice that has become less common in the transition to settler diets from climate impacts (Maldonado 2015).

[3] This is an issue among Indigenous Nations across the United States and the globe. The issue expands beyond a health crisis, in that food and food sovereignty operate as a source of colonialism. See Burnett et al. 2015, Milburn 2004, Nabham 2013, Samson & Pretty 2006, Whyte 2016a.

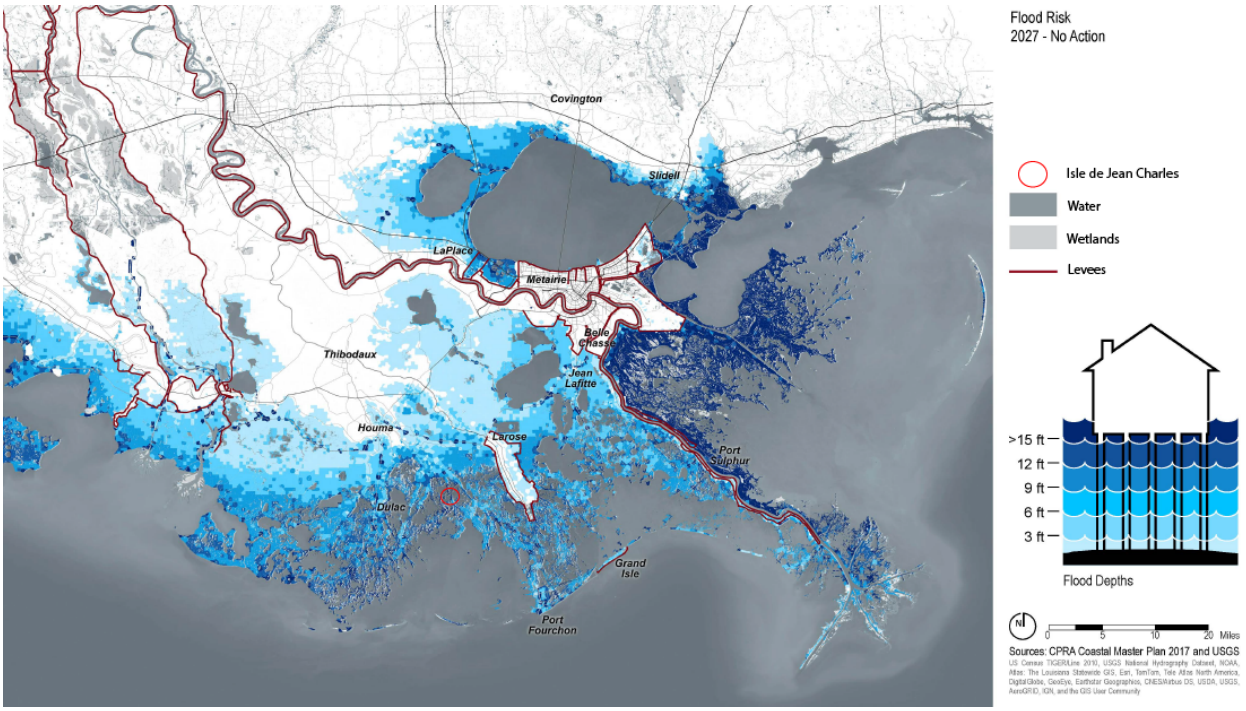

Figure 2.2: Flood Risk in the Mississippi Delta 2027, Isle de Jean Charles Circle Added. (LDOA 2019)

Given the immense and interwoven impacts of settler colonialism and climate change on this community, there are many ways in which the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe has cultivated resistance and resilience. Seeking recovery of lost burial sites is not the only way in which this Tribe has resisted and adapted independently of settler government-assisted strategies, or resettlement plans. The modes of survival employed by the community are not only resistance or adaptation to climate change impacts, rather they seek to adapt to the rising seas and begin to address that which brought them to this position: settler colonialism (Nelson et al. 2009). These are both acts of adaptation and resurgence.

The Isle de Jean Charles band of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe continues to reject colonial realities and center Indigenous beliefs, knowledge systems, and agency, as to be resurgent against the settler colonial climate impacts. Tribal members continue to attend public meetings in order to show that Native presence in the parish is alive and cannot be erased, have

emphasized traditional knowledge in approaching flooding and environmental issues and have called upon the generations of knowledge of the area to predict further impacts (Maldonado 2018, Maldonado et al. 2013). Efforts have also been made to reestablish traditional gardening techniques and diets through growing in raised beds that can be saved from saline intrusion, thus reinvigorating cultural practices that have been lost due to environmental degradation.

There have also been adaptation measures more familiar to a settler perception of climate adaptation, that is, the raising of their homes or building up the land that surrounds their home using oyster shells, rocks, or dirt (Maldonado 2018). In 2001, the Tribe also constructed a levee to protect their island, which has been successful in protecting from high tides and further saltwater intrusion, though is not sufficient for high-intensity storms (Katz 2003). Through these practices and others, the Tribe has adapted and resisted settler colonial and climate impacts on their lives and land, and thus far the community survives even as the land shrinks at alarming rates. Ultimately, however, it is widely known that they likely cannot live on this island much longer, and further, Tribal members have expressed a desire to reunite the other members that have moved away due to such extreme land loss (Jessee 2019).

Chapter 2.1: Beginning the Pursuit of Resettlement

In 2002, following exclusion from a levee project to protect coastal Louisiana, the Tribal Council sought resettlement of the entire Isle de Jean Charles community to both remove current residents from dangerous flood zones and to reunite Tribal members (Alford 2012, Simon 2008). The Army Corps of Engineers agreed to assist in the funding of this program, however, it was only on the terms that there would be unanimous approval for the resettlement. Because this was not the case, as is common in such complex issues as resettlement, the Tribe lost funding to resettle the island community (Peterson & Maldonado 2016).

However, in 2014, President Barack Obama enacted the National Disaster Resilience Competition (NDRC) through which Louisiana applied for climate adaptation support, specifically for the Louisiana Strategic Adaptations for Future Environments Program (LA SAFE). As a part of this application, the state of Louisiana partnered with the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe to include their resettlement in the grant. This application as it related to the Isle de Jean Charles was created predominantly by the Tribal leaders with support from the Lowlander Center, a local nonprofit made up of Native and non-Native members working to support lowland communities (Carter et al. 2018). Through this grant, in 2016 the state of Louisiana was awarded $92,629,249 for all of the LA SAFE projects, $48 million of which was marked for the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe's resettlement plan (King 2017, Stein 2018).

In applying for this funding, the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe worked closely with the Lowlander Center, along with the state of Louisiana to create an application that represented the work that the Tribal leaders had been doing for many years in preparation for resettlement. This application reflected the goals of the Tribe which are to "relocate to disaster resilient and energy efficient housing while maintaining their cultural integrity" (LDOA 2015, 105). It was centered on the resettlement of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe, not only the current island residents, and thus included details specific to this group, including the desire to remain close to the Isle de Jean Charles as to retain traditional cultural and livelihood practices, and designing the resettlement with a community focus both in layout and community gathering centers (Ibid.). This type of planning, that attempts to maintain the layout or infrastructure of the place that was left has been named as a critical tool to maintain cultural practices particularly in relation to community interaction which can be impacted dependent on the proximity of homes or access to communal space (Piggott-McKellar et al. 2019). Because the project aimed to reunite Tribal

members that were displaced through the continued land loss, the entire project aimed to relocate 100 homes, at an estimated cost of $100 million (LDOA 2015). Thus, the application outlined a proposal to acquire funding for purchasing the resettlement site, further planning, and the infrastructure and housing construction for the first 40 housing units (Ibid.). Importantly, this application emphasized that the property on the island would be maintained for those that are there now, and though access would likely be limited to boating it would be possible to maintain this access for members of the Tribe (Ibid.). The process of grant writing was collaborative and supported the vision held by Tribal leaders and planners of their resettlement (Isle de Jean Charles Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe and Tribal Council 2019).

However, things soon became more challenging. After acquiring the grant, the State of Louisiana Office of Community Development (LA-OCD), the agency that would be working with the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe on this project, received news that it was possible that not all residents of the island were a part of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe. The United Houma Nation wrote to the Louisiana State government to inform leaders that many of their Nation's members also lived on the island and should be considered stakeholders in the project (Carter et al. 2018, Dermansky 2019a, 2019b, Utacia Krol 2018). In contrast, Chief Naquin had stated that there was only one resident on the island who was not a member of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe and they had close ties to the Tribal members (Dermansky 2019b). Because of the tension and disagreements between the Nations, rather than facilitating a discussion or collaborative solution, the State of Louisiana quickly removed Tribal affiliation as a part of requirements for inclusion in the resettlement, a revision that Chief Albert Naquin equated to the treaties forced upon Indigenous Nations during the removal era- a deceptive move that does not respect the independence and sovereignty of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe

(Batte 2016, Crepelle 2018a). Erasure of Indigenous voices in the planning for the potential future for this Tribe supports assimilative policies, because it asks members of this Tribe to leave their land and livelihoods for a resettlement site that has not been created with their Tribe's culture in mind. This erasure moves the project from an Indigenous-led resettlement, to a form of internal settler colonialism since it would contribute to the settler government's "management of people [and] land" to facilitate Indigenous erasure and elimination (Tuck & Yang 2012, 4). No longer is an Indigenous Nation defining its future and relationship with land, but rather the settler government is managing the resettlement and thus attempting to manage the future of this Tribe. Following the decision by the LA-OCD, the nature of the project changed drastically.

This type of resettlement that the LA-OCD began to pursue aligns with settler scholar Nathan Jessee's notion of "ahistorical adaptation", defined by disconnections between "current and future exposure to coastal hazards [and] the development practices and legacies that have produced vulnerability unevenly among particular groups of people, such as Indigenous peoples and coastal communities of color" (Jessee 2019, 150). Initially, though not perfectly, the adaptation planning sought to support and assist Indigenous leadership to begin to address the historical underpinnings of climate vulnerability predominantly through emphasizing Indigenous leadership. However, after this adjustment to the plans, the LA-OCD transitioned this work to become ahistorical adaptation planning, and, even more, conducts work that falls in line with "shape-shift[ing]" settler colonialism (Alfred & Corntassel 2005, 601) as it has functioned throughout history.

Chapter 2.2: The Resettlement Process

The new version of the resettlement project was officially underway in July 2016. At this time, the Disaster Recovery Unit of the LA-OCD, along with assistance from engineers and others, conducted preliminary surveys of residents and of the island and its infrastructure in order to begin the work of resettlement (LDOA 2017). It should be noted that the engagement phase is compartmentalized into this single phase, rather than engagement being continually centered throughout the project. The first piece of this research was conducting a census of island residents, followed by a land use and infrastructure survey of the land (Ibid.). It was also at this time that the office began to reach out to island residents in order to determine the most desired site and general interest in the project. This initial research found 60% of the current residents on the island desired to be resettled, either with the community or on their own, while others were unsure, and 28% did not want to leave the island (Ibid.). In terms of the potential resettlement sites, individuals frequently spoke of the desire to maintain the secluded and rural nature of the island, and though they would miss the island, looked forward to the safety associated with a new location (Ibid.). However, all of these interviews and community meetings were with current island residents. Though the LA-OCD plan does still include the vision to resettle those that have been displaced from the island previously, this is only those that have left the island since August 28, 2012 due to Hurricane Isaac (State of Louisiana 2019b). This does not include all the members of the Tribe who have been displaced due to colonial infrastructure and climate change, and those that left prior to Hurricane Isaac would be forced to compete with non-Indigenous individuals for placement in excess housing plots following the completion of the resettlement (Utacia Krol 2018). Furthermore, even those that left due to or following Hurricane

Isaac were not considered as interview subjects during the engagement phase of the LA-OCD's work, much to the disappointment and frustration of Tribal leaders (Utacia Krol 2018).

