



“Fake Vegans”: Indigenous Solidarity and Animal Liberation Activism

Dr. Melissa Marie Legge
McMaster University

Rasha Taha
McMaster University

Key Words: indigenous • activism • solidarity • social work

Abstract

The Haudenosaunee Wildlife and Habitat Authority has negotiated with Parks Canada to determine safe areas for indigenous hunters to exercise their Treaty rights in Ontario. One of these areas is Short Hills Provincial Park. Every year, a group of protestors block the park in an attempt to prevent hunters from legally exercising their rights. The protestors are a combination of property owners who have a "not in my backyard" mentality, and animal activists who object to the deer harvest. In response to the protests, supporters of the hunters have taken a stance of solidarity at the park entrance to try to disrupt the protests. The supporters consist of indigenous peoples and settler allies, members of CPT-IPS, Christian Peacemaker Indigenous Peoples Solidarity Team, and members of HALT, Hamilton Animal Liberation Team. This paper focuses on deconstructing the experiences of settler animal liberation activists demonstrating in solidarity with indigenous hunters.

"We are also responsible to the natural world. ... We consider the impact of every governmental decision on future generations, on peace - and on the natural world." (Haudenosaunee Wildlife and Habitat Authority Annual Report 2015)

"If you listen to the four legged, they will teach you" (Elder Marie Jones, Short Hills Harvest, November 2016).

There is a tension within the North American animal rights (AR) movement between (1), notions of cruelty toward other-than-human (OTH) animals and ecological harm, and, (2), racism and cultural imperialism (Kim, 2015). These tensions have come to a head at significant moments in the history of AR activism, including the debates around the Chinese sale of live animals in food markets in San Francisco in the early 2000's, and the struggle surrounding the Makah whale hunt in the mid 1990's (Kim,

2015). In her 2015 book *Dangerous Crossings*, Kim points out that the tension between animal rights and cultural imperialism has high stakes that are “nothing less than life or death, both human and non-human” (Kim, 2015, p. 8).

The following analysis will focus on bridging the gap between AR activism and Indigenous solidarity work through an examination of the lived experiences of animal liberation activists’ involvement in recent solidarity work with Indigenous communities in Southern Ontario in November 2015. The authors of this paper are part of the Supporters of the Haudenosaunee Right to Hunt¹, and the Hamilton-Halton Animal Liberation Team (HALT). Melissa Marie Legge, who goes by emmy, and Rasha Taha, are settlers, long-time animal liberation activists, and are vegan. We consulted with Jamie Bugg, a Haudenosaunee activist who has long been involved in the Short Hills harvests, on the writing of this paper.

AR ACTIVISM AND CULTURAL IMPERIALISM

The Animal Liberation Front (ALF), a collective of animal liberation activists who have been active since their first public action in the mid-1970’s, have compiled a list of forms of animal rights activism, embracing the conceptualization that activism itself involves nothing more than action in support of a cause. In AR activism, this broad list of activities ranges from individuals learning about the question of the animal, to material sabotage of animal-exploitation industries (ALF, n.d.a). The authors of this paper are activists who support AR with the explicit goal of ending exploitation of animals. One common way that we support AR activism is through a deep commitment to a vegan lifestyle. Being vegan means avoiding the consumption of animal products in any way. This is a lifestyle that has been criticized as Eurocentric; however, some Indigenous scholars have started exploring its potential relevance to an Indigenous identity, particularly in an urban context (Robinson, 2013). The intersectionality of the social locations described here and embodied by Legge and Taha made the experience of the Short Hills deer harvest salient, since both these authors, as settlers, are also

¹ For more information on the group, visit <http://sixnationsrighttohunt.tumblr.com/>, <https://vimeo.com/huntsupporters>, or @HuntSupporters.

committed to solidarity with Indigenous peoples, and an anti-colonial approach to life where possible.

COMMONALITIES BETWEEN INDIGENOUS PERSPECTIVES AND ANIMAL RIGHTS ACTIVISTS

Many animal advocacy communities in Ontario are led largely by settlers, and some fail to recognize the common grounds they share with Indigenous communities that have defended the earth and its inhabitants against destruction and devastation since long before first contact with European settlers (Powell, 2014). Donaldson and Kymlicka (2015) outline the commonalities shared between Indigenous perspectives and those of AR activists, such as the condemnation of the property-based view of OTH animals, as well as the recognition of OTH animals as being their own subjects worthy of intrinsic respect.

