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When DeWolf asked me what I wanted to talk about, I had just finished reading Betty Booth Donohue's *Bradford's Indian Book*, which reinterprets Bradford's *Of Plimoth Plantation* as if read through Native American eyes. From Donohue, I began to learn more about the perspective of Native People on the events in Plimoth. I began to think about the vast differences between the Native perspective and the colonial settlers' view of the world, but also of the similarities.

What I will try to do this evening is to share what I have learned so far about these similarities and differences by drawing on a number of written sources. I will try to show how similarities in spiritual perspectives initially helped to draw the two cultures together for mutual support, while later experiences began to drive them apart.

Let me start with my biases: I was raised in a Christian home by a Methodist minister and his wife. I have only recently begun to learn about Native spiritual practices, mostly from books and other publications. While I can comfortably describe 17th century history from my own Protestant roots, I have no similar experience within the Native community. I have, however, shared what I'm about to say with Sagamore William Guy of the Pokanoket Tribe who has graciously reviewed my presentation to bring them in line with his experience. Neither of us, I assure you, has lived in the 17th century, so you should take what I have to say as merely suggestive and not definitive!

Some members of the audience are likely much more familiar with Judeo Christian theology and history, so I will not attempt to describe it, except by way of pointing out similarities and differences with Native spirituality.

When I refer to Native people, I am referring to the broad sweep of Algonkian tribes throughout New England and New York State. While much could be applied to the Pokanokets or other specific tribes, I would leave it up to representatives of each tribe to confirm any statement's applicability to them specifically.

Just as today's Congregationalists do not necessarily espouse the beliefs of the 17th century Separatists, today's Indigenous people do not necessarily espouse the beliefs of their 17th century ancestors. Many, but not all, are Christian today, though often those who are not often cite the treatment by the English colonists as the reason they are not. Many Native people converted to Christianity during the Great American Awakening of the 18th century, but I will end my inquiry in the 17th century and leave that subject to another presenter.

Finally, I am not a scholar, nor do I have an academic background in history. What I do have is an enduring fascination with what happened here four hundred years ago, an extensive library of

texts, and a desire to understand the motivations and thinking of both English and Native actors in the drama that took place here. Hopefully my background as a clinical psychologist will also lend some authority to my remarks.

You might ask why I chose this topic, one that many people may want to avoid tackling. When it comes to understanding what took place here four hundred years ago between the English and the Pokanoket people, I think that this topic is one of the most important to understand. What began as an initial attempt on the part of both parties to form an alliance, and some would say even a friendship, gradually deteriorated over two generations to the point of provoking a war that forever changed the relationship between Native people and all immigrants who decided that they would make this place their home with or without the sanction of the Native Americans. While differences in religious or spiritual beliefs were not openly discussed in any of the writing of the time, they must have provided the basis for misunderstanding at a minimum and for deadly conflict at the worst.

What I hope to illustrate, however, is that there were sufficient similarities in outlook that, had they been explored openly, might very well have led to a different outcome. For a few but important years, the English and the Native population shared common aspirations to create a lasting, peaceful relationship and a vision of at least cooperation and respect that could have resulted in a far different outcome. Perhaps, after 400 years, it's not too late to recapture that opportunity once again.

I should also point out that this year marks the 40th anniversary of the American Indian Religious Freedom Act (AIRFA) signed into law by President Jimmy Carter in 1978. Until that time Native Americans were not allowed to practice their religion and were persecuted for conducting tribal ceremonies integral to the continuation of traditional culture. At the same time, the federal government supported Indians' Christian conversion. Despite the First Amendment's guarantees, American Indians' traditional religious practices were not protected until the passage of this act 40 years ago.

I want to begin by outlining my understanding of the Native perspective on spirituality or what most of us would call religion. Needless to say, it will be difficult to capture, describe or summarize all of Native thought about spirituality in such a short talk. Given that there are over 500 separate nations just in North America alone, I can only make but a few generalities. Given those severe limitations, let me begin by pointing out some of the aspects that I have gleaned from my reading on the subject.

According to Ernie Peters of the Dakota Tribe, American Indian religions have no name because it's part of all life. Before the coming of the New People, this land was considered a paradise. Everything natural came from God and was made by Him. The Creator provided everything that we needed. All we had to do was to express our gratitude. Life was our religion.

