Reconciliation with the Earth and Each Other: Intergenerational Environmental Justice in Canada

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Table of Contents

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Abstract

There has been growing recognition in recent environmental discourse that environmental justice, which is normally understood to mean the disproportionate effect of climate change on minority groups, also takes the form of epistemic injustice. In the Canadian context, this means the exclusion of Indigenous philosophies, values, and perspectives from discourse about environmental ethics, as well as the spheres of policy and governance as they pertain to the environment. At the same time, there has been increasing concern with creating just outcomes for future people. Given that future generations have made no contribution to the pollution that causes climate change, but will feel its worst effects, many environmental and political philosophers have recently pointed to the need for a strong theory of intergenerational justice, especially as it pertains to the environment. In this thesis, I argue that an essential part of achieving intergenerational environmental justice in Canada is working toward the rectification of both material and epistemic harms toward Indigenous peoples which are perpetuated by a conception of nature that sees it exclusively as an instrumentally valuable resource to be exploited for human gain. I explore the historical construction of this conception of nature and its pervasiveness in recent work on environmental ethics in order to show how Indigenous perspectives have historically been suppressed through colonialism, and more recently been subjected to epistemic oppression within Western environmental ethics. I then focus specifically on intergenerational environmental justice as a field in which Indigenous philosophies have faced the greatest exclusion, and may also have the most to teach us. I conclude by providing a brief overview of recent Indigenous environmental activism as an expression of Indigenous values, and look to treaties as understood by Indigenous philosophies as a potential framework for moving together toward a just future for all.

Introduction

It has become difficult in recent years, as the frequency and severity of natural disasters increase and warnings from scientists become increasingly urgent, to ignore the reality of the climate crisis with which the modern world is faced. Reactions to this new reality have been mixed; while some progress has been made by the environmental movement, especially in increasing awareness of the seriousness of climate change, it is also widely agreed that we are not doing enough to slow the devastating effects of climate change on current and future people. If current trends continue, Canadians may experience an average temperature increase of up to seven degrees in this century, which would bring with it catastrophic increases in sea level and damage to ecosystems (Bush et al., 2022). The effects of climate change will not be felt equally by all people; globally, it will be poor countries that will bear the brunt of rising sea levels, increasingly intense natural disasters, and hotter temperatures, despite minimal contributions to global pollution in the short term. In the Canadian context, climate change disproportionately impacts Indigenous communities, polluting water sources, causing the collapse of ecosystems, and forcing migration from traditional lands. Further compounding this injustice is the fact that Indigenous groups and activists are at the forefront of the environmental justice movement, and have made significant contributions to the philosophical literature surrounding environmental ethics, but often find that their contributions are overlooked. The disproportionate effects of climate change on those who pollute least has given rise to the idea of "climate justice," sometimes called "environmental justice," which acknowledges the inequities of climate change across the globe and has inspired many to work towards the fair distribution of the burdens associated with fighting climate change (Robinson, 2018). Discourse around environmental justice seeks to promote accountability for those who pollute the most, which are largely

Western, industrialized nations, while rectifying the harms already caused by climate change. This field of study has recently been widened to include not only current peoples, but also future people, who will be disproportionately impacted by the climate change caused by our actions today, despite making no contribution to climate change themselves. This is an incredibly important branch of environmental thought, as addressing these inequities is central to both international justice and combatting climate change. It is beyond the scope of this project, however, to engage with the larger climate justice movement as a whole. Instead, I will focus on a narrower domain of climate justice, which has only recently begun to be explored as part of environmental discourse: intergenerational environmental justice, which combines concerns about just distribution of the burdens of climate change among current people with related concerns about the burdens of climate change on future people. Extending the conversation to include future generations is necessary because of the slow and delayed nature of many of the effects of climate change; this means that future people will not only experience the worst effects of climate change, but they will also only experience those effects because of the actions of current people, without participating in creating them. Further, many of the actions we take now to improve our quality of life cause irreversible effects on the climate that cannot be fixed, as some suggest, by improving our technologies (de-Shalit, 1995, p. 5). Without considering the impact of irreversible environmental damage on future people, any policy or theory of justice is necessarily incomplete.

Another crucial, and related, concern in environmental discourse which will be addressed in this work is the disproportionate impact of climate change on Indigenous peoples in Canada, which will continue to effect Indigenous communities into the future if changes are not made. These impacts take two main forms: first, the physical impact of climate change on traditional

Indigenous lands, which often prevent Indigenous peoples from living according to their traditional ontologies and values, or forces migration from traditional lands. In both cases, relationships between Indigenous peoples, the land, and the species that inhabit those lands are interrupted, and colonial power structures are reproduced (Reibold 2022, p. 6). Compounding this form of injustice is the epistemic injustice caused by the exclusion of Indigenous philosophies, perspectives, and values from the discourse surrounding environmental ethics, as well as political discourse concerning environmental policies and governance. Canadian legal, political, and economic systems reflect a decidedly Western epistemology which sees Indigenous ways of knowing as inferior (Beckford 2010, p. 240). My goal in this work is to present a preliminary case for the meaningful inclusion of Indigenous philosophies in conversations about environmental ethics and, more specifically, intergenerational environmental justice, in order to confront the epistemic injustice they currently face, as well as injustices occurring on a practical level. Climate change has brought to light the fact that continuing on with "business as usual" allows colonial power structures to continue to cause harm to Indigenous peoples. While I am not advocating for a "switch" to Indigenous ways of thinking or living on the part of non-Indigenous people, I do want to suggest that overcoming the aforementioned injustices necessarily involves challenging the dominant Western conception of nature and the way of life that it informs. By challenging the assumption that Western philosophies and ways of knowing are "neutral" or the "norm," we can not only begin to overcome stereotypes, epistemic injustice, and exclusionary ways of thinking, but also broaden our understandings of the world beyond those revealed through Western science and philosophy thus far.

Before presenting a brief overview of each chapter, it is important to understand why and how the climate crisis should be viewed as an ethical issue, rather than merely a practical one. It is widely agreed that protecting the environment is one of the most important challenges of this century, especially for the sake of future generations, to whom most agree we owe a safe, livable planet. Although much of the research on climate change is scientific in nature, there is a crucial role to be played by philosophy, and specifically ethics, in confronting this global crisis. Discussing climate change as a problem rather than simply a change in the physical state of the world invokes moral and ethical considerations; further, as Stephen Gardiner notes, ethical considerations are central to the policy decisions that must be made concerning climate change (Gardiner, 2011, p. 20). This point is also acknowledged by reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, which state that decisions about what constitutes dangerous interference with the climate are value judgements just as much as they are scientific ones (*Contribution of Working Group III to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change: Summary for Policymakers*, 2022). Despite the increase in discourse surrounding environmental ethics, intergenerational justice, and their intersection in intergenerational environmental justice, there has been little tangible progress in the fight against climate change, nor in updating our policies or the structure of our societies to reflect the importance of protecting future generations. Gardiner writes that our current behaviours demonstrate that we believe our interests to have absolute priority over those of future people, despite his intuitive argument that at some point, the risks to future people and costs to current ones mean that not taking action to prevent climate change is morally unjustifiable (Gardiner, 2011, p. 21). Gardiner attributes our lack of action on the issue of global climate change to the nature of the problem itself, calling it a "perfect moral storm," which can be divided into three

separate, smaller "storms" coming together: the global, intergenerational, and theoretical aspects of climate justice (Gardiner, 2011, p. 22). On a global level, rich countries with the highest emissions, mostly located in the Northern Hemisphere, are largely responsible for the emissions that cause climate change, while poor countries contribute least to emissions but suffer the majority of its negative effects; this creates "skewed vulnerabilities" that form one layer of the complex issue of the climate crisis (Gardiner, 2011, p. 31). Future generations are extremely vulnerable to the actions of current people, and will also face skewed vulnerability to a dangerous environment that they did not participate in creating, adding another layer to this moral problem (Gardiner, 2011, p. 36). The third and final layer of this problem, argues Gardiner, is that our current theories of ethics and justice are ill-suited to the moral dilemmas brought about by the climate crisis. This "theoretical ineptitude" is illustrated by the fact that most prominent political philosophies do not consider global environmental problems, or the distant future (Gardiner, 2011, p. 41). Most theories in environmental ethics and political philosophy also express environmental concerns in anthropocentric terms, instrumentalizing nature as a resource to be conserved or exploited; through this kind of discourse, "…nature becomes a vehicle through which injustice is visited on other people. It facilitates the exploitation of the poor by the rich in the global storm, and of the future by the present in the intergenerational storm (Gardiner, 2011, p. 43)." These three "storms," argues Gardiner, work together to paralyze efforts at mitigating the climate crisis by rendering most institutions unable to tackle such a complex issue on their own, and fragmenting the agency that would empower people and institutions to work together to face this crisis (Gardiner, 2011, p. 30). More simply, there is also an incentive problem: the worst effects of climate change fall on others, and maybe

even people who will live after our death, so some may feel as though there is no reason to act (Gardiner, 2011, p. 34).

Despite the lack of adequate action on the climate crisis thus far, the pressure to act is mounting as the effects of climate change become more and more apparent on a global scale. Discourse about the importance of protecting future people has become prominent in mainstream environmentalism; environmental activists often appeal to the safety and well-being of future generations in an attempt to promote environmentally conscious behaviours, often calling on people to think of the effects of their actions on their children or grandchildren. Environmental ethics has begun to catch up, with scholars such as Avner de-Shalit and Janna Thompson explicitly considering intergenerational environmental justice in their work, and calling for the extension of the traditional scope of ethics to be extended to include future people as well as contemporary ones. Despite the persistent exclusion of Indigenous peoples' understandings of the environment and future people, which compounds the disproportionate effects of climate change felt by Indigenous communities, Indigenous scholars such as Winona LaDuke and Brian Burkhart have also contributed to environmental discourse and demonstrate a deep concern for future generations in their work. However, despite the contributions of Indigenous activists to the environmental movement, Indigenous philosophies and ways of knowing are rarely given serious consideration in academic environmental discourse, or are extracted from knowledge holders and used by scholars who have little understanding of the context of these knowledges (McGregor, 2004). This exclusion of Indigenous philosophies and ways of knowing is itself an injustice, but also creates injustice on the practical level when Indigenous communities are then subject to laws and policies grounded in Western knowledges that do not reflect, and often suppress, their ways of knowing. Both the theoretical and the practical injustices must be addressed in order to

create just outcomes for Indigenous peoples, and should both be considered important aspects of the broader project of reconciliation between settlers and Indigenous peoples living in Canada (Tully, 2018). In the past, racist colonial prejudices have led to the dismissal of Indigenous worldviews as unworthy of serious consideration, under the assumption that Western ways of knowing have privileged access to the truth. The argument being made here is that Indigenous worldviews should be recognized as valid and as meriting inclusion in philosophical conversations about environmental ethics and justice.

As we will explore in Chapter One, the dominant conception of nature in Western, industrialized nations is largely (but not solely) that the natural world functions much like a machine, with atomistic, controllable parts working together following natural laws (Merchant, 1989, p. 186). This conception of nature has developed in the particular historical context of Western societies and is supported by narrowly "rationalistic" ways of thinking which assert that the world is knowable, and thus controllable, through the power of human reason (Allard-Tremblay, 2021, p. 1028). This image of nature has historically been used to justify the exploitation of nature that serves the powerful forces of capitalism and colonialism (Murton, 2021, p. 96). This conception of nature is often accompanied by attitudes that reflect an instrumental valuation of nature and influence anti-environmental behaviours (Heberlein, 2012, p. 7), or alternatively by the disconnection of individuals from nature completely, seeing the natural world as an endless supply of resources and a mere backdrop for human activity (McKibben, 2006, p. 59). However, just as Indigenous knowledges and philosophies are diverse and complex, so too is Western philosophy; although the dominant conception of nature in the Western, industrialized world is a mechanistic, inert one, this conception has also been challenged from a variety of angles from within the Western canon. For example, advances in

scientific ecology, which challenge atomistic elements of the dominant Western conception of nature through an understanding of life forms as interconnected ecosystems, have inspired works by "deep ecologists," who have worked to reconceptualise our ethical relationship to the rest of the natural world as well as our physical relationship (Naess, 1989). Ecophenomenologists have also sought to challenge the dominant Western conception of nature by turning to subjective experience as the ultimate source of knowledge about nature, challenging the assumption that neutral and objective scientific observation is the best way to understand the natural world (Toadvine, 2015). Ecofeminists have also challenged the mechanistic conception of nature and the human place within it, presenting a relational view of our ethical obligations to each other and to the natural world (Isla, 2019). These approaches will be explored in greater detail in Chapter Two, as well as the compatibility of some Western approaches to environmental ethics with the work of Indigenous scholars. In recent years, there has been a growing recognition that the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in environmental discourse is both an important matter of justice and a potential means of challenging the rationalistic[1] conception of nature. Chapter Two will show that looking to Indigenous philosophies and knowledges, as described by Indigenous scholars, can provide an alternative perspective on our relationship with the earth and each other from which there is much to be learned. Including these philosophies and knowledges in environmental discourse is also important as a means to overcoming the historical exclusion of these perspectives and working towards reconciliation between settlers and Indigenous peoples living in what we now call Canada.

[1] I will use this term throughout the thesis in the sense stipulated by Allard-Tremblay, to name a specifically modern worldview and mode of theorizing that posits a radical difference between humans and the natural world and views nature only as an instrumentally valuable resource.

At the outset, it is important to note that referencing Indigenous perspectives in work by non-Indigenous individuals, as is the case in this work, must be done in a way that attempts to accurately represent and truly understand Indigenous beliefs, and highlights the work of Indigenous thinkers themselves, not anthropological or other second-hand accounts. Engaging respectfully with Indigenous knowledge as a non-Indigenous researcher means not treating that knowledge as a product to be extracted and used at will; this has often been the approach taken by Western researchers, who understand Indigenous knowledge as either "myth" or "data," not as a legitimate understanding of the world (Holmes, 1996). Fikret Berkes suggests three principles for respectful engagement with Indigenous knowledge in *Sacred Ecology,* which can help us to understand how non-Indigenous researchers might engage with Indigenous knowledge in non-exploitative ways. The first of these principles, inspired by the work of Leilani Holmes, is that the study of Indigenous knowledge must be participatory, with Indigenous peoples engaging in the research as equals; the second is an understanding that written communication is an inadequate, or incomplete, way to transmit this knowledge; and third, the researcher and their readers must be ready to question their assumptions and be reflexive when faced with unfamiliar worldviews (Berkes, 2018 p. 42) . By attempting to truly understand Indigenous perspectives, rather than appropriating them and folding Indigenous knowledge into Western epistemic frameworks, we can avoid the perpetuation of oppressive power structures that have suppressed and delegitimized Indigenous knowledge since colonization began in North America. It is also essential that the sharing of Indigenous knowledge is used to help Indigenous peoples themselves through tangible changes in policy and that the intellectual property of Indigenous thinkers, especially elders, is respected (McGregor, 2004). This work will attempt to follow these principles by citing the work of Indigenous scholars on Indigenous philosophies, and seeking to

understand Indigenous knowledges within their contexts rather than appropriating them. There is no claim being made that this work presents a complete view of Indigenous philosophies, nor will I attempt to; just as all of Western philosophy could not be explained in one work, nor could Indigenous philosophies. I will, however, reference the work of Indigenous scholars who use and discuss Indigenous philosophies in order to show how these ideas are relevant to environmental discourse, including theories of environmental justice, and attempt to engage with these knowledges in a way that acknowledges and overcomes common stereotypes. Since Western epistemic frameworks and values dominate environmental, political, and legal discourse in Canada, this means uncovering and challenging existing assumptions about what counts as knowledge, or as "real" philosophy. Challenging the assumptions and frameworks that lead to this exclusion means recognizing that the standards by which we judge knowledge and philosophy are not culturally neutral and keeping an open mind to the validity of other traditions. This does not mean rejecting Western standards for knowledge, or standards for knowledge generally, but simply acknowledging the validity of different cultural conceptions of the human relation to nature.

It is also important to acknowledge that the terminology used here is imperfect. When speaking about Indigenous philosophies in this work, I make general claims about Indigenous worldviews and philosophies, which may justifiably raise concerns about essentialism. However, the literature on Indigenous philosophies that I have referenced in my work, which is written by Indigenous scholars, emphasizes that most Indigenous philosophies share some common ideas, concepts, and values. Generalizations about the differences between Indigenous and Western understandings of the human place in nature (and, in the world) are often presented by Indigenous scholars, who argue that there are relevant and important commonalities between

Indigenous philosophies on these points. This makes it meaningful to speak of "Indigenous philosophies," generally, in this context. Further complicating this issue is the limited literature available on specific Indigenous philosophies, which I am not in a position to address through first-hand research in the present thesis. To address this limitation in my work, and to acknowledge the fact that there is not just one, "Indigenous" philosophy, I use the phrase "Indigenous philosophies," plural, throughout my work. One further issue that should be addressed at the outset is the potential difficulty involved in "translating" beliefs from one culture and language to another. There are some differences in the transmission of Indigenous and Western philosophies, with Indigenous knowledges often being passed between generations and knowledge holders through the oral tradition and storywork (Berkes, 2018, p. 27). This can mean that some knowledges are difficult to express through the written word, making it difficult to reference Indigenous knowledges in Western academic works, which center written text and structured argumentation (Turner, 2006, p. 101). With these considerations in mind, and while acknowledging that Indigenous beliefs exist in a cultural framework that is only fully understood by those participating in that culture, it should still be recognized that it is possible to understand each other across cultural divides. This is evidenced by the fact that communication between Indigenous and non-Indigenous thinkers in environmental ethics and environmental activism is already happening; the importance of including Indigenous perspectives in environmental discourse at all levels has been widely noted by Indigenous scholars, and more recently by non-Indigenous thinkers as well. Despite this recognition, Indigenous knowledges and philosophies remain largely at the fringe of environmental discourse, policy-making, and legal discourse in practice. Engaging with Indigenous philosophies and knowledges in ways that respect

knowledge holders and the knowledges themselves is an important step towards overcoming this exclusion.

Chapter Three will look at the ways in which Indigenous philosophies can help to build a theory of intergenerational justice that captures the importance of protecting both the environment and future people. Including Indigenous voices in this discourse, as I will show, is also a matter of justice; excluding these ideas serves only to perpetuate the colonial ideas and power structures that exist in Canada. Chapter Four will show how ideas about our obligations to future people stemming from Indigenous philosophies are made manifest in the movement towards resurgence of these philosophies among Indigenous peoples, as well as how Indigenous-led environmental activism embodies these ideas. Indigenous philosophies are not only important for non-Indigenous people; these philosophies are living, dynamic, and inform the lives of Indigenous peoples and communities. Protecting these philosophies for future generations is part of the work of resurgence, which is a movement within Indigenous communities to regenerate and pass on these philosophies, overcoming the colonial past that sought to destroy them. Indigenous philosophies are also a powerful tool by which Indigenous nations can assert their sovereignty and regain control over the land. These aspects of Indigenous philosophies are embodied in movements like Land Back, which are led by Indigenous activists and seek to promote the rights of Indigenous communities through the sharing of these knowledges (*LANDBACK Manifesto*). Land Back is one example of a movement that embodies a diverse range of ideas from Indigenous philosophies about reciprocity with the earth and with future generations, as well as the power of these ideas to inspire change in both the way we relate to the earth and to each other. Although the climate crisis poses a serious threat to humanity, it also presents us with an opportunity to confront some of the damaging ideas that lie at its root and

challenge them. We are presented with an opportunity to reconceptualise our obligations to the earth, each other, and future people, and it is crucial that we take it. This work aims to show that including all perspectives in this reconceptualization will not only help us to better understand how to approach this crisis, but also gives us an opportunity to overcome injustices of the past and move towards reconciliation with the earth and with each other.

Chapter I – The Historical Construction of the Rationalistic Conception of Nature

The physical effects of climate change make it clear that we have reached a breaking point; to understand why this is the case, it is important to examine the attitudes towards nature that have traditionally dominated Western thought and have led us to this critical junction. Although human-driven climate change has only been measurable since the mid-20th century, the conception of nature that has contributed to the production of the climate crisis has developed in the West over hundreds of years. To understand the development of this conception of nature, it is useful to examine the attitudes exhibited towards nature over time; doing so will be the focus of this chapter. In broad strokes, the dominant modern Western conception of nature involves a belief in the separation of human beings from the rest of the natural world, coupled with the idea that nature exists for the benefit of human beings, possessing largely instrumental value (Thomas, 1983, p. 17). On this view, humans hold a privileged place in the universe, and nature is seen as an amalgamation of mechanistic processes that can be known and controlled using human reason, and which provides us with resources to be used for our benefit (Merchant, 1989, p. 23). Although it is important to emphasize that there have always been a range of attitudes towards the natural world in every society, including the West, there is broad agreement that Western culture today reinforces this mechanistic conception of nature (Merchant, 1989, p. 1). Examining the attitudes demonstrated through the behaviour of individuals and the structuring of societies is one way of uncovering the conception of nature that underlies them, a conception which will be of central importance to the rest of this work. The idea that Western attitudes towards nature are to blame for the climate crisis has been widely discussed, with many specific attitudes and ideologies suggested as the singular root cause of modern ecological destruction. Understanding how the exploitative attitude that is displayed in our current destruction of the

natural world came about requires an analysis of the social conditions during the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions, and the influence of this period on the modern era. To guide the analysis of these social conditions that will be presented in this chapter, we will follow a popular line of argument amongst Western scholars since the late 1960's: the idea that Christian attitudes, specifically the doctrine of dominion expressed in Genesis, are uniquely responsible for ecological destruction in the West. Analyzing the extent to which this claim, most famously put forward by Lynn White Jr. in "The Historical Roots of our Ecologic Crisis", is historically accurate will help to provide a fuller picture of the social conditions in the West during the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions, when advancements in science and technology allowed humans to exploit the natural world in ways that could previously have only been imagined, laying the basis for the environmental catastrophe we face today. Tracing the historical development of this conception of nature will show that it is informed by a particular set of historical circumstances and informed by culturally specific values. The goal of this chapter is to challenge the idea that the rationalistic picture of nature is one without metaphysical underpinnings; this, as we will see, is one of the central assertions White makes in the aforementioned article.