However, there are some perspectival conflicts as well. The AR perspective views inherent respect as encompassing a guaranteed right to life, whereas the Indigenous perspective views traditional hunting practices as being respectful of OTH animal selfhood (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2015). AR activism’s conflict with Indigenous rights is not the only example of the tension that has long existed between cultural imperialism and AR (Kim, 2015). Kim (2015) elaborates on three examples of this tension. She takes up the Makah whale hunts to illustrate the complexities of reconciling the interests of AR activists and Indigenous rights in the United States, but also the struggle over live animal markets in San Francisco, as well as the case of Michael Vick and dogfighting, contextualized within questions of race. Two questions that emerge from unpacking these case studies are, which cultural traditions deserve protection, and who truly belongs? This perspectival conflict was illustrated by the struggles surrounding the Makah whale hunt in the late 1990’s. Settlers argued against the hunt on three moral grounds – 1, whales as deserving of respect and protection, 2, traditions should be able to adapt with changing ecological context, 3, species conservation (Kim, 2015). AR activists asserted that recognizing the whale’s subjectivity means not hunting, and the Indigenous peoples involved, who saw the whales as “respect-worthy and important but still edible” (Kim, 2015, p. 207). Rudy (2011) outlines how Indigenous hunting communities are often more

spiritual in their practices toward animals than settler hunters, and identifies that hunting for sustenance is viewed as an honourable and spiritual endeavor in many Indigenous communities. In the case example offered above, the Makah hunters defended themselves against ethical accusations, referencing their “continuing spiritual relationship with nature as Native people” (Kim, 2015, p. 236). The Makah accused activists who opposed the hunt of ecocolonialism, and ecoracism, asserting that the whale hunt in this case was part of the reparations owed by settlers to account for historical colonialism. In 1998, the president of the Makah Whaling Commission, Keith Johnson, made a statement that said, “To us the implication that our culture is inferior if we believe in whaling is demeaning and racist,” (Kim, 2015, p. 233). For the Makah, the whale hunt was not only a material desire, but became a symbol of sovereignty, not only political due to connections with treaty rights, but also cultural. Kim (2015) writes that the Indigenous peoples involved in the Makah whale hunt conflict “wanted to wrest back the power of self-determination that colonialism had stripped away” (p. 238). Two decades after the conflict surrounding the Makah whale hunt began, we saw echoes of these same tensions surrounding the Short Hills deer harvest in 2015.

INDIGENOUS RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTH ANIMALS

It is important to highlight Indigenous scholars’ voices when it comes to the relationships that humans have with OTH animals. Notably, Robinson (2013) focuses on how Mi’kmaq legends portray human-OTH animal relationships through sibling relations, rendering the latter deserving of respect one would give a brother or friend (Robinson, 2013). Robinson argues that despite the tendency to want to recreate past culture in the name of authenticity – such as cultural practices that the Mi’kmaq peoples used to engage in – there is room to create new ways to express ancestral values (Robinson, 2013). Building off of a well-known Mi’kmaq legend, Glooskap – an archetype of the Mi’kmaq person – asks his friend the marten to give his body for food so that Glooskap’s grandmother can live, which the marten agrees to because of the relationship that he has with Glooskap; in return, Glooskap makes the marten his brother (Robinson, 2013). Since the marten’s sacrifice was made due to a need for his flesh in order to ensure survival, Robinson argues that this sacrifice is no longer necessary today

given that we no longer need to rely on OTH animals for sustenance, or in Robinson’s words, “dying for food is something that we no longer have to ask our animal siblings to do for us” (Robinson, 2013).

BRIEF HISTORY OF HALT

Both of the authors of this paper are current members of HALT. Taha joined in November 2014, at which time they co-authored the second public statement on the Short Hills harvest issued by the team, while Melissa Marie Legge joined in January of 2016, following their involvement with the Short Hills solidarity work the previous November with CPT-IPS (Christian Peacekeepers Team- Indigenous Peoples Solidarity). HALT is a grassroots collective of individuals fighting to end human and OTH animal oppression in their communities and across Southern Ontario. Even though the membership is in constant flux, the collective’s core values remain grounded; HALT operates from an intersectional anti-oppressive lens and is anti-capitalist, with an emphasis on its firm stance in support of Indigenous self-determination, sovereignty, and land defense. HALT is comprised of both settler and Indigenous activists.