According to Christine Leigh Heyrman of the University of Delaware, at the time of European contact, Indigenous cultures throughout North America had developed coherent religious systems that included cosmologies—creation myths, transmitted orally from one generation to the next, which purported to explain how those societies had come into being. Second, most native peoples worshiped an all-powerful, all-knowing Creator or “Master Spirit” (a being that assumed a variety of forms and both genders). They also venerated or placated a host of lesser supernatural entities, including an evil god who dealt out disaster, suffering, and death. Third and finally, the members of most tribes believed in the immortality of the human soul and an afterlife, the main feature of which was the abundance of every good thing that made earthly life secure and pleasant.

The tribes of the Pokanoket Nation believed in spiritualism and thanked Mother Earth, along with all other living beings, for the benefits they enjoyed, like sunshine and food. For instance, Kehtannit (the tribe’s name for the Creator, God) was a divine spirit in their folklore. Strongly believing in an afterlife, they buried their dead along with their belongings, with the burial rites being presided over by a spiritual healer.

According to authors like Francis Jennings, Neal Salisbury, and Alden Vaughn, Native American tribes of the eastern woodlands believed that a Great Spirit had created a harmonious world of plenty of which they were only one part. All of nature contained this divine spirit and was to be respected. Thus the native inhabitants managed the land so that it would be productive for all living creatures but changed it little, taking only what they needed. They thanked a tree for dying and providing them with wood for a fire and thanked an animal they had killed for giving up its flesh to feed them and its skin to clothe them. The Judeo-Christian view that humans dominate nature and could change it for their advantage made no sense to these people. Access to the spirit world came through dreams, which shamans would interpret for them. Often these shamans were women, who seemed to be more in contact with the spiritual world because of their role in the miracle of childbirth.

As Mashpee Wampanoag tribe member Paula Peters has said, had the English bothered to look for it, Native spirituality was everywhere. It centered on the attributes of the earth and the wonders of other worlds, honoring the Sun, Moon and four directions as well as animals and birds. No chapel was necessary since ceremonies were held wherever and as often as the occasion called for, without an assigned place or day of the week. It required only a circle where each individual was part of the whole. Birds and animals had spiritual significance, like the crow that delivered the first seed of corn from the southwest. There were many thanksgiving opportunities to honor the creator’s gifts, like the celebration welcoming the strawberry as the first fruit of the season. Drumming, singing and dancing had spiritual significance as did adornments, including beads of shells and copper pendants, and symbolically painted faces and tattoos, embroidered clothing, and feather headdresses. These customs and traditions are still honored by the descendants of those people today.

The Indigenous were people who managed their presence on earth to be in balance with nature, sustaining themselves without starving the living world around them. Their spirituality centered on the circle of life and their place within it. They recognized their responsibility to all living things and the recurring gifts of the earth. They believed that their Creator is in anything around them: water, air, trees, everything. The people and the world around them were all part of the spiritual realm, not separate from it.

They believed that people were not better than the other animals on earth, but one of them. Hunters offered prayers for a successful hunt, to the animal spirits. The people were taught to use natural resources with respect and care, so that there would be enough for future generations. Every day was thanksgiving. They gave thanks for the dawn, the sun, the moon, for the rain, and for every animal they killed. For the Native Americans, the land was not owned, it was to be shared. It was sacred and belonged to everyone.

The tribes held two major celebrations: The New Year, which happened in the spring, was a time where the tribe thanked the Mother Earth for all her gifts through feasting and dance. They also held a strawberry thanksgiving festival in the summer in honor of Mother Earth's gift of the strawberry crop by playing games, feasting, praying, and dancing. In fact, there were Nikomos or thanksgiving celebration with each new moon throughout the year.

According to Neal Salisbury, in the Native perspective, relationships in the social, natural and supernatural world are defined in terms of reciprocity rather than domination and submission.

In Native life, all property was communally owned. All shared in the bounty and cared for the needs of all in hard times. While there were leaders, their role was to serve the needs of the people. Leaders were revered for their wisdom.

According to Lance Young, Chief of the Nemasket Tribe, Native people didn't have the conception that this is only my house, this is only my plot of land. He said, "we all shared whatever we had and took only what we needed from the land and used all of it. There was no homelessness; there were no poor people; sharing was just who we were. There was a time when the Pilgrims first arrived when there could have been this mutual sharing, but because the other differences were so great, it never happened."