White's initial claim in "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis" is that dominant Western attitudes towards nature, such as the aforementioned idea that nature exists solely for the benefit of humans, can be traced back to the Christian doctrine of dominion which was popular during the Middle Ages (White, 1967, p. 1205). He argues that popular attitudes towards nature during this time period, when "both our technological and our scientific movements got their start, acquired their character, and achieved world dominance," are key to understanding the impact of science and technology on the environment in the modern era (White, 1967, p. 1205).

The Scientific Revolution of the 17th century, and the Industrial Revolution in the following century, took place in societies that were deeply conditioned by Christian views, including the doctrine of dominion over nature that is part of the story of Creation in Genesis 1:28. This passage teaches that man was given dominion over the rest of nature, which was created for his use. Technological advancements during this time period, such as more powerful plows, came alongside broader intellectual patterns about human nature and linear, perpetual progress, which White believes were largely determined by the Christian faith (White, 1967, p. 1205). The destruction of "pagan animism," where nature was believed to contain spirits and was therefore considered sacred, by Christianity meant a shift from a belief in the sacredness of nature and natural spirits to the separation of humans from nature, positioning us as "exploiters" and "masters" of nature (White, 1967, p. 1205). Since modern technology and science began to develop during the same era as this shift in belief from paganism to Christianity, White concludes that the change in attitudes that took place during the Scientific Revolution must be the cause of our current destruction of nature for the sake of technological progress (White, 1967, p. 1204). With the development of agricultural technology that allowed farmers to produce higher yields, while also tearing much deeper into the land to till the soil, "…man's relation to the soil was profoundly changed. Formerly man had been part of nature; now he was the exploiter of nature (White, 1967, p. 1205)". The claim being made here is that the Christian doctrine of dominion is underpinned by metaphysical assumptions about the place of human beings in the natural world, which in turn influenced certain beliefs in those to whom this doctrine was taught.

Vigorous debate about the cause of the ecological crisis followed the publication of White's article; although critique came from a wide range of sources, from theologians to

sociologists, critiques of "The Historical Roots" can be broadly categorized into three groups. I will survey each of these responses in turn to show that despite the considerable influence of the doctrine of dominion on the modern rationalistic conception of nature, other social and cultural factors must also be considered. First, many commentators on White's work have noted that there are diverse attitudes towards nature represented in the Bible, not just that of dominion. Robin Attfield writes in *The Ethics of Environmental Concern* that although Christian beliefs were certainly a strong influence on the attitudes and behaviour of Western people during the Scientific and Industrial Revolutions, White overlooks the Christian tradition of stewardship, which teaches that humans are tasked with caring for God's creation, including non-human animals (Attfield, 1991, p. 45). He argues that among people living in the medieval period, "there was a widespread sense of responsibility for the care of the earth…together with an underlying sense that animals should be treated with kindliness and were of more than merely instrumental value (Attfield, 1991, p. 37)". Since the tradition of stewardship, coupled with humanitarian movements and moral sense theories endorsed by the Church, existed alongside the idea of dominion, Attfield writes, our ecological problems cannot be blamed solely on Christian attitudes to nature (Attfield, 1991, p. 43). F. B. Welbourn also critiques White's article on the basis that any dominion that man can be said to have over nature is necessarily limited by a respect for God's creation, negating the possibility that nature could be seen purely as "unsacrosanct raw material" (Welbourn, 1975, p. 564). Welbourn also questions the idea that dominion over nature does not also assign the responsibility to care for nature to humans, an aspect of this doctrine that White fails to discuss (Welbourn, 1975, p. 565). Attfield also takes this line of argumentation, writing that although humankind is explicitly said in Genesis to have dominion over the earth, and to be separate from the rest of Creation, this does not necessarily

justify the exploitation of natural resources. He believes that this is demonstrated by passages from the Old Testament that dictate respectful treatment of certain animals and plants (Attfield, 1991, p. 25). Further, to the extent that humans can be said, according to Christian teachings, to hold dominion over nature, it is only the kind of dominion a ruler would have over their people, which was expected to be exercised responsibly (Attfield, 1991, p. 27).

A second type of reply to White's thesis takes a more historical approach, highlighting the fact that most societies, not just Christian ones, have dramatically altered their environments since antiquity. Lewis J. Moncrief writes in "The Cultural Basis for Our Ecological Crisis" that the existence of ecological problems all over the world, not just in the West, demonstrates that the environmental crisis cannot solely be a "religious problem" (Moncrief, 1970, p. 509). Alongside several examples of the existence of exploitative attitudes in non-Western societies, he argues that cultural, technological, and social forces are more directly responsible for our current exploitative attitude towards nature in the West, and that religious beliefs only create a "ballpark" of acceptable ideas in which societal norms develop, not concrete rules (Moncrief, 1970, p. 511). This idea is supported by Keith Thomas' historical work *Man and the Natural World,* where he writes that although the doctrine of dominion was interpreted in a "breathtakingly anthropocentric spirit" by members of the Church in the 17th century, the claim that these teachings translated directly to an exploitative attitude exaggerates the extent to which these beliefs influenced most people in their actual interactions with nature (Thomas, 1983, p. 20). Although the anthropocentric interpretation of the doctrine of dominion found in Genesis was extremely popular during this time period, and called for the virtually unlimited power of humankind over nature, most people exhibited a fairly gentle and respectful attitude towards nature in their actual conduct towards plants and animals. The most commonly held belief

among working class people at this time was that humans had a duty to respect nature and live well in accordance with natural phenomena, a belief that existed alongside the teaching of dominion promulgated by the Church (Welbourn, 1975, p. 565). Prior to the Industrial Revolution, communities were normally centered around agriculture and the lives of their members were largely dictated by natural rhythms and events, which meant that most people had great respect for the power of nature to influence their lives (Merchant, 1989, p. 10). This physical involvement with nature also translated to moral involvement, which is demonstrated by the imagery used to depict nature in art and literature during this era that shows the earth as living, beneficent, and nurturing (Merchant, 1989, p. 28). The existence of these beliefs demonstrates that although religious beliefs about dominion did exist, their influence was not as widespread as they may seem from the work of theologians and other intellectuals writing during this time period.

A third type of response to White's thesis argues that the rise of capitalism and industry are largely responsible for encouraging exploitative attitudes towards nature, working alongside and eventually surpassing religious beliefs as the main cause of the current ecological crisis. Feminist historian Carolyn Merchant demonstrates in her work that changes in economic realities were at least partially responsible for the shift towards the instrumentally valuable conception of nature, especially among those lower on the social hierarchy. As the Industrial Revolution began to take hold in Europe, the common conception of the cosmos that Merchant refers to as the "organic" conception, wherein the universe is seen as a large organism with many living parts, gave way to the "mechanistic" model that helped to justify the exploitation of nature for economic gain (Merchant, 1989, p. 42). Between 1500 and 1700, a profound shift took place in both the dominant attitudes of people towards nature and the ways in which land was used; the

rise of the capitalist market during this time period shifted the focus of agriculture from subsistence to profit by way of larger yields and more productivity from the land (Merchant, 1989, p. 51). Even the most egalitarian communities were eventually influenced by the market to enter into competition with one another for limited resources and to make as much profit from their land as possible (Merchant, 1989, p. 78). Although many people continued to hold ideas about egalitarianism and respect for the environment, it was widely accepted by the end of the 1700s that the task of human beings was to convert "nature" into "culture" by cutting down forests to create space for agriculture, moving more people into cities, and exploiting natural resources like coal and timber for fuel (Merchant, 1989, p. 63). These changes in economic realities influenced the attitudes that people held towards nature, as the natural world increasingly came to be seen as a commodity, and existing ideas about dominion and humans' right to use nature for their benefit were, in turn, used to justify further expansion of the market.

Although it is clear from this survey of the relevant literature that Christian attitudes are not solely responsible for the climate crisis, it is also true that Christian teachings were often used as justification by those who already wished to exploit the natural world for personal or economic gain (Welbourn, 1975, p. 566). The idea that nature exists solely for the benefit of humankind, one possible interpretation of Genesis 1:28, likely maintained its popularity around the time of the Industrial Revolution because it validated the actions that were required by the emerging capitalist market: the exploitation and sale of natural resources. John Passmore writes in *Man's Responsibility for Nature* that although Christianity cannot be held entirely responsible for these attitudes, it did encourage the attitude that nature "exists primarily as a resource… that man has the *right* to use it as he will, that it is not sacred, [and] that man's relationships with it are not governed by moral principles (Passmore, 1974, p. 20)". As Western societies became

increasingly industrialized, a new conception of nature emerged to allow people make sense of their changing relationship to their environment, one that was increasingly mechanical and separated humans from the rest of nature (Merchant, 1989, p. 5). Philosophers like Descartes reinforced this change by arguing that human beings were distinct from the rest of the natural world because they possessed the capacity for thought and reason, whereas plants and animals were composed of inert matter (Merchant, 1989, p. 188). Kant further entrenched this distinction between humans and nature by arguing that the capacity for reason gives human beings intrinsic value, with all other living things merely possessing instrumental value (Kant, 1929). The emphasis of Enlightenment philosophers on rationality was deeply influential and contributed to the construction of the modern image of human beings as separate and superior to the rest of nature. This emphasis on rationality is also evident in scientific thought during the Scientific Revolution period; Merchant argues that Francis Bacon, for example, reinforced the attitudes of progress and separation from nature that were emerging alongside early capitalism by advocating for the control of nature through scientific understanding (Merchant, 1989, p. 164). Bacon's mechanistic understanding of nature saw non-human living beings as machines comprised of atomistic, inert parts and did not address any of the interplay between humans and nature that characterized other, more holistic views (Merchant, 1989, p. 182). Merchant writes that this mechanistic understanding of nature is underwritten by five assumptions about the nature of reality, which have resulted in science being considered largely value-free and objective. These assumptions are that matter is composed of particles; that the universe possesses a natural order; that knowledge and information can be extracted from the natural world with the use of human reason; that problems can be broken down into parts and manipulated by mathematics; and that sense data, uncovered from the natural world, is discrete and can be analyzed as atomistic parts

(Merchant, 1989, p. 228). This understanding of nature was deeply influential, in part due to its ability to justify the continued extraction of natural resources that was needed to fuel the expansion of the capitalist market. Rational control over nature became the goal of both science and industry, a goal that is clearly reflected in and justified by the mechanistic and exploitative attitudes held by most people in the West towards their environment. The social conditions of the Industrial and Scientific Revolutions, in tandem with religious ideas about the place of humans in relation to nature and the influential work of thinkers like Descartes, Kant, and Bacon, cemented the distinction between nature and culture in the minds of Western society at large.

These new attitudes towards nature helped to justify the expansion of the British and French empires through the colonization of Canada. Human civilization at this time was seen as "virtually synonymous with the conquest of nature (Thomas, 1983, p. 25)," and the emerging belief, supported by the natural sciences and Descartes' theory of dualism, that humans and nature were two separate classes of things helped to justify Western civilization's advance onto "new" land, which was seen as unclaimed space to be claimed by human beings at will. The ideology of domination that fueled colonization is intricately linked with the idea that humans can and should control nature, and that distancing ourselves from nature constitutes moral and social progress (Bookchin, 1986, p. 50). Early settlers noted their disgust at the amount of "wilderness" they happened upon when arriving in North America, and the untamed woodland that covered most of the land was seen as an obstacle to human progress (Thomas, 1983, p. 164). The idea that nature could be understood through science and controlled by technology fueled both the capitalist market and colonialism in North America; as technology became more advanced, these interconnected projects became progressively less limited by natural obstacles (Klein, 2015, p. 171). The country we now refer to as Canada was not, however, new land as

these settlers initially believed; colonization involved the violent dispossession of Indigenous peoples of their land, mainly in the interest of extracting natural resources for profit. Olive Patricia Dickason describes the desire of Europeans to "civilize" Indigenous peoples, as follows:

> The initial reaction of establishing trade was soon complicated by the French drive to evangelize and to remould [Indigenous peoples] into the European cultural pattern, characteristics that were shared with other colonial powers. Europeans generally did not recognize the validity of [Indigenous] civilizations, classed them as "savage," and denied their right to sovereignty and even to landed property rights for those peoples living in non-state societies, which was the case in Canada (Dickason, 1993, p. 13).

Western attitudes towards Indigenous peoples, which were largely developed by people living in Europe who learned about Indigenous peoples through travel literature, not those who actually interacted with them, had great influence over which actions of colonization were seen as "justifiable". To a great extent, Indigenous peoples were seen as part of nature and in need of "civilizing" through assimilation into Western lifestyles (Manuel & Derrickson, 2017, p. 62). Western views of Indigenous peoples during the early colonial time period can be classed into two related categories: the more "positive" view of Indigenous peoples as inherently virtuous and existing in an innocent state of nature, and the "negative" view of Indigenous peoples as uncivilized and less than human (Dickason, 1984, p. 81). Both views are harmful, not based in reality, and stereotype Indigenous peoples. The identification of Indigenous peoples with nature meant that attitudes about the right of humans to dominate and exploit nature for their benefit were easily transposed into an attitude of superiority over Indigenous ways of life and a feeling that colonization was a way of bringing civilization to supposedly "natural" Indigenous communities. Difficulty understanding Indigenous societies on the part of European settlers were most easily resolved by simply considering these societies to be beyond civility, made up of individuals who were, for the most part, seen as less than human (Dickason, 1984, p. 84).

As Dickason notes in *The Myth of the Savage*, this characterization of Indigenous peoples played a fundamental role in justifying colonization, including the theft of Indigenous lands, and has only recently come to be recognized as having little basis in reality by most Western intellectuals. These ideas arose despite, and often in reaction to, consistent critiques of Western culture and institutions from Indigenous leaders, who engaged in long debates with European settlers, missionaries, and explorers. David Graeber and David Wengrow explore the role of Indigenous ideas in Enlightenment thought in their book *The Dawn of Everything*, where they show that Indigenous critiques of the lack of freedom and equality in European institutions were a serious threat to European values, insofar as they exposed people to social possibilities beyond those found in the Western tradition, that they inspired Enlightenment thinkers to craft arguments justifying the colonization of Indigenous peoples and destruction of their ways of life in response (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021, p. 37). For example, they argue that A. J. Turgot's theory of stages of economic development and social evolution was a direct response to Indigenous critiques, with "egalitarian" societies like the ones European settlers considered the least evolved and technologically "advanced" societies like those found in Europe considered superior. Underlying this influential theory was the idea that progress is tied to advances in technology, which often came at the expense of the natural environment (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021, p. 60). Graeber and Wengrow write that Locke and Rousseau were also influenced by Indigenous critiques, and argue that their work can be seen as both a reaction to these ideas and justification for the continued colonization of Indigenous land (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021, p. 65). The idea that private land ownership could be established through working the land, one of the foundational elements of Locke's work (Locke, 2002, p. 13), was one of the ways that Indigenous peoples were dispossessed; to the eyes of Western settlers, Indigenous peoples, who did not use

traditional Western methods of agriculture, did not seem to be cultivating the land on which they lived according to Western standards (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021, p. 149). Rousseau, conversely, critiques the progress of society from the state of nature to civilization, and the rise of private property as evidence of moral decline, but Graeber and Wengrow argue that he was equally influenced by Indigenous ideas in his work (Graeber & Wengrow, 2021, p. 65).

Despite pushback from Indigenous peoples, the appeal of a new, seemingly inexhaustible source of natural resources to be commodified and sold was ultimately too great to prevent Western expansion onto Indigenous land. Encouraged by pressure from the emerging capitalist market and by reactionary ideas, such as those put forward by Turgot and Locke, European settlers pushed forward with their project of colonization, causing irreparable damage to Indigenous peoples and their ways of life in the process. This damage was caused by direct conflict, but also by more subtle tactics; in the first century after contact with Europeans, for example, Indigenous populations declined by up to 90% because of smallpox and other epidemics of diseases unfamiliar to Indigenous peoples (Harris, 2020, p. 35). Although European settlements were originally small and focused on the extraction of specific resources, like fish or timber, they soon became sites for the expansion of the British Empire through the establishment of industry and European-style urban centres. The extraction of raw resources and the sale of land, facilitated by the idea of private ownership laid out by Locke, were hugely economically advantageous, and it became clear that nothing would get in the way of Britain's plan to form a liberal capitalist society in the country that came to be known as Canada (Murton, 2021, p. 137). The commodification of nature for profit meant dispossessing Indigenous peoples of their land so that resources could be extracted and sold (Murton, 2021, p. 138). This sometimes involved the negotiation of treaties with Indigenous communities; other times, land was occupied or

seized by force. Indigenous peoples were sometimes made to relocate to remote locations so that the government could access resource-rich or agriculturally valuable land (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 1). To further the colonial project, as settlers became increasingly populous and disengaged with their natural environment through urbanization, the Indian Act was passed in 1876 to provide legal justification for the atrocities of colonialism (Joseph, 2018, p. 7). Through what has since been recognized by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as a cultural genocide, the Canadian state sought to assimilate Indigenous peoples into the growing settler population by banning spiritual practices and Indigenous languages, confining Indigenous peoples to reserves, and separating children from their families through mandatory attendance at residential schools, which aimed to keep cultural values and identity from being transmitted from one generation to the next (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). Just as Christian teachings were used to justify the exploitation of nature, they were similarly employed as justification for the creation of residential schools, which were run by various Christian churches. Harold Cardinal writes in *The Unjust Society* that,

> The employment of missionaries as the educational agent of the non-Indian society came about naturally…As white settlers encroached more and more onto Indian lands, the government employed multiple forces, the missionaries, the police, the Hudson's Bay Company and its own Indian agents, as salesmen for its own pacification program (Cardinal, 1999, p. 45).

Residential schools were not intended to be educational centres as they publicly claimed, but were instead a part of the government's plan to remove Indigenous peoples from their land and assimilate them into settler society. The TRC details the devastating effects of these acts of cultural genocide, and notes that, "the residential school system was based on an assumption that European civilization and Christian religions were superior to Aboriginal culture, which was

seen as being savage and brutal (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015, p. 4)." The same attitude of human superiority that contributed to the exploitation of nature for the sake of building European-style cities and creating economic value in the new capitalist market was at work in the racist policies of the Canadian state against Indigenous peoples, whose effects are still strongly felt in Indigenous communities today.

The ideas and attitudes that helped to justify the exploitation of nature under capitalism and the colonization of Canada persisted into the 20th century, although sometimes in new forms. As industrialization intensified during the 1900s, the idea of conservation took hold across Canada as a way to maintain areas of pristine "wilderness" for various forms of recreation. This sentiment inspired the creation of Canada's National Parks, including Banff and Algonquin National Parks, and was a reaction to the increasing damage caused to nature by resource extraction and industrialization (Murton, 2021, p. 139). Although this did preserve some of Canada's most beautiful landscapes from development, "conservation" efforts often meant that Indigenous peoples were forced off of their land so that settlers could use these areas for recreation. The creation of fenced off, "wild" areas of nature, removed from human societies, further entrenched the boundary between humans and nature that had emerged from the establishment of the capitalist market and movement of most people to life in urban centers. Although hunting was often allowed in these parks for sport, use of the land for subsistence was made illegal. This had a devastating effect on Indigenous communities who relied on subsistence hunting for their survival, and further severed ties between these communities and the land. James Murton notes that Indigenous peoples were considered part of the wilderness ideal, but "only in an abstract sense, as representatives of the past (Murton, 2021, p. 157)". Parks were created as a way to preserve a certain idea of nature, one that positions wilderness as a resource

for human enjoyment and recreation and a representation of a bygone, less advanced era, more so than preserving nature itself (Murton, 2021, p. 158). However, the push to create these places where people could still access nature also demonstrates that even those who were separated from nature in their day-to-day lives still desired connection with nature, albeit the distorted image of nature as "wilderness". This increasing separation from nature manifested itself in other practices around the same time period; prior to World War II, the desire to engineer nature resulted in the intensification of agricultural practices and division of agricultural land into small plots that encouraged competition between farmers and separation of communities into a more individualistic society (Murton, 2021, p. 163). After World War II, the engineering of nature intensified even further to fuel the postwar project of building organized cities and suburbs, with nature seen as much as ever as a "collection of resources for the use of humanity (Murton, 2021, p. 167)" by those in charge of these projects. Canadians living in urban centres, who represented most of the population, were increasingly reliant on distant people and resources for energy, food, and other products, and economic pressures provided powerful incentives to ignore the devastating environmental and social impacts of increased production and industrialization (Murton, 2021, p. 180). The widespread use of fossil fuels has helped us to realize the Enlightenment goal, popularized by thinkers like Bacon and Descartes, of controlling nature, but at the cost of millions of tons of carbon emissions that have created the conditions disastrous, human-driven climate change (Klein, 2015, p. 173).