A major focus in the earlier years of the collective’s involvements was on African Lion Safari, a drive-through ‘wildlife’ park in Hamilton that claims to be a conservation space for wildlife such as lions, elephants, and giraffes. The collective held demonstrations outside of the park in the summer months to raise awareness of the cruel confinement and treatment of the animals. Protests against the Shrine Circus were also a big part of the collective’s actions that actively opposed animal confinement and exploitation. Other events that the group has participated in, facilitated, and organized include anti-Marineland protests, Fur Free Friday marches, and fundraisers for different organizations that help both humans and other animals (Lavallie, 2015; Poisinelli, 2016).

Since becoming aware of the Short Hills protests, HALT has publically issued two statements voicing its solidarity with the Indigenous community and the Haudenosaunee’s right to hunt for the past two years while condemning the actions of the protestors (see appendices). In 2015, HALT decided to participate in actively opposing the racially-charged protests through offering the Indigenous hunters support in whatever way they asked (as relayed through friends and family via text message and word of

mouth), which included using their physical bodies to create a barrier between hunt protestors and vehicles entering the park, cheering when trucks were allowed to enter, and singing and drumming with Indigenous women who came out to Short Hills to support the hunters. Taking a stance of solidarity with Indigenous communities is in line with HALT’s values, but the group asks the question: How do we reconcile our commitment to AR while supporting the traditional hunting of deer by Indigenous peoples?

HALT’S VALUES AND ETHICS

Given that HALT is an animal liberation collective, one of its core values is that OTH animals should not to be used as means to achieve utilitarian ends, whether that pertains to literal consumption of their bodies or exploitation for entertainment purposes; they have their own personhood and own subjective existence (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2011). Mi’kmaq legends facilitate the understanding of a shared personhood between OTH animals and humans (Robinson, 2013). Rudy (2011) elaborates on this shared personhood in *Loving Animals* through saying:

We need to value animals more because their radical otherness contextualizes our lives. We see our place on earth more clearly, because we see our own limitations and fragilities through them. We are all part of one another. Beginning with processes like identification and love creates space for us to tell stories so that others can see the value of animals more profoundly. We can only add species to race, class, gender, sexuality as an equivalent identity category if we can make the beings on the other side of the human-animal divide seem more real.

However, this belief in OTH animal personhood cannot be viewed in a vacuum, since human and OTH animal relationships are wrought with complexity. This is especially relevant when working from an anti-colonial perspective. Despite holding the belief that OTH animals exist for their own means, HALT cannot deny that applying this logic to Indigenous societies is a form of Eurocentrism and imperialism that works to perpetuate the colonial agenda of assimilation of Indigenous cultures into Western society. Through learning about historical context, like how current OTH animal agricultural practices have been used as tools of colonization (Powell, 2014), HALT could not align itself with the stance taken by a large portion of the AR movement with regards to the Short Hills harvests. Because of its non-alignment, HALT is considered to be the black sheep of the

AR movement in Ontario given its stance on Indigenous hunting and the upholding of treaty rights; and, as such, members of the collective have been accused of being “fake vegans” by other activists within the broader AR community (Lavallie, 2016).

However, HALT is not alone. According to Donaldson and Kymlicka (2015), a number of animal liberation activists around the world abide by an ‘Aboriginal exemption’ when it pertains to AR principles for reasons including treaty rights, respect for cultural integrity, and resistance against settler racial discrimination. HALT recognizes that Indigenous groups have been heavily involved in the defense of the land, water, and air, as well as OTH animals, since well before any predominantly Eurocentric AR movement existed; and, those are actions stemming from values that correspond with those of animal liberation activists like HALT moreso than capitalist Eurocentric social values (Donaldson and Kymlicka, 2011; Powell, 2014). Rod Coronado, member of the Pasqua Yaqui tribe and ALF activist, imagined Indigenous values as a source of strength for the AR movement. He is quoted in Powell (2014), saying,

Long before there was an animal rights movement, there were Indigenous peoples defending the earth and her animals with their lives. And they still are! Just because they eat meat doesn’t make them the enemy. Until we learn tolerance, we will continue to be disenfranchised. It doesn’t mean WE have to be like them, but there’s such beauty in diverse worldviews that all hold nature and animals on the same level as us. It is the opposition’s worst nightmare for us all to be unified against their policies that destroy the same world we all love. (Rod Coronado, in Powell, 2014, n.p.)

There is a clear tension that was experienced by the authors of this paper during their involvement in the demonstrations at Short Hills. It was challenging for us to reconcile our dedication to animal liberation with supporting Indigenous hunting; this tension is representative of the very nature of intersectionality itself, where two salient identities clash: identifying as vegan and animal liberation activists, and recognizing the privilege of being settlers.