Following the "engagement" phase, the LA-OCD began finding a resettlement location. During the research component, community members on the island gave their input as to which of the available locations were preferable, with the vast majority agreeing upon the "Evergreen Site," which sits 40 miles inland from the island and offers 515 acres of secluded farmland (McGraw 2019, State of Louisiana 2019c) (Figure 2.3). The evergreen site sits 9 feet above sea level and is made up of old sugarcane fields and wetlands which will provide access to both fishing and agricultural practices that have been dwindling since the reduction in island size (Schleifstein 2018).

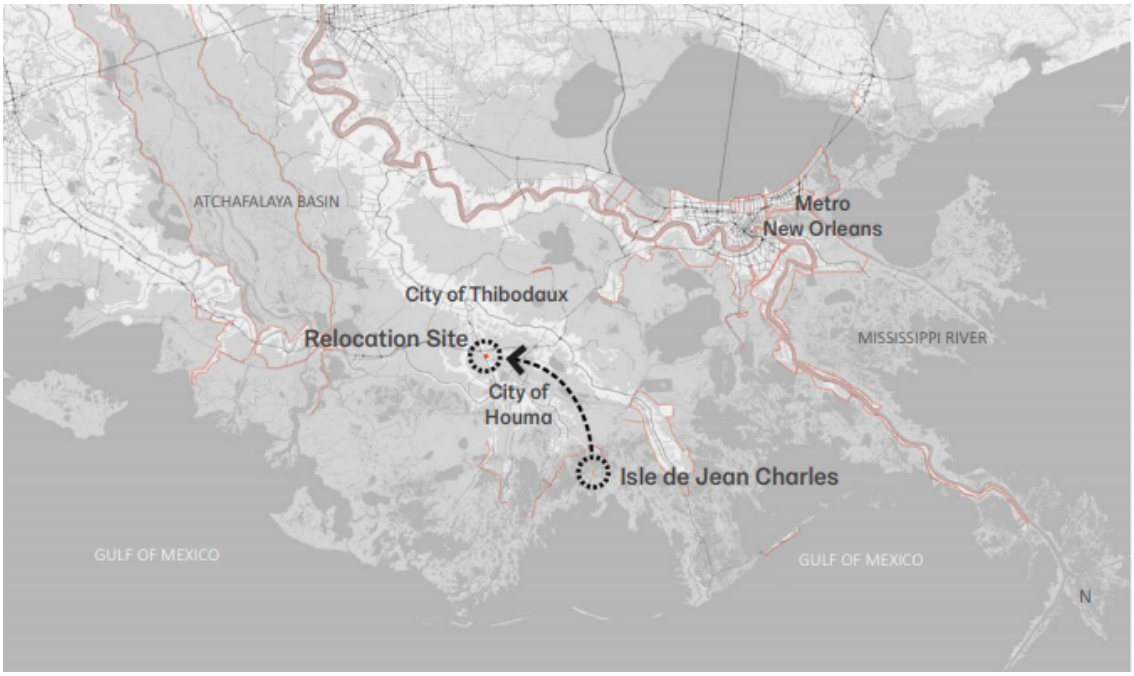

Figure 2.3: Relocation site in relation to Isle de Jean Charles in the Mississippi Delta Context (LDOA 2019).

Though twelve residents of the Isle de Jean Charles were included in the visiting and assessing of the potentialsites, the actual purchasing of the site was done unbeknownst to Tribal

leaders. Because the Indigenous leaders were undermined through this process, the planners were also delayed in informing residents of the Isle de Jean Charles that, if they moved with this resettlement plan, they would need to give up their property on the island (Dermansky 2019b). Retaining rights to the Isle de Jean Charles was one of the primary criteria that Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw leaders stressed in the grant-writing and planning phases (LDOA 2015). Furthermore, the news that this land that is central to the Tribe's identity will be lost, particularly when delivered suddenly and without consulting with Indigenous leaders furthers settler colonial harms to Indigenous Nations. State management then controls and limits Indigenous access to land. This information was the final injustice that sparked Chief Naquin's decision to remove himself from the planning committee through a letter to Stan Gimont, the director of the Office of Block Grant Assistance at the department of Housing and Urban Development (Naquin 2018, Prache 2019). In this he explains that the current plan does not reflect the plan that was in the application for the grant, and thus the funds should be returned. Chief Naquin outlines a number of injustices in the current plan, and sums this with the final injustice surrounding this land issue. He writes:

> I believe the final unjust act is the requiring Island property owners to sign away interest of their homes. The last thing anyone wants to do is sign away the legacy from their ancestors who worked so hard to keep it. Our Tribe feels this is dishonoring of everything our ancestors did to ensure we survived the Indian Removal Act of 1830, Indian Relocation Act of 1956, Jim Crow Laws, and other discriminatory acts. The injustices are contrary to everything our Tribe stands for and will not be tolerated (Naquin 2018).

The government, in seeking to assist in the retreat from danger for this Indigenous community only furthered the rightful distrust of the settler government and did nothing to support the adaptation measures that the Tribe seeks and, as a result, the Tribe has now asked to be removed from the project.

Even more, this issue surrounding land was only one of many grievances that Chief Naquin named. Of course the erasure of Indigenous leadership, moving the Tribe from a co-leader to merely a stakeholder significantly impacted the desire to no longer be a part of the project (Naquin 2018). Chief Naquin goes on to note that beyond the removal of Indigenous leadership, the government-conducted project removed elements from the original plan created by the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe and the Lowlander Center that ensured that culture and life-ways would be maintained despite the resettlement, a critical aspect of this project to the Tribe (Ibid.). Described in a press release,

> Since the HUD award was announced in early 2016, state planners have steadily erased our role as leaders of the resettlement process, excluded our Tribal leadership from decision-making, disregarded Tribal protocols during community engagement activities, proposed we give up our Island home and that the new land be opened to public auction or to house other so-called "climate refugees" from throughout the coast. Moreover, planners have exacerbated tensions within our Tribe. (Isle de Jean Charles Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe and Tribal Council 2019)

These injustices mirror the colonial project of dismissing and erasing Indigenous Nations from the land, and in this case from the resettlement planning. First, this quotation includes a statement on the idea that 'climate refugees' will be housed on the island following the removal of the Tribe. It has since become clear that this will not occur. Still, the potential for this in itself is significant because the belief that the Isle de Jean Charles, after the relocation of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe, will be used to house incoming climate refugees mirrors the Removal Act exactly. This Tribe would be forcibly removed due to forces of settler colonialism in the form of oil extraction, only to be replaced with other non-Indigenous settlers on the land from which the Tribe was removed. Though this notion that it would be home to climate refugees is not a part of the most recent renderings of the resettlement plan, the fact that it at all existed shows a clear lack of understanding or acknowledgement of settler colonialism and its

relevance to this project. Even more, land access was a primary concern for the Indigenous leaders of the Tribe who had been emphasizing the necessity to maintain access to their ancestral island home. Not only was the Indigenous leadership and its voice erased in this regard, but also in this specific case of losing access to ancestral lands, the history of removal becomes extremely relevant and even more a part of the perceptions of this relocation project.

Beyond this potential loss of access to the island, the Tribe has identified the changes in the plan as "assimilationist" (Isle de Jean Charles Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe and Tribal Council 2019), no longer respecting the need to revitalize distinct ways of life, which is reminiscent of historical policies and planning that moved Indigenous Nations with this same disregard for Indigenous lifeways and attachment to land. As Ojibwe scholar Michael Witgen explains, "settler colonialism... seeks an end or completion of the colonial project via the elimination of the Indigenous population and its replacement by a settler population" (Witgen 2019, 393). In decentering Indigenous practices and lifeways, the planning committee contributes to this elimination, operating as if settler colonialism does not exist and eliminating the Indigenous culture that was once a part of this plan. This was done both in ignoring the protocol that is specific to the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe, by not centering cultural revitalization, by considering giving away the land upon resettling the community, and of course by removing Indigenous leadership in the project. The planning committee erased the Indigenous population in claiming that the island was not in fact the land of an Indigenous community but only land on which some members of an Indigenous Tribe happen to live. The planners' seeming indifference in the pursuit of a non-Indigenous specific resettlement plan is inherently settler colonial. The settler government claimed the project as its own, diminishing Tribal leadership and thus taking away the agency of this community to decide its own future. The Tribe writes,

> We are not merely 'stakeholders' engaged in a project. We are rights-holders committed to future generations of our family, our knowledge, our ways of life, and our Island people. Our Tribe's cultural survival depends on it (Isle de Jean Charles Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe and Tribal Council 2019).

In not acknowledging this the Office of Community Development is putting at risk the cultural survival of this Tribe. Quotations in the appendix of the Engagement Report completed by the Office of Community Development sum up the harm done to the community from the process. In particular, an unnamed Tribal member is quoted stating, "I believe you accomplished the same as Christopher Columbus. You succeeded in taking the Native American culture out of a project" (LDOA 2017, B-7). Others wrote "I believe the process will/has transformed from a Tribally driven process to an individual process. Thus jeopardizing our federal recognition availability" (Ibid., B-7) along with "You have taken our dream, and the dream of our Chief, and Great Grandpa and smashed them" (Ibid, B-8). These statements all reflect the Tribe's experience in the resettlement project as deeply connected to the history and present of settler colonialism in their lives. Since the letter written by Chief Naquin, the Tribe has asked to be removed from the project as it does not reflect their initial understandings of what this resettlement would entail and, in fact, through this process has caused great harm to the community. Chief Naquin has stated that he will continue to seek funding for a Tribal resettlement, however this will not be through the current HUD-funded plan, and in fact firmly requires that the Tribe's name is taken out of the plan (DeSantis 2019). The Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe is now at a loss, as it is extremely difficult to acquire new funding for a truly Tribally-led, decolonization- or resurgent-centered resettlement until the name is no longer associated with this funding.

The case of the Isle de Jean Charles band of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe exemplifies what Nathan Jessee has deemed "ahistorical adaptation." In this case the Office of Community Development attempted to pursue adaptation measures that did not address or even

acknowledge the full impacts of settler colonialism. This ahistorical adaptation has the ability to cause great harm while also risking the efficacy of entire projects, which in turn leaves Indigenous nations to continue to be exposed to environmental threats to their lives and livelihoods.