As for the Puritans and the Plymouth Separatists, Spirituality was also at the center of their lives. The Separatists prayed and read Scripture every day. The whole purpose in living was to save their souls for the next life in heaven by leading a good life. Their belief was that all humans are naturally sinful and wicked and have to be converted by religion to be good. The purpose of religious practice was to lead people to salvation and to prepare them for the next life.

According to author Nathaniel Philbrick, "a Puritan believed it was necessary to venture back to the absolute beginning of Christianity, before the church had been corrupted by centuries of laxity and abuse, to locate divine truth." Their church was created around the model of the

‘ancient church’ described in the New Testament, so they had a Church Elder (William Brewster), some deacons, and a deaconess. They strictly honored the Sabbath by not performing any labor on Sunday. They studied the writings of earlier Protestants and Separatists, such as Martin Luther and John Calvin, and they even established a printing press to illegally distribute new Separatist and Puritan books in England. “

According to Richard Howland Maxwell of the Pilgrim Museum, the most obvious characteristic of the Separatists, as opposed to the Puritans, is that they had "given up" on any possibility of real reform within the Anglican Church and had chosen to separate from it to start their own churches. But Separatism went beyond just a cynical break from their "other church." It had a deep philosophical grounding going all the way back to Scripture and involving the belief that Christians must separate themselves from the world.

According to UC Berkeley professor Claude Fischer, the Puritans were a strange group, one highly atypical of early America; they were perhaps more a cult than a community. They lived in compact villages rather than spread out in homesteads; they were relatively isolated from world commerce; they were homogeneous; and they were sternly religious. Most distinctively, they lived in tightly-controlled communities, in what historian Michael Zuckerman has called “a totalitarianism of true believers.”

Bradford’s strong religious disposition rationalized the pre-colonial Great Dying among the Pokanokets. He wrote that it consequently made way for a foundation “for the propagating and advancing the gospel of the kingdom of Christ in those remote parts of the world; yea, though they should be but even as stepping-stones unto others for the performing of so great a work”. This was a morbid ideology also shared by Captain John Smith, who was convinced the epidemic sickness killing Natives was a sign of God’s influence in the colonizers’ destiny.

They saw everything through the Scriptures. When they first arrived on Cape Cod, the Pilgrims steal corn from the Native Americans, and Bradford immediately thanks the Lord for providing it for them. Then Bradford quotes from Numbers 13, Chapter 13: “[L]ike the men from Eshcol, carried with them the fruits of the land and showed their brethren; of which, and their return, they were marvelously glad and their hearts encouraged”. These verses function rhetorically as a way for the Pilgrims to justify stealing—which is even stranger due to the fact that not stealing is a direct commandment from the Judeo-Christian god.

As Philbrick writes, “The Pilgrims had come to America not to conquer a continent but to re-create their modest communities in Scrooby and in Leiden. When they arrived at Plymouth in December 1620 and found it emptied of people, it seemed as if God had given them exactly what they were looking for. But as they quickly discovered during that first terrifying fall and winter, New England was far from uninhabited. There were still plenty of Native people, and to ignore or anger them was to risk annihilation. The Pilgrims’ religious beliefs played a dominant role in the decades ahead, but it was their deepening relationship with the Indians that turned them into

Americans. By forcing the English to improvise, the Indians prevented Plymouth Colony from ossifying into a monolithic cult of religious extremism. For their part, the Indians also were profoundly influenced by the English and quickly created a new and dynamic culture full of Native and Western influences. For a nation that has come to recognize that one of its greatest strengths is its diversity, the first fifty years of Plymouth Colony stand as a model of what America might have been from the very beginning.”

According to Plymouth Historian William Pickering, when Europeans first occupied the Americas, most did not even consider that the peoples they encountered had cultural and religious traditions that were different from their own; in fact, most believed Indigenous communities had no culture or religion at all. On the whole, these English settlers saw themselves as settling in a “virgin land” where real “civilization” had not been established. They understood their right to conquest in terms of old English legal traditions based on industry and utility, in which constructing houses, building fences, and laying out plantations constituted legitimate claims to land. They took their Biblical warrant from Genesis 1:28: “Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth and subdue it.” The issue of land became, in many ways, the deepest “religious” issue over which worldviews collided. Many of the colonists saw the new land as a “wilderness” to be settled, not as already inhabited, or as Michael Wigglesworth described it in 1662, “a waste and howling wilderness, where none inhabited but hellish fiends, and brutish men that devils worshipped.”