Intersectionality rejects the notion of separating identity categories but instead focuses on their intertwining and inextricable natures (Simien, 2007). When AR activists protest Indigenous peoples’ right to hunt, HALT’s stance is that AR activists are not adequately acknowledging or addressing their role in the perpetuation of colonization and oppression of Indigenous peoples as settlers. HALT does not endorse the hunting of animals; however, HALT cannot and will not intervene in the traditional practices of

Indigenous peoples, in order to avoid replicating colonial patterns of oppression, and the demonstration of white saviourism (Powell, 2014). Belcourt (2014) writes that animal oppression and liberation cannot be addressed without the concurrent dismantling of settler colonialism and white supremacy, as they are tools used to simultaneously exploit and erase both Indigenous human and OTH animal bodies.

BACKGROUND ON THE SHORT HILLS DEER HARVEST

Over the past three years, a traditional Haudenosaunee deer harvest has taken place at Short Hills Provincial Park in Thorold, Ontario, with the support the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR), through the upholding of treaty rights (Powell, 2014). The Haudenosaunee Wildlife and Habitat Committee negotiated with Parks Canada to determine safe areas for Indigenous hunters to exercise their Treaty hunting rights. This agreement was intended to ensure that Indigenous hunters have access to their land and traditional practices, as well as generously ensuring the safety of local settler hunters and property owners. Furthermore, the Haudenosaunee engage in conversations on an ongoing basis about ensuring the balance of local ecosystems and the impact of climate change (Haudenosaunee Confederacy, n.d.). At Short Hills, the Haudenosaunee deer harvest helps balance the ecosystem, which cannot sustain the large deer population that live in the park in the absence of natural predators (Haudenosaunee Confederacy, 2015). About 500 deer live in the park, which can sustain about 100 of them (Haudenosaunee Confederacy, n.d.).

Since the first time this harvest took place, some local residents, who are not actively engaged in AR activism on a regular basis, have joined with a small number of AR activists to protest: on the grounds of rejecting animal use, the destruction of the park's aesthetics, or objecting to having the hunters “in their backyards”. When opposition to the harvest gathered traction in the AR community in Niagara, activists split into two separate ideological camps: those who opposed the hunts, and those who stood in solidarity with Indigenous communities and the defense of their treaty rights (Powell, 2013a). Powell (2013a) recalls the early protests as a definitive historical moment in AR organizing in Southern Ontario, hypothesizing that the conditions that galvanized the protests were fueled by feelings of “settler panic” within the AR activist community. In

addition, Powell (2013a) identified the prevalence of the absolutist view of being against the use of OTH animals, regardless of cultural or political context (Powell, 2013a). There were some AR activists who were in support of the harvests. They were activists who had been active for years within the community, and identified as vegans and animal liberationists. In personal communications, they reported being shamed and antagonized for their support of the hunts by the larger AR community, and their morals and values about animal liberation and the movement were called into question and doubted.

For the past three years, people protesting the harvest have picketed and blockaded the park at sunrise and sunset, as Indigenous hunters enter and leave. During the 2015 harvests, officers from the Niagara Regional Police, the Ontario Provincial Police, and the MNRF, had a formidable presence. While exact numbers of activists and law enforcement agents varied from day to day, law enforcement often outnumbered either protestors or supporters of the hunt. Paradoxically, none of the law enforcement supported the hunters, who have a legal agreement to participate in the harvest; rather, the authors of this paper witnessed them reinforcing barricades illegally set up and maintained by protesters at the park's entrance, restricting hunters' access. In 2015, each vehicle entering the park was delayed anywhere from five to fifteen minutes, which allowed protestors ample time to yell and shine flashlights into the vehicles, documenting the number of people occupying each, and taking note of license plate numbers, seemingly as an intimidation tactic. Racial slurs were liberally used, as well as the verbal negation of the fact that Indigenous people have a historical claim to the land. In personal communications with community members, it was identified that those people involved in the protests against the harvest do not give a good impression within the community, and as experienced by the authors of this paper, this certainly held true on site. While the supporters of the hunt would often arrive from various locations in carpools, bringing food and drink to share with those on all sides, and spent time attempting to engage in meaningful dialogue around the issues, protestors were notorious for arriving in luxury vehicles that they kept running throughout the hours-long protests in order for people in their camp to take a break and warm up in the cars, and responding with aggression and spite when supporters asked them to talk.