The attitude of dominion over nature and the view of the natural environment as a bank of resources for human use have culminated in the ecological devastation that Canadians are faced with today. These attitudes reveal an underlying conception of nature as separate from human beings, knowable and controllable through human reason, and merely instrumentally

valuable. The continued exploitation of nature, which has been encouraged by the capitalist market and justified by rationalist Enlightenment thought and religious ideas that place humans above and apart from nature, has led us, along with the rest of the world, to the brink of climate catastrophe. Recent reports by the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change warn that we are rapidly heading towards an unlivable future if major changes are not made in the way that we consume fossil fuels and structure our societies (*IPCC 2022: Summary for Policymakers*, 2022). Indigenous peoples have already been harmed by the attitudes that belie the climate crisis; the joint projects of controlling nature and Indigenous peoples that are foundational to Canada's history have also deeply disrupted Indigenous societies through the establishment of reserves, residential schools, and the pollution and destruction of the land, among other negative effects. As this survey of the historical context demonstrates, many of the same attitudes and beliefs motivated both the desire to exploit nature and to dispossess Indigenous peoples; these include the desire to own and exploit land for profit and the belief in the superiority of Western and Christian understandings of the world. The rationalistic conception of nature that has influenced the exploitation of the nature world has also caused harm to Indigenous peoples; this means that reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and efforts to protect the environment are interconnected. As James Tully writes in "Reconciliation Here on Earth", any effort to correct one of these harms must take the other into consideration (Tully, 2018, p. 83). In the chapters that follow, we will explore how challenging the rationalistic conception of nature must also involve reconciliation with Indigenous peoples and listening to Indigenous perspectives to guide these efforts. Chapter Two will analyze the extent to which our attitudes can motivate our behaviour towards nature to provide justification for the idea that challenging the dominant Western conception of nature is both philosophically valuable and a crucial aspect of the fight against

climate change for the sake of future generations.

Chapter Two—Indigenous Philosophies and Western Environmental Ethics

As we have seen in Chapter One, a particular conception of nature as mechanistic, knowable through human reason, and instrumentally valuable has been historically constructed in the West alongside the rise of science and industry. This conception of nature is what Yann Allard-Tremblay calls the "modern rationalist worldview," which "proffers a radical difference between humans and the natural world (Allard-Tremblay, 2021, p. 1038)". According to this conception of nature, he continues,

> Humans are of nature but they are not quite part of it. Nature is the environment in which we evolve and interact, but it is separate from us. We are rational beings and our reason gives us dominion over nature. This reason also makes us sources of claims and creators of values. It is thanks to reason that we perceive and attribute value to nature…The value attributed to nature is typically associated with what is useful for us. Nature is something to be exploited. Humans are the center of this universe; rendering this modern rationalist worldview anthropocentric (Allard-Tremblay, 2021, p. 1038).

The rationalist conception of nature, as described above, is also connected with the mechanistic conception of nature that was discussed in Chapter One; mechanism is a rationalistic way of looking at the world that believes human reason can break nature down into atomistic parts in order to be analyzed, understood, and ultimately controlled (Merchant, 1989, p. 229). Although the rationalistic conception of nature is historically related to the sciences in its development, it is important to note that it should not be equated with science itself. In the analysis to follow, this is what will be referred to as the "rationalistic," or "dominant Western" conception of nature. Although a range of ideas about nature exist in all societies, this conception of nature has gained traction and become the dominant conception in many Western societies at least partly because it allows the powerful forces of capitalism and colonialism to function almost unchecked. Nature, understood to be inert and merely instrumentally valuable, does not require the same ethical treatment as humans, who are generally understood to possess intrinsic value (Merchant, 1989, p.

111). Although far from universally accepted, this conception of nature has provided justification to those who have wished to exploit the natural world for economic gain, as well as those who have sought to increase their political power through land ownership. Dependence on science and technology in the modern age has solidly entrenched the influence of this worldview, which in addition to seeing the natural world as mechanistic and inert also believes it to be objectively knowable through the use of human rationality, often using the scientific method (Merchant, 1989, p. 168). In Canada, this conception of nature has been at least partly responsible for the displacement of Indigenous peoples, ever-increasing exploitation of natural resources for profit, and the belief among some that nature can be used for human benefit with little to no consequence (Murton, 2021, p. 96). Rationalistic ways of thinking are also skeptical of Indigenous knowledges, which are context-dependent and therefore not based on abstract, universalizable principles (Allard-Tremblay, 2021, p. 1027). The rationalistic conception of nature manifests itself in Western environmental ethics in two main ways: through the idea that humans are separate from the rest of the natural world, often because of their capacity for reason; and through the instrumental valuation of nature. Both of these rationalistic ideas will be explored and challenged below. Rationalistic conceptions of nature also exclude ideas and philosophies that posit relational worldviews, such as many Indigenous philosophies; we will also explore how this exclusion creates "epistemic injustice" towards diverse philosophies and the importance of overcoming this exclusion as part of the greater project of reconciliation in Canada. My aim in this chapter is to show that the rationalistic conception of nature, which is still widely accepted in modern Western philosophy, is not an objective or unquestioned picture of the human place in nature. My suggestion is that challenging this conception of nature is necessary both as a matter of philosophical importance and a matter of justice to Indigenous

peoples, whose perspectives and worldviews this conception excludes. First, however, we will turn to the question of "environmental attitudes" that is popular in mainstream environmental discourse and evaluate the appropriateness of shifting attitudes as a project for philosophical inquiry.

Although increasing industrialization and the rise of capitalism, alongside colonialism, has encouraged the belief that nature is a commodity to be exploited for the benefit of humans, many have also pushed back against the idea that humans stand outside nature and can use it however they see fit. The modern environmental movement, spurred on by the climate crisis, has called this conception of nature into question, and signals the desire to reconceptualise our understanding of nature. Calls for a "new environmental ethic," which are common in environmental philosophy, are further evidence of this desire. One notable example of this sentiment is Richard Sylvan's influential 1973 article "Is There a Need for a New, An Environmental, Ethic?" in which he concludes that such an ethic is necessary, supported by the famous "Last Man" argument. Sylvan asserts that nature has intrinsic value by creating a thought experiment in which the last living human being destroys nature; he argues that because we would feel that such an action is wrong, despite it not having any effect on human beings, we must conclude that nature has value in itself, a fact that is not accounted for by the dominant Western environmental ethic (Sylvan (Routley), 2008). To correct this misalignment of our moral intuition about the value of nature and the dominant ethic, he argues, a new environmental ethic must be created; the exact nature of this ethic, however, is not fleshed out. Some calls for a new environmental ethic or conception of nature see this project as important simply as a means to stopping environmental degradation or climate change. Others have focused on the attitudes that individuals possess towards nature, calling for individuals to shift these attitudes in order to

effect changes in environmental behaviours. These approaches can be, and have been, criticized for assuming what end would be good—in this case, protecting the environment. Since these approaches start with the assumption that protecting the environment is morally good, they are circular in nature and therefore do not provide much support for the assertion that we should challenge the dominant Western conception of nature. There are, however, strong arguments put forward by many, including ecophenomenologists, deep ecologists, ecofeminists, and Indigenous scholars, that there is a need to reconceptualise our understanding of nature for purely philosophical reasons. The aforementioned schools of thought suggest that the climate crisis calls for us to rethink not just environmental ethics, but the dominant Western worldview as a whole in response to new information coming from our experience of nature and from the sciences (Callicot, 1989a, p. 5). Although a new environmental ethic is certainly needed as part of the project to mitigate the effects of the climate crisis and encourage more sustainable environmental behaviours, challenging the dominant Western conception of nature is necessary in order to align it with our best understandings of the place of human beings in nature. Technological fixes, although part of the overall solution to climate change, are ill-equipped to help us reconsider the human relationship with the rest of nature; if this kind of reconceptualization is in fact necessary, then a philosophical approach is best suited to this task. Reconceptualising our understanding of nature and the human place in the natural world is important for at least three reasons: first, our conception of nature has been shown to inform the attitudes held by individuals towards the environment and, to some extent, they shape our societal behaviours towards nature (Crompton & Kasser, 2009). Shifting these attitudes is an important part of the fight against climate change. Second, this reconceptualization can help bring us closer to an understanding of nature that is aligned with recent and compelling advances in environmental thought, especially within the

field of ecology. Third, the rationalistic conception of nature that is dominant in many Western societies should be challenged because of its role as a powerful tool of colonialism, used to discount Indigenous ways of knowing and dispossess Indigenous peoples of their lands. Indigenous perspectives have historically been excluded from philosophical discourse about nature, creating "epistemic injustice" that works alongside other colonial wrongs to harm Indigenous peoples. When Indigenous knowledge is included, it is often by extracting knowledge from Indigenous peoples without proper acknowledgement or understanding of these ideas (D. McGregor, 2021). As a matter of justice, it is important that we challenge the dominant Western conception of nature and attempt to come to a new understanding informed by the views of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. Before imagining what this reconceptualization might look like, we will first evaluate the calls for new "environmental attitudes" that are common in contemporary environmental discourse in order to conclude whether or not attempting to change individuals' attitudes toward nature is the most appropriate path forward.

Environmental discourse often cites "environmental attitudes" as a central concern in changing human patterns of thought and behaviour to become more ecologically friendly. Environmental thinker Arne Naess, for example, argues that fostering particular attitudes, or "inclinations," in individuals is the most important strategy for effecting change in the fight for ecological sustainability, writing that, "…there is little understanding that fostering *inclination* is essential in every aspect of socialization and acculturation and therefore also in the global ecological crisis (Naess, 2008, p. 138)." It is often claimed that shifting our attitudes towards nature is crucial if we wish to stop environmental destruction, which assumes a fairly direct link between attitudes and environmental behaviours. This outlook is supported to some degree by recent research in social psychology; for example, a recent study by Tom Crompton and Tim

Kasser and funded by the World Wildlife Fund as part of their Strategies for Change Project, found that personal attitudes towards nature were closely correlated with positive or negative environmental behaviours (Crompton & Kasser, 2009, p. 9). The authors argue that due to overwhelming evidence that values and attitudes affect our environmental behaviours, those who wish to effect change in response to climate change should focus more seriously on shifting societal and personal values. This could include, they suggest, building awareness that humans are part of nature and helping people to express the intrinsic value they sense in nature (Crompton & Kasser, 2009, p. 56). However, the concept of attitudes is not often explained in these arguments, and the direct connection between environmental attitudes and behaviour is argued by some to have been overstated. Thomas A. Heberlein draws this conclusion from his study of environmental attitudes, arguing that although attitudes are certainly important to changing environmental behaviours, they are only a necessary and not a sufficient condition for creating real behavioural change at the individual level. Attitudes themselves are difficult to define, but are usually "based on values and built on beliefs," bringing with them varying degrees of consistency, rationality, and stability over time (Heberlein, 2012, p. 7). Heberlein argues that at the base of attitudes are values, which are in turn grounded in an individual's beliefs about the world (Heberlein, 2012, p. 15). Attitudes are rarely based on a single value or belief; instead, they are tied to an overall outlook or worldview in which many different, sometimes conflicting, beliefs and values are embedded (Heberlein, 2012, p. 25). Proposed solutions that reference changing attitudes offer what Heberlein calls a "cognitive fix," where new information is provided in order to inspire a change in attitudes, and subsequently a change in behaviour; this type of solution, he argues, has limited effectiveness when other structural or societal factors also have an influence on behaviour (Heberlein, 2012, p. 7). For example,

educating people about the benefits of recycling plastic products might positively influence their attitudes towards this behaviour, but they may still not actually recycle plastic if there is no easy way to do so where they live. Other social psychologists, like Daryl J. Bem in his book *Beliefs, Attitudes, and Human Affairs,* have questioned whether there is a strong connection between attitudes and behaviour at all (Bem, 1970). Heberlein is careful to note throughout *Navigating Environmental Attitudes,* however, that the lack of a direct connection between environmental attitudes and behaviours should not discourage us from attempts to change our attitudes towards nature, and that attitudes are far from irrelevant in this context. He writes that, "even though *individual* attitudes have little to do with *individual* behaviour, they are necessary to support collective actions to change the structure or context of human behaviour (Heberlein, 2012, p. 68)". Although changing attitudes through a "cognitive fix" may not offer a quick solution to the climate crisis, as some have hoped, attitudes can help to shape the structural conditions in which environmental behaviors occur on the social level, and should therefore not be neglected in environmental discourse.

A more pressing issue related to environmental attitudes, as Heberlein notes, is that many people have not thought deeply about what their personal attitudes towards nature might be, nor how society reflects certain environmental attitudes or a particular conception of nature. For many people, especially those who live in urban centres and have very little direct interaction with nature on a day-to-day basis, the environment exists as a backdrop for human life and is rarely considered in its own right. Bill McKibben describes this as a feeling of "permanence", where most people feel, whether consciously or subconsciously, that nature will always be able to support human needs and desires and therefore do not give it much thought (McKibben, 2006, p. 7). He writes that many people in the modern world see spending time in nature, especially in

the "wilderness," as a hobby, and feel that they are in some way separate from nature in their everyday lives (McKibben, 2006, p. 59). Climate change has forced us to examine and question this assumption, bringing us face to face with the idea that our place in the world is precarious and not guaranteed. Confronted with this new reality, we are forced to choose how we want to proceed; we can continue to deny our entanglement with nature at a serious cost to future generations and the environment, or we can make attempts to change our ways of thinking. Without uncovering and analysing what assumptions and attitudes we hold, however, there is no hope of changing them; this is not to say that this is an easy project, but it is one in which philosophical inquiry can be particularly helpful. Naomi Klein, a prominent environmental activist, writes in *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. The Climate* that the reason we have failed to confront climate change is because "the actions required directly challenge our reigning economic paradigm…the stories on which Western cultures are founded…as well as many of the activities that form our identities and define our communities (Klein, 2015, p. 63)". To effect change, it is crucial that we question our existing paradigms, stories, and our personal relationships with nature. This, of course, does not mean rejecting Western ideas and knowledges altogether, but instead challenging the idea that these knowledges are not underpinned by metaphysical assumptions and values, and are therefore universally acceptable. Klein is hopeful that change is possible, but without questioning our assumptions about nature and the human place within it, the kind of radical change needed will be impossible.

Despite the emphasis placed on shifting attitudes in recent environmental discourse, and the definitive role of attitudes in our behaviour, working to change societal or individual attitudes through new arguments or information may not be the most fruitful path forward for environmental ethics. Challenging the dominant Western conception of nature as a whole may

present both a more appropriate and effective way forward for environmental ethics. Further, while there is strong evidence for the claim that a new environmental ethic, and accompanying attitudes, is needed as part of the project to combat climate change and environmental degradation, purely pragmatic reasons like the need for reduced pollution or a cooler climate are not strong foundations for any ethical theory. It must also be shown that there are other reasons to support these claims if we wish to claim that a new ethic is needed. Providing support for the claim that challenging the dominant Western conception of nature is necessary on philosophical grounds will be the focus of the remainder of this chapter. I will argue that a new conception of nature is needed on theoretical grounds, in order to align the dominant conception with our best understanding of reality, but also as a matter of justice, since the rationalistic conception of nature excludes diverse perspectives on nature, specifically those found in many Indigenous philosophies. These are two serious reasons to challenge the rationalistic conception of nature. We will first consider the theoretical aspect of this reconceptualization, then turn to the importance of this project as a matter of justice.

Western environmental ethics, as it currently stands, presents barriers to those interested in promoting the new conception of nature that many feel is necessary. The primary concern for Western environmental ethicists has traditionally been limited to extending moral concern, historically reserved for human beings alone, to the rest of nature. This value is conceptualized either as purely instrumental, where nature is seen as valuable only as a means to other ends, usually the good of human beings, or intrinsic, where nature is seen as good in itself. Human beings are most often seen as being intrinsically valuable simply because of their status as human beings, with moral obligations following directly from this intrinsic value (Burkhart, 2009, p. 27). Although the instrumental valuation of nature does not necessarily follow from the intrinsic

valuation of human beings, this is normally the conception with which we are presented. An analysis of this claim is outside the scope of this work; instead, I will focus on concerns arising from this dichotomy as a whole. When nature is conceptualized as only instrumentally valuable, it becomes morally permissible to use it in almost any way necessary to promote the good of human beings, who are placed above and outside of nature because of their intrinsic value. This justifies the exploitation of nature, including animals, for our benefit, with little attention paid to the effects of this exploitation on nonhuman species (Winter, 2022, p. 9). The sciences also influence this conception of value; the scientific worldview that became dominant during the Industrial Revolution presupposes a sharp division between the physical world, including nature, which is perceived as objective, inert, and value-free, and the subjective realm of value, thought, and consciousness. Modern science, which influences much of Western society, still holds that nature is value-neutral in order to position it as an object of inquiry, making the attribution of anything but instrumental value to nature through this lens virtually impossible (Callicot, 1989b, p. 133). Despite developments in quantum theory and relativity that have pushed back against the subjective/objective dualism in scientific thought, environmental philosopher J. Baird Callicot writes that, "the classical attitude that nature is value-neutral remains a virtually unchallenged dogma of the scientific worldview (Callicot, 1989b, p. 133)". Callicot also describes the persistence of this same divide in Western ethics, writing that most Western philosophical systems assume the intrinsic value of human beings, citing Kant as one influential example, while excluding nonhuman species from moral consideration (Callicot, 1989b, p. 131). Kant's respect-for-persons version of the categorical imperative dictates that all human beings, due to their capacity for reason, ought to be treated as ends in themselves, never solely as means; this attributes to human beings an intrinsic value that cannot be extended to nonhumans (Kant, 1929,

p. 308). Rationalism, derived from Kant and the work of other philosophers during the Enlightenment, has also influenced this conception of nature, as we will explore below. Based on these influences, Western environmental ethics has developed into a largely anthropocentric field of study, focused almost exclusively on the good for human beings, with few notable exceptions.

The instrumental valuation of nature has recently been challenged as part of the broader environmental movement, with many seeking to provide a viable framework in which non-human nature can be said to possess intrinsic value, akin to the value attributed to human beings (Callicott, 2015, p. 114). One notable attempt to challenge the idea that only human beings possess intrinsic value has been the animal rights movement, spearheaded Peter Singer and Tom Regan, which seeks to extend inherent rights to animals as well as human beings. Singer and Reagan's work is influential not just within the realm of academic philosophy, but also guides the thinking of activists and environmentalists on the subject of animal ethics (Waldau, 2011). Peter Singer's utilitarian theory of animal welfare, expounded in his 1975 book *Animal Liberation: A New Ethics for Our Treatment of Animals,* extends the traditional utilitarian moral calculus of pleasure and pain to include the experiences of animals. According to Singer, a truly just utilitarian approach that takes all pain and pleasure into consideration in its moral calculus would need to extend the same consideration of interests that is given to humans to animals. This is a matter of maintaining logical consistency, since it cannot be denied that animals, like humans, experience pain and pleasure (Singer, 2001, p. 35). Despite its strong influence on the wider "animal liberation" movement, which seeks to free animals from use in the production of food and clothing, and aims to protect the interests of animals to the same extent as those of humans, Singer's utilitarian animal ethic has faced staunch criticism. Most of this critique centers on the perceived differences between animals and humans, such as the capacity for

complex emotion, which is a detail not taken into account by Singer's utilitarian theory (Regan, 1983, p. 16). Further, the type of utilitarianism Singer puts forward is inherently individualistic, and therefore cannot account for entire species or ecosystems, whose protection is often the focus of environmentalists, which some have argued make this theory generally inadequate for dealing with the greater environmental concerns facing us in age of climate change (Bassham, 2020, p. 39). In response to the utilitarian approach championed by Singer, Tom Reagan offers a rights-based framework to justify the extension of moral concern to animals in his most influential book, *The Case for Animal Rights*. According to Regan, no moral theorist can plausibly deny that humans have some obligations to nonhuman animals, and seeks to show that animals have rights akin to those of humans based on their inherent value as "subjects-of-a-life" (Regan, 1983). Being "subjects-of-a-life," all sentient beings ought to be prevented from experiencing gratuitous suffering; the subjectivity of each individual who can experience their own life makes them inherently valuable in themselves. Regan argues that all subjects of a life, both human and nonhuman, are intrinsically valuable and deserving of respect, and challenges the idea that humans are separate from animals and nature solely because of their capacity for rationality, as suggested by Kant (Regan, 1983). One critique of Regan's theory of animal rights is that it does not provide clear guidance on where we should "draw the line" and stop bestowing rights on living beings. Reagan does offer criteria for being a "subject-of-a -life" which are intended to provide guidance on this question, writing that subjects-of-a-life must have beliefs, desires, perception, memory, and an emotional life, among other capacities (Regan, 1983, p. 243). Not all animals fit these criteria, however, and whether or not an animal meets these criteria must be decided based on their capacities, which may be difficult to ascertain. The animal rights movement, despite its critics, reflects the possibility of extending moral concern

beyond rational agents based on reasoned argumentation. Regan and Singer's influential work has demonstrated that it is possible to create a philosophical framework that extends intrinsic value to nonhuman animals, which can be seen as a first step towards challenging the instrumental valuation of nature as a whole. These approaches have also demonstrated the capacity for environmental ethics to influence public debates about the valuation of nature through their influence over the animal rights movement, and have succeeded in changing the way that many people think about their moral obligations to animals.