The Isle de Jean Charles is not alone in experiencing or having the potential to experience these resettlement projects that require working with the settler government. The most common example of this is in coastal Alaska where as many as 40 Native villages are in significant danger or imminent threat due to climate change vulnerability caused by settler colonialism (USGAO 2009, See Krupnik & Jolly 2002, Marino 2012, Marino & Lazrus 2015). Across North America and the world Indigenous Nations are on the frontlines of climate impacts because of the histories of oppression and settler colonialism. It is extremely important, thus, to understand the relevance of this to climate impacts and the ways in which it is at risk of being furthered by adaptation pursuits.

Chapter 3: Decolonization, Resurgence, and Land

The context of settler colonialism's continued and deeply entrenched existence leaves the question of how to move forward and facilitate a resettlement project that truly addresses that which made a community vulnerable. Without considering settler colonialism as the source of climate vulnerability, the managed retreat of this Tribe will be an "ahistorical adaptation" measure, a band-aid cure that leaves unaddressed the source of the problem, settler colonialism. In the context of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe, the project was unsuccessful as it failed to fundamentally challenge settler colonialism as the cause of vulnerability. Thus, it is critical to examine the ways in which scholars and communities are considering resistance to settler colonialism, that is, both resurgence and decolonization. The scholars represented in this discussion only represent a small number of Indigenous individuals and communities, and there are many ways in which the following perspectives may take shape in different ways as other individuals and Nations consider their own unique perspective on these ideas. Still, I will outline the ways in which scholars that are foundational to the discussion of decolonization and resurgence are considering these ideas which will provide context in considering how decolonization and resurgence can then be brought into conversation with climate adaptation and the work that the Office of Community Development of Louisiana attempted. I will particularly emphasize the role that land has played in this decolonization and resurgence discourse as land is central to settler colonialism, managed retreat, and an anti-colonial future.

Chapter 3.1: Defining Decolonization

Scholars write of what decolonization must do (Sium et al. 2012), and even what decolonization is not (Tuck & Yang 2012). Unfortunately, however, there is not a universally agreed upon definition of what decolonization *is*. It is described best in this way: "Definitions of decolonization and who is Indigenous, despite their centrality to this project, remain open and, to a certain extent, remain unknown" (Sium et al. 2012, 2). Yet, the fluidity and at times contradictory nature of these definitions are resurgent in themselves, in that western societies have always been permitted to be contradictory and complex, whereas Indigeneity, in the settler-colonial view, must always be singular and easily identified (Fanon 1963, Nakata 2012). As we consider Indigeneity as a complex term, decolonization exhibits these same qualities which I aim to respect throughout the discussion of it.

As its name makes clear, decolonization is anticolonial (Alfred 2009a, Karabinos 2019, Sium et al. 2012). This type of work takes place both at macro- and micro-scales. Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) writes, "Decolonization is a process which engages with imperialism and colonialism at multiple levels" (20). Thus, decolonization as a pursuit can be unique to an individual and to each Indigenous Nation, just as colonialism is experienced in these same individual and nation-based levels. Still there are major structural changes that can and must occur. At times, these seem to be the only way to counteract the forces of colonialism, particularly those flexible, shapeshifting colonial powers that morph to fit into each generation and time period (Alfred & Corntassel 2005). Power must be reconsidered, perceptions and hierarchies of knowledge must be altered, and land must be returned to name a few of the many challenges ahead of us. However, just as colonialism is a structure, experienced at a very personal, psychological and psychophysiological level (Alfred 2009a, Alfred & Corntassel 2005)

so, too, can decolonization be understood in these terms. Kahnawake Mohawk scholar Gerald Taiaiake Alfred speaks to the nature of colonialism on these individual levels that then reach the wider communities and nations. This also serves to ground these discussions in the real lives of individuals, an important reminder to white settlers like myself in any considerations of colonialism or decolonization:

> "While all of this is certainly colonialism, Indigenous people don't experience colonialism as theories or as analytic categories. Colonialism is made real in the lives of First Nations people when these things go from being a set of imposed externalities to becoming causes of harm to them as people and as communities, limitations placed on their freedom, and disturbing mentalities, psychologies, and behaviors" (Alfred 2009a, 43).

Decolonization deserves this same grounding; it is not a theoretical framework but rather a true pursuit and future that can lift and empower the lives of human beings that have been violently impacted by settler colonialism. At the same time, decolonization cannot only be understood on this individual scale. Decolonization must unsettle all people and all places (Alfred 2009b, Fanon 1963, Sium et al. 2012). It requires both personal change and community-wide change that decenters whiteness and all that is settler-colonial and calls upon those who can "beat the beast [of settler colonialism] into submission and teach it to behave" (Alfred 2009b, 37). This requires relentless resistance and resilience, as colonialism, too, is a relentless force.

Early scholars on decolonization characterize it as a "disorganiz[ing]" of society (Fanon 1963, 4), and often in association with violent rebellion.[4] Contemporary scholars, however, do

[4] Though these scholars are not a part of my discussion of decolonization, there are two scholars in particular that are considered influential to the decolonization field and work today, these are Franz Fanon and Edward Said. First, Franz Fanon, a philosopher among other professional pursuits, is an early and leading author in the movements towards decolonization. The way in which Fanon viewed decolonization was in terms of violence, as colonialism is enabled and reproduced through violence and thus must be combated with such. He believed it required "the last shall be first" (1963, 37). In other words, the colonized peoples must be centered and the colonizers must then be decentered, a task that can only be achieved, in his view, through violence. This is reminiscent of other scholars of relatively similar time period, most notably Edward Said writing in the 20th century as well, who describes the need

not necessarily deem violence as central to the pursuit. There is an acknowledgment of this, as Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith remarks, "decolonizing can be extremely 'messy,' often leading to extreme violence" (2013, 4). However, violence does not characterize the field as much as it once did. Still, authors agree that decolonization requires a complete reorganization of society (Simpson 2017), a point with which Fanon agrees, even if it is not through violence that this is achieved. Contemporary writers seeking to define the subject, write of decolonization as that which must directly oppose what colonialism is- defining it through its opposite.

Scholars Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012) famously wrote "Decolonization is not a metaphor" which examined that which is and is not decolonization. Tuck and Yang define decolonization in ways that are directly opposite of colonialism: decolonization is that which brings the "repatriation of Indigenous land and life" (2012, 1). Because this is what has been and is lost through colonialism, decolonization seeks to bring this back to Indigenous nations and individuals. Others view this in the same way, decolonization as that which directly opposes the colonial forces and impacts (Simpson 2017, Wildcat et al. 2014). Scholars differ in how they view that which opposes the colonial project, as they emphasize different elements including knowledge production, land, and language, to name a few (Alfred & Corntassel 2005, Simpson 2017, Tuck & Yang 2012, Wildcat et al. 2014). Because "the dispossession of land is at the heart of the domination [of Indigenous peoples]" (Burow et al. 2018, 58), decolonization, in the context of this research, will similarly place land at the heart of addressing this domination.

"to take up arms" and imagine a "new national community" (1994, 241), a vision that is similarly underscored with violence. Though this violence is the way in which Fanon and others consider how decolonization may come about, through this one can understand the goal of this violence, that is, the disorganization or reorganization of society that recenters the colonized peoples. It is this disorganization through violence that characterizes these early views on decolonization.

Chapter 3.2: Decolonization and Land

Land is relevant to an anti-colonial future, as it is foundational to the colonial past and present: “whatever settlers may say- and they generally have a lot to say- the primary motive [of settler colonialism] is not race (or religion, ethnicity, grade of civilization, etc) but access to territory. Territoriality is settler colonialism’s specific, irreducible element” (Wolfe 2006, 388). Thus, land materially and symbolically is a dominant, if not the most dominant characteristic of settler colonialism and therefore is a prominent element in decolonization and resurgence as well.

Land is considered a critical component of Indigenous identity and communities, it is not only relevant due to the dispossession inflicted upon Indigenous Nations through settler colonialism. Many scholars write of a close relationship to the land that is in stark contrast to the settler relationship to the land (Anaya 2005, Berkes 2012, Coulthard 2010, Gadgil et al. 1991, Simpson 2017, Trosper 1995, Ritskes 2014, Wildcat et al. 2014). This relationship is described as “kincentric ecology” by Raramuri scholar Enrique Salmon (2000), characterized by a mutual relationship with the natural world in which the surroundings are regarded as kin. The mutual nature of the relationship describes the idea that humans are not separated from the land and ecosystems around them, but rather, are a critical extension of it.

This relationship to land is then relevant to decolonization because it is foundational to Indigenous culture and identity, and that which is threatened by settler colonialism. Though there are many unique and differing ideas on decolonization, I will understand it as the returning of and to Indigenous land, which then allows other anticolonial pursuits to follow.

Dr. Gerald Taiaiake Alfred, for example, writes a policy recommendation that is rooted in the return to land. First he describes the ongoing harms of colonialism, particularly in terms of

dependency on the settler-colonial state. He then describes a policy solution that will address this forced dependency, which he argues is the only direction one can take to overcome colonialism's far reaching and deeply rooted impacts:

> "The solution to the problem of First Nations' psychological and financial dependency on the state caused by colonialism is the *return of land* to First Nations and the re-establishment of First Nations presences on and connections to their homelands [emphasis added]" (2009a, 54).

Decolonization, in this case described as the "solution to the problem," is considered the return of land to Indigenous Nations. Alfred follows this by explaining that regaining access to land is followed by the realization of other anticolonial pursuits as well. For example, sacred histories are often tied to ancestral lands, and thus in the returning of land the renewal of knowledge of sacred histories may return as well. He does not disregard these other elements, such as language or sacred history, he merely believes these will inherently follow once land access is acquired.

Cherokee Scholar Robert Thomas (1982) similarly refers to these elements including common language, religion, sacred history and place all of which make up a "Peoplehood," specifically, an Indigenous Nation. Thomas created a model to understand the role of these interconnected features of a community, particularly for Indigenous communities, one that has since been taken and expanded upon as well (Corntassel 2012, Holm, Pearson & Chavi 2002). This model is relevant to the case of decolonization, particularly in reference to community resettlement, as it outlines what can be lost if one feature is missing from the community. Corntassel refers to the implications of a loss of one element:

> If one thinks of peoplehood as the interlocking features of language, homeland, ceremonial cycles, and sacred living histories, a disruption of any one of these practices threatens all aspects of everyday life. The complex, spiritual, political and social relationships that hold people [must be] continuously renewed (2012, 89).

In other words, the loss of one of these ingredients, such as land, risks the loss of the entire peoplehood. Thomas shares this view as he identifies these features as special characteristics that, when lost, damages the people's ability to avoid assimilation into the majority group (Thomas 1982). Though land, described by Thomas as "place", is not alone in the community elements that are central to a thriving resilient community, it is clear that the loss of it jeopardizes the entirety of the community. The model connects to decolonization because settler colonialism, through land robbing and Indigenous erasure, threatens these elements of peoplehood, and given that decolonization is the opposite of settler colonialism, it can be considered a revival of the elements. Thus the peoplehood model, too, indicates land as a central component to decolonization, though in this case it sits beside other important features of community. It differs from other perspectives on land and decolonization, though only in that it centers additional elements alongside land. Ultimately, land is still vital to decolonization in the peoplehood model as well.