After learning about the hostility towards the hunters, Indigenous supporters and allies from all across Southern Ontario began concurrent demonstrations at the park in the hopes of mitigating the impact of the protests while offering the hunters support. The demonstrators, now formally known as the Supporters of the Haudenosaunee Right to Hunt, consist of family and friends of the hunters, other Indigenous community members, members of the faith-based non-violent social justice group CPT-IPS, and AR activists, including HALT. On a typical day at the Short Hills hunt in 2015, the number of hunt supporters was roughly double that of the protestors. HALT’s involvement during the harvests was strictly solidarity and support work, with the aim of creating a positive and supportive experience for the Indigenous people involved in the harvest, while publically demonstrating opposition to the protests.

EXPERIENCES OF HALT TEAM MEMBERS AT SHORT HILLS

The schedule of the harvests, and therefore protests and solidarity demonstrations, meant that Supporters were at Short Hills at least every twelve hours, for four to five hours at a time on November 14th, 15th, 19th, 20th, 28th, and 29th of 2015. This often meant sleeping in two to five hour bursts during the two-day span of each hunt, often between classes at universities or shifts at regular jobs. Local Supporters offered hospitality to those coming in from out of town, who slept on couches, in spare beds, and on floors. Others traveled several hours in often borrowed or rented cars to be present for the demonstrations. Temperatures at the park during the demonstrations ranged from 17 degrees Celsius to below freezing, and Supporters stood in the strong wind, rain, and near complete darkness, and were threatened, and physically and verbally assaulted by law enforcement, as well as protestors. Between demonstrations, Supporters would eat, sleep, support the Indigenous community members who built and tended a sacred fire, care for their companion animals, work on social media campaigns, organize radio interviews, shuttle vegan food provided by Food Not Bombs to and from the park, or drive to the Niagara Regional Native Centre to get wood and traditional medicines for the fire.

Indigenous and settler Supporters alike were privileged to be included in morning ceremonies led by local Indigenous elder Marie Jones, held as the sun rose over the vineyards and the forest. Settlers among the Supporters were generously taught about the

meaning of the fire, and what the experience of being a firekeeper can be like. Settlers were humbled to be invited to smudge, and to sing and drum with the Indigenous women and their friends. Supporters received messages from the hunters inside the park that they could hear the songs, and it made both them and the deer calm. We were told stories about the history of Indigenous activism in the area, and what the deer harvest means in the traditions and culture of the Haudenosaunee. We were taught that the drums that had been brought to Short Hills were made of deer hide, and that without the harvest, making the drums would not be possible. Throughout the demonstrations, the Indigenous women reminded all of the Supporters that we should be of a good and peaceful mind. The demonstrations were described by Supporters, Indigenous and settler alike, as “reconciliation in action.”

Even though HALT had prepared extensively, mentally and physically, before attending the actions at Short Hills, we were still astonished by the violent and racist tendencies in which the protestors repeatedly engaged. According to Powell (2014), animal rights advocates hide under the guise of having a non-violent lifestyle that eschews the overt use of animals while condemning the “violent” and “backwards” practices of Indigenous communities. In this way, settlers justify their exercise of power over Indigenous peoples by pleading to the “barbaric” or “backwards” ways in which Indigenous communities treat animals; the concept of animal rights, then, is not used out of concern for the animals, but rather to justify reproducing current power relations (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2011). It is of no surprise then, that the vast majority of the protestors appeared to be middle- to upper-class settlers of European descent.

Some members of HALT, as well as other Supporters, attempted to engage in conversations with the protestors regarding other demonstrations we could participate in that involve the use of animals without opposing Indigenous traditions, but were unfortunately met with hostility and aggression. The reality is that the environmental impact and life toll of hunting practices of Indigenous communities are equal to only a tiny fraction of the abuse and suffering inherent in the animal agriculture industry (Donaldson & Kymlicka, 2011). As for the specificity of hunting, specifically settler hunting, it is a practice regulated by the MNRF. There are 128 provincial parks in Ontario where hunting is regulated by the MNRF (Government of Ontario, 2016). In 2013 alone,

72,558 white-tailed deer, the same deer the Haudenosaunee hunters harvest at Short Hills, were hunted throughout those parks by settler hunters through the MNRF licensing and tag system (Ontario Wildlife Management Unit, 2014). According to Powell (2013b), four deer were harvested by the Haudenosaunee hunters during the Short Hills hunt in 2013. During our time at Short Hills in 2015, local Indigenous supporters who were in contact with the hunters informed us that in a day’s worth of work, hunters would emerge from the park with anywhere from fifteen to twenty harvested deer; the hunts spanned three weeks in November, totalling nine days of deer harvesting. Regardless of the report, the difference in numbers is staggering. This speaks to the racially-charged nature of the protests at Short Hills that are not being replicated anywhere else where deer are hunted.