The Puritans could not understand that Native people shared any of their own aspirations because, to them, they were unique and no one else mattered. They could not believe that a non-Christian culture could be as good as or intelligent as theirs.

Even today, as George Cornell reported in the *LA Times*, because Native American religions are so culturally removed and different than their own, non-Indians do not see them as having the same status as “real” religions. This attitude has led to the enactment and enforcement of a multitude of Federal laws without any consideration of their possible effect on Native religions, and which have severely restricted the religious practices of Native Americans.

According to writer Sarah Williams, The Indians expressed great kindness to the Puritans, coming to live with them where they served as “their interpreter” and “directed [the Puritans] [on] how to set their corn, where to take fish, and to procure other commodities”. After this encounter with the Indians, Bradford’s depiction of them changes. He does not talk about them in a particularly positive light, but he no longer speaks of them negatively either; however, it is clear that the Indian’s involvement in Plymouth Plantation led to the success and survival of the colony whether Bradford directly says so or not.

With different concepts of race, religion, and gender, events during the period 1643-75 are defined by a lack of understanding from all perspectives. Mass Bay evangelist John Eliot began to actively attempt to convert Native people to Christianity in the 1640s, eventually setting up

fourteen Praying Towns where Christianized Native people could dress and behave like the English. Natives had to choose between their old ways and the new, and for many the promise of western medicine made the choice of renouncing their old ways more attractive. They decided to trade their access to a pantheon of gods for one god, cut their hair and abandon old gender and cultural norms because they had the potential to ensure survival. Eliot promised to teach them English medicine so that they would be able to continue healing themselves, even after he was gone. However, these efforts did more to expand the rift between settlers and most Natives.

As the first generation of English and Native people who met in Plymouth began to die in the latter half of the 17th century, a new generation who never experienced mutual cooperation between the two groups emerged. As Philbrick points out, “No longer mindful of the debt they owed the Pokanokets, without whom their parents would never have endured their first year in America, some of the Pilgrims’ children were less willing to treat Native leaders with the tolerance and respect their parents had once afforded Massasoit.” This difference led to a lack of respect for Native ways on the part of the English and a growing resentment among the Pokanokets that culminated in the rebellion that came to be known as King Philip’s War.

So, despite this history, are there ways that the beliefs of these two peoples were similar?

One idea that is comparable between the Native Americans and the Puritans is their belief that God exists as a Supreme Being. Puritan Evangelist John Eliot wrote that both followed the basic truths that “all men have in them a desire of happiness,” that “all men more or less leave some indelible impressions of a Godhead,” that even “heathen philosophers have acknowledged that no nation in the world is so barbarous where the confession and adoration of a Deity is not to be found.” What he saw as basic truths meant that he believed natives had some semblance of religion.

Many key Native religious beliefs and practices had broad but striking resemblance to those current among early modern Europeans, both Catholic and Protestant. Both cultures credited a creation myth (as set forth in Genesis), venerated a Creator God, dreaded a malicious subordinate deity (Lucifer), and looked forward to the individual soul’s immortality in an afterlife superior in every respect to the here and now. Both also propitiated their deity with prayers and offerings and relied upon specially trained clergy to sustain their societies during periods of crisis. Finally, like Indigenous people, the great majority of early modern Europeans feared witches and also pondered the meaning of their dreams.

Like many other Europeans, the Puritans believed in the supernatural. Every event appeared to be a sign of God’s mercy or judgment, and people believed that witches allied themselves with the Devil to carry out evil deeds and deliberate harm such as the sickness or death of children, the loss of cattle, and other catastrophes.

Both cultures cite a tree in their origin stories: the Puritans with the Tree of Knowledge, and the Native culture’s description of a great tree in the heavens. English Settler Thomas Morton’s

exploration and experience amongst Algonquians led him to believe there were origin stories similar to that of Adam and Eve in Native dogma, creating a further link to Judaism and Christianity. He assumed a universality of certain concepts and principals; he thought natives had an origin story that matched those of other religions. Though the Puritans tried to get rid of the Catholic Church's veneration of saints to whom people often prayed, that was not unlike the various gods to whom Native people prayed. Even the use of burning incense among Catholics paralleled the use of smudging with sage smoke by Native people.

Like the Native social order that took care of all in the tribe, (according to Creviston), the Separatists proposed to create a common social order in which all would be taken care of. Unfortunately, their emphasis on the accumulation of wealth and private property ultimately led to a stratified society with rich and poor, and the early ideals of a caring Christian community faded.