Unangax scholar Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang (2012) similarly address these ideas, though centering land more explicitly than Thomas. They understand decolonization in relation to colonization. Colonialism, specifically settler colonialism, is defined by these scholars by its greatest concern, that is, land. Thus decolonization as well must be defined on these same terms. Similar to Alfred, Tuck & Yang explicitly describe the repatriation of land as the single way to address settler colonialism. In discussing land, these scholars not only refer to the material relevance of land to the settler colonial project. Rather, Tuck & Yang incorporate the cultural relevance of land just as they address the physical land repatriation. They explain this as they say,

> "Though the details are not fixed or agreed upon, in our view, decolonization in the settler colonial context must involve the repatriation of land simultaneous to the recognition of how land and relations to land have always already been differently understood and enacted" (2012, 7).

The returning of land is absolutely central to decolonization in this case, similar to both Simpson and Alfred, yet taken further by requiring recognition of unique understandings of land and relations to land held by Indigenous communities. The repatriation of Indigenous land and land relationships is the aim and methods of decolonization. Ultimately, these scholars, among others,[5] are closely aligned in that repatriation of land is foundational, central, or simply is decolonization. It is through these scholars that I will understand decolonization and bring it into conversation with climate adaptation.

Chapter 3.3: Defining Resurgence

Resurgence is another term that recently came into use, at first predominantly by Indigenous Nations that fall within the settler-colonial state of Canada, and since has spread throughout other North American Indigenous communities as well (Elliot 2018). Similar to decolonization, Indigenous scholars often have their own perceptions and ideas surrounding the term. The common strain amongst these is the goal of reinvigorating Indigenous people and communities. It rejects colonial realities and centers Indigenous beliefs, knowledge systems, and agency (Corntassel 2012, Corntassel & Scow 2017, Elliot 2018, Simpson 2016, Simpson 2017). I outline prominent definitions of resurgence in order to provide an understanding of it for further discussion around land and climate adaptation for Indigenous communities. These definitions are by no means comprehensive, as even within individual scholars' work one can

[5] These works are not alone in this idea, many others share this same sentiment including but not limited to Matsanuga 2016, Elliot 2018, Alfred 2005, Sium et al. 2012, Simpson 2014.

find a variety of perspectives and commentary on resurgence. I then highlight some of the differences between decolonization and resurgence, before connecting resurgence to land as well.

Michael Elliot (2018) discusses three dimensions of resurgence, influenced by significant Indigenous scholars, from whom I too gained my understanding of the term. Elliot works within the Canadian settler system, though provides the following framework with which to understand and pursue resurgence that can apply to other settler colonial contexts as well. The framework is made up of three contentions. First, colonialism is an active structure that seeks to eliminate Indigenous people, a view first disseminated by scholar Patrick Wolfe. Second, the current means of addressing colonialism still foster these underlying structures, and finally, third, Indigenous peoples must "turn away from this hostile environment wherever possible and channel energies into independent programmes of cultural, social, spiritual and physical rejuvenation" (Elliot 2018, 61). Using these three contentions, Elliot outlines a view on resurgence that rejects colonialism entirely, including, importantly, the current pursuits of resurgence that engage with colonial society. Resurgence in this view emphasizes Indigenous independence and disengagement from settler-colonial powers.

Yellowknives Dene Scholar Glen Coulthard, in conversation with Simpson and Alfred, writes: "Resurgence… draws critically on the past with an eye to radically transform the colonial power relations that have come to dominate our present" (2014, 157). Based on the way in which Coulthard refers to the present as associated with colonial power relations, one can infer the past to which he is referring is the pre-colonial past. Given this, his definition aligns with the "turning away" from settler-colonial systems as discussed by Elliot and goes further to call for radical transformation. In Coulthard's view, this may facilitate the flourishing of Indigenous Nations

informed by a time prior to settler colonialism's spread. Simpson and Alfred align with these ideas in the application of traditional Indigenous perspectives and frameworks utilized to create a just society for the Indigenous Nations of today (Alfred 2009a, Coulthard 2014, Simpson 2011). Resurgence is based in this relationship to the past, as it does not call for a new type of action but rather draws on "modalities of being and acting that are already deeply rooted in Indigenous communities and social histories" (Elliot 2018, 6). Simpson, too, maintains that "Resurgence is our original instruction" (2011, 66). She argues resurgence has always existed in Indigenous practices and traditions and it is a responsibility to the colonial present to evoke Indigenous resurgence (Ibid.). Considering these perspectives in conversation with one another, resurgence involves practices that are rooted in Indigenous histories and culture. It is in practicing rituals, language, traditional food preparation, and discovering what these acts can be on the community and individual scale. It is inherently a turning away from the settler state and instead a turning inward into community and into oneself. Resurgence seems to be most used in conjunction with revitalization of Indigenous communities and people, which is inherently anticolonial as the colonial project seeks to erase that which is being revitalized.

Though decolonization and resurgence share similar aims, that is, cultivating an anticolonial future, I find there are a number of ways to distinguish these terms. First, the idea that resurgence is ongoing, a part of the past, present and future of Indigenous ways of life (Simpson 2011, Elliot 2018), is unique to resurgence. "Authentically decolonized futures will inevitably reflect ongoing practices of resurgence" (Elliot 2018, 69), meaning resurgence will continue to exist throughout a decolonized future. This is not only a temporal difference but also emphasizes the idea that decolonization is a way in which to characterize a future with structures

that oppose the current colonial structures of our reality, as opposed to resurgence which refers to actions that occur now (and potentially forever) that support this decolonization.

A final and critical difference is to whom these terms refer. Though both unequivocally require the centering of Indigenous nations and individuals, resurgence is a term that is solely in reference to Indigenous people and Indigenous experience. Indigenous people are the sole people who may experience and practice resurgence. Resurgence focuses inward, whereas decolonization does both: "Settler colonialism and its decolonization implicates and unsettles everyone" (Tuck & Yang 2012, 7). In this way, resurgence is a practice reserved for Indigenous communities to be experienced only by Indigenous individuals. Yet these practices inherently inform and cultivate decolonization which "unsettles everyone." Together resurgence can ensure the type of decolonization that decenters the settler-colonial and is shaped by Indigenous Nations.

Despite these differences, however, resurgence, too, centers Indigenous land and land relationships. Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson frequently speaks to the centrality of land to the anticolonial project (2011, 2017). It is her belief that land must be a part of resurgence and decolonization because "Indigenous peoples require a land base" (2017, 50). Simpson continually discusses resurgence in relation to cultivating a place-based existence for Indigenous individuals and communities. She describes Indigenous freedom in relation to having this connection and access to land: "Our responsibility as Indigenous Peoples is to...give birth to an Indigenous present that generates Indigenous freedom, and this means creating generations that are in love with, attached to, and committed to their land" (2017, 25). Simpson's anticolonial present and future, understood here as Indigenous freedom, is characterized by the renewed attachment to ancestral homelands. In which she discusses and defines resurgence she

emphasizes a place-based existence. She both explicitly explains the need for renewed attachment to land, and more subtly emphasizes this through continuously including the term "place-based" in her definitions and discussions of resurgence (2017). Thus in her defining and outlining of resurgence she is exposing her view that land is certainly a significant piece to resurgence and cultivating these strong relationships to it is Indigenous freedom. This renewal can and must manifest differently depending on the community and individual, but is centered on place-based practices.

Jeff Corntassel describes this: "Whether through ceremony or through other ways that Indigenous peoples (re)connect to the natural world, processes of resurgence are often contentious and reflect the spiritual, cultural, economic, social and political scope of the struggle" (Corntassel 2012). Thus renewing this attachment to land, Corntassel describes alongside Simpson, is inherently resurgent and can be achieved through ceremony, through meals, or any other way that "peoples (re)connect to the natural world" (Ibid.). In this way land serves to facilitate cultural resurgence.

Similarly, climate adaptation too involves the land, whether through manipulating shores through beach renourishment and seawalls or through resettlement to new lands. It is thus crucial to not only understand decolonization and resurgence but to draw the relationship that these concepts have to land in order to begin to consider the ways in which adaptation can address the inequities that gave rise to climate vulnerability.

Chapter 4: A Proposed Future for Climate Adaptation and Community Resettlement

Given this understanding of decolonization and resurgence, particularly as they are tied to land, it is possible to consider these ideas in relation to community resettlement. At first glance, because land is central to decolonization and resurgence and land is inherently lost in resettlement, decolonization and resettlement may appear antithetical to one another. However, I aim to expose the ways in which these projects can and must be closely linked and support one another. I will do so by outlining three key components to consider as future protocols for resettlement specifically for settler government officials that are a part of community resettlement projects. Importantly, I do not aim to misuse the language of decolonization, as decolonization is a radical reorganization of land and land relationships that goes far beyond climate adaptation. Rather than metaphorizing decolonization as Tuck and Yang (2012) warn us of, I aim to see the ways in which two land-based projects, decolonization and climate adaptation, can and must overlap.

In the case of the Isle de Jean Charles resettlement process, following the negative experiences with the Louisiana State officials, the Tribe created "Preserving our Place: A Community Field Guide to Engagement, Resilience, and Resettlement: Community regeneration in the face of environmental and developmental pressures." The guide outlined strategies to uphold community values and implement accountability strategies throughout a process that is often in collaboration with outside partners. This document was made by and for community members that are working with outside partners in order to supply communities with the tools to ensure their voices are heard and their vision of resettlement is maintained. Because this field guide was produced predominantly for communities, I will turn to the outside partners,

specifically state and federal agencies, and offer similar recommendations for conduct in community resettlement projects. I offer three main ideas for consideration: 1) Recognition and Understanding of the History and Present of the Community; 2) Emphasizing Process: Transformative Participatory Evaluation; and finally 3) Facilitating Land and Livelihood Access. These three ideas offer a starting point for community partners, particularly federal officials, to consider prior to entering into relationships with communities seeking resettlement.

Chapter 4.1: Current Political Structures for Resettlement

My recommendations acquire urgency given the number of communities on the verge of climate disaster and the current lack of protocol or structures for community resettlement. Current policy does not have a standard funding source or mechanism through which communities can easily acquire community-wide resettlement support. The United States' Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) has a single relocation program that can be enacted following a disaster if local officials decide to request funding to buy the flooded properties from owners who are interested in moving away from the hazardous flood zone (Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration 2017). If both the state and FEMA approve these properties and this funding allocation, then the federal and the state government purchase the house at pre-disaster market value and the residents begin the process of relocating (Ibid). The policy also stipulates that the house must then be demolished and the land be kept open in perpetuity (Federal Insurance and Mitigation Administration 2017, Marino 2018). Though this buyout program works to mitigate risk of future storms, it has a number of flaws including that it takes on average five years after the initial flooding to complete each project (Weber & Moore 2019). The program also only applies to individual families, thus in the case of the Biloxi-

Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe this would be unacceptable due to the desire to bring community members back together rather than scatter them due to environmental risk. Anthropologist Elizabeth Marino argues that the three underpinnings of this policy are market value (capitalism), property, and individualism and "it is not circumstantial that these principles are also fundamental to the construction of whiteness and a Euro-centric worldview" (Marino 2018, 12). These policies then perpetuate this hierarchy or dominance of the white Euro-centric worldview.