While settlers Supporters were engaging in support work during the harvest, we were able to connect with some of the Indigenous community members. We listened eagerly as they told us the ways in which the entirety of the animal is used and for what purposes – such as using the skin for making drums, or how many families a single deer would feed for the winter. Indigenous community members described lack of access they had to engagement with their traditions when there was a shortage of raw materials available to their peoples, prior to the introduction of the Short Hills harvests. Emphasis was placed on explaining how the hunters went about the ceremony during the harvest and how cherished the animals’ lives are. Not only is the harvest physically taxing for the hunters, but it is also an immensely spiritual affair that requires a great deal of stamina and emotional energy from the hunters. Rudy (2011) speaks to the spiritual aspect of hunting where the hunter is made more ethical because of the virtue of the task in which they are engaged, having to reflect on one’s life and that of the animal’s; hunting for sustenance is seen as an honourable and spiritual way of procuring food and clothing. After absorbing a plethora of information and listening to powerful stories, members of HALT felt honoured to have been included in the solidarity work of Short Hills given the importance of that resistance and the significance it harboured for the Indigenous community.

In Powell (2013a), reference is made to the principles of the Two Row Wampum – an important symbol for peace between settler and the Onkwehon:we; original peoples. The Two Row Wampum is a visual representation of a treaty made between the

Onkwehon:we and the Dutch in 1613. One band of colour represents the Dutch in their ships, and the other represents the Onkwehon:we in their canoes. In this representation, each travels down the river without interfering with the other, as equals (Onondaga Nation, 2017). Powell (2013a) writes that these are “foundational agreements that demand to be honoured. Both when it is convenient and when it is not” (n.p.), Powell (2014) also points out that historical and contemporary awareness of colonial power dynamics with regard to human and non-human subjects is necessary for those working in solidarity with Indigenous communities. With reference to animal liberation activist communities, he writes, “If the struggle for animal liberation is to acknowledge anti-colonialism it will need to not only trace back this history to the first cow, pig, and chicken who hit this land – but they will also need to be mindful of how their messaging, framing, and the power dynamics will be seen as merely a continuation of the same line of thinking which first placed animals here” (n.p.). Particularly the awareness around messaging, framing, and power dynamics here is salient for the authors of this paper.

CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

A theoretical perspective that was resonant with what vegan AR activists experienced at Short Hills is Haraway’s call to “rethink approaches that definitively mark nonhuman animals as either killable or not” (Corman, 2012, p. 306). While provocative within animal liberation activism, troubling this duality is incredibly important to the authors’ analyses of their involvement in the demonstrations at Short Hills. Powell (2014) notes that animal liberation movements have often been willing to frame traditional use of the bodies of animals by Indigenous populations within the same logic as biopolitical commodification of the flesh, but this framing has been drawn to a violent extreme where Indigenous peoples are constructed as backward and dangerous. It is suggested that these racist practices serve to aid the state in their capitalist oppression. Powell (2014) writes that “framing the issues in this way [...] allows for the state to offer crumbs to animal advocates while continuing on with settler animal use industries that are somehow normalized in their massive scale and effect” (n.p.).

Kim (2015) describes the AR campaign over the sale of live animals in food markets in San Francisco in the early 2000’s, and notes that the sheer population of

Chinese American people in the area and their access to social capital had a large impact on this struggle. The activists involved, no matter how strategic, were unable to simply overpower those who supported the sale. This is a cautionary tale for those who hope to make strides within the AR movement in Canada. Indigenous populations in Canada increased by 20.1% between 2006 and 2011, compared with 5.2% for the non-Aboriginal population (Statistics Canada, 2015). Taking into account population growth alone, it becomes clear that Indigenous rights movements will not be easily overpowered in the future. This will have deleterious effects for AR activists who refuse an intersectional lens. That said, not all AR activists will be comfortable with all forms of solidarity with Indigenous activists. In her analysis of the Makah whale hunt in *Dangerous Crossings*, Kim (2015) eventually comes to the conclusion that “it may be prudent to err on the side of caution and act as though gray whales wish to live. Otherwise, we humans, Native and non-Native, run the risk of imposing our own systems of meaning on those who lack the power to contradict us” (p. 245). While there is value in considering what Kim (2015) makes clear here – that we cannot fully know the perspectives of the OTH animals who are the third party in AR activism – the authors of this article were unable to reconcile whether this perspectival anthropocentrism was enough to justify potential neocolonialism. On the other hand, will hunting more animals truly heal past pain and suffering faced by the Indigenous people of this land? Or must we do as Robinson (2013) suggests, and look at how we can adapt ethical models of eating and living in nature to fit an Indigenous way of living and knowing?