Another approach to challenging the instrumental valuation of nature has been to argue for a theory focused on the personal and spiritual significance of nature, rather than a rights-based or utilitarian theory. These "biocentric" ethical theories assert the value of all living things, avoiding the issue of line-drawing, and attempt to capture the spiritual value that many people experience in nature. One early and notable biocentric theory in the Western canon is that of Albert Schweitzer, who argues in *The Philosophy of Civilization* for a theory of "reverence for life" which would extend substantive moral concern beyond the animal kingdom to every living thing (Schweitzer, 1946, p. 246). This ethic dictates that every living thing has "will-to-live" that has the same importance as any other, meaning that all living things must be equally revered (Schweitzer, 1946, p. 250). All forms of life should not just be valued, according to this theory, but regarded as sacred. Schweitzer's theory presents a radical form of biocentrism, a family of theories that accords intrinsic value to all living beings, not just animals. The spiritual aspect of Schweitzer's reverence-for-life ethic, however, is not widely accepted as an appropriate basis for an ethical theory, since it does not have a solid grounding in reason or empirical observation. Some have also argued that "reverence" is too strong an approach, and that although living beings deserve some degree of respect, considering them to be sacred is inappropriate. In

response to these critiques, the value of a spiritual approach has been supported by thinkers such as Bron Taylor, who writes that understanding the natural world as sacred is a powerful basis for environmental ethics, even among those who reject conventional religions, for its capacity to express the depth and power of the feeling of connection with the rest of nature (Taylor, 2015, p. 257). Other notable environmental thinkers have also expressed feelings of reverence for nature; Aldo Leopold's "land ethic," outlined in *A Sand County Almanac,* is one example. Leopold calls for us to reorient our ethical outlook to include all of nature, seeing humans as part of the natural world rather than its conquerors (Leopold, 1966, p. 240). According to this outlook, "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community," which means that all parts of an ecosystem must be considered in ethical reasoning (Leopold, 1966, p. 262). This biocentric approach also involves a personal, spiritual connection with nature and feeling that the natural world is sacred. The wide influence of Leopold's work, which is considered by some to have started the modern environmental movement, is evidence that this approach resonates with many.

The desire to reimagine the moral valuation of nature expressed in these approaches points to a deeper problem with the instrumental valuation of nature: it does not align with our best scientific and philosophical understandings of the human place in nature. The animal rights movement and the development of biocentric theories of environmental ethics demonstrate the need to move away from the idea that humans are inherently different and separate from the rest of the natural world towards an understanding of the human place in nature that acknowledges our similarities with (other) animals and interconnectedness with the rest of the natural world. The instrumental valuation of nature against which these theorists have argued is, as we have seen, grounded in the metaphysical view that humans are separate from nature. This assertion,

although it is often suggested by the rationalistic worldview, is not purely rational or self-evident. Rationalism is believed to be universalizable by its proponents, meaning that the demands of reason can fairly be applied to any society or knowledge system, since the use of rationality coupled with the same evidence should lead any rational agents to the same conclusions (Allard-Tremblay, 2021, p. 1028). Despite the pervasiveness in Western political thought, and its claim to universality, however, rationality is not a self-evident basis for understanding our place in the world. Rather, it is grounded in a particular, historically constructed view of the relationship between human beings and nature which is not actually supported by philosophical or scientific inquiry into our relationships with the rest of the natural world. The rationalist worldview that positions humans outside and separate from the natural world, which developed in the historical context specific to the Western, industrialized world, is based on premises that can and should be called into question. According to scientific study, as well as metaphysical inquiry, humans are necessarily interconnected and interdependent with the rest of the natural world, not separate from it. These realities should lead us to question whether the "rationalistic" worldview that positions humans as capable of dominating nature is truly rational all the way down, as its proponents would claim. The human experience of nature, as well as the findings of scientific ecology and the related field of deep ecology, show us that humans do not exist apart from nature; even by the most rational approach, it is clear that humans deeply interconnected with and dependent on the natural world for survival. Christine J. Winter expresses this idea in *Subjects of Intergenerational Justice,* where she writes that

> Whether acknowledged or not, human life is dependent on the environment. People, like any planetary life-form, depend on an ideal climate—not too hot, not too cold, not too wet, not too dry. Clean water and air, and adequate supplies of nutrients so foods can flourish, are the fundamental building blocks of life, the component parts, as it were, of survival…However, there are those who seek more than this from the environment. For them, it can also be a

> source of enjoyment, mental and physical sustenance, of spiritual nourishment…non-monetary, non-material benefits (Winter, 2022, p. 9).

Any conception of nature that places human beings above or apart from nature is inconsistent with the fact that all life, including human beings, is inherently interconnected with and dependent on other life forms, as well as the environment as a whole, for both survival and enjoyment. Ecologists have made this point from a scientific perspective, arguing that all life is interconnected in ecosystems, where all life forms are understood to be dependent on the careful balance of all others. Merlin Sheldrake, who explores the ways in which fungi help to connect and sustain other life forms in his book *Entangled Life,* argues that ecology challenges the rationalistic idea that living beings are "autonomous individuals with neat borders (Sheldrake, 2020, p. 147)". The field of scientific ecology has sought to understand ecosystems in all of their complexity, and has brought a new understanding of nature as living and interdependent ecosystems, rather than atomistic individuals (Callicot, 1989c, p. 102). Humans, according to the ecological view, are understood as equal participants in these complex systems, rather than separate entities. The holistic, systems-based approach[2] expressed in much of the recent work in scientific ecology is also reflected in James Lovelock's famous "Gaia Hypothesis," which posits that the whole earth is a living system that seeks to maintain the ideal conditions for its ecosystems—a careful balance which anthropogenic climate change has disrupted (Lovelock, 2021, p. 19).

Ecology has revolutionized the way that scientists think about nature, and its findings have also inspired developments in environmental philosophy. Understanding humans as interdependent with ecosystems and part of nature forces us to reimagine our place in the natural

[2] Systems-based approaches, which present a more holistic approach, have nonetheless been criticized for continuing to mechanize nature through metaphor. See Merlin Sheldrake, *Entangled Life,* P. 212 for a discussion of why the metaphors we use to understand nature matter.

world, which has consequences for much of Western metaphysics and ethics, which has often appealed to the distinction between nature and culture that separates humans from the rest of the natural world. The field of deep ecology was created to deal specifically with the philosophical and ethical consequences of these new scientific findings. Deep ecology, as expressed by its founder Arne Naess, is "inspired" or "suggested" by developments in scientific ecology, but does not follow logically from scientific conclusions. Naess and other deep ecologists challenge the mechanistic conception of nature, often linked with science, which posits that the natural world can be fully described through the formulation of natural laws, and can properly be considered a merely instrumentally valuable object of study (Naess, 1973, p. 98). It is a platform that rejects both the "production and consumption ideology" that it perceives to be present in Western, industrialized states, as well as the "shallow" approach taken by mainstream environmentalism which is focused on fighting pollution and resource depletion, among other pragmatic concerns, rather than questioning ultimate goals and norms (Naess, 1989, p. 27). Since it does not challenge the ideologies and societal norms that lead to environmental problems, including the idea that humans are separate from nature, and assigns only intrinsic value to nature by conceptualizing it as a resource, the "shallow" approach is seen by deep ecologists as insufficient as a way of responding to modern environmental destruction. Deep ecology, on the other hand, rejects the idea that humans are separate from nature in favour of "the relational, total-field image" in which all organisms, including humans, are seen as equally important knots in a wider field of relations (Naess, 1989, p. 28). This image more accurately represents the interconnectedness of living beings, rather than viewing them as atomistic individuals. Relationships, on the "deep" view, are seen as essential to the basic constitution of things as they are, and living things cannot be understood outside of their relationships. As well as being

misaligned with the reality that human beings are interdependent with the rest of the natural world, the metaphysical image of the world that is presented by the rationalistic worldview can be connected to the production of the current environmental crisis. Deep ecology challenges the rationalistic worldview on both philosophical and pragmatic grounds in hopes of aligning our dominant metaphysical understanding of the world with the actual nature of the world as revealed by scientific ecology and philosophical inquiry.

Although deep ecology is in part a response to the climate crisis—which is clear from Naess' assertion that the environmental crisis, although potentially devastating, also presents positive opportunities for reframing the idea of progress and the creation of a better society for all (Naess, 1989, p. 27)—it also seeks to provide a philosophical framework within which a new conception of nature can be articulated. An important part of deep ecology's project of questioning the rationalistic view of nature is the recognition that value-laden, spontaneous, and emotional experience is an important source of knowledge about reality; Naess writes that recognizing the importance of our subjective experiences of nature necessitates a new idea of nature altogether, one that does not coincide with the rationalistic view of nature which is often attributed to the sciences (Naess, 1989, p. 32). This approach, as Naess explains (Naess, 1989, p. 51), is borrowed from phenomenology, a school of thought developed by thinkers like Husserl, Derrida, and Merleau-Ponty, that seeks to, as Husserl writes, "return to the things themselves" by looking to our experience of nature as a source of knowledge, rather than purely "rational" inquiry beginning from rational principles (Merleau-Ponty, 2014, p. lxxiii). Phenomenologists have worked on a wide range of topics, and many have provided important insights about the relationship between humans and nature based on our experience of nature rather than rational models. A full overview of the existing work in ecophenomenology falls outside the scope of this

work; the goal of the following overview of recent work by phenomenologists with regards to nature is to show that the dominant Western conception of nature, as well as that of the relationship between nature and human beings, can and should be questioned. Beyond the pragmatic concerns of slowing climate change and influencing individuals' attitudes towards the environment, there are important philosophical questions raised by ecophenomenology about the rationalistic conception of nature, which is argued to represent only one way of looking at the world, and one that does not reflect our meaningful experience of nature. Environmentalism often takes science, most recently scientific ecology, as its starting point and model; this creates, according to ecophenomenologist Ted Toadvine, an environmental ethic that focuses on "problems" and "solutions" rather than challenging the deeper assumptions about nature that frame those problems (Toadvine, 2009, p. 4). Ecophenomenology presents a methodological approach toward an "alternative" conception of nature that expresses our emotional, lived experience of nature, rejecting the supposedly objective rationalistic approach and the idea that environmental problems can be given technological solutions (Brown & Toadvine, 2003, p. xii). Working against mind-body and nature-culture dualism, which are seen as constraining our understanding of the human-nature relationship, ecophenomenology recognizes the experience of nature as ontologically prior to any scientific description, and challenges the dominant idea that science provides us with the definitive description of the world (Toadvine, 2015, p. 177). This approach provides a "multifaceted philosophical investigation of nature, one that includes its ontological, epistemological, aesthetic, and theological dimensions…(Toadvine, 2009, p. 6)" rather than simply offering pragmatic solutions. Ecophenomenology sees the question of the human-relation nature as part of a greater project of understanding our experience meaning in the world, and as important for its own sake. It has also been noted, however, that there are practical

applications for an understanding of nature informed by ecophenomenology despite its theoretical focus. Toadvine writes that our lack of clarity about the "human-nature relation hamstrings current efforts to develop practical guidelines, for instance, in the fields of wilderness preservation and environmental restoration (Toadvine, 2009, p. 11)". Ted Toadvine and Charles S. Brown describe how philosophy, and specifically ecophenomenology, can help us to confront the climate crisis in *Ecophenomenology: Back to the Earth Itself,* writing that,

> If philosophy does have a contribution to make in today's practical decision making, this contribution will likely begin with steady and insightful clarification of our ethical and metaphysical assumptions about ourselves and the world around us. These basic assumptions— about the relation between individual and society, human nature, the nature of nature, and the nature of the Good—underlie all of our current behavior, both individually and culturally. But the assumptions that have guided our past behavior reveal their limitations as we think about, imagine, and live through the events and consequences of what we call the environmental crisis. When confronted with the consequences of our actions—mass extinctions, climate change, global pollution, dwindling resources—we inevitably experience a moral unease over what has been done, what we have done, to nature. We cannot help but ask about the root of this deep-seated moral reaction, and the changes it calls for in our current practices. To answer these questions, we need the help of philosophy (Brown & Toadvine, 2003, p. x).

Toadvine and Brown make a strong case for the importance of philosophical inquiry into the human place in nature not just as a theoretical issue, but also as a natural reaction to the climate crisis and part of the path forward in confronting this crisis. The climate crisis has forced us to question the human place in nature and our metaphysical image of the world; even without the climate crisis, however, challenging the dominant Western conception of nature would be a worthwhile project for purely philosophical reasons. Despite the potential for practical application of these ideas, their philosophical importance should be seen as prior, with pragmatic concerns following from independently established conclusions. Ecophenomenology, then, demonstrates how the project of understanding the human place in nature is both philosophically and pragmatically important.

Deep ecology and ecophenomenology provide insights into the relationship between humans and the rest of nature, which are of great philosophical importance, and provide two possible approaches to challenging the rationalistic conception of nature. Deep ecologists and ecophenomenologists are not alone, however, in challenging the dominant conception of nature and scientific approach to understanding the natural world; many elements of these approaches are compatible with non-Western philosophies of nature, specifically Indigenous philosophies. Those seeking alternatives to the Western conception of environmental ethics have increasingly been drawn to Indigenous philosophies for their radically different approaches to the relationship between humans and the rest of nature. Indigenous philosophies can provide insights into these questions that can both complement and go beyond the contributions of Western thinkers. Indigenous philosophies offer an approach that does not rely on instrumental or intrinsic valuation; the diverse range of ideas that can be attributed to Indigenous philosophies offer a different way of understanding our relationship to the natural world that can serve as inspiration for the reconceptualization of nature that is so often sought by Western thinkers. Annie Booth and Harvey M. Jacobs argue in their article, "Ties That Bind: Native American Beliefs as a Foundation for Environmental Consciousness," for the relevance of Indigenous beliefs to the Western project of formulating a new environmental ethic, writing that Indigenous beliefs and philosophies seem to offer the kind of radical solutions that are currently being sought to help manage the environmental crisis and reimagine our relationship with nature, and noting that these approaches affirm the work of deep ecologists (Booth & Jacobs, 1990). Others, including James Tully, have echoed this sentiment in their work, calling for non-Indigenous people to look to Indigenous knowledge and philosophies and learn from the diverse wealth of knowledge they contain (Tully, 2018). As we saw in the introductory chapter, some difficulties arise when

engaging with Indigenous philosophies from within a Western philosophical framework. The dynamic, lived nature of Indigenous knowledge makes it difficult to describe some ideas and concepts in written language, especially languages like English that are structurally ill-equipped to communicate many of these concepts. Further, many Indigenous philosophies and ways of knowing have been suppressed through colonialism, and there exists a fairly limited body of scholarship on Indigenous philosophies because of this oppression. Indigenous scholars, however, have sought to retrieve and communicate this knowledge to Western audiences in an attempt to pass along the insights contained in Indigenous knowledges despite these challenges, and scholars such as Tully, Booth, and Jacobs present strong arguments in support of the possibility of understanding each other despite these difficulties.

Giving one definition of Indigenous knowledge, which encompasses Indigenous philosophies, science, and spirituality, is both challenging and problematic. Like any body of knowledge, Indigenous knowledge should not be presented as uniform or homogenous. Marie Battiste and James Henderson raise concerns about the imposition of definitions on Indigenous knowledge by Western academics, arguing that these definitions do not accurately represent the lived nature of Indigenous knowledge and separates this knowledge from the context in which it originates and is lived by knowers (Battiste, 2000, p. 36). Battiste and Henderson do offer one description of Indigenous knowledge, however, which they do not claim is representative of all Indigenous knowledge. In *Protecting Indigenous Knowledge and Heritage,* they write that,

> Perhaps the closest one can get to describing unity in Indigenous knowledge is that knowledge is the expression of the vibrant relationships between people, their ecosystems, and other living beings and spirits that share their lands…All aspects of knowledge are interrelated and cannot be separated from the traditional territories of the people concerned… To the Indigenous ways of knowing, the self exists within a world that is subject to flux. The purpose of these ways of knowing is to reunify the world or at least to reconcile the world to itself. Indigenous knowledge is the way of living within context of flux, paradox, tension, respecting the pull of dualism and reconciling opposing forces…

> Developing these ways of knowing leads to freedom of consciousness and to solidarity with the natural world (Battiste, 2000, p. 42).

This definition, although it represents only one perspective on the diverse range of Indigenous knowledges, highlights some of the concepts that appear in many Indigenous philosophies: the interrelated nature of personal identity and one's relationships with others and the land, the pursuit of balance amidst opposing forces, and the situation of the knower within the natural world. In other academic literature, Indigenous philosophies have been described as a fundamentally relational, presenting an outlook in which everything is interconnected and interdependent. The principles of relational ethics are not deduced from abstract principles, but rather built on context in which one lives with others (J. McGregor, 2018, p. 120). Moral obligations are derived not from rational duties to atomistic, individual others, but from the relationships between the self and others, including living beings, past and future generations, and the land. The quality of relationality is, according to Sandra Littletree, Miranda Belarde-Lewis, and Marisa Duarte, "…what distinguishes Indigenous ways of knowing from Western knowledge in a fundamental way (Littletree et al., 2020, p. 412)". A relational approach helps us to see the ways in which everything on earth, both living and inanimate, is connected and dependent on everything else, and can inform a radically different conception of morality.

These ideas point to the fact that Indigenous philosophies position the knower in a way that diverges significantly from the dominant Western way of knowing the world, which is heavily influenced by the principles of scientific inquiry. Rather than starting with the assumption that human beings hold a privileged place in the world, standing outside and above nature, Indigenous philosophies start from an assumption that the knower is positioned within their relationships with the land and others. Looking to the differences between Western and Indigenous Creation stories can help to further clarify this distinction and provide insights into

how each outlook positions the knower in relation to the rest of the natural world. As we have seen in Chapter One, the Christian creation story described in Genesis reflects a conception of nature wherein humans are placed outside of the natural world (Merchant, 1995, p. 137). Indigenous Creation stories express a different understanding of the relationship between human and non-human living beings; one example is the Haudenosaunee story of Sky Woman, the core of which Brian Maracle describes as follows:

> ...a woman fell through a hole in the sky-world and came to rest on a turtle's back. She gave birth to a daughter, who dies giving birth to twin boys. After creating the features of the earth, the twins battled for control. The right-handed twin won and created the first human beings with a handful of clay (Maracle, 2004, p. 28)[3].

In this Creation story, unlike the Christian one, humans are involved in the creation of the world and are not separate from the rest of Creation. Although the Christian worldview is not representative of all Western philosophy, it presents a narrative that reinforces the distinction between humans and nature that has been influential in the development of the dominant Western conception of nature. Indigenous Creation stories present a fundamentally different worldview, one that understands the world as interdependent and centers relationality as the foundation of morality. E. Richard Atleo also highlights the importance of Creation stories in *Tsawalk: A Nuu-chah-nulth Worldview,* where he writes that the idea that "everything is one," expressed in the Nuu-chah-nulth phrase *heshook-ish tsawalk*, is not just related to Creation stories but depends on them as the foundation of this knowledge and as a guide for interpreting it. Atleo also writes that this idea and its connection to Nuu-chah-nulth Creation stories is central to understanding the Nuu-chah-nulth worldview, highlighting the importance of these stories (Atleo, 2004, p. xi). While many Western societies have attempted to divorce knowledge from

[3] Maracle provides a beautiful long-form retelling of this Creation story in this book chapter, and many other retellings are also available; see Robin Wall Kimmerer, *Braiding Sweetgrass.* Milkweed Editions: Canada, 2013, p. 3-7 for one example.

origin/Creation stories in favour of purely "rational" understanding of the world, Indigenous knowledges remain grounded in the understanding of the nature of existence presented in these stories. As Atleo explains, this gives concepts such as "everything is one" a deeper meaning than the one they are commonly understood to have in environmental discourse; in Nuu-chah-nulth philosophies, seeing everything as one means more than the unity of the physical universe, including both the physical and metaphysical (Atleo, 2004, p. xi). These meanings are difficult to communicate outside of the Creation stories and cultural contexts from which they originate, and cannot be captured by rationalistic inquiry that sees the world as inert and mechanistic. Maracle writes that the Indigenous Creation stories are more than just stories; their teachings are "a guiding light in how [Indigenous peoples] conduct our lives (Maracle, 2004, p. 29)," and continue to inform the lives of Indigenous people and communities. Deborah McGregor also highlights the lived nature of Indigenous knowledges in her work, writing that Indigenous knowledges should be understood as part of larger knowledge system, comprising the legal, political, spiritual, and economic aspects of a community, and that these knowledge systems "represent more than just "knowledge" (as a noun); they represent a way of life, something that has to be lived (as a verb) in order to be known, understood, and practiced (D. McGregor, 2021, p. 2)." McGregor goes on to explain that Indigenous knowledges cannot be acquired or learned "without having undergone similar experiences to those originally involved in acquiring/ generating, holding, and transmitting such knowledge (D. McGregor, 2021, p. 3)." This differs greatly from the traditional Western philosophical approach of transmitting knowledge, where any individual can acquire knowledge through schooling or reading written texts. The lived nature of Indigenous knowledges means that the individuals who hold these knowledges are essential to any attempt to learn from them, as it is knowledge holders who truly understand

these knowledges from a place of personal experience. This also means that Indigenous knowledges cannot be extracted from their contexts without losing much of their meaning and significance, since they can only be understood in relation to their specific contexts.