A number of scholars have outlined the need for a standardized community hazard mitigation fund, perhaps similar to the FEMA relocation funding though centered on the whole community rather than the individual (Mearns and Norton 2010, O'Brien et al. 2006, Shearer 2012). However, if this were to be actualized there is also a clear need for a standard of practice by the outside government collaborators when funding is granted. It is here that my recommendations have relevance, as there is a unique opportunity for a new protocol to be set for government officials that are entering into this work.

The need for socially just and informed policy making is seen clearly in the case of the Isle de Jean Charles and the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe. For this community, the National Disaster Resilience Competition offered a way in which to receive a significant portion of the funding that was needed. Given that resettlement had been a part of the Tribe's plans for twenty years, it was a way in which to make significant progress towards this goal. In conducting the resettlement planning process poorly, as seen in the rewriting of the plan following grant acquisition and potential loss of land access following resettlement, the state of Louisiana not only left the community at risk but in fact further harmed the community first through conducting a process that perpetuated settler colonial goals such as erasure and anticipated removal from ancestral lands. Even more, because the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe's name

is still associated with the NDRC funding, leaders are restricted in their ability to acquire new grants that would allow the Tribe to carry out a resettlement project that respects their leadership, process, and envisioned outcome (Jessee 2019, Isle de Jean Charles Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe and Tribal Council 2019, Naquin et al. 2019).

This experience working with the settler government in order to achieve community resettlement aims will likely not be unique to the Isle de Jean Charles case. It is clear that securing funding is no small task, as the Tribe had been attempting to do so for almost two decades. Thus, despite perhaps trepidations that community members felt about working with the settler government towards which there is little trust, there was a need that this funding met that other sources had not (Naquin et al. 2019). Feelings of distrust, discontent, or even disdain toward the settler government from Indigenous Nations that have been and are so harmed by it are likely to be common, while the settler government as a source for funding is likely to be common as well (Davenport & Robertson 2016, Stein 2018). As local reporter Michael Stein describes:

> Native people were forced to flee deep into the southern marshes of Louisiana to avoid the colonial persecution, into what was then designated as 'uninhabitable swampland.' Now they are being asked to ignore decades of learned apprehension and trust the U.S. government to move them once again (2018).

This exposes the need for a clear standard or baseline from which all government officials begin the work of collaborative community resettlement as to be mindful of this apprehension, limit harm and address the inequities perpetuated by settler governments that led to the need for adaptation measures in the first place. I offer the following recommendations for change.

Chapter 4.2: Recognition and Understanding of the History and Present of the Community

Through the case study of the Isle de Jean Charles resettlement, the relevance of history, of settler colonialism and forced displacement, is abundantly clear. The current predicament might more aptly be called settler colonialism-induced resettlement rather than climate-induced. Because the distribution of climate vulnerability is founded upon inequities on which our social system is built, and these impacts will only exacerbate these, there is certainly a need to confront social injustice in climate adaptation and resilience measures (Jessee 2019, UNDP 2007). However, in order to do so, there must be an understanding of the historical and present injustices both structurally and those that are community-specific. Thus this first recommendation advocates for community partners to have a strong understanding of the histories and present of the community seeking resettlement prior to entering into relations and collaborations, complementing the work of scholar Nathan Jessee (2019) who writes on the dangers of ahistorical adaptation. Specifically, in the case of supporting the resettlement of an Indigenous Nation that has been impacted by the harms of settler colonialism, I argue that a deep understanding of settler colonialism and its relevance to climate vulnerability must be required as a part of agency protocol.

Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith (1999) writes of the importance of history as a way not only to understand the present but to *resist* the settler colonial present. In considering resistance to colonialism she writes, "This...requires a theory or approach which helps us to engage with, understand and then act upon history" (35). Still she critiques history here as "his-story" (1999, 29), that is, only representing western settler white male views. Thus in the context of this recommendation, understanding history does not mean "his-story" but rather utilizing the multitude of Indigenous scholars and critical histories to not only understand the project work,

but further support the work done by Indigenous communities to reclaim "history [as] a critical and essential aspect of decolonization" (Tuhiwai Smith 1999, 29-30). If a project truly seeks to confront settler colonialism, this distinction of the type of history that must be centered is particularly essential.

The Isle de Jean Charles resettlement offers an example of the relevance of the ongoing structure of settler colonialism and the necessity of recognizing and understanding this structure and its impact on this Tribe prior to intervention. The island became home to the now Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe due to settler colonialism forcibly and violently removing members of these Tribes from ancestral lands (See Chapter 1). As settler colonialism continues beyond this removal, so too does the Indigenous community's potential to be vulnerable to harsh climate change impacts. In a broadly analogous context, Scholar Siri Veland and her associates write that,

> The processes of nation building for the Australian nation-states continue to create an ongoing disaster for Indigenous Nations. Colonisation and contemporary manifestations of continuing colonisation (deep colonisation) simultaneously present an ongoing disaster that suppresses Indigenous forms of governance, and persists as a risk to the remaining social structures through policies of normalisation. (Veland et al. 2013, 323).

Settler colonialism is therefore the "ongoing disaster" rather than climate change (Ibid., Shepard 2019), exposing the need for knowledge of the larger disaster rather than the symptoms of it. In the LA-OCD work on the resettlement of the Isle de Jean Charles residents, it is clear that there was a lack of understanding of the history of settler colonialism as a factor bringing about the need to resettle. Not only was there no mention of this in the reports published by the LA-OCD (LDOA 2017, LDOA 2019a), but also decisions made by the LA-OCD reflected this lack of understanding. First, the rewriting and ownership-taking of the process rather than continuing Indigenous leadership throughout the project indicates a complete lack of understanding of

Indigenous Nations' relationships with the settler government. Upon hearing of Tribal affiliations on the island, communications with co-leaders rather than erasing their role would have been a response that indicated respect and an understanding of the harm of erasure. Instead, the choice made here indicates little knowledge of the erasure of Indigenous Nations and erasure of Indigenous voices in the settler context of the United States, and a lack of knowledge of the relevance of this history to the present. In this way, this also illuminates the need for an understanding of the underlying theories and underpinnings of settler colonialism such as the concept that it is an ongoing structure rather than a historical event (Wolfe 2006).

The experience of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe is unfortunately not unique in this way. Scholars writing on the importance of a historical focus in climate adaptation research write, "too often research tends to view the functioning of institutions in isolation of their deeper historical-social context" and thus create policies or strategies that are irrelevant or less effective to the community (Adamson et al. 2018, 200). In the case of climate adaptation, ineffective or failed projects may leave communities at risk of death and forced displacement. As "vulnerability to natural hazards, disasters, and displacement cannot be disentangled from harmful historical social and political-economic processes" (Jessee 2019, 155-156), individuals must understand these entanglements prior to supporting communities. This ties closely to Wisner et al.'s perception of vulnerability, as they write "...Vulnerability is rooted in social processes and underlying causes which may ultimately be quite remote from the disaster event itself" (Ibid., 50). They write that vulnerability must no longer be separated from these social processes that gave rise to it. Though these scholars do not name it, the social processes here refers to settler colonialism (Shepard 2019). It is settler colonialism that is the underlying cause of these disasters and not only must it not be separated from understandings of vulnerability, but

it must be central to them. Thus, in the case of projects like community resettlement, a knowledge of the source of vulnerability is unquestionably paramount which here inherently entails an understanding of the history and present of settler colonialism.

The relevance of history in community-oriented projects is not an entirely unique idea, in that members of the community development field have been considering the importance of local context and knowledge as a part of their processes as well. For example, in the case of a failed conservation effort in Papua New Guinea, scholar Cristina Balboa reflects on the project members valuing the global and technical capacity of their conservation organization rather than local capacities, ultimately "reduc[ing] their ability to create context-specific interventions" (2014, 274). This highlights the need for greater bridging capacities, not only through creating relationships but also through researchers and agency officials themselves understanding the history and present context of a community (Ibid.). The importance of this background work is also apparent in international rural development work. Norman Uphoff argues that a project will be unsustainable or ineffective entirely if leaders enter into the work under the assumption that they already know how to choose and conduct a project (Uphoff et al. 1998). The process of learning prior to, during, and after managing and facilitating a project is crucial, and though these scholars emphasize the importance of community-specific knowledge, I argue that because of the centrality of systemic inequity to vulnerability-related projects, a knowledge of these larger systems must be included in this learning process. It is thus expanded beyond only knowledge of the local context but also knowledge of systems such as settler colonialism that impact and help create local contexts. However, even with an understanding of local context there must be room left for continued learning and humility upon beginning and conducting the process; academic research may detail the structural and historical pieces but much of the community-specific

context can only be exposed through lived relationships. Still, the academic research component must be critical to preliminary work done by government agencies or community partners so that the burden of proof of the impacts of settler colonialism not solely be placed on the community, but rather, be researched and understood by the agency.

Furthermore, resurgence is closely tied to relationships with the past (Coulthard 2014, Elliot 2018, Simpson 2011). A learning process that seeks to understand local histories can then draw "critically on the past with an eye to radically transform the colonial power relations that have come to dominate our present" (Coulthard 2014, 157). In this way, engaging with history not only entails the understanding of settler colonialism that produces vulnerability but also the ways in which resilience and resurgence have been cultivated by Indigenous Nations. Such engagement is not only about "regaining that which was lost and returning to an original and pure point in history, but instead understanding the processes that have defined our current spatialities in order to sustain vibrant Native futures" (Goeman 2013, 3). Resurgence has been always a part of Indigenous existence (Simpson 2017), as it is tied to Indigenous resilience and the revitalization of Indigenous culture. Thus an understanding of this history and present of an Indigenous Nations' modes of resurgence can only empower the further revitalization of Indigenous culture and resilience which come into contention with settler colonialism and thus further support communities' climate resilience efforts. This understanding of history then ensures the agency's understanding of the source of vulnerability as settler colonialism, while also supporting resurgent efforts to begin to resist this source.

Chapter 4.3: Emphasizing Process: Transformative Participatory Evaluation

Even after understanding an ongoing system of settler colonialism, there is still a need to remain reflexive and deliberate throughout the process of community-resettlement. It is clear that the Isle de Jean Charles resettlement at least in part can be considered a failure due to the poorly conducted process. It was the treatment of leaders and all members of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe while the planning was occurring that encouraged Chief Albert Naquin to remove the Tribe as an official partner. This is not unlike other processes experienced by communities who are seeking resettlement or support due to displacement. It has been shown very recently, for example, that following typhoon disaster displacement in Taiwan "state intervention in recovery entrenched past patterns of prejudice, injustice and disadvantage through contemporary political dynamics" (Price 2019, 200). Thus, there is a clear need to consider how state agencies relate to communities seeking support. In other words, we must attend to the process as much as to the outcome of the completed project. As Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson writes, the process "not only frames the outcome, it is the transformation." (2017, 19). In the Isle de Jean Charles context, that the Field guide exists in itself implies the risk of harm inherent in a poorly conducted process. Further statements in the guide refer to this importance as well:

> The overarching vision of the resettlement planning *process* is to maintain, rejuvenate, and strengthen the Tribe's collective identity, social stability, and contribution to the region by creating a model teaching-learning community" (Naquin et al. 2019, 37, Italics added).