There is no clear path forward. For the authors of this paper, the solidarity demonstrations at Short Hills were a conscious embodiment of their values of intersectionality with regards to social justice, and specifically within AR activism. Donaldson and Kymlicka (2011) write, “Is it not a form of Eurocentrism and moral imperialism to impose ‘our’ views of the rights of animals on other societies?” (p. 44). This was paramount. The ethics and values of many social movements through history have fluctuated in order to begin to work toward an intersectional ideal, which requires activists and their allies to engage in strategic planning and coalition-building processes. No movement may be a better example of this than the multi-faceted feminist movement, which remains extremely diverse in its ongoing struggle to eradicating sexism and the

patriarchy (Rudy, 2011). The AR movement is no different. In order for the AR movement to avoid engaging in ongoing neocolonial practices and begin to operate within the frame of intersectionality in order to resist oppression from all perpetrators, activists need to shift their strategies and get involved in the messy work of deconstructing the tension between cruelty toward OTH animals and neocolonialism, or they will risk the failure of our movement to thrive.

The authors of this article would like to acknowledge the contributions of Jamie Bugg to our learning, our activism, and our writing.

REFERENCES

- Animal Liberation Front (ALF). (n.d.a). #87: What are the forms of animal rights activism? Retrieved from <http://animalliberationfront.com/ALFront/Activist%20Tips/ARActivFAQs.htm#faq87>
- Animal Liberation Front (ALF). (n.d.b). #2: Animal Rights vs Animal Welfare. Retrieved from <http://www.animalliberationfront.com/ALFront/FAQs/GenARFAQ.htm#faq2>
- Belcourt, B. R. (2014). Animal Bodies, Colonial Subjects:(Re) Locating Animality in Decolonial Thought. *Societies*, 5(1), 1-11.
- Coronado, R. (2011). *Flaming Arrows: Collected Writings of Animal Liberation Front Activist Rod Coronado*. Wacry Communications.
- Corman, L. (2012). *The ventriloquist's burden? animals, voice, and politics* (Order No. AAINR92818). Available from ProQuest Sociology Collection. (1520343395; 201421083). Retrieved from <http://search.proquest.com/docview/1520343395?accountid=12347>
- Donaldson, S., & Kymlicka, W. (2015). Animal Rights and Aboriginal Rights. In Black, Sankoff, and Sykes. (eds.). *Canadian Perspectives on Animals and the Law*. Irwin Law.
- Donaldson, S., & Kymlicka, W. (2011). Introduction. In *Zoopolis: A political theory of animal rights*. P. 44-45. OUP Oxford.

- Government of Ontario. (2016). Ontario Hunting Regulations Summary. Retrieved from <https://www.ontario.ca/document/ontario-hunting-regulations-summary>
- Haudenosaunee Confederacy. (n.d.). Haudenosaunee Wildlife and Habitat Committee. Retrieved from <http://www.haudenosauneeconfederacy.com/hwhc.html>
- Kim, C. J. (2015). *Dangerous Crossings*. Cambridge University Press.
- Lavallie, J. (2016). *The Colonial Flight of the Bumblebee*. Retrieved from <https://fakevegan.com/2016/04/05/the-colonial-flight-of-the-honeybee/>
- Lavallie, J. (2015). Marineland Protests Must Be Made. *Hamilton Spectator*. Retrieved from <http://www.thespec.com/opinion-story/5647213-marineland-protests-must-be-made/>
- Ontario Wildlife Management Unit. (2014). Estimated Resident White-Tailed Deer Hunting Activity and Harvest. Retrieved from <https://www.ontario.ca/document/resident-white-tailed-deer-hunting-activity>
- Onondaga Nation. (2017). Two Row Wampum: Gusweñta. Retrieved from <http://www.onondaganation.org/culture/wampum/two-row-wampum-belt-guswentta/>
- Poisinelli, K. (2016). *Fundraiser Fun!* Retrieved from <http://www.wildearthrefuge.com/fundraiser-fun/>
- Powell, D. (2013a). *This Isn't About Race: Short Hills, Niagara Action for Animals, Sun Media, and Settler Panic*. Retrieved from <http://dylanxpowell.com/2013/08/27/this-isnt-about-race-short-hills-niagara-action-for-animals-sun-media-and-the-settler-panic/>
- Powell, D. (2013b). Short Hills Should Be a Lesson in Settler Animal Advocacy. *Two Row Times: The Spirit of All Nations*. Retrieved from <https://tworowtimes.com/opinions/opinion/short-hills-lesson-settler-animal-advocacy/>
- Powell, D. (2014). *Veganism in the Occupied Territories: Anti-Colonialism and Animal Liberation*. Retrieved from <http://dylanxpowell.com/2014/03/01/veganism-in-the-occupied-territories-anti-colonialism-and-animal-liberation/>
- Robinson, M. (2013). Veganism and Mi'kmaq Legends. *The Canadian Journal of Native Studies*, 33(1), 189.