Although Indigenous knowledges express a different understanding of the human place in the natural world than the one characterized by the dominant, rationalistic conception of nature in the West, they are not radically different from the work of Western philosophers in deep ecology and ecophenomenology. As we have seen, deep ecologists and ecophenomenologists have both challenged the dominant Western view of nature and attempted to create frameworks which challenge the instrumental valuation of nature. Although Western and Indigenous philosophies cannot be directly compared, as they originate in different contexts and inform divergent worldviews, the approaches taken by deep ecology and ecophenomenology are compatible with some of the ideas present in many Indigenous philosophies. Specifically, both the aforementioned alternative Western approaches and Indigenous philosophies present an alternative way of understanding our relationship to the natural world, one which challenges the dominant Western view of nature as mechanistic and merely instrumentally valuable. Deep ecologists and ecophenomenologists are not the only Western scholars challenging the dominant conception of nature, however; feminist scholars have explored the idea of relationality through care ethics, which has been defined as an approach to moral life grounded in our relationships with others, highlighting the importance of caretaking and reciprocity in morality (Gilligan, 2016). In contrast to ethical theories that assume moral decisions are made by individual, isolated moral agents, care ethics is premised on the idea that morality should fundamentally, although not solely, address issues of relationships between people (Whyte & Cuomo, 2015, p. 235). Ecofeminists have adopted this view of morality, applying a relational framework to all of

nature, not just human relationships; Joan McGregor describes this ethical approach as "responsibility ethics," where responsibility for the earth and one's community are the central themes. In "Toward a Philosophical Understanding of TEK and Ecofeminism," McGregor describes how the ecofeminist approach complements and is supported by Indigenous framings of ethics due to the relational nature of both Indigenous and ecofeminist philosophies (J. McGregor, 2018, p. 118). Kyle Whyte and Chris Cuomo also describe the similarities between the Indigenous and feminist care ethics approaches, writing that both ecofeminist care ethics and Indigenous philosophies question conceptions of nature as inert and center ideas of interdependence and relationality; this, according to the authors, provides fertile ground for collaboration in working towards environmental justice (Whyte & Cuomo, 2015, p. 236). It may also be argued that the similarities between Indigenous and alternative Western conceptions of nature, such as those expressed in deep ecology, ecophenomenology, and ecofeminist care ethics, demonstrate that although Indigenous philosophies differ greatly from the dominant Western conception of nature and environmental ethics, they may not be as far removed from all Western knowledge as they first appear. Many Western philosophical approaches are compatible with, and supported by, the knowledges contained in Indigenous philosophies, despite their different cultural contexts and meanings; this may be helpful to those working within the Western tradition and hoping to learn from the concepts contained in Indigenous philosophies.

Indigenous ways of knowing are unconstrained by the rationalistic understanding of nature that has made it difficult to justify extending moral concern to nature. The relational ethics found in so many Indigenous philosophies do not start from the same set of assumptions as most Western theories, where only human beings are considered to have intrinsic value. Instead, value is derived from relationships to others; since human and nonhuman beings are considered to be

interdependent and related in most Indigenous philosophies, there can be no valuation of different kinds of beings in isolation from one another. The work of Indigenous philosopher Brian Burkhart illustrates one way in which Indigenous philosophies can challenge the dichotomy between instrumental and intrinsic value, which he argues is a result of Western knowledge's lack of connection to the living earth (Burkhart, 2019, p. 195). Localized knowledge that is derived from a relationship with the land brings with it an entirely different worldview, one in which these conceptions of value no longer make sense. Burkhart writes that,

> When these concepts of life, sacredness, interconnectedness, and so on are applied to the intrinsic/instrumental value problem, the possibility of a different understanding arises or at least initially the need for a different understanding is necessitated. When seen through this lens, the response to the problem is clear: neither intrinsic nor instrumental value can be the correct way to account for our moral obligation to nonhumans. Nothing has value in isolation, which means that a thing as a static and isolated node of reality [as is the view of nature according to the rationalistic, mechanistic worldview that characterizes Western thought] would have no value whatsoever (Burkhart, 2019, p. 200).

The relational approach that Burkhart describes points to a way of seeing ourselves and the natural world that fundamentally challenges the dichotomy between instrumental and intrinsic value. Since nothing, on this view, exists in isolation, determining value as a human observer standing outside of nature becomes impossible. Relational ethics call into question not only the dichotomy between instrumental and intrinsic value, but also the idea that value can be assigned to isolated individuals at all. Burkhart describes this value by the quality of sacredness to all interconnected things, even inanimate objects like rocks or landscapes, since these too are connected with other beings (Burkhart, 2019, p. 201). Burkhart's work demonstrates the power of Indigenous philosophies to challenge our fundamental philosophical assumptions and model a radically different way of approaching the world and conceptualizing its value. Fikret Berkes also acknowledges the "power of [Indigenous philosophies] to address some of the shortcoming of the contemporary Western knowledge-practice-belief complex... (Berkes, 2018, p. 295)", in

Sacred Ecology, especially insofar as they inherently incorporate the spiritual and ethical with ecological knowledge. This, she argues, results in a holistic approach to environmental ethics that does not depend on some of the assumptions, like the intrinsic/instrumental value dichotomy, that have proven problematic in Western thought. Berkes writes that, "In building new ecological ethics, traditional ecological [Indigenous] knowledge bridges the gap between instrumental values that characterize utilitarianism and intrinsic values that characterize biocentric ethics (Berkes, 2018, p. 296)". Relational ethics offer a different approach, grounded in an alternative way of understanding and relating to the world, that challenges the dominant Western worldview. By starting from a fundamentally different set of assumptions about the nature of reality and the place of humans in the world, Indigenous philosophies offer an approach that avoids many of the issues plaguing Western environmental ethics and can serve as a model for a new conception of nature that captures the interdependence between human and non-human beings.

Despite growing calls for increased consideration of Indigenous perspectives, Western philosophy has not been as quick as other disciplines, such as ecology, to recognize the importance of these knowledges. Indigenous knowledges and philosophies have historically been excluded from environmental discourse because of their misalignment with rationalistic ways of thinking. As Allard-Tremblay describes, rationalistic worldviews are skeptical of any knowledge not established by pure reason, and assumes that these forms of knowledge, including Indigenous knowledges, need to be justified by universalizable, rationalistic ways of acquiring knowledge (Allard-Tremblay, 2021, p. 1027). Ecology has recently begun to look to Indigenous knowledges, usually presented in the form of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) as a resource when seeking to protect or restore damaged ecosystems. Indigenous methodologies

have begun to be recognized within the sciences as valid and fruitful ways of gaining understanding of the natural world; these methodologies include storywork and an emphasis on lived, first-hand experience of natural processes[4]. These approaches highlight relationality and the connections between interdependent parts of the earth, which inherently challenges the traditional atomistic, mechanistic Western scientific worldview and has helped scientists better understand the working of ecosystems. TEK has been recognized by some Western scientists as an alternative to the dominant scientific paradigm which reduces ecosystems to atomized parts and therefore struggles to capture or deal with the complexity of entire ecosystems (Singleton et al., 2021). In the context of climate change, Indigenous methodologies have also proven invaluable in understanding novel changes in the climate and individual ecosystems. Regna Darnell writes that, "science lacks the time and depth taken for granted by traditional ecological knowledge… Many scientific experts never 'visit' the land on which they pass judgement based on abstraction from the uniqueness of local contexts (Darnell, 2018, p. 235)," and emphasizes the importance of learning from localized knowledge derived from the land. Although research on TEK abounds, its findings are not always accepted by the scientific community, despite its proven benefits in efforts towards sustainability. Many Western researchers are still hesitant to embrace Indigenous perspectives, which are in many ways fundamentally different from the schools of thought in which they were educated. There has also been pushback from Indigenous thinkers about the way that TEK is characterized and used by Western scientists; Deborah McGregor writes that the concept of "Traditional Ecological Knowledge," although a real kind

[4] See Shawn Wilson, *Research is Ceremony.* Fernwood Publishing: Halifax, 2008 and Sara Florence Davidson, "Following the song of *k'aad 'aww:* using Indigenous storywork principles to guide ethical practices in research" in *Decolonizing Research: Indigenous Storywork as Methodology,* ed. Jo-Ann Archibald, Q'um Q'um Xiiem, Jenny Bol Jun Lee-Morgan, and Jason De Santolo. Zed Books: London, 2019 for two excellent examples of the ways in which science has been shown to benefit from the incorporation of Indigenous methodologies.

of knowledge, is a Western and colonial construct that divorces Indigenous knowledge about the environment from other crucial and connected beliefs and values (D. McGregor, 2004, p. 386). Traditional Ecological Knowledge does exist, writes McGregor, but is usually defined by Western thinkers in a way that divorces it from the land and the people that hold it. A better term for this knowledge, writes McGregor, is "Indigenous Knowledge (IK)," which reflects the broader context in which Indigenous knowledge about the environment develops. Indigenous Knowledge can be described as,

> …not just knowledge per se. It is the lives lived by people and their particular relationship with Creation. In conventional Eurocentric definitions of Indigenous Knowledge, it is presented as a noun, a thing, knowledge; but to Indigenous people, it is much more than knowledge. Indigenous Knowledge cannot be separated from the people who hold and practice it, nor can it be separated from the land/environment/Creation (D. McGregor, 2004, p. 390).

In the context of Western science, TEK is often extracted from Indigenous communities and knowledge holders and used as a resource to further scientific inquiry or the development of technology without acknowledging or attempting to understand the connection between TEK and Indigenous values, beliefs, and traditions (D. McGregor, 2004, p. 398). McGregor also notes that Western science is still the standard against which TEK is evaluated, demonstrating a lack of respect for TEK as a valid source of knowledge about the world (D. McGregor, 2004, p. 397). McGregor does believe, however, that reconciliation between the Western concept of TEK and that of IK is possible, and that using this reconciled form of knowledge can be a powerful tool for the assertion of Indigenous control over the land when applied to policy and solving environmental problems (D. McGregor, 2004, p. 396). Others have also critiqued the perceived need to validate TEK with Western science; Christine J. Winter writes that the assumption that Indigenous knowledge is inadequate on its own and needs to be justified by Western knowledge reflects the idea that Western knowledge is "neutral" and its value system is, and should be, the

"norm" (Winter, 2022, p. 77). This assumption, however, is no longer tenable; as we have seen, Western knowledge systems have been historically constructed, and their assumptions and values are not self-evident or neutral. As Walter Mignolo writes, all knowledge is situated in a particular context, and no knowledge can be truly neutral or the standard against which other knowledge is measured. Assuming that a particular kind of knowledge can form this standard is, according to Mignolo, an act of "epistemic ignorance and violence in plain view (Mignolo, 2009, p. 160)".

The idea that injustice and violence is committed by excluding or devaluing certain kinds of knowledge, especially those held by minority groups, has also been explored though the concept of epistemic oppression. Miranda Fricker defines this violence as "epistemic oppression," which occurs when a more powerful, or "epistemically privileged," group in a given society has an "unfair advantage in 'structuring' our understandings of the social world (Fricker, 1999, p. 191)". According to Fricker, societies are made up of people with diverse standpoints, from which each individual is granted a point of view or epistemic orientation, allowing us a particular outlook on the social world (Fricker, 1999, p. 194). On a societal level, when some groups have more power than others, the collection of concepts used to interpret the world and construct meaning within a society tend serve the interests of some groups of people more than others (Fricker, 1999, p. 207). Fricker writes that this power imbalance is not only evident in interpretive practice, but in the tools of understanding themselves; on a societal scale, this can result in a "collective failure to understand the nature of some type of social experience…" which can make a particular interpretation of a situation from an unprivileged standpoint seem, on the dominant view, irrational or outrageous (Fricker, 1999, p. 208)." As Fricker describes, this results in

> …hermeneutical injustice to those whose experiences are excluded from collective understandings. When our practice is uninformed by the experience of people in a given social position, we are collectively in a position to fully understand neither the experiences in question, nor any other areas of the social world to which they have interpretive relevance. Thus some people's social experience remains obscure and confusing, even for them, in a way which limits or distorts collective social understanding more generally (Fricker, 1999, p. 208).

Although this kind of injustice is often connected with social and historical oppression, Kristie Dotson adds the insight that epistemic oppression is not always reducible to other forms of oppression (Dotson, 2014, p. 116). The exclusion of Indigenous perspectives from mainstream academic conversations surrounding environmental ethics may best be characterized as what Dotson calls "third-order epistemic oppression," which refers to cases where the dominant, shared epistemic resources in a given society are inadequate to encompass all epistemic orientations (Dotson, 2014, p. 130). In these cases, the epistemic framework itself does not contain the tools needed to understand a particular worldview that differs from the dominant one; as a result, the people whose understandings are being excluded may know how to articulate their position very well but are still not taken seriously because that understanding challenges existing, shared epistemic resources (Dotson, 2014, p. 131). Allard-Tremblay provides an explanation of how rationalistic ways of thinking perpetuate this kind of epistemic oppression against Indigenous peoples; he writes that rationalistic ways of thinking silence Indigenous voices and knowledge systems, positioning them as "irrational" and in need of justification by rational processes of inquiry. This means that even if Indigenous peoples can articulate their beliefs well, they will be misinterpreted or distorted by those who try to understand them through a rationalistic framework. Indigenous voices are often distorted in this way when rationalistic ways of thinking which classify Indigenous worldviews, beliefs, and stories as religious or cultural claims, rather than alternative and equally valid sources of knowledge (Allard-Tremblay,

2021, p. 1036). This distortion can also occur when Indigenous peoples are forced to distort their beliefs and worldviews in order to have them heard in public forums (Allard-Tremblay, 2021, p. 1037). The solution to this kind of epistemic oppression, suggests Dotson, is stepping back to get a view of the dominant epistemic framework itself, and considering that "the parameters of one's epistemological system must be recognized and, quite possibly, radically altered (Dotson, 2014, p. 131)". This presents challenges because, as Fricker describes, the tools provided by the dominant framework will often not be useful in this project, making a truly radical reimagining of the framework itself the only option to remedy this kind of injustice.

The epistemic exclusion of Indigenous perspectives, although not always reducible to social and historical oppression, is certainly related to Canada's history of colonialism (and its continuation today) in many ways. One justification that has been provided for this exclusion, and which is connected with the greater colonial project, has been what Olive Patricia Dickason describes as the pervasive "myth of the savage" in Western societies, which is the pervasive stereotype that Indigenous peoples are inherently connected to nature in a way that European people are not (Dickason, 1984, p. 20). This pervasive stereotype is sometimes also referred to as that of the "noble savage", and often prevents meaningful dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous thinkers on the topic of environmental ethics. This racial stereotype paints Indigenous people as being inherently in tune with nature, which is often seen as a positive quality, but at the same time positions their traditional ecological knowledge as "primitive" compared to modern Western science and technology (Smithers, 2015, p. 84). This stereotype has its roots in the accounts of European settlers who struggled to understand Indigenous societies upon first contact because of the considerable differences in values and ways of life from their own. Dickason describes how this reaction was shaped by cultural factors, writing

that, “their “superior” [quotes added] technology, coupled with their belief that man was made to dominate nature, and Christians to dominate the world, did nothing to mitigate their conviction that Europeans were indeed the “true men”, and that New World men were of an inferior order (Dickason, 1984, p. 25)”. Although this initial reaction was proven to be unfounded time and time again upon further interaction between settlers and Indigenous peoples, European people struggled to fit Indigenous peoples into their own worldview. Rather than seeking to understand these new peoples, the general reaction was to place Indigenous peoples into the existing stereotype of the “homme sauvage” that has existed in the West since Ancient Greece, where foreigners were referred to as ‘barbarians’ (Dickason, 1984, p. 81)”. The dominant worldview in Renaissance Europe was that of a “Great Chain of Being,” and Indigenous peoples were seen as falling lower on the chain than “civilized” Europeans due to their supposed lack of technology and reason (Dickason, 1984, p. 43). Although a more positive view of Indigenous peoples developed alongside the negative stereotype that classed them as “primitive”, one that saw them as particularly virtuous because of their close relationship with the land, the positive view remained a theoretical position, while the negative view guided policy decisions, especially those that guided the colonization of North America (Dickason, 1984, p. 53). Burkhart writes that these two stereotypes of Indigenous peoples have persisted into the modern era, becoming either that of the “ecological saint” who is inherently connected with nature, or the “ecological savage” who is considered to be part of nature in the same way as animals, separating them from “civilized” Western people and positioning them as less than human (Burkhart, 2019, p. 182). Both stereotypes are harmful to Indigenous peoples and present barriers to meaningful dialogue and collaboration between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

Despite the historic exclusion of Indigenous philosophies from the Western canon, Indigenous leaders, knowledge holders, and scholars continue to share their knowledge with Western audiences. Much of this knowledge challenges the rationalistic conception of nature, which, as we have seen, has also been the goal of many Western schools of thought. As well as being valuable in itself, and for the inherent critique of our current, unsustainable way of living with the earth, looking to Indigenous philosophies is a crucial part of the broader project of reconciliation between settlers and Indigenous peoples in Canada. James Tully describes the relationship between environmental protection and reconciliation with Indigenous peoples in "Reconciliation Here on Earth," where he writes that Canada is faced with two interconnected projects of reconciliation: that of reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, and between human beings and the living earth (Tully, 2018, p. 83). To be successful in either project, Tully argues, we must undertake them together; as he notes, "our relationships with each other and our relationships with the living earth are far too interdependent and entangled to treat their reconciliation separately, as if they were independent (Tully, 2018, p. 83)". Approaching these projects separately, as would be encouraged by an rationalistic worldview that views problems as atomistic, will not allow us to be successful in either pursuit. Non-Indigenous people must challenge the unsustainable relationship with the earth that underlies the colonial project in order to truly reconcile with Indigenous peoples, and reconciling with the earth requires reconciliation with the Indigenous peoples whose knowledges have co-evolved with the land (Tully, 2018, p. 84). Tully writes that, "bypassing Indigenous peoples and Indigenous sciences [in these joint projects of reconciliation] would be epistemic folly. It would continue the social and epistemic injustice of dispossession and colonization, and the consequence would be continued ecological justice (Tully, 2018, p. 84)." In pursuit of true reconciliation, we must push

back against the idea that the earth belongs to humans and can be commodified, which leads to a relationship of mastery, and instead seek to cultivate balanced, reciprocal relationships with each other and with the earth (Tully, 2018, p. 104). Tully argues that learning from Indigenous knowledges about the interdependence of all life in this pursuit is crucial, as well as entering into new, cooperative relationships with Indigenous peoples on their own terms, and encouraging the resurgence of Indigenous knowledges and governance in Indigenous communities (Tully, 2018, p. 116). This argument demonstrates the interconnected nature of environmental and Indigenous justice; Tully's work calls for us to see not just the natural world as interdependent, but also to understand the connections between challenging the rationalistic view of nature and achieving environmental justice for all.

Indigenous knowledges and philosophies are invaluable in the pursuit of a renewed conception of nature insofar as they challenge the rationalistic conception of nature that is dominant in Western societies, and, as Tully and others explore, their inclusion in environmental discourse is crucial to overcoming the epistemic exclusion that these perspectives have faced. Although there are some barriers to the inclusion of Indigenous philosophies in Western discourse, such as pervasive stereotypes about Indigenous knowledges, these barriers are in no way insurmountable; it has been argued that there is considerable common ground between some Western approaches and Indigenous philosophies which show that understanding each other across cultural divides is not as fraught as it may first appear. Jay T. Johnson and Brian Murton reach this conclusion in their article "Re/Placing Native Science: Indigenous Voices in Contemporary Constructions of Nature," where they write that there is a common desire between Western and Indigenous scholars to reconsider the "destructive dichotomizing narrative of Western Enlightenment thought" which sees humans and nature as separate entities (Johnson &

Murton, 2007, p. 126). Both Indigenous and Western thinkers, they argue, have important understandings to add to this common cause, and both perspectives are important to rewriting this narrative (Johnson & Murton, 2007, p. 127). Further, including Indigenous voices in this pursuit is not only valuable as a means of challenging the nature/culture dichotomy and traditional ideas of value, as demonstrated by the work of Brian Burkhart, but also gives us a chance to rewrite the colonial narrative that displaces Indigenous voices in the first place (Johnson & Murton, 2007, p. 126). Learning from Indigenous philosophies is not only important for the knowledge that we might gain, but as a step towards reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. Challenging the rationalistic conception of nature, as we have seen, is an important project for both philosophical reasons and as a matter of justice, and is a project in which Indigenous philosophies have much to teach us. The following chapter will explore the importance of learning from Indigenous philosophies in the context of intergenerational environmental justice as a step towards overcoming the injustice of their historical exclusion from the philosophical discourse surrounding intergenerational justice.