The process thus has both the ability to do great harm and to achieve significant good for the community, all of which is dependent on how it is managed and conducted. As I argue below, the process taken by the Office of Community Development fits into the *practical* participatory evaluation model while an alternative, more justice-seeking process would use a *transformative*

participatory evaluation model. This framework allows the effective components of the process taken by the government officials to be highlighted alongside the shortcomings, while also offering a clear improved alternative.

Participatory evaluation generally implies that in the process of conducting research or projects, communities would be asked to participate or collaborate if they are impacted or have a stake in the research being done (Cousins & Earl 1992, Cousins & Whitmore 1998). Participatory evaluation has been named as an effective framework to design projects that aim to support the work done to address climate impacts as experienced by Indigenous Nations (Kalafitis et al. 2019). These processes facilitate resilience and the sustainability of such projects, as "scholars and policymakers have noted the ability to better adapt or survive dangerous climate change is often strengthened through participatory measures and processes that build upon existing community efforts" (Shearer 2012, 75, Mearns & Norton 2010). Thus the value of participatory measures have been continuously reiterated by both scholars in climate adaptation and in development contexts. Distinguishing practical from transformative evaluation takes this recommendation further. Practical participatory evaluation is centered solely on problem solving or addressing the assigned issue as the primary and perhaps only aim of the work. It falls within participatory evaluation because foundational to it is that "stakeholder participation in evaluation will enhance evaluation relevance, ownership, and thus utilization" (Cousins & Whitmore 1998, 6), again, operating clearly under assumptions around practically completing the project and effectively 'solving' the named problem. In this way the practical participatory evaluation falls into the "project paradigm" complex, which views research as a "linear, time-limited,... process" (Potts & Brown 2015). In stark contrast, anti-oppressive work emphasizes relationships and sustained action (Ibid., Simpson 2017). In other words, "the goal of

an anti-oppressive research is not a finished report, but an ongoing community-building enterprise helping us to develop complex understandings about our lives. Relationships and action are the prioritized components, not surveys and reports" (Potts & Brown 2015, 37). This is in opposition to a practical approach which uses engagement to complete the project rather than values engagement in itself.

Particularly in the case of the Isle de Jean Charles resettlement, environmental issues are rooted in "deeper pathologies of power" (Farmer 2003, 7) and thus any project to remedy environmental change must seek to address these systems of power, namely settler colonialism, that produced this climate vulnerability. Even more, Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasmasoke Simpson writes of the importance of relationships since "relationships [that] are based on consent, reciprocity, respect, and empathy" are central to Indigenous Internationalism or international relations (2017, 61). Resettlement projects that necessitate collaboration between Indigenous Nations and settler government agencies are international relations, and thus can and must utilize this idea in order to be transformative as they must be.

Practical Participatory Evaluation mirrors the work of the Louisiana Office of Community Development (LA-OCD) in two significant ways. The first is the understanding of 'stakeholder' contributions, and second, the emphasis on results or completion. First, the transition from 'partner' to 'stakeholder' distances the Tribe from the resettlement as one of many potential stakeholders (Jessee 2019), and reflects the goals of this practical approach, in which individuals are considered stakeholders in order to enhance the project itself rather than being considered the core of the project. In the "Report on Data Gathering and Engagement Phase" produced by the LA-OCD, the goal of the engagement with residents of the Isle de Jean Charles is made clear:

> The content in this report is meant to orient potential master planning teams to the perspectives and preferences held by Island residents with regard to the resettlement. Honoring resident vision will be crucial to participation and success for the Isle de Jean Charles Resettlement Project. (LDOA 2017, 2)

This statement exemplifies the practical approach to participatory evaluation. It clearly states that "honoring the residents' vision" is critical for the success of the resettlement project, naming engagement as a means to the end rather than an end in itself. This mirrors exactly the nature of stakeholder participation in practical participatory evaluation as a strategy to enhance the success of the project (Cousins & Whitmore 1998). This is also clear in the nature of the project process beyond statements made by the LA-OCD, as, for example, Chief Albert Naquin writes that the LA-OCD has "...excluded our Tribal leadership from decision-making, disregarded Tribal protocols during community engagement activities, proposed we give up our Island home…" (Isle de Jean Charles Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe and Tribal Council 2019, 2). These actions are clearly not in line with the aims of the resettlement as defined by the Tribe, which are centered on culture rejuvenation, continued land access, and reconnecting with previously relocated community members (LDOA 2015). The lack of true efforts to build relationships and fully incorporate the Indigenous leaders in the process resulted in lack of understanding or consideration of their goals and thus a lack of project success. This type of exclusion not only exemplifies the compartmentalizing rather than centering of community members, but also indicates an emphasis on outcome, rather than relationships. Again there was of course a lack of strong relationships prior to the project being carried out, and instead there was an urge to move forward despite a lack of Tribal support. The project manager from the LA-OCD has been cited saying that the project will be continued with or without the Tribal Council participation in the project, rather than seeking to heal these relationships (Dermansky 2019b). This statement indicates that the LA-OCD views the project as outcome- or result- based, seeking participation

for increasing the efficacy of the project rather than centering it. The Tribe's public response to this is strong:

> We worry that the state of Louisiana's vision for a resettlement is assimilationist and more about moving people from the coast without taking the care to preserve and strengthen social relationships and distinct traditional ways of life that have been strained throughout this intergenerational crisis of land loss. (Isle de Jean Charles Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe and Tribal Council 2019, 2)

This exemplifies the pitfalls of the approach taken by the LA-OCD, highlighting the overemphasis on "moving people from the coast" rather than placing relationships at the forefront of the projects. Further, the reference to the "intergenerational crisis of land loss" indicates there is an understanding of this crisis that is far beyond the climate crisis by the Tribe, from the Removal Act, to the oil extraction, and only now to the rising seas, something left unacknowledged by the LA-OCD.

A significant part of these relationships is not only creating them during the work, but also maintaining them beyond project completion (Potts & Brown 2015). In the LA-OCD's documents and discussions of the process, there are four stages, the final stage being "Living in the New Community," which does imply continued engagement following the completion of the project and thus perhaps a de-emphasis on simply completing the work (Isle de Jean Charles Resettlement Program 2019). However, in this phase description the onus is placed predominantly on the Tribe to adjust to new livelihoods and lifeways on this new land and lacks clear statements of how support will be continued following completion (Ibid.). This is in stark contrast to the other phase descriptions which center the state officials conducting this work outlining how they will complete the work, and not mentioning the work that the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe leaders are contributing (Ibid.). Ultimately, the practical participatory evaluation approach does not make "an explicit commitment to effecting social change" (King

2017). It was rejected by the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe as it has fallen short of an urgently-needed anti-oppressive or anti-colonial approach to resettlement thus failing to reduce the community vulnerability to land loss and displacement.

That said, the LA-OCD's participatory evaluation framework had some pieces of the process that had value, as it still was participatory. This included the emphasis on collaboration with island residents, though this was not maintained throughout their work. This intended collaboration allowed island residents to inform the choice of relocation site and facilitated responsiveness to Island residents' requests, including an updated plan to help maintain island properties for the residents of the island. Of course, as seen in the Tribal leadership responses, and interview responses hidden in the appendix of the engagement phase report, the process was still lacking in significant ways.

The *transformative* participatory approach offers an alternative process of community-centered work with government agencies that can address some of these issues and should be expected within government protocols for community resettlement. Before outlining this approach, it is critical to name the approach that the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe's field guide offered as a sample framework to this same work. Its participatory action research methods which are "based on a concept that problem-solving and co-learning collaborative work is a dynamic process in which all participants possess the courage to engage in collaboration, a goal of which is to balance the power differentiation between and promote the self-actualization of collaborating parties" (Naquin et al. 2019, 32). The discussion of the transformative participatory evaluation approach does not aim to undermine this recommendation by the community field guide. Rather, the transformative versus practical participatory methods offer a useful framework to understand the process taken by the LA-OCD and how and why it must be improved.

Transformative participatory evaluation provides clear guidelines aimed towards the government agencies rather than the communities, and thus offers a potential structure for the resettlement protocol. In this way it complements the Tribe's framework rather than undermines or replaces it.

There are three aims of transformative participatory approaches, founded on the core concept that research is about "who creates and controls the production of knowledge," emphasizing the need to share this production of knowledge rather than, as is typically done, solely give that power to those writing the research (Cousins & Whitmore 1998, 8). This is central to Indigenous research paradigms as well, as knowledge has been a tool for settler colonialism, and research in particular has been exploitative and extractive for Indigenous Nations (Gaudry 2015, Potts & Brown 2015, Tuhiwai Smith 2013, Walters et al. 2009). Centering this as the fundamental concept of the approach already begins to reflect upon power and knowledge, thus making space to center worldviews beyond that of the settler.

The first aim of transformative participation outlined is "to empower people through participation in the process of constructing and respecting their own knowledge and through their understanding of the connections among knowledge, power, and control" (Cousins & Whitmore 1998, 8). This was not seen in the work done by the LA-OCD. First, the government officials had clear control over the project as knowledge and plan creators, while the Tribe was placed in a "stakeholder" position. This power imbalance does not reflect a strong consideration of the history between Indigenous Nations and settler governments, it simply reproduces it. Even more, because the project had been referred to as "assimilationist" and lacking in support for distinct ways of life held by members of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe, it is clear that the incorporation or highlighting of community knowledge was not a part of the LA-OCD's work as

experienced by the Tribe (Isle de Jean Charles Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe and Tribal Council 2019, 2). Thus, improvement on this is critical and must be central to any future protocol for such projects.