Scholar Lori Stokes points out the similarities between the Separatists' belief in the Common Good and the Native notion of community. The early Separatists emphasized the practice of "mutual watch," that is giving loving attention to the people around you, much like the Native concept of mutual care in their society. In a similar way, Congregational ministers were assigned to perform many of the roles that the tribal sachems played, such as comforting the sick and relieving anxiety.

"The similarities of early native American religions and ancient Hebrew religion are astonishing," says historian Duane Hale of the Creek tribe. Hale, a researcher of the American Indian Institute at the University of Oklahoma, also notes congruent strains with early Christianity. Similarities include Indian expectations of a Christ-like benefactor, emphasis on communal sharing of everything, and emphasis on modesty by not calling attention to oneself. "All American Indians were--and most are today--deeply religious and devoted to their belief in one Supreme Being," Hale said in a recent interview. He discounted past characterizations of some old tribal rites as pagan. "Christianity and early Indian religion have been so interwoven that it is often difficult now to tell which came first for them," Hale said. Of 1.4 million U.S. Indians, most are Christians but many also retain tribal insights, he said.

As Philbrick writes, "There were profound differences between the Pilgrims and Pokanokets to be sure — especially when it came to technology, culture, and spiritual beliefs — but in those early years, when the mutual challenge of survival dominated all other concerns, the two peoples had more in common than is generally appreciated today."

So how did those differences play out in the latter half of the 17th century? Why did these two cultures diverge rather than merge? As we will see, Puritans and the Native Americans had a culture-conflicted relationship with each other because of their different religious beliefs, ethics, and their views on the world, which also made the relationship between the two even more complicated than it was at the beginning.

Religion played a very important role in both Native American and Puritan society, though their ideas differed greatly. The Puritans were very religious people, and it mattered more of what God thought of them more than anything and what everyone else thought didn't matter as much. While the Puritans were the very religious ones, the Native Americans cared more about viewing people for who they were as people than their religious beliefs.

The Native Americans' goal was to live in peace and to live in nature. While the Native Americans tried to also make political alliances with the all the colonists, the Europeans were more interested in taking as much land as fast as they humanly could. The Puritans and the Native Americans had a very complicated relationship with each other because it was a fight for control of the land

The Puritans' religious teachings were based on the Bible, which was supposed to provide the correct answer to any question. On the other hand, the Native Americans relied on oral narratives, which passed religious beliefs from one generation to the next. According to author Kathleen Bragdon, this factor brought conflicts between the two groups. The Puritans thought that the Natives were barbaric and unreligious, and that it was impossible to have a true religion based on stories. For their part, the Natives disliked the idea of borrowing a foreign set of beliefs that did not fit into their own traditions.

Native Americans perceived the "material" and "spiritual" as a unified realm of being—a kind of extended kinship network. In their view, plants, animals and humans partook of divinity through their close connection with "guardian spirits," a myriad of "supernatural" entities who imbued their "natural" kin with life and power. By contrast, Protestant and Catholic traditions were more inclined to emphasize the gulf that separated the pure, spiritual beings in heaven—God, the angels, and saints—from sinful men and women mired in a profane world filled with temptation and evil.

According to Lois Bird Carpenter, the Puritans valued their religion above any other human aspect. They believed that their actions had less consequence than their faith in God. On the other hand, the Natives believed that their actions were more important and governed their faith. In Carpenter's view, the most prominent religious difference that emerged between the two groups was based on the idea of God. The Puritans, like all other Abrahamic religions, were monotheists. However, the Natives, though worshipping "Great Spirit" as their almighty, considered a number of other deities such as trees, ancestors and the omnipotent god Tirawa. Under the laws of the Bible, it is a sin to worship any other god apart from God. Thus, the Puritans believed that the Native American's way of worship amounted to idolatry, which violated the first commandment given to Moses by God. Therefore, the Puritans thought that the natives were sinners whose destination was hell, unless they were converted to Christianity.

From the Christian perspective, the world is not as important as the next world (Hell or Heaven). The Puritans, like other Christians, believed that all humans are naturally evil. On the other hand,

according to Braddon, the Natives believed that there was only one world for all humans and animals. They thought that a person returns to the earth after death in the form of a new person or animal. To them, things one did while on Earth did not matter because he or she will still reincarnate.