Chapter III—Reconceptualizing Intergenerational Environmental Justice

As we have seen, mainstream environmental thought has historically not included all perspectives, and often perpetuates epistemic injustice against Indigenous philosophies and ways of knowing. In this chapter, we will examine the issue of intergenerational environmental justice as a specific branch of environmental thought in which Indigenous perspectives have been subject to significant epistemic exclusion because of the rationalistic nature of many existing Western theories of intergenerational justice. The climate crisis, insofar as its effects will primarily be felt by future generations, has brought the issue of intergenerational justice to the forefront of political and environmental philosophy. Rising temperatures, increased pollution, and the depletion of natural resources by people living today will become the burden of future people, who have done nothing to create the adverse circumstances they will face. Most people feel intuitively that we have at least some moral obligations to future people, especially those to whom we are biologically related, and there is a growing body of literature emerging that supports this intuition. The reality of climate change has made the formulation of a theory of intergenerational justice an urgent need, and many have attempted to conceptualize, or reconceptualize, what responsibilities, if any, we may have toward future people. Many of these attempts to formulate a theory of intergenerational justice have attempted to extend current liberal theories of justice to accommodate future people as well as individuals who are currently alive. Others, such as Avner De-Shalit, have attempted to formulate a communitarian approach to intergenerational justice. All theories of intergenerational justice, however, recognize the importance of protecting nature for the sake of future generations; although there are very few who doubt that at least some obligations to future people exist, how we conceptualize these obligations is a contentious matter. The central problems of intergenerational justice as they

relate to the environment have been clearly identified, including the management and preservation of natural resources, and its importance has notably been stressed by influential documents such as the 2011 UN Human Development Report and Millennium Development Goals (United Nations, 2011). Doubts have been raised, however, concerning the adequacy of current theories of intergenerational justice to meet these challenges, especially those theories which are couched in a liberal conception of justice, and there has been increasing interest in the development of new, more robust theories of intergenerational justice. It has also been noted, for example by Christine J. Winter in *Subjects of Intergenerational Justice*, that the way in which a theory of intergenerational justice is framed must be acceptable to all peoples in a diverse society such as Canada if it is to be truly just (Winter, 2022). This chapter will focus on the problematic nature of liberal theories of intergenerational justice when applied to settler states, and specifically Canada, due to their supposedly impartial, individualistic framing of justice which does not take Indigenous worldviews into account. The goal of this critical analysis is to show that liberal theories of justice, despite striving for ontological neutrality, are grounded in assumptions that carry with them a thick ontology, including a rationalistic conception of nature. It follows that theories of intergenerational environmental justice founded on political liberalism are also not ontologically neutral. When these approaches are framed as impartial or universally acceptable, Indigenous philosophies relying on a different set of assumptions are seen as invalid and therefore excluded. My aim here is not to dismiss every element of liberalism, but to show, with reference to critiques by Indigenous scholars, how it has failed to create just conditions, both epistemically and politically, for Indigenous peoples. To demonstrate how liberal theories of intergenerational justice are inadequate in this context, I will first provide a critical discussion of some relevant theories, including the communitarian theory of intergenerational justice put

forward by Avner De-Shalit, and then highlight the ways in which these theories have been critiqued through the lens of Indigenous philosophies. By referencing Indigenous philosophies, I will also present an alternative way of looking at the issue of intergenerational justice, especially as it pertains to protecting the environment for future generations, as reflected in the work of Indigenous scholars. Throughout this discussion, it will be argued that in order to reach a truly just theory of intergenerational justice, a "neutral" or "universalizable" approach is inadequate, and that diverse perspectives must be explicitly considered in order to come to a theory that is acceptable to all those living on the land known as Canada. The focus here will be the framing of theories of intergenerational justice; the application of these ideas will be examined in Chapter Four.

Before examining the ways in which current theories of intergenerational justice have been argued to be inadequate, it is first important to understand the principles and main conceptual debates involved with liberal theories of justice more generally. From this foundation, we will then be able to understand more clearly how a liberal theory of intergenerational environmental justice can perpetuate some of the existing injustices created by liberal theories of justice more generally as they pertain to the rights of Indigenous peoples. Liberal theories of justice, such as the one famously articulated by John Rawls in *A Theory of Justice*, rely on the assumption that the individual is the fundamental moral unit, and privilege rationality and objectivity by seeking universalizable principles of justice that can apply to everyone in a society in the same way. Rawls, for example, theorizes that the principles by which we govern society should be derived from an artificial position, behind a "veil of ignorance," where the individual formulating the principle does not know their own identity and therefore will be motivated to create principles that will result in fair treatment no matter the actual position of the individual in

society (Rawls, 1972, p. 11). Related to the idea that the individual is the fundamental moral unit are two further principles, which are seen as being related in slightly different ways by different thinkers: freedom and equality (Kymlicka, 1996, p. 34). Each individual, according to liberal theories of justice, ought to be accorded the same "package" of rights; these rights protect the freedom of the individual and each person being accorded the same rights is purported to ensure equality between individuals (Turner, 2006, p. 13). These fundamental principles allow liberal theorists to claim that this framework is neutral and impartial, since each individual is accorded the same rights and no one individual is privileged above any other. The liberal framework, insofar as it privileges rationality as a way of knowing and views societies as groups of atomistic individuals, can also be considered a rationalistic one. The individualistic nature of liberal theories has invited critiques from within the Western tradition by communitarian thinkers, who stress the importance of community, not just individual persons, in the context of justice, and as a necessary condition for flourishing human life. This perspective arose as a response to the rise of liberal individualism in the 1970s, and generally critiques the atomistic, supposedly objective outlook articulated by liberal thought. Michael J. Sandel and Alasdair Macintyre, for example, critique Rawl's approach of deriving rational principles of justice from behind a "veil of ignorance" for the disconnectedness of those formulating the principles and the presumption that principles of justice can be derived from outside a lived, historically informed context, respectively (Macintyre, 1981; Sandel, 1982). Communitarianism continues to be an influential political framework in Canada, and has pushed liberal thinkers to update their theories to accommodate culture, community, and an expanded view of the individual. A full analysis of the debate between liberal and communitarian thinkers, however, falls outside the scope of this

work. In this chapter, I will focus on the liberal tradition in Canadian political discourse in order to provide the necessary context for the critical analysis I wish to present.

Others, such as Will Kymlicka, have argued that liberalism *can* provide adequate protection for the rights of minorities, and that a turn to communitarianism is not needed. Against communitarianism, Kymlicka argues that the liberal focus on the individual can be used to sustain social relationships, and that group-differentiated rights can be consistent with liberal principles of freedom and equality (Kymlicka, 1996, p. 34). In *Multicultural Citizenship,* Kymlicka argues that the usual liberal approach of simply promoting universal human rights, although an important tool to protect individuals, is not adequate on its own to protect minority rights in multicultural societies (Kymlicka, 1996, p. 4). What is needed, according to Kymlicka, is a theory of minority rights to supplement, but not replace, the universal human rights granted to individuals in liberal democracies like Canada. The application of universal human rights alone, he argues, results in minority groups beings treated with "benign neglect" by the state, where groups are free to maintain whichever customs, religion, and traditions they want in the private sphere but do not have group-differentiated protections in the form of rights (Kymlicka, 1996, p. 3). Liberalism, at its core, seeks to provide individuals with the freedom to choose how they live their lives, which Kymlicka characterizes as having two preconditions: providing individuals with the liberties and resources to lead one's life from the inside, in accordance with one's beliefs and values; and having the freedom to question and revise our existing beliefs, which requires awareness about different ways of life and the ability to examine them intelligently (Kymlicka, 1996, p. 81). Minority groups can be granted group-differentiated rights within this framework in order to protect the "societal culture" a minority group seeks to maintain, and which provides them with the resources to live in accordance with their beliefs and

values, as well as giving others an awareness of other possible ways of leading a good life (Kymlicka, 1996, p. 80). This line of reasoning can be used to protect the rights of "national minority" groups, such as Indigenous peoples, that want to maintain a distinct, separate, self-governing culture rather than integrating into the dominant culture (Kymlicka, 1996, p. 11). In the case of Indigenous peoples living under settler colonialism, however, demands for sovereignty are not just centered around maintaining a particular set of beliefs or a societal culture, but also call for stolen land to be returned to Indigenous peoples. Kymlicka's work, although sensitive to the issue of Indigenous sovereignty and demands for self-determination, does not speak to the central issue of rectifying the colonial injustice of dispossession. By placing Indigenous nations under the category of "national minorities," Kymlicka frames the issue of Indigenous rights as one of unjust incorporation into the dominant culture, rather than recognizing the full depth of colonial injustice, including the subjugation and dispossession of Indigenous peoples. He argues that the path forward involves a more just form of incorporation where the dominant culture and minority cultures can coexist, rather than advocating for Indigenous land governance or other methods of returning stolen land to Indigenous peoples. Kymlicka's argument provides one perspective on how liberalism could be supplemented in order to ensure truly equal rights for all, not just the supposedly impartial "benign neglect" that is characteristic of traditional liberal thought, but falls short of a providing a full picture of justice by failing to acknowledge the violent dispossession of land from Indigenous peoples by the settler state.

Despite Kymlicka's sensitivity to the issue of minority rights, his approach is still explicitly liberal, and therefore may also not be acceptable to Indigenous peoples because of its basic premise, consistent with traditional liberalism, that individual freedom and equality are the

most important principles by which we should structure our societies, as well as the aforementioned shortcomings concerning stolen land under settler colonialism. These principles are not consistent with Indigenous understandings of justice, as many Indigenous scholars have noted; Taiaiake Alfred, for example, writes that liberal frameworks are not truly impartial nor universal because they are rooted in,

> …a fundamentally individualistic, materialistic ideal of equality or sameness. By contrast, Indigenous notions of justice…centre on the imperative of a respectful, balanced coexistence among all human, animal and spiritual beings, together with the earth. Justice is seen as a perpetual process of maintaining that crucial balance and demonstrating true respect for the power and dignity of each part of the circle of interdependency (Alfred, 2009, p. 42).

This Indigenous conception of justice, as described by Alfred, is not compatible with the liberal framing; this demonstrates that the traditional liberal approach cannot be truly impartial, since it excludes at least one perspective on the nature of justice. Justice as individual rights and the neutral application of objectively framed, rationalistic principles of justice, as Rawls describes, is only one way of understanding justice, one that is steeped in a particular political and philosophical tradition that has been historically constructed in the West. Framing justice in a liberal framework, therefore, can be said to assimilate and exclude diverse ideas about the nature of justice; in the Canadian context, this means those of Indigenous peoples, among others. This point is made by Dale Turner, who critically engages with liberalism in the Canadian context in his book, *This is Not a Peace Pipe: Towards a Critical Indigenous Philosophy.* He writes that the Canadian liberal tradition attempts to assimilate Indigenous peoples into the dominant culture of the colonial state under the guise of "equal" and "neutral" treatment of all citizens (Turner, 2006, p. 15). He specifically targets "White Paper liberalism," exemplified by the "White Paper" put forward by the Canadian government in 1969, which sought to end the government's responsibilities towards Indigenous peoples not by offering them opportunities for self-

governance and rectifying the injustice of land theft, but by assimilating them into Canadian society and assigning them the same "package" of rights as any other citizens (Turner, 2006, p. 19). Turner discusses several ways in which liberal theories of justice do not provide true justice for Indigenous peoples, the most relevant for this discussion being the assertion that liberal theories do not recognize that a meaningful theory of Indigenous rights cannot be created without the participation of Indigenous peoples as equals in dialogue (Turner, 2006, p. 16). As Turner describes, "the fact that [Indigenous peoples'] ways of understanding the world are not worthy of equal participation in a dialogue over the meaning and content of *our* rights is itself a form of inequality (Turner, 2006, p. 26)." This highlights the injustice of liberal theories both in their framing and in the practical consequences of applying these frameworks to diverse societies, which often results in assimilationist policies like that of the White Paper and the failure to acknowledge land theft. Turner also critiques Kymlicka's attempt to accommodate Indigenous understandings of justice into a liberal framework, arguing that Kymlicka's approach, although more sensitive to the issue of Indigenous rights in liberal thought than most others, is still inadequate because it does not capture the sui generis nature of Indigenous rights, instead painting them as a type of minority right (Turner, 2006, p. 58). Indigenous peoples who have been dispossessed of their lands possess these sui generis rights, which must be recognized as a separate kind of right in all of their complexity, and any genuine understanding of these rights must align with the ways in which Indigenous peoples themselves understand them. He argues that liberal frameworks of justice, like the one Kymlicka presents, function ahistorically, beginning from a rationally constructed set of principles and bestowing equal rights on individuals without adequately considering the historical context in which those individuals and their communities live. This approach, at best, characterizes all minority rights in the same way

and leaves out any rich understanding of Indigenous sovereignty, including the rights of Indigenous peoples to their traditional territories, which Turner sees as a crucial part of achieving justice for Indigenous communities on their own terms (Turner, 2006, p. 67).

As a way of moving forward, Turner suggests that although it may not be just, it is pragmatically required that Indigenous peoples, specifically "word warriors," who are trained in both the Western and Indigenous traditions, work to make Indigenous voices and perspectives heard in politics and philosophy (Turner, 2006, p. 73). Turner makes this suggestion as a response to "Kymlicka's constraint," which is the idea, expressed by Kymlicka in *Liberalism, Community, and Culture*[5], that Indigenous rights will mostly be accorded by non-Indigenous people, working in Western institutions based on non-Indigenous traditions and ideas, which means that Indigenous peoples must find ways to effectively communicate their worldviews to those holding power in order to effect positive change (Turner, 2006, p. 75). The short-term solution to this problem, Turner argues, is more effectively engaging with these institutions and ideas to ensure Indigenous perspectives are heard and understood, and subsequently creating new ways of approaching the issue of Indigenous rights that are informed by dialogue with Indigenous peoples themselves (Turner, 2006, p. 93). Glen Sean Coulthard takes a critical stance towards Turner's argument for greater inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in the legal and political discourses of the state in *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of*

[5] Kymlicka writes that, "For better or worse, it is predominantly non-Aboriginal judges and politicians who have the ultimate power to protect and enforce Aboriginal rights, and so it is important to find a justification of them that such people can recognize and understand. Aboriginal people have their own understanding of self-government drawn from their own experience, and that is important. But it is also important, politically, to know how non-Aboriginal Canadians—Supreme Court Justices, for example—will understand Aboriginal rights and relate them to their own experiences and traditions…On the standard interpretation of liberalism, Aboriginal rights are viewed as matters of discrimination and/or privilege, not of equality. They will always, therefore, be viewed with the kind of suspicion that led liberals like Trudeau to advocate their abolition. Aboriginal rights, at least in their robust form, will only be secure when they are viewed, not as competing with liberalism, but as an essential component of liberal political practice." This is what Turner refers to as "Kymlicka's constraint" in his work. See Will Kymlicka, *Liberalism, Community, and Culture.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989, p. 154

Recognition, where he argues that Turner's claim that Indigenous peoples need to engage more effectively with these discourses to make their perspectives heard mistakenly assumes that the primary way in which colonial power relations play out is through the exclusion of Indigenous perspectives in discourses concerning their rights (Coulthard, 2014, p. 45). Understanding the issue in this way, he argues, leads Turner to advocate for an "ethic of participation" wherein Indigenous people seek to be included to a greater degree in the discourse and decision-making of the state. Coulthard argues that the efficacy of Turner's argument rests on the power of the discourses he describes, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous; according to Coulthard, Turner attributes too much power to Indigenous discourses and does not fully acknowledge the assimilative power of those generated by the state (Coulthard, 2014, p. 46). Further, Coulthard argues, the legal and political discourses of the state do not stand alone—they are intertwined with the economic, political, and military power of the state, meaning that "Indigenous peoples must be able to account for these material relations…which would require an exploration of theories and practices that move beyond liberal and ideational forms of discursive transformation (Coulthard, 2014, p. 47)". Coulthard's own critique of liberalism focuses on the distinction between two operative levels of colonial power identified by Franz Fanon in his book *Black Skin, White Masks:* the objective level, which involves material realities such as wealth distribution and land theft; and the subjective level, which involves attitudes towards these material realities and towards Indigenous peoples themselves (Coulthard, 2014, p. 32). Following Fanon, Coulthard argues that in settler states like Canada, where the state does not rely solely on violence for control, colonial power is reproduced by "enticing Indigenous peoples to *identify,* either implicitly or explicitly, with the profoundly *asymmetrical* and *nonreciprocal* forms of recognition either imposed on or granted to them by the settler state and society (Coulthard,

2014, p. 25).” This is the power relation that Coulthard believes to be at work in Canada and perpetuated by liberal theories of justice. He specifically targets the liberal theory of justice expounded by Charles Taylor in “The Politics of Recognition,” where Taylor argues that recognition of cultural difference ought to be granted to minority groups in order to protect the diverse cultural contexts in which people form their identities. Developing our identities, argues Taylor, happens in dialogue with others, and misrecognition, or a lack of recognition, can inflict real harm by interfering with this process; on this basis, he argues that group-specific claims to rights can be defended under a liberal theory of justice as essential to a good life and the formation of personal identity (Taylor, 1994). Coulthard counters this argument by noting that although this theory is an improvement over overt assimilationist tactics, like those that Turner identifies in the White Paper liberalism of the 1960s, the logic behind Taylor’s argument, where recognition is “granted” to minority groups by the dominant group, does not modify or transcend colonial power relations (Coulthard, 2014, p. 31). He writes that Taylor’s approach addresses colonialism in a “strictly affirmative manner” by granting certain rights to Indigenous peoples, which modifies the intensity of some effects of colonialism without addressing the generative structures behind those effects; in other words, recognition is a solution to some of the subjective effects of colonialism but does not address the objective realities behind them (Coulthard, 2014, p. 35). Coulthard calls for more radical forms of change that challenge the liberal values that found Taylor’s theory of recognition, as well as Turner’s approach, which gloss over the objective realities of colonialism that result in the exclusion of Indigenous perspectives from the discourses of the state. Both authors, however, demonstrate in their work the inadequacy of liberal theories of justice with regards to Indigenous rights, and the need for an expanded view of

justice that includes diverse perspectives, not just the supposedly impartial, rationalistic conception of justice granted by liberalism.

From these foundations in political philosophy, scholars interested in justice and spurred on by the realities of the climate crisis have sought to formulate a theory of intergenerational justice, often by extending existing theories of justice to capture future people as well as current ones. Following in the footsteps of liberal thinkers like Rawls, theorists of intergenerational justice have often relied on the assumption that the individual is the fundamental moral unit, and that justice entails the fair distribution of resources among equal individuals. Most theories of justice are mainly concerned with synchronic justice, which involves justice between contemporary people; theories of intergenerational justice seek to provide an account of diachronic justice, which involves relationships between contemporary and future people (Thompson, 2009, p. 2). Attempting to extend existing liberal theories of justice, however, has proven difficult. Rawls, for example, considers justice between generations as a matter of duties that citizens owe to their descendants; this means that current people have responsibilities towards people that do not yet exist, but to whom they are connected through a set of moral obligations (Rawls, 1972, p. 251). This is an extension of his broader theory of political liberalism, which attempts to extend his theory that just principles governing a society should be created behind a "veil of ignorance" behind which the individuals making decisions do not know their own identities (Rawls, 1972, p. 125). As we have seen, this requires the decision makers to create principles that would benefit them no matter their position in society with regards to gender, race, idea of the good, and so on. When theorizing about justice for future generations, however, Rawls changes his assumptions about the interests of the individual decision-makers, which he posits are members of families who care for their descendants and want to extend them

goodwill (Rawls, 1972, p. 128). Using this caring relationship as the motivation for creating principles of justice acceptable to future people, however, has been argued to be inconsistent with the foundational assumption made in Rawl's theory of justice, which is that principles of justice should be formulated by disinterested, neutral individuals. Janna Thompson asserts that caring relationships between family members are, by nature, not disinterested ones, and that this inconsistency demonstrates one way in which a liberal theory of justice can struggle to include the interests of future people (Thompson, 2009, p. 19). Rawls has to deviate from his assumption that neutral, disinterested decision-making is the most just way to structure a society when attempting to take the interests of future people into account, rather than just those of contemporary people. As we will see, this is just one way in which the idea that neutral, objective principles of justice can be argued to be inadequate in the context of intergenerational justice.

Rawls does attempt to give an account of how his theory of justice might be extended to include future people, unlike many political theorists; however, his work has been subject to criticism by both liberal and communitarian theorists of intergenerational justice, who point out inconsistencies with Rawls' approach. Janna Thompson, for example, argues that Rawl's account of intergenerational justice is inadequate because it keeps synchronic and diachronic justice separate, which fails to account for our responsibilities to past generations and their accomplishments, and makes it impossible to conceive of relationships between contemporary people as involving responsibilities to past and future people as well as those currently alive (Thompson, 2009, p. 2). Thompson argues that intergenerational responsibilities are central to any political society, citing current discourse surrounding "sustainability", fueled by the climate crisis, as evidence of our increasing concern for future people and the need for a complete theory

of intergenerational justice to help inform our decision-making on their behalf (Thompson, 2009, p. 4). Thompson presents her own theory of intergenerational justice, which, though critical of Rawls' work, is still liberal in nature insofar as it centers the "lifetime-transcending interests" of individuals as the "…basis of practices that enable citizens and members of communities to make moral demands of their successors and which, in turn, give these individuals obligations in respect to their predecessors (Thompson, 2009, p. 5)." This approach is still individualistic in nature, seeing individual people and their interests as the foundation for moral demands. Thompson's work improves upon the work of other liberal theorists of intergenerational justice by providing a compelling account of our moral obligations to past *and* future people, but can still be critiqued for its assumption that the individual is the fundamental moral unit. This is the line of argumentation taken by Avner de-Shalit, who argues that a communitarian approach to intergenerational justice more accurately captures the nature of our obligations to future people. De-Shalit, like other communitarian thinkers, conceives of individual people as defined, at least partly, by their social connections and responsibilities to others, as well as by their membership in one or more communities. From this conception of the individual, de-Shalit posits that we have obligations to our communities, writing that, "…if one acknowledges that the community constitutes one's identity, then it is absurd at the same time to deny any obligation to the community and its members. If one acknowledges the importance of the community, then one wishes the community to be sustained, and even to flourish (de-Shalit, 1995, p. 15)." Building on this idea of community between members of contemporary generations, de-Shalit posits the existence of a "transgenerational community" that extends into the future and creates obligations to future people who are members of this community. This is possible, argues de-Shalit, because although we do not share day-to-day interactions with these future people, we do share cultural

interaction and moral similarities, and therefore can still be said to form a unified community despite living in different times (de-Shalit, 1995, p. 30). De-Shalit also supports the possibility of a transgenerational community by claiming that just as many people consider the past to be part of their current conception of self, many also regard the future this way. As further evidence for this claim, he cites with the idea of self-transcendence, borrowed from psychology, which asserts that we have a need to transcend our current self by extending it into the future, either directly or through institutions (de-Shalit, 1995, p. 34). This approach is inherently critical of the liberal, individualistic approach that considers individuals to be the fundamental moral unit; de-Shalit instead emphasizes community as the foundation for intergenerational justice and recognizes the importance of communities to individuals' identity. He also points out the inconsistencies that arise in liberal theories of justice when the issue of future people is introduced. The communitarian approach provides an alternative way of viewing the problem of intergenerational justice that emphasizes the importance of community, not just the individual, and challenges the rationalistic assumptions that underlie liberal theories of intergenerational justice.