This was explicit in the field guide's recommendations as well, as one of the core principles of research that they outlined was "Valuing of Local Knowledge and Input" (Naquin et al. 2019, 33), exposing the parallels and complementary nature of these outlined approaches for the community and for the community partners. The importance of local knowledge or traditional knowledge in such projects cannot be overstated. Knowledge production has been a critical piece of colonization and settler colonialism. Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwai Smith writes, "The production of knowledge, new knowledge and the validity of specific forms of knowledge, became as much commodities of colonial exploitation as other natural resources" (Tuhiwai Smith 1999, 59). The creation of knowledge that erases Indigenous peoples has been as much a part of settler colonialism as the oil extraction around the Isle de Jean Charles. Lacking intellect was and is a quality imposed on Indigenous peoples that seeks to discredit the humanity of Native people (Tuhiwai Smith 1999). Thus, in not highlighting or empowering Indigenous voices leads to a further attempt to disqualify the intellect and humanity of Indigenous peoples. Tuhiwai Smith goes on to write, "The nexus between cultural ways of knowing, scientific discoveries, economic impulses and imperial power enabled the West to make ideological claims to having a superior civilization" (Tuhiwai Smith 1999, 64). This can be tied to Tuck & Yang's (2012) concepts of internal settler colonialism, that which supports the ascendency of the white settler state, in this case in the form of knowledge production that legitimizes western superiority. Because knowledge production has been so central to settler colonialism, any work that seeks to address this structure must not reinforce these settler knowledges. Thus, the concern for and

centrality of Traditional Knowledges is central to addressing settler colonialism as the lack of doing so inherently perpetuates the use of settler knowledge. It is clear then that further care must be taken to ensure individuals and communities are empowered to bring in traditional knowledge (TK) into this work. It is also significant, however, to have a clear understanding that holders of TK have a right to *not* participate as well (Chief et al. 2014, Simpson 2014). Because the production of western knowledge has exploited and "collected" Indigenous knowledge through ethnographies, archeologies, and pharmaceuticals to name a few disciplines, the space to protect and refrain from the use of TK is equally important, as to ensure this type of exploitation does not occur again. "Sharing knowledge is… a long term commitment" (Tuhiwai Smith 1999, 16) and if the shared commitment and respect is missing then the sharing of knowledge may not be possible particularly for Indigenous peoples with histories of knowledge extraction and exploitation from settlers. This is a critical principle in considering TK as a potential part of climate change initiatives, and thus if TK is relevant to a particular community then protections of TK must be considered central to the process as well (Ibid.).[6] Such protections might be considered a part of respecting a community's knowledge and the community's understandings of power, knowledge, and control, two pieces of the first aim of transformative participatory evaluation (Cousins & Whitmore 1998). Overall, empowering community members to ensure there is a space for respectful sharing of knowledges, as outlined in this first aim, facilitates an environment that is critical to an anti-colonial adaptation project as it seeks to oppose the power

[6] Though a full discussion of TK and its relevance to climate adaptation is outside the scope of this work, many scholars have examined the relationship between TK and climate change initiatives. See Chief et al. 2014, Kimmerer 2013, Lazrus 2015, Leonard et al. 2013, Maldonado et al. 2016, Nalau et al. 2018, Riedlinger & Berkes 2009, Whyte 2013.

given to settler colonial knowledge and incorporate world views and knowledges that are relevant to the community.

Of course, the sharing of knowledge can only occur when relationships are built not only for the purposes of this project but as a project or success in itself. Thus, the second aim of transformative participatory evaluation is to break down the distance between the researcher and the researched so that "all participants are contributors working collectively" towards a common vision (Cousins & Whitmore 1998, 8). This aim seems to clearly address the issues named by Tribal members, as one of the primary concerns was being moved from a leadership position to "stakeholders" (Jessee 2019). Utilizing "stakeholders" rather than fellow leaders or other more empowering terms cultivates tokenistic community relationships rather than meaningful ones. The positioning of Indigenous leaders as stakeholders centers the settler researcher or project manager and disempowers Indigenous voices. Métis scholar Adam Gaudry (2015) writes of such harmful research:

> These discourses ultimately justify the entrenchment of colonial structures that disengage local decision-making processes and undermine the traditional Indigenous governance at the community level, often disguising this intervention as the involvement of a benevolent, but unfailingly paternalistic, helper (245).

In order to counteract such harmful settler research, the transformative approach seeks to empower the community leaders and transition the role of the evaluators or project partners from "leaders" to "support systems" for community action and empowerment (King et al. 2007), thus emphasizing "agency, not just participation" of community members (Wilmsen & Webber 2015, 79). Ensuring agency in the Indigenous Nation rather than settler government officials supports the idea that resurgence must facilitate a "turn away" from the state. Though in such projects that collaborate with the settler state this is difficult to achieve, by decentering the settler agency there is a greater possibility to "channel energies into independent programmes of cultural,

social, spiritual and physical rejuvenation" (Elliot 2018, 61), in other words, support resurgent practices.

Specifically in relation to the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe, this movement of roles for the government agents fulfills the core principles that the field guide seeks to achieve. These include the value of including the whole community, "placing the vision of the community first," and when done properly, could likely achieve "clear communication" and "openness and honesty" (Naquin et al. 2019, 33). Through working as equal team members the community will not only be included but centered, and communication can become open, honest, and clear due to the peer-structured relationships rather than project leader-to-stakeholder relations. This framework thus gives communities a hand in their own future, which is critical to any project that is so disruptive to people's lives such as community resettlement (Simms 2017).

Finally, the third concept of the transformative participation framework is the requirement of critical reflection. Critical reflection asks "participants to question, to doubt and to consider a broad range of social factors, including their own biases and assumptions" (Cousins & Whitmore 1998, 8). Reflection was outlined as well in the Field Guide, again, exemplifying the clear parallels between the two. This idea also offers a way in which to address the first recommendation, that is, emphasizing a prior knowledge of community histories and present as "the reflective process is directly linked to action, influenced by understanding of history, culture, and local context and embedded in social relationships" (Baum et al. 2006, 854). Collaboration with federal agencies risks creating "more harm than good unless differences in perspectives… are well understood" (Kalafitis 2019, 3), which can be facilitated by critical reflection. Thus, reflection on biases, assumptions and power as a core component to any process, requires space to be made for shared conversations on justice and process.

Transitioning processes from practical participatory evaluation to transformative participatory evaluation centers social equity and justice, which is critical to address a challenge that inequity and injustice created as in the case of the resettlement of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe. As Yellowknives Dene scholar Glen Coulthard (2014) writes, "'transformative' models... are those that seek to correct unjust distributions of power and resources at their source; that is, they not only seek to alter the content of current modes of domination and exploitation, but also the forms that give rise to them" (52). Climate change can be understood in this context as the content of "current modes of domination and exploitation," and settler colonialism as the form that gave rise to it. Practically, the process of the transformative model itself moves the project away from the "project paradigm" (Potts & Brown 2015), and in doing so emphasizes the *process* of resettlement rather than only considering the final product, that is, resettlement. This has the potential to "emphasize freedom rather than outcomes" (Kalafitis et al. 2019, 3). The practical versus transformative framework as a whole offers a clear connection between what has been done thus far and where this process must be taken. The LA-OCD has several positive components in their process, as there were collaborative meetings and, particularly during the grant-writing phase, members of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe agreed with and supported pieces of their approach (Isle de Jean Charles Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe and Tribal Council 2019). However this framework alone certainly cannot be a guide or prescription for conducting a resettlement process as a government agency. The framework offers potential starting points for protocol to be created surrounding these projects, however, the protocol is intentionally community-centered as the project itself must be adapted to the circumstances of the community (Brunner and Nordgren 2016), and thus there cannot be a single method that fits every situation.

Chapter 4.4: Facilitating Land and Livelihood Access

The final recommendation moves from the process to the resulting resettlement. One of the most significant factors that moved Tribal leaders to reject this resettlement project was the news that upon resettling, land ownership and access on the Isle de Jean Charles would be lost (Isle de Jean Charles Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe and Tribal Council 2019, Jessee 2019). Despite this proposal being altered by the LA-OCD after the strong reaction from Tribal leaders, the relevance of land and land access must be directly addressed due to its centrality to decolonization and the harm that this proposal did to the project.

Under the guise of a resettlement project, the land that was once a refuge from the Removal Act of the 1830, and since had become home to cultural practices and culturally significant places, is at risk of once again being taken by the same federal government that took the last territory of southeast Indigenous Nations. It is possible that with an understanding of the history and present of this Indigenous community along with a relationship-based, community-centered process, the government officials may not have made this decision. However, again, the issue of land access is central to decolonization and resurgence and thus must be addressed explicitly. In this case, land access refers to not only access to the physical land from which communities were resettled but also ensuring access to the livelihoods and practices that are associated with it.

From a community development context, facilitating land access has the potential to result in deeply strengthening the resilience of the resettled community (Mclean 2012). Similarly, as land access is tied to livelihood, "although resettlement may be successful in reducing people's physical vulnerability to disaster risk, it is often coupled with a decrease in development and living standards, thereby possibly increasing the economic and social

vulnerability of resettled populations" (Mearns and Norton 2010, 117). This is why geographer Graeme Hugo (2011) has argued that resettlement must not only maintain, but improve lives and livelihoods of those that are resettled (2011). In order to do so the process must assume a "capability approach," that is, a resettlement process that "assumes that, given enough opportunity to do so, people can determine how they can best fulfill themselves, and therefore attends to the range of possible ways of living people can pursue, rather than imposing a particular notion of a good life on them" (Kalafitis et al. 2019, 3). Facilitating land access provides a way to cultivate a "good life" without imposing any particular livelihood or way of life and thus making communities more resilient. This is through providing a means through which communities can continue livelihood and cultural practices on the land from which they were resettled, rather than providing a particular livelihood on the resettlement site itself. In the case of community development, this frame of the capability approach that focuses on the individual can be broadened "to address the capabilities and functioning not just of individuals but of communities" as a whole (Schlosberg & Carruthers 2010, 17). With this broadened "capability approach", land access proves to be a way in which to provide communities with the opportunity to thrive following resettlement.

Particularly in relation to Indigenous Nations, access to ancestral land is critical to Indigenous self-sustainability and resilience, yet resettlement risks the loss of this access (LaDuke 1999). As settler colonialism is tied to climate vulnerability itself, bringing decolonization into these measures inherently involves bringing land and land access to the forefront of the project. Returning to decolonization then, Kahnawake Mohawk scholar Gerald Taiaiake Alfred writes "the solution to the problem...caused by colonialism is the return of land to First Nations and the re-establishment of First Nations presences on and connections to their

homelands" (Alfred 2009a, 54). Land access is absolutely necessary to, and in fact is decolonization (Simpson 2017, Tuck & Yang 2012). Resurgence, too, is tied to land as processes of resurgence are connected to reconnecting with ancestral land and renewing an attachment to this land (Simpson 2017, Corntassel 2012, Elliot 2018). This then serves to support the turning inward towards Indigenous culture and community which characterizes the resurgence against settler colonial power (Elliot 2018). It follows then that loss of access achieves the opposite: "disconnection from lands, culture, and communities has led to social suffering and destruction of families" and erosion of Indigenous societies (Corntassel 2012, 88). This is what is at stake for the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe today, and potentially for other Indigenous Nations that have to resettle in the United States' settler context.

In response to this, scholars that consider resettlement away from culturally significant land recommend moving to a site that is still close to these homelands. In the initial application by the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe for the Natural Disaster Resilience Competition they requested moving to a site that is nearby the Isle de Jean Charles and of course will maintain land rights to the island (LDOA 2015). Anticipating that the likelihood that the island road will be entirely submerged, they even included plans to boat to the island upon this road inundation (LDOA 2015). Though the LA-OCD ignored these plans, they too attempted to resolve this loss of land access by acquiring a site that was ecologically similar to the Isle de Jean Charles, with access to some traditional livelihood practices (LDOA 2019). I argue that land access and land rights must not only be maintained by the community as outlined in the initial application by the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe, but it must be *facilitated* as a part of the resettlement program. Alfred (2009) describes that a policy that works towards decolonization would re-establish Indigenous Nations presence on and connections to their homelands. A resettlement

project that facilitates this connection to homelands offers an opportunity to see the actualization of Alfred's vision.