According to Richard Tetek, Christians in general, and Puritans especially, condemned and abhorred Native religious practices and beliefs. No matter how sympathetic a Puritan author was, all Native Americans were indiscriminately described as devil worshipers and Satanists. For English Puritans religion was probably the most insurmountable barrier between the two cultures. There was no space for compromise and toleration, and inevitably Native Americans stood on “the dark side”. Thus religion and cultural differences had crucial implications for the Puritan’s attitude towards Indians and it had a direct impact on other aspects of mutual interaction, from everyday contacts to land tenure.

Native people had learned restraint. If there was less food in the winter, they ate less. That made them competent and resourceful, whereas the English saw them as failing. The Puritans thought God was in Heaven and they must go up to Heaven to meet God in the afterlife. Native people believed that God was everywhere in the natural world, and thus it was to be respected. The Native ideal was of restraint and reciprocal kinship; the English ideal was closer to competition and plunder.

So what does all of this mean, or what could it mean in today’s world?

Certainly cultures who come into close contact with one another can develop hostilities. They can also benefit from sharing and learning from one another. Examples of Western cultures that merged are the Scotch-Irish of Northern Ireland or the Alsatians who emerged from French and German cultures on the border between France and Germany. New behaviors can also develop from a true merger without exploitation. However, we know that such instances are rare, usually occur when the power balances are roughly equal, and appropriation of one culture by another has been far more likely. In fact, it is difficult to find examples of colonial cultures merging with Indigenous ones with positive outcomes.

In the Northwest Territories and the Northern United States, the Métis, are the group of people who originated in the 1700s when French and Scottish fur traders married Aboriginal women, such as the Cree, and Anishinabe (Ojibway). The Métis developed a unique culture that included elements of both European and Native ways and artifacts (clothes, tools, means of travel, etc.). They prided themselves on their distinctiveness from both the cultures from which they are descended. Since the mid-1990s, the province’s Métis have worked towards the building of self-governing institutions and they have obtained a land base in northwestern Saskatchewan and have had their Indigenous rights, such as access to full hunting, restored.

But that this is not our history in New England. The Puritan/Separatist culture did not merge with the Pokanokets. That failure opened the way for the eventual near genocide of the First People of

the East Bay and the total domination by European immigrants to this day. Given that history, we can only turn our attention to decolonization, that is, current efforts to undo the damage that European settler colonization has done to Native populations throughout the Americas as well as to the non-Indigenous population.

As Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang write in *[Decolonization is not a metaphor](#)*, settler colonialism is different from other forms of colonialism in that settlers come with the intention of making a new home on the land, a homemaking that insists on settler sovereignty over all things in their new domain. Within settler colonialism, the most important concern is land/water/air/subterranean earth (land, for shorthand). Land is what is most valuable, contested, required. This is both because the settlers make Indigenous land their new home and source of capital, and also because the disruption of Indigenous relationships to land represents a profound epistemic, ontological, cosmological violence. In the process of settler colonialism, land is remade into property and human relationships to land are restricted to the relationship of the owner to his property.

In order for the settlers to make a place into their home, they must destroy and disappear the Indigenous peoples that live there. For the settlers, Indigenous peoples are in the way. In the destruction of Indigenous peoples, Indigenous communities, and over time and through law and policy, Indigenous peoples' claims to land under settler regimes, land is recast as property and as a resource. Indigenous peoples must be erased, must be made into ghosts. Settlers create their identity by making the land produce, and produce excessively, because "civilization" is defined as production in excess of the "natural" world (i.e. in excess of the sustainable production already present in the Indigenous world). Settlers become the law, supplanting Indigenous laws and epistemologies

We are most profoundly seeing the effects of settler colonization in climate change, where lack of respect for the balance of Nature and taking only what we need is resulting in world-wide calamities such as floods and uncontrolled fires. We can also see these effects in rising rates of homelessness, crime, racism and a variety of social ills that arise when land and property are seen as more important than human compassion.

So how do we begin to undo the damage that settler colonization has brought?

Owen L. Oliver (Quinault / Isleta Pueblo) writes, "True decolonization means genuinely listening to Indigenous community members and creating shifts in the power dynamics that uplift Indigenous ways of connecting with the lived environment. Institutions, including both universities and government systems, need to provide more than seats at the table. Indigenous communities need to be at the forefront of strategic planning and equitable decision-making processes. Tribal community outreach is the first step."