Despite accounting for the importance of community and providing a theory of justice that is critical of the liberal, individualistic approach to intergenerational justice, de-Shalit's approach, as well as those put forward by liberal thinkers like Rawls and Thompson, can still be shown to be inadequate in the Canadian context. This is because liberal and communitarian theories of intergenerational justice have both been shown to fall short when it comes to protecting the rights and reflecting the worldviews of Indigenous peoples. This is particularly true when it comes to theories of intergenerational justice which deal specifically with environmental justice, as is the case in Avner De-Shalit's work, among others. Theories of intergenerational environmental justice which reflect the values of the dominant culture, whether

they be liberal or communitarian in nature, often do not protect the rights and needs of Indigenous peoples as they themselves understand them (Winter, 2022, p. 58). Christine J. Winter provides a detailed analysis of the ways in which current Western theories of intergenerational justice can commit epistemic injustice against Indigenous peoples in her recent book, *Subjects of Intergenerational Justice: Indigenous Philosophy, the Environment and Relationships.* As we saw in Chapter Two, many Western theories of environmental justice perpetuate ideas stemming from the rationalistic conception of nature, such as the nature-culture dichotomy and instrumental valuation of the natural world, which perpetuate the epistemic exclusion of Indigenous perspectives from environmental discourse. Similarly, according to Winter, in the context of intergenerational environmental justice, "continuing to apply a liberal philosophic and political framework is to perpetuate colonial hegemony. It is to continue the injustice of forced assimilation, the patterns of violence, domination, repressions and invalidation of alternative ways of being (Winter, 2022, p. 142)." To support this claim, Winter explores the ways in which both liberal and communitarian theories of intergenerational justice fail to capture or account for Indigenous philosophies and ways of knowing, continuing to exclude Indigenous perspectives from this critical discourse and ignoring the valuable insights contained these philosophies (Winter, 2022, p. 18). First targeting liberal theories of intergenerational justice, Winter writes that seeing the individual as the fundamental moral unit, while protecting the rights of individual people, is far from a universally acceptable basis for a political theory or ethical outlook. This rationalistic assumption, much like the others we have explored in the context of environmental justice, is not self-evident nor universalizable. Two main problems arise, according to Winter, from basing a theory of intergenerational environmental justice on individualistic foundations: first, such a theory will run into the non-identity problem as

described by Derek Parfit (Winter, 2022, pp. 97–100). This is the argument, put forward by Parfit in his 1984 book *Reasons and Persons*, that because we cannot know the identities of future people who have not yet been born, we cannot form bonds of obligation or duty, and therefore cannot formulate a theory of intergenerational justice (Parfit, 1984, pp. 351–379). Further, Parfit argues, since our actions play a role in determining which people will exist in the future, we have already given them the "good" of existence, and any harms incurred by those same actions are therefore outweighed (Parfit, 1984, p. 355). The non-identity problem, argues Winter, can only be seen as a problem in the context of a theory that depends on identifying individuals to whom we owe contractual duties (Winter, 2022, p. 99). Without this context that assumes a social contract extending into the future, the non-identity problem no longer applies. The second issue that Winter describes is the "ontological disconnect" at the core of liberal theories of intergenerational justice. She writes that,

> In giving pre-eminence to the (human) individual as the most significant social unit, individualist liberal theory ignores the reality of *Peoples, communities, cultures and collectives of people* and *all nonhuman entities and their interconnections*. It is *the individual living human person* only to whom consideration accrues. It is a social imaginary in which it is understood a fulfilled individual is the positive outcome, and main concern, goal, or focus, of social cohesion and communal relations (Winter, 2022, p. 100).

Here, Winter is arguing that the supposedly impartial, rationalistic approach embodied by liberal theories of intergenerational justice fail to reflect Indigenous understandings of justice as stemming from balanced interconnections between community members, not as achieving goods for individuals. Just as liberal theories of justice within a generation can perpetuate epistemic injustices against Indigenous peoples, whose worldviews and philosophies stand opposed to rationalistic understandings of justice, theories of intergenerational justice must also work to accommodate diverse understandings of justice, rather than just the supposedly impartial liberal one. As Winter notes, any theory of justice founded on individualism cannot adequately reflect

an understanding of the self as entangled with community, nor afford culturally appropriate justice in practice to those who see the community, not the individual, as fundamentally morally valuable (Winter, 2022, p. 115).

As we have seen, the communitarian approach to justice has attempted to overcome some of the issues associated with individualism in the liberal tradition; however, Winter also critiques the communitarian approach to intergenerational environmental justice as described by de-Shalit in *Why Posterity Matters*. She writes that although communitarian theories of intergenerational justice are more expansive than traditional liberal theories, they are not expansive enough to accommodate Indigenous ontologies because they do not include nonhumans in their definition of "community" (Winter, 2022, p. 101). Indigenous philosophies commonly express the idea that community encompasses the land, including nonhuman animals as well as other human beings, and sometimes even express the idea that this community shares kinship or familial relations with one another[6]. Communitarian theories of intergenerational environmental justice such as de-Shalit's, although they capture the importance of community to the individual, cannot accommodate this expansive concept of community, which leads Winter to criticize these theories for being anthropocentric. She writes that de-Shalit's theory bestows value on the environment instrumentally, for the sake of human flourishing, and therefore still places human beings separate from and above the rest of nature (Winter, 2022, p. 116). Conceptualizing justice within a liberal or communitarian framework, therefore, can be said to "…conceal the complex, entangled, intermeshed web of connections between human and nonhuman (Winter, 2022, p. 116)," and perpetuate the rationalistic assumption that humans are separate from the rest of nature. But, as Winter notes, "…the prized rationality that underpins liberal understandings of

[6] See Winona LaDuke, *All Our Relations: Native Struggles for Land and Life*. Chicago, IL: Haymarket Books, 2015, p. 2, for one description of this conceptualization of community.

human as stand-alone individuals and motivates theory, is a function of a human-nonhuman collective (Winter, 2022, p. 116)," emphasizing the fact that rationalistic thinking is not self-evident and could not exist without the community of all living beings which we depend on for our survival and well-being. Just as rationalistic framings of environmental ethics fail to capture our best understanding of the human relationship with nature, as interconnected with and dependent on the rest of nature, so too do liberal and communitarian theories of intergenerational environmental justice. Benefits to the environment, according to these theories, come as fortunate consequences from benefits to human beings; in relational ontologies, like those expressed in many Indigenous philosophies, both humans and nonhumans can be subjects of justice and should be protected for their own sake. Conceptualizing justice within these frameworks not only fails to reflect the interconnected nature of human beings and nature, but also suppresses Indigenous understandings of intergenerational justice, which see community as encompassing much more than just human beings. Winter notes that, "a justice framework that decouples human from nonhuman cannot be just in a context of already always interconnected. Justice must encompass all-that-is (Winter, 2022, p. 120)".

A final quote from Winter is useful to illustrate why the project of including Indigenous perspectives in a theory of intergenerational environmental justice is crucial. She writes that,

> Justice demands both the ends and the means are rightful. If that is the case, what is required is a justice framework scaffolded by Indigenous ontologies. These ontologies must be 'knowable'…To decolonize, to be just, the theory must not require that [Indigenous peoples] conform to Western ontologies if they are to seek and receive intergenerationally or environmentally just outcomes…Continuing to apply a liberal philosophic and political framework is to perpetuate colonial hegemony. It is to continue the injustice of forced assimilation, the patterns of violence, domination, repression and invalidation of alternative ways of being (Winter, 2022, p. 142).

As we have seen, it is crucial that the theories we use to face the interconnected crises and injustices brought about by climate change can not only bring about just outcomes when applied

in the real world, but also that these theories reflect the worldviews and ontologies of all peoples whom they will affect. If the fundamental ideas behind a theory of justice are not acceptable to all peoples, then that theory cannot bring about truly just outcomes for everyone. This is particularly important in the Canadian context, where the burdens of the climate crisis are already distributed unevenly and are borne most heavily by Indigenous communities, who have already been subject to assimilationist policies and cultural genocide, as highlighted by the TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada, 2015). The push to develop theories of intergenerational environmental justice creates an opportunity to move towards reconciliation with Indigenous peoples by looking to and learning from Indigenous philosophies and worldviews. Including Indigenous perspectives as equals in this discourse is not only a means to a better understanding of our obligations to future people with regards to the environment, but can be a way to challenge the epistemic oppression of Indigenous philosophies in Western discourse surrounding environmental philosophy and ethics. In the next chapter, we will look at the ways in which Indigenous philosophies concerning obligations to future generations have influenced and are made manifest in Indigenous-led environmentalism and the project of resurgence within Indigenous communities, and how a treaty-based model of reconciliation might help us to achieve the collaboration needed to reconceptualizing our understanding of obligations to future people and face the climate crisis together.

Chapter Four—Toward Intergenerational Environmental Justice in Canada

With relevance of Indigenous philosophies to questions of environmental ethics established, as well as the importance of including Indigenous knowledges in these discourses, we will now turn to look briefly at the ways in which Indigenous leadership in environmental activism embodies these philosophies and models potential ways of creating partnerships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada. As noted in Chapter Two, Indigenous philosophies have been described as "lived" philosophies—that is, as bodies of knowledge that are practiced and provide guidance to the lives of Indigenous peoples rather than static knowledge that can be acquired by anyone. This means that understanding Indigenous philosophies in the context of intergenerational environmental justice requires us to look at how these philosophies are practiced, not just how they have been described in academic literature. Indigenous environmental activism is also a deeply meaningful expression of Indigenous philosophies and values, and should also be considered as part of meaningful dialogue between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. One way to understand the significance of Indigenous environmental activism is to explore how Indigenous philosophies guide and inform Indigenous leadership in the environmental movement. Indigenous communities and activists have always been at the forefront of environmental activism, and their contributions have been invaluable to all those living in Canada; for example, Indigenous activism and the assertion of land rights has protected land from development, and has promoted a new understanding of our relationship to the environment on an individual level. In this chapter, I will focus on the Land Back movement because of its influence and embodiment of Indigenous resistance to political and epistemic oppression. The Land Back movement is an example of the power of Indigenous-led activism in the political and social spheres, and it reflects the values and perspectives of a diverse range of

Indigenous philosophies and knowledges. Of particular relevance to this work is the emphasis placed on future generations in the Land Back movement. Land Back exemplifies the intertwined nature of protecting the environment and upholding Indigenous rights; by exploring the history and guiding principles of this movement, we can come to a better understanding of some of the ideas present in Indigenous philosophies and the importance of Indigenous philosophies to the projects of reconciliation and resurgence in Canada. Reconciliation, as we have seen, refers to the project of rebuilding positive relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples; resurgence, on the other hand, refers to the project of restoring, protecting, and regenerating Indigenous philosophies, lifeways, and communities for Indigenous communities (Borrows & Tully, 2018, p. 4). Resurgence focuses on the importance of Indigenous philosophies not as a tool to help Canadian society, but as lived philosophies that inform the lives of Indigenous peoples and communities, as well as being a powerful tool for asserting the land rights and sovereignty of Indigenous peoples. Both reconciliation and resurgence are essential to achieving intergenerational environmental justice for all, as we will explore in this chapter. To conclude, we will explore one suggested framework for moving towards a more just future for all: the Two-Row Wampum model, as described by Dale Turner. Models like the Two-Row Wampum demonstrate that intergenerational environmental justice cannot be achieved without the collaboration of all peoples; we will also, however, look at the Two-Row Wampum model through a critical lens. Moving forward requires that we face the issues brought about by the climate crisis together, despite the challenges we might encounter. Although facing the climate crisis is undoubtedly a daunting task, it also presents us with an opportunity to choose a different path forward. As Indigenous scholar and activist Winona LaDuke notes, “crisis is opportunity (LaDuke, 2020, p. 10),” and the climate crisis presents us with an opportunity to make

meaningful changes in the way we think about our place in nature and the relationships we want to create with each other, including those who will come after us.

Indigenous peoples have sought to protect the land from unsustainable resource extraction, pollution, and damaging development projects since the beginning of colonization in Canada. Through a growing number of books, articles, and research papers, Indigenous knowledge holders and scholars have expressed Indigenous philosophies in an attempt to educate non-Indigenous people on ways in which we can build stronger and more respectful relationships with the land. Many of these texts have inspired people to think differently about their relationship with the land, but are not the only way that Indigenous activists have sought to bring about change. Beyond expressing these ideas in articles and books, Indigenous thinkers have composed political declarations and statements such as the Kari-Oca Declaration composed ahead of the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development Rio+20 in 2012 (*Kari-Oca 2 Declaration*, 2012). This declaration rejects the idea that nature can only be protected through commodification, and outlines the perspectives presented by a committee of more than 500 Indigenous persons on environmental matters. Declarations like Kari-Oca 2 and philosophical works by Indigenous thinkers often express normative philosophies that are intended to guide relationships between human beings, as well as those between humans and nonhumans (Whyte & Cuomo, 2015, p. 237). Indigenous philosophies have guided relationships between Indigenous peoples and the land for thousands of years; their value in matters of environmental protection cannot be overstated. These philosophies, however, are equally important because of their value to Indigenous communities, and should not be seen as mere tools for use by environmental activists or thinkers. Since Indigenous philosophies are of such importance to the future of Indigenous communities, and can offer a wealth of knowledge to those hoping to protect the

natural world, Kyle Whyte and Chris Cuomo note that, "any efforts to address environmental issues must take guidance from the ecological knowledge, advice, and leadership of Indigenous peoples (Whyte & Cuomo, 2015, p. 240)." On the ground, the guidance and leadership that Whyte and Cuomo describe has already been integral to stopping harmful development projects such as the Trans-Mountain pipeline expansion, which threatens to disrupt ecosystems and further entrench our reliance on fossil fuels by expanding the existing Trans Mountain pipeline through Tsleil-Waututh and unceded Secwepemc territories (Klein, 2020, p. 274). Opposition to the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion has resulted in a legal battle between the Tsleil-Waututh Nation and the federal government, a case that reached the Supreme Court of Canada and ultimately resulted in the approval of the Trans Mountain pipeline expansion project despite the environmental and Indigenous rights concerns brought forward during the legal proceedings[7]. Indigenous-led resistance to this project did not just take the form of legal cases, however; members of the Secwepemc Nation have also sought to physically block the construction of the pipeline through the Tiny House Warriors initiative, which builds tiny houses along the proposed path of the project (*Our Land Is Home*). Both the Tsleil-Waututh Nation v. Canada case and the Tiny House Warriors project express the deep connection between Indigenous communities, philosophies, and the land. These examples demonstrate that Indigenous communities and activists have courageously stepped up to stop development projects, take on long legal battles, and educate non-Indigenous peoples despite the injustices they face.

[7] See Tsleil-Waututh Nation v. Canada (Attorney General) (Federal Court of Appeal August 30, 2018), https://decisions.fca-caf.gc.ca/fca-caf/decisions/en/343511/1/document.do for the official legal proceedings of this case.

Indigenous activists have led not just protests and targeted action against development projects, but also founded large-scale movements such as Idle No More and Land Back, which have been both influential environmental movements and assertions of Indigenous rights. These movements work outside of treaty negotiations, which have often resulted in little progress of tangible change for Indigenous peoples and push back against colonial governmental policies that threaten the future of Indigenous communities and their lands (Manuel & Derrickson, 2017, p. 150). The Land Back movement, which will be the focus of this discussion, seeks to change land governance in Canada in order to promote the self-governance of Indigenous peoples, as well as protecting the environment. The Land Back Manifesto highlights the importance of sovereignty to the movement as a connected project with that of protecting the environment, echoing the sentiment of reconciling with both the earth and one another that we have seen expressed in the work of James Tully (*LANDBACK Manifesto,* 2021). Indigenous communities who participle in the Land Back movement seek to rebuild and maintain just relationships with the earth in which human beings act as its stewards. Arthur Manuel and Grand Chief Ronald Derrickson describe the connection between promoting the sovereignty of Indigenous Nations and protecting the environment go hand in hand, writing that, "in defending the land at this time of international global warming crisis, we are defending something much larger than Indigenous rights. Our fight today is to preserve the planet in a livable form (Manuel & Derrickson, 2017, p. 242)." Current systems of land governance exclude Indigenous peoples from decision-making processes about the land, while also failing to protect the land from degradation and exploitation by industry. In order to uphold Indigenous land rights and protect ecosystems from further damage, these systems of land governance need to change; this is the central goal of the Land Back movement. Giving "land back" does not mean that non-Indigenous people would not be

welcome to continue their lives on the land that they call home; rather, Land Back aims to place the power to make decisions about proper use of the land in the hands of Indigenous communities who have cared for the land for thousands of years. This is only possible, however, if Canada comes to recognize Indigenous treaty rights and the right of Indigenous peoples to self-determination, including but not limited to supporting Indigenous land governance and the political autonomy of Indigenous communities, on their terms, where it is desired (Manuel & Derrickson, 2017, p. 146). By doing so, we could take a step forward past colonialism towards true reconciliation with each other and the earth.

The Land Back movement also highlights some of the values that motivate and guide Indigenous activism, including the importance of considering future generations in our current actions. Indigenous philosophies, as lived philosophies, may be best understood by looking at movements such as Land Back and how they embody these ideas and values. The push to return land rights to Indigenous peoples through movements like Land Back is made not just for contemporary people and communities, but for the sake of generations to come. Far from being a peripheral concern, as it is sometimes positioned in environmental thought, the well-being of future generations is one of the central tenets of the Land Back movement. Manuel and Grand Chief Derrickson describe the importance of the Land Back movement to future people in their book *The Reconciliation Manifesto*, writing that, "Our values, language and culture give [Indigenous peoples] strength to fight this David and Goliath struggle…We know that the expenses we are charging to Mother Earth are being put on our grandchildren's credit card (Manuel & Derrickson, 2017, p. 244)." As Manuel and Grand Chief Derrickson go on to explain, part of the spiritual relationship that many Indigenous peoples maintain with their traditional territories is a concern for the impact of current actions on future people; this means that the

well-being of future people is always considered when making decisions concerning present relationships with the land (Manuel & Derrickson, 2017, p. 246). An example of this concern for future people in decision-making is what has been called the "Seventh Generation" principle, a principle which has been embraced by many Indigenous peoples but is commonly understood to be derived from the Great Law of Peace of the Haudenosaunee Confederation. This principle dictates that all decisions should be made with seven future generations in mind, as well as seven past generations of ancestors (Loew, 2014, p. xv). The Land Back movement embodies the value of protecting future people expressed in the Seventh Generation principle by ensuring that the generations of people to come are not unfairly burdened by our actions today; their well-being is of crucial importance because they are also connected by reciprocal relationships with current people and the land. This outlook differs substantially from the rationalistic, contractarian approach taken by some Western scholars, which positions moral action as occurring within a social contract to which two rational human beings, or groups thereof, have agreed. Martin P. Golding takes this contractarian approach in his work, arguing that although we do have some obligations to future people, they cannot reciprocate the benefits we bestow upon them, and therefore cannot form part of our moral community (Golding, 1980, p. 65). The approach embodied by the Land Back movement provides an alternative perspective, one in which future people are seen as part of the moral community, which is demonstrated by the consideration that future people are given when making decisions in the present. Many Indigenous philosophies see past, present, and future as inherently connected, with the past constituting the present and being reconstituted in the future (Stewart-Harawira, 2005, p. 42). This conception of interdependence between not just human and nonhuman contemporaries, but between past, present, and future beings and the land, is underpinned by a cyclical and non-linear conception of time. Christine

Winter describes the cyclical connection between generations expressed in many Indigenous philosophies with the following example:

> I have ancestors; I live now, and I have children who will (all being equal) continue to live when I am gone; and I will have grandchildren (all things equal) …While I am living, I am also a (potential) ancestor, and my living children were once a future generation to me, as are my potential grandchildren, as was I to my ancestors. In time I will be an ancestor as will my children and my grandchildren will be living and thinking of future generations. The generations are co-existing, the past is always in the present, and the future is always in the past (Winter, 2022, p. 154).

This cyclical conception of temporality and connections between the generations presents us with an alternative way of thinking about our relationships with future people, one that pushes back against the idea that we cannot have reciprocity with people who do not yet exist. Although Western philosophies, as well as environmental discourse that highlights the importance of future generations, have explored cyclical conceptions of time, Indigenous philosophies are deeply mindful of the connections between generations in a way that many Western theories of intergenerational morality are not. Many Indigenous philosophies give immense moral weight to the connections between generations that are underpinned by a circular conception of time. The Land Back movement manifests this idea that we are already in reciprocal relationships with future people by intentionally working to protect the land for the sake of generations to come. The Land Back Manifesto reflects these values, emphasizing the importance of the next generation and a sense of belonging to the land that transcends the lifetime of individuals, connecting generations of people (*LANDBACK Manifesto*, 2021).