Zander et al. (2013), working with the Yolngu Nation in the settler state of Australia, offered a way in which to achieve this through obtaining increased government support to provide transport for resettled community members to return to ancestral lands. Not only did this provide access to culturally significant spaces and practices, but also initially was considered a way in which to maintain livelihood practices such as traditional hunting and fishing (Ibid.). It thus offered a way to provide the opportunity for communities to choose their path to resilience rather than imposing one onto them. This manifestation of the "capability approach", though not widely used, must be considered more closely in these resettlement cases. The land of the Isle de Jean Charles still is home to important burial grounds, holds cultural significance, and anchors traditional livelihood practices, particularly subsistence fishing (Maldonado 2018). In relation to livelihood, concerns of fishing in freshwater that will be on the resettlement site as opposed to the saltwater practices that have been used for generations is a source of concern for Isle de Jean Charles residents in the resettlement (LDOA 2019a). Moving inland risks the loss of these practices and others, and in order to successfully resettle a community from harm's way this loss must be addressed. This was explicitly acknowledged in the initial grant application created by Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Leaders which stated, "as a site with reduced risk is being sought, the location should not be extremely far from the original site in order to retain traditional livelihood and cultural practices" (LDOA 2015, 107). Zander et al.'s (2013) approach takes this further to decrease or eliminate the barriers to achieve this access to original homelands. This is of course only one example that may work for a particular Indigenous Nation or culturally place-

based community, yet the particular way in which this access is facilitated must be considered in collaboration with community leaders.

Decolonization's most radical implications are land-based: as Tuck & Yang (2012) provocatively argue, it means fully repatriating stolen lands to Indigenous peoples. The decolonial agenda in its most profound form therefore invokes far more than a metaphor – it is nothing less than a complete reversal of extant power relations between settler and Native and with it, of course, a full rejection of the settler state itself. In the context of resettlement, this might entail a full returning of pre-Removal Era land to Indigenous communities that were displaced by this act. In this way climate-induced resettlement might offer an opportunity to return ancestral lands as a part of the decolonial agenda that reverses colonial power relations and returns Indigenous land and land relations. Still, decolonization must be defined by the community themselves as to how they imagine a decolonization-oriented resettlement program. In the case of the Isle de Jean Charles, the ancestral lands of the Biloxi, Chitimacha, and Choctaw are not only not necessarily overlapping, but also have not been named as culturally significant in the ways that the island has. Thus it requires collaboration with the community in envisioning if and how repatriation of ancestral lands may be a desired part of this resettlement plan. Due to the complexities exposed in the case of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe and the Isle de Jean Charles as the land significant to the Tribe, decolonization and its relationship to the resettlement project *must* be defined by the Indigenous Nation that is considering this in the resettlement project rather than the settler agency.

A similarly community-specific consideration to this work would bring specific land relationships held by the community seeking resettlement into the resettlement project. Erasing or altering land relationships has been a central part of the settler colonial project, "indeed, the

project of making white men out of Native Americans was, to a large extent, predicated on the injunction to 'own' property individually" (Mikdashi 2013, 222). Thus, as Tuck & Yang (2012) write, reconsidering these settler land relationships that have been imposed on Indigenous Nations is an integral part of this repatriation of Indigenous land, that is, decolonization. Thus, it is possible to bring this into the ways in which land is held both on the resettlement site and the original ancestral land to which the community has access. This would move the project from not only mediating the harms of land loss through facilitating land access but even further intertwining this with decolonization efforts. Of course, this, again, must be led by the Indigenous Nation rather than a settler agency, as land relations may be specific to each community. As these are recommendations oriented towards the conduct of the settler agency, they aim to make space that had been taken away in the experience of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe in order to ensure space is made for Nations to define their own means through which they seek decolonization. Ultimately, decolonization-oriented adaptation must be central to any resettlement of an Indigenous Nation, and the ways in which this achieved may be unique to each Indigenous Nation though land and land access must consistently be considered as a significant part of it.

These recommendations offer a starting point to the protocol for settler state agencies that begin this work. The call for funding for community resettlement projects is not unfounded, indeed there is a profound need to support communities that need to resettle away from the frontlines of climate change. Rather, it is missing the key component of how to conduct such projects once funded. I recommend 1) Recognizing and Understanding the History and Present of the Community, 2) Emphasizing the Process through the Transformative Participatory Evaluation Approach, and specifically in the case of Indigenous Nations, 3) Facilitating Land

and Livelihood Access. Because such a protocol for supporting community resettlement does not yet exist, there is a unique opportunity to define a practice that may avoid harm and truly support communities. It is my hope that these recommendations provide a starting point to later be examined and expanded upon, particularly by or in conversation with communities considering resettlement.

Conclusion

Less than four years following the acquisition of the Natural Disaster Resilience Competition grant the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe has been erased from the resettlement project, and though the project continues, there has been little headway on moving the community out of danger. In 2019 alone, this has meant remaining on the Isle de Jean Charles through three major hurricanes, at least one of which involved evacuating island residents by helicopter (Dermansky 2019b, Insurance Information Institute 2019). Still island residents remain, many of whom refuse to take part in the resettlement project. This is not due to unwarranted or uninformed defiance, but to a failure on the part of the government agency to meet the needs of the Indigenous community that sought resettlement. This is the same settler government that violently removed Indigenous Nations from their lands, forcing these communities to come together in the bayous of the southeast, the same settler government that allowed destruction of the marshes for oil exploration without considering human rights and Indigenous sovereignty and the same one that is a leading emitter of greenhouse gas emissions that result in sea level rise. Yet, the officials fail yet again, without recognition of why and how their actions have left this community still exposed to hurricanes that will continue to degrade their land and risk their lives.

There is a continued call for consistent and accessible funding sources that can serve community resettlement projects (Mearns and Norton 2010, O'Brien et al. 2006, Shearer 2012). However, the experience of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe shows the inefficacy of this funding if it is not followed with a just and informed process and outcome. Specific to Indigenous Nations, given the centrality of land to both resettlement, resurgence, and decolonization, there is a clear opportunity and need for pairing these efforts. Decolonization, here, must be central as it is the force that addresses the continued structural violence of settler colonialism, the structure that creates and perpetuates climate vulnerability. In the case of the Isle de Jean Charles band of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe, it was the violence of the Removal Act, external settler colonialism, that pushed this Tribe to the edge of Louisiana, forcing a new lifeway unto a community that previously lived further inland, resilient to changing climates. It was then the erasure of Indigenous voices, internal settler colonialism, that destroyed the bayous and facilitated saltwater inundation and land loss of the Isle de Jean Charles for the benefit of oil corporations. These are settler colonial forces that have led to the need for resettlement, not simply a changing climate.

I first outline settler colonialism, both the theoretical understanding that I take on through this thesis and then the example of the 1830 Removal Act. This Act exemplifies the theoretical underpinnings that I outlined, grounding the theory in the reality of the United States. Even more, however, the Removal Act is that which removed the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe's ancestors from their ancestral lands to the marshlands of the Southeast, and ultimately to the Isle de Jean Charles that now faces complete inundation. The Removal Act discussion seeks to expose one of the many ways in which settler colonialism has placed Indigenous Nations on the frontlines of climate impacts. Chapter two takes on the present day of the Isle de Jean Charles,

and the attempted resettlement of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe. As Yuchi scholar Daniel Wildcat (2009) writes, “Here we go again- another removal of Indigenous Peoples” (1). The LA-OCD perpetuated colonial realities through erasure of Indigenous voices and lifeways rather than addressing these, thus only proposes a plan that removes Tribal members from an island likely only to face settler colonial impacts again at the new resettlement site. This is ineffective climate adaptation as it does not address that which created these climate impacts, that is, settler colonialism.

Chapter three, through a discussion of decolonization and resurgence, outlines ways in which Indigenous peoples are discussing addressing settler colonialism. This includes prominent scholars’ views on decolonization and resurgence, and of course the connections of these ideas to land. In particular the relationship of these ideas to land seeks to inform a type of community resettlement, such as that which the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe seeks, that is not “another removal of Indigenous peoples” (Wildcat 2009, 1), but rather a step towards resurgence and even decolonization.

The final chapter aims its recommendations towards settler agencies that support the efforts of Indigenous Nations seeking resettlement. More specifically, this thesis offers three ideas for protocol for government agencies seeking to assist in community resettlement projects, particularly drawing upon the experience of the Isle de Jean Charles resettlement and decolonization and resurgence literature. These include: 1) Recognition and Understanding of the History and Present of the Community; 2) Emphasizing Process: Transformative Participatory Evaluation; and finally 3) Facilitating Land and Livelihood Access. The recommendations seek to complement the work already done by the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe to address the ineffective work that the LA-OCD. The Field Guide created by the Tribe was oriented towards

supporting communities, while these recommendations turn towards government agencies affiliated with such projects and offer room for growth. Specifically, these recommendations are tied to settler colonialism, understanding that as Whyte writes, "In the absence of a concern for addressing colonialism, climate justice advocates do not really propose solutions to climate change that are that much better for Indigenous well-being than the proposed inaction of even the most strident climate change deniers" (Whyte 2017, 7). This is seen in the actions of the LA-OCD's ineffective work through not seeking to address settler colonialism and the undeniable relationship between it and climate change impacts.

It is unfortunately the case that the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe is not alone in experiencing the impacts of settler colonialism and climate change induced displacement. Scholar Cassandra Shepard writes, "Settler colonialism is the disaster that precipitates [other] disasters" (Shepard 2019). As such, a growing number of Indigenous Nations living in settler states are similarly experiencing extreme climate impacts. In Alaska, for example, 184 of 213 Alaskan Native communities are threatened by problematic flooding (Marino & Schweitzer, 203). The Quinault Nation of Taholah is currently seeking resettlement funding to move their entire community to higher ground as they currently are experiencing inundation of where they sit now on the Olympic Peninsula (Knoblauch 2018). These are just a few of many cases of Indigenous Nations considering or pursuing resettlement- and likely the number will grow. Even more, 40% of the United States population lives on the coast (NOAA 2020), thus the need for resettlement will only grow in the coming years as sea levels rise and storms worsen (Shonkoff et al. 2010). These recommendations thus are relevant in the present moment of uncertainty, given the level of climate impacts that will be felt and as communities and governments search for the best ways in which to adapt to these impacts.

Still, a significant piece missing from my recommendations that I have outlined leaves room for further research. This is the gendered nature of dispossession and settler colonialism impacts (Simpson 2017). As Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson writes, "dispossession under settler colonialism is gendered, and radical resurgence and nation building must take this into account in a serious and critical manner" (2017, 54). Thus, understanding and incorporating gender in the historical analyses and understandings, alongside incorporating these analyses into adaptation and resurgence are similarly vital to an effective anti-colonial adaptation project.

Ultimately, it is vital to the success of climate adaptation to address social inequity and structures of oppression, especially settler colonialism. Rather than recreating the histories of oppression and dispossession, climate adaptation offers an opportunity to reimagine land relations and social equity to build a more just and equitable society. Given the dire need to address climate impacts, it is imperative that agencies, communities and individuals utilize this opportunity to center social equity, justice, and partner with decolonization efforts. This is the only type of adaptation that will truly facilitate communities' resilience rather than recreate the inequity that enabled the hierarchies of vulnerability in which we live today.

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