The Land Back movement exemplifies not only the need for Indigenous leadership in the environmental movement for the sake of the greater project of protecting the environment, but also the importance of protecting and regenerating Indigenous knowledges for the sake of Indigenous communities. As Deborah McGregor explains, Indigenous philosophies and

knowledges are "not just floating around untethered to broader Indigenous societal goals and aspirations," but are part of larger Indigenous Knowledge Systems that "enable the continued generation and renewal of Indigenous peoples to ensure their well-being (McGregor, 2021, p. 3)." Without support for the systems in which Indigenous knowledges are generated, and the people whose lives are informed by these knowledges, they can be useful to no one (McGregor, 2021, p. 2). Although support can and must be provided by external groups, the renewal of these knowledges can only be realized by Indigenous knowledge holders and their communities. This reclaiming and renewal of Indigenous knowledges is often referred to as "resurgence" within Indigenous communities. Although a precise definition of resurgence is difficult to formulate, as it means different things to different individuals and communities, John Borrows and James Tully have offered one potential definition, describing the term as referring to "Indigenous peoples exercising powers of self-determination outside of state structures and paradigms… [Resurgence is] a force for reclaiming and reconnecting with traditional territories by means of Indigenous ways of knowing and being (Borrows & Tully, 2018, p. 4)". Some view resurgence as an alternative project to that of reconciliation, one which rejects the assimilationist tendencies of some reconciliation-based frameworks; the work of Glen Coulthard in *Red Skin, White Masks*, which rejects the idea that Indigenous culture and ways of knowing need "recognition" from the state, is one such example (Coulthard, 2014). In a similar vein, the work of Indigenous scholar and activist Leanne Simpson explores the importance of resurgence as a way of providing what Coulthard calls a "culturally grounded alternative to colonialism" for Indigenous nations (Coulthard, 2014, p. 148). Simpson writes that although she is concerned with "how we dismantle the master's house, that is, which set of theories we use to critique colonialism," she is much more concerned with "how we (re)build our own house, our own houses (Simpson, 2011,

p. 32)" within Indigenous communities. Simpson, like Coulthard, aims to reject the dominant paradigms that have oppressed Indigenous ways of knowing and focuses her attention on envisioning a path towards rebuilding and strengthening Indigenous communities outside of those paradigms. Others, however, see resurgence as a parallel, but compatible, project to that of reconciliation. Borrows and Tully contend that although some models of reconciliation can be assimilative, attempting to reconcile Indigenous peoples to an "unjust status quo (Borrows & Tully, 2018, p. 5)", it is nonetheless possible to work towards reconciliation. What is needed, according to Borrows and Tully, are relationships of "transformative reconciliation," which aim to transform and overcome unjust relations and are supported by "robust practices of resurgence" in Indigenous communities (Borrows & Tully, 2018, p. 5). They see resurgence as compatible with reconciliation, with the two projects having their own relevance but also working in tandem to create a more just future for all.

The conversations around reconciliation and resurgence are complex, and a full exploration of the nuance involved is beyond the scope of this work. In the context of environmental issues and intergenerational justice, which we have explored here, the most pressing concern is the centering of Indigenous voices and empowerment of Indigenous leadership in facing the climate crisis. As McGregor describes, any inclusion of Indigenous knowledges in the broader discourse surrounding environmental ethics requires a recognition of the context in which these knowledges originate and support for the self-determination of communities who hold and live these knowledges (McGregor, 2021, p. 1). The focus of those who seek to benefit from Indigenous knowledges and philosophies is often the extraction of knowledge for application to broader environmental problems, not the well-being of the systems that support the generation and renewal of Indigenous knowledges. This, for McGregor, means

that any knowledge that is gained loses much of its meaning as it is separated from its lived context (McGregor, 2021, p. 2). She writes that, although Indigenous knowledges are undoubtedly relevant and useful for environmental governance,

> …the only appropriate and effective way for IKS to be "utilized" in environmental governance is to involve Indigenous peoples as nations, societies, and governments, with particular attention given to the holders/keepers and practitioners of IKS. It is simply neither appropriate nor constructive to try to "extract" Indigenous knowledge from Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples should be positioned as leaders in environmental protection, conservation, and assessment; not as "interest" groups to be "incorporated" or "included." Indigenous knowledge resides in the people, the community, the land (places); it may not be tangible or quantifiable in ways inherent to other knowledge systems (e.g., western science). The only way to appropriately understand IKS or IKs is to establish meaningful relationships with Indigenous peoples on their own terms (McGregor, 2021, p. 4).

By positioning Indigenous knowledge holders as leaders, rather than attempting to extract their knowledges and incorporate them into the dominant paradigm, McGregor hopes that we will finally see the changes necessary to support the self-determination of Indigenous communities and make steps towards protecting the environment for future generations. This sentiment is echoed by many other Indigenous scholars, including John Borrows, who writes that building practices that will sustain the earth for future generations cannot be accomplished without the "simultaneous resurgence of Indigenous laws, governments, economies, education, relationships to the living earth, [and] ways of knowing and being (Borrows, 2018, p. 69)". Recognizing the value of Indigenous knowledges and philosophies and learning from them in a respectful way means positioning Indigenous knowledge holders as leaders, not sources of knowledge to be used as a means to an end.

Although, as we have seen, there are stark differences between the dominant Western view of nature and the one expressed in many Indigenous philosophies, there is a common understanding that something must be done to change the way we think about our place in the world and how we relate to the earth. As Winona LaDuke suggests in her work,

> Somewhere between the teachings of western science and those of the Native community there is some agreement on the state of the world. Ecosystems are collapsing, species going extinct, the polar icecaps are melting, and nuclear bombings and accidents have contaminated the land…The writing is on the wall, in bold letters. There is no easy answer, and even scientists themselves seem to recognize the necessity of findings new strategies and understandings (LaDuke, 1999, p. 197).

By any standards, it is clear that change must occur if we want to secure a safe, livable future for generations to come. The question now, however, is how we might go about this. One proposed approach is suggested by Seth Klein in his recent book, *A Good War: Mobilizing Canada for the Climate Emergency*, where he argues that we should approach the climate crisis in the same way we mobilized Canadians to face World War II (Klein, 2020, p. 9). This would involve invoking economic and political measures similar to those used during the Second World War to rally public opinion in support of the cause of slowing climate change, rebuild the economy and shift to greener modes of energy production, and enact emergency legal policies to support these initiatives (Klein, 2020, pp. 366–368). Klein presents a compelling and hopeful case for this approach, arguing that Canadians have faced an emergency of this magnitude before, in the case of World War II, and thus can come together to face the climate emergency with similar success. However, despite Klein's acknowledgement of Indigenous leadership in the environmental movement throughout the book, this approach may not be satisfying to those who wish to see current Indigenous leadership extended to other areas of governance, including land governance. Klein argues that we must break with colonial practices and embrace the principles of the United Nations Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in order to ensure just outcomes alongside slowing climate change, but expresses doubts that attempting to learn from and shift to a worldview informed by Indigenous knowledges is possible, especially given the short time frame we have to confront the climate crisis (Klein, 2020, p. 284). He cites Indigenous scholar Matthew Norris as a critic of his "wartime" approach; Norris argues that the wartime

framework as upholding the top-down political structures that impose governmental authority on Indigenous peoples—exactly what the fight for Indigenous self-determination is seeking to overcome (Matthew Norris, quoted in Klein, 2020, p. 283). The wartime framework also runs counter to the approach we have seen suggested by many Indigenous philosophies, which encourages balance and reciprocity rather than the perpetuation of violence, even if only in metaphor. Klein acknowledges this critique, and even states that he agrees that a shift in worldview may be necessary, but ultimately believes that there is not enough time for such a shift to occur if we want to slow climate change to manageable levels. Both sides of this argument present important points: there is a definite need to act quickly and decisively to confront the climate crisis, as Klein asserts, but also a need to act in a way that is acceptable to all, especially Indigenous communities who have led the fight against resource extraction and climate change thus far. An approach that bridges these two concerns is challenging to articulate, but is worth working towards in order to promote just outcomes for all.

Whether there is a framework in which Indigenous and Western ideas can work together, rather than being placed in opposition, is still debated; there have been, however, suggestions for what this framework might look like. One approach that has often been cited in the relevant literature is the Two-Row Wampum model, which originates from Iroquoian political thought, and can help us to envision a future in which Indigenous and Western knowledges can co-exist and draw on one another while avoiding the assimilation of Indigenous knowledges into Western frameworks. Dale Turner quotes Grand Chief Michael Mitchell of Akwesasne in *This is Not a Peace Pipe,* who describes the significance of Two-Row Wampum belts, on which the Two-Row Wampum model is based, as follows:

> When the Haudenosaunee first came into contact with the European nations, treaties of peace and friendship were made. Each was symbolized by the Gus-Wen-The or Two Row

> Wampum. There is a bed of white wampum which symbolizes the purity of the agreement. There are two rows of purple, and those rows have the spirit of your ancestors and mine. There are three beads of wampum separating the two rows and they symbolize peace, friendship, and respect. These two rows symbolize two paths of vessels, traveling down the same rivers together. One, a birch bark canoe, will be for the Indian people, their laws, their customs and their ways. The other, a ship, will be for the white people and their laws, their customs and their ways. We shall each travel the river together, side by side, but in our own boat. Neither will try to steer the other's vessel (Grand Chief Michael Mitchell, quoted in Turner, 2006, p. 48).

Although, as Turner notes, Two-Row Wampum belts have sometimes been misinterpreted as symbolizing the parallel existence of two nations, the beads representing peace, friendship, and respect connecting the two rows are intended to bridge the two rows representing the two groups entering into an agreement and working together despite their differences. This means that although the two parties must collaborate to constantly renew the agreement, there will be no assimilation of one way of knowing and living into the other as a matter of respect (Turner, 2006, p. 49). This respect is intended to function in a reciprocal context; each group must allow the other to act in the way that they choose with regards to their internal affairs without interfering. Historically, the agreements signified by Two-Row Wampum belts often ended up being one-sided; Turner notes that European settlers rarely gave the same respect to Indigenous nations that they were themselves accorded (Turner, 2006, p. 51). Although the agreements that were represented materially by Two-Row Wampum belts have not always been upheld by both parties involved, many see Two-Row Wampum belts as a potential model for how Indigenous and Western knowledges could continue to develop in their own contexts without assimilating Indigenous knowledges into Western ones. The Two-Row Wampum model suggests that each body of knowledge should be respected and developed within its own context, while respecting the value of other knowledges and their right to develop as knowledge holders see fit. Following this model could allow for both Western and Indigenous knowledge systems and philosophies to

contribute to the change needed to confront the climate crisis and its associated injustices. This does not preclude cooperation between knowledge holders, nor learning from one another, but instead suggests that the best way to move forward together is to respect the value of other ways of knowing and to allow different knowledges to flourish in the communities and contexts in which they originate.

The Two-Row Wampum model presents us with a promising framework for the development and collaboration of Western and Indigenous philosophes. It may, however, become problematic in the context of climate change because of the common interpretation that it allows for the groups involved to act as they wish, so long as they conform to the terms of the agreement into which they have entered. As Dale Turner describes, Alan Cairns is one author who interprets the Two-Row Wampum model this way, following the Western view of agreements materialized by wampum belts as a fixed set of rules allowing for two distinct cultures to exist in parallel (Cairns, 2000, p. 47). As Turner argues, this is not in the original spirit of these agreements; however, the tendency to interpret the specific kind of agreements materialized by Two-Row Wampum belts is a pitfall of this model. When a group's actions impact the shared environment, which climate change has shown us is always the case, there is no room for justice in agreements that allow for actors to make decisions without taking into account their externalities. Kerstin Reibold argues that these forms of agreements "can easily turn…existent relations into deeply unequal ones (Reibold, 2022, p. 12)" by allowing actions by one group, usually the dominant one, to impact the environment of another. When the Two-Row Wampum model is interpreted as allowing for the actors involved to maintain their distinct ways of life regardless of the effect on others who share the land, it compounds the existing unequal effects of climate change, driven by settler society, on Indigenous peoples. As we have seen, harms to Indigenous peoples under settler

colonialism are not limited to the epistemic injustice of failing to include Indigenous philosophies and worldviews in the discourses and institutions of the state, but also take the form of dispossession, specifically of traditional lands. The effects of climate change compound and perpetuate the injustice of dispossession by damaging the ecosystems of traditional lands, making returning stolen lands to Indigenous peoples an inadequate form of rectification for colonial harms. In "Settler Colonialism, Decolonization, and Climate Change," Reibold describes three land-related and interconnected colonial harms: land theft, denial of collective self-determination for Indigenous peoples, and the imposition of settler ethnogeographies. She defines "ethnogeographies" as culturally specific conceptions of land which are comprised of two elements: an ontology of land and the specific land-use patterns by which the ontology is materialized (Reibold, 2022, p. 2). Reibold argues that neither simply giving land back to Indigenous peoples, nor or according self-governance rights alone is enough to ensure that Indigenous groups can live in accordance with their own land ontologies and rebuild their cultures. More attention, she argues, must be paid to the effect of imposed ethnogeographies on Indigenous peoples (Reibold, 2022, p. 3). Giving land back and according self-governance rights, although part of the process of decolonization, have traditionally been understood through dominant Western (settler) ethnogeographies where land is understood to be either individual property or under government control (Reibold, 2022, p. 4). Neither conception of land (i.e. as individual or government property) captures the relational understanding of land that is characteristic of most Indigenous philosophies. Differences in ethnogeographies lead to different understandings of the wrong of land theft; for Indigenous peoples, the wrong of land theft is not restricted to a violation of property rights, but is also wrong insofar as it interrupts relations

between individuals, communities, and traditional territories, including the species and ecosystems that share the land (Reibold, 2022, p. 4).

One aspect of rectifying land theft is creating conditions that allow Indigenous peoples to re-establish relations with the land. In the context of climate change, however, creating these conditions becomes much more difficult, and sometimes impossible; in some cases, traditional lands have been affected by climate change in such a way that traditional land ontologies cannot be materialized, such as in areas where ecosystems have been severely damaged, or where species have migrated away from the area or gone extinct. This means that even when traditional lands are returned, they may not allow for decolonization on Indigenous peoples' terms, including the rebuilding of relationships with the land and others, human and nonhuman, who share that land (Reibold, 2022, p. 9). Maintaining these relationships and fulfilling the associated duties is a crucial part of self-determination for many Indigenous peoples, and the effects of climate change on the land mean that land restitution is often an ineffective form of decolonization insofar as it does not allow for self-determination as defined by Indigenous peoples themselves. Reibold also argues that climate change restricts Indigenous self-determination, even without external political interference, by making subsistence economies impossible, thus forcing communities to enter the market economy and making it more difficult to live in accordance with traditional values (Reibold, 2022, p. 10). This undermines self-determination as defined by Indigenous peoples themselves, which often involves not just political sovereignty but the "maintenance of relations and reciprocal duties with land and non-human beings that live on the land (Reibold, 2022, p. 9)". This argument is supported by Tully's conclusion that transformative reconciliation involves reconciling with both the earth and with each other; without healing the extractive relationship with the earth encouraged by Western

settler society, there can be no progress towards decolonization and justice for Indigenous peoples. For these reasons, agreements that are interpreted as allowing for groups to conduct their internal affairs however they see fit, such as the Two-Row Wampum model on some incorrect interpretations, are not an effective means of promoting environmental justice in the context of climate change, where settler society conducting "business as usual" creates environmental conditions in which the self-determination of Indigenous peoples is compromised. The idea that we can continue to exist as separate nations is untenable if we hope to achieve environmental justice in Canada; as Reibold suggests, a more effective approach is to focus on cooperation and bring attention to the ways in which our actions have effects on others, both human and nonhuman, who share the land with us.

Reibold, as well as other Indigenous scholars such as Brian Noble and Leanne Simpson, have suggested treaties as a model for Indigenous-settler relations moving forward. Reibold argues for a broader view of treaties as a promising way forward for Indigenous-settler relations, one which relies on an understanding of the connectedness of partners entering into the agreement (Reibold, 2022, p. 9). She writes that,

> The idea of internal self-governance rights as a decolonial tool relies on the assumption that cooperation with the settler state is unnecessary, and thus equality is restored by cutting relations…such an assumption is misleading in times of climate change. Climate change necessitated land and resource sharing and this cooperation. Moreover, climate change makes us realize that at least in environmental terms we cannot disentangle ourselves from others. What one actors does to the environment affects other that share this environment (Reibold, 2022, p. 12).

Treaties have long history of success in resolving conflicts between Indigenous groups when interpreted according to Indigenous understandings. On the Western view, by which treaties between settlers and Indigenous peoples are most often interpreted, treaties are viewed as fixed, concrete agreements with little room for change or negotiation once solidified. Katrine Duhamel

writes that on the Indigenous view, treaties are always open to reinterpretation, and are better described as “flexible agreements intended to maintain a spirit, rather than a strict set of rules that could not adapt to changing circumstances (Duhamel, 2018)”. This broad understanding of treaties acknowledges difference, seeing each party as an independent nation with their own customs, laws, and social systems which should not be modified by the external group, but also recognizes the interdependence of all those sharing the land and the necessity of cooperation (Reibold, 2022, p. 9). This leaves space for the independent flourishing of Indigenous knowledge systems but also encourages cooperation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups without assimilation. Robin Wall Kimmerer also highlights the importance of cooperation between Indigenous and Western knowledge systems as a means of achieving environmental justice in her book *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants*. She writes that although Indigenous stories and knowledges are rich in wisdom, from which everyone can learn, they should not be appropriated, nor should non-Indigenous peoples try to emulate Indigenous ways of life (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 344). Instead, Kimmerer suggests that, “an immigrant culture must write its own new stories of relationship to place…but tempered by the wisdom of those who were old on this land long before we came (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 344)”. She writes that the Western world often tries to use a rationalistic approach, through the scientific method, to understand our relationship to place, which can lead to an illusion of dominance over the rest of the natural world; Kimmerer argues that it is not more scientific data we need in order to live in reciprocity with the earth, but more wisdom (Kimmerer, 2013, p. 245). It is this wisdom that many, including Kimmerer, believe Indigenous philosophies can offer us.

As we have seen, the dominant Western conception of nature has received more criticism than ever given the urgency of the climate crisis. This conception of nature—according to which the natural world is seen as mechanistic, knowable through rational inquiry, and possessing only instrumental value—has been historically constructed alongside the rise of capitalism and colonialism. Due to its compatibility with the powerful ideologies of capitalism and colonialism, this conception of nature has helped to shape many Western societies and influences the way that individuals and communities interact with the rest of the natural world. This, in turn, plays a role in the exploitation of natural resources, pollution of air and water, and other actions that contribute to anthropogenic climate change. Many have argued that understanding this conception of nature as historically and socially constructed, and as one conception among many alternatives, can help us to see that this conception of nature can be challenged and changed (Cronon, 1995, pp. 69–90). It has also become apparent from advances in scientific ecology and environmental philosophy that the mechanistic view of nature does not accurately represent the functioning of ecosystems (Callicot, 1989), nor does it align with our meaningful experience of nature (Zwicky, 2019, p. 57). These facts suggest that it is time to challenge the rationalistic conception of nature, which is historically constructed and by no means self-evident; this is a task to which philosophy is best suited. In addition to the reasons just mentioned, it is important that we engage in this questioning as a matter of justice to Indigenous peoples and in dialogue with them as equals, as the rationalistic conception of nature does not reflect Indigenous understandings of the natural world and contributes to the perpetuation of colonial power dynamics. Indigenous perspectives have historically been subject to epistemic oppression in environmental philosophy; therefore, we owe them consideration as a step towards healing from this injustice. Learning from Indigenous philosophies is one element of the greater project of

reconciliation that many living in Canada aspire to, and, as James Tully argues, cannot be realized unless accompanied by attempts to reconcile ourselves with the living earth (Tully, 2018). The inclusion of Indigenous philosophies in environmental discourse is not as difficult a task as it may seem, as many Western philosophical frameworks such as deep ecology, ecophenomenology, and ecofeminism also challenge the rationalistic conception of nature and are compatible with, and supported by, Indigenous philosophies. The similarities between Indigenous philosophies and some elements of these Western approaches can help us to understand and include Indigenous perspectives into the broader conversation around environmental philosophy and ethics. The field of intergenerational environmental justice is one in which Indigenous philosophies have much to teach us, and simultaneously one in which Indigenous perspectives have been subject to the most exclusion. Many theories of intergenerational justice which focus on the environment are grounded in liberal political thought and center the individual as the fundamental moral unit. Liberal philosophies have contributed to the oppression of Indigenous peoples in Canada, motivating assimilative tactics like those exemplified by the White Paper, and exclude Indigenous understandings of society and the self by viewing people as atomistic, rational individuals rather than interdependent and connected. To overcome some of the theoretical issues that stem from individualistic thinking in the realm of intergenerational justice, as well as to better reflect Indigenous perspectives and knowledges, it is important that we challenge and reconceptualise our current understanding of intergenerational environmental justice (Winter, 2022). Indigenous-led movements such as the Land Back movement reflect some of the ideas and values found in many Indigenous philosophies, including concern for future people in all actions and the central role of reciprocity, which can help to guide us towards a new conception of intergenerational justice that can be accepted by

all. These philosophies and values are also a powerful tool for the assertion of Indigenous rights, and should be promoted through projects of resurgence for the well-being of Indigenous communities, not just society as a whole (McGregor, 2021, p. 5). As we have seen, however, both Indigenous and Western knowledges contain wisdom that can help us to reimagine our relationship with the earth and confront the climate crisis in the pursuit of intergenerational environmental justice. Both knowledge systems can make valuable contributions in the pursuit of intergenerational environmental justice. No matter what approach we take, or model we use to navigate the path forward, we cannot face the climate crisis and build a more just future without including everyone. The crises we face on a global scale, most pressingly the ecological crisis, cannot be faced by individuals, nor one group alone. Only through collaboration can there be hope for change. Winona LaDuke poignantly summarizes this sentiment, writing that, "There is, in many Indigenous teachings, a great optimism for the potential to make positive change. Change *will* come. As always, it is just a matter of who determines what that change will be (LaDuke, 1999, p. 200)". Now is the time to choose a just, safe future for generations to come.

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