Rudy, K. (2011). *Loving animals: Toward a new animal advocacy*. U of Minnesota Press.

Simien, E.M. (2007). Doing intersectionality research: from conceptual issues to practical examples. *Politics and Gender*, 3 (2), p. 264-271. DOI:

10.1017/S1743923X07000086

Statistics Canada. (2015). Aboriginal Peoples in Canada: First Nations People, Métis and Inuit. Retrieved from <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/nhs-enm/2011/as-sa/99-011-x/99-011-x2011001-eng.cfm>

APPENDIX A: HALT PUBLIC STATEMENT ON THE SHORT HILLS HUNTS, 2015

The traditional Haudenosaunee deer harvest at Short Hills took place this year between November 14th and the 29th. As it was in the past – the hunt was aggressively protested by a small group of white-settler animal rights activists and property owners who (despite lengthy conversation) do not view such actions as perpetuating colonialism and oppression.

For the last two years, Hamilton Animal Liberation Team (HALT) has released statements of solidarity with the Indigenous community and condemned actions of the protestors. This year, the collective got involved with some direct action over the three weeks of the hunt.

Our reasoning for this resides in the fact that the animal advocacy movement has a history of ignoring intersectional issues and fails to build community outside of its own walls. It fails to recognize that animal, human and environmental struggles co-exist within a larger scheme that encompasses land use, resource extraction and exploitation, colonialism, capitalism and systemic oppression. To grow these movements, it is essential that we support each other. For the entire structure to function properly, all of its parts need to work together. We also must take a stand against the oppression of Indigenous communities and the land. When we stop talking and start listening, we realize that we have much more in common than first assumed.

We understand that Indigenous communities have long been at the forefront of land, water and air defense. We understand that animal captivity and consumption (through methods such as factory farming) was brought to Turtle Island by European settlers, and we understand that, while we stand together to oppose animal oppression and exploitation, we also must take a stand against the oppression of Indigenous communities and the land.

We must acknowledge the underlying intersectionality between animal rights and Indigenous autonomy. For example; not only was factory style farming and slaughter brought to Turtle Island by European settlers, but these practices (along with large scale agriculture practices) were (and still are) used to oppress Indigenous Peoples of this land. The growth of the animal farming industry created a situation where Europeans could justify the need for an increasing amount of land. In “Canada” – 7.5 million acres is recognized reservation land while 50 million acres is used for animal grazing. And this does not even account for the amount of land used for housing, feeding and processing. The animal agriculture system is built on the clearing of traditional lands – and continues to do so as the industrial farming method gained momentum after WW2. To

argue against large scale animal oppression – particularly methods of raising and production – would be incomplete without the recognition of its use in building a colonial state.

HALT’s involvement during the hunts was strictly support work. We worked in collaboration with other groups such as the CPT, individuals from Brock University, Food not Bombs St. Catharines, hunters, and local Indigenous supporters. During the nine mornings we spent at the park, our aim was to create a positive and supportive experience for the hunters. This involved doing stand between work (where supporters would stand around trucks to prevent protestors from getting too close), holding signs of support, singing and drumming, and attempting to get the trucks into the park as quickly as possible (as the protestors demanded they should have to wait for 5-10 minutes and the police enforced this). Indigenous supporters who attended the mornings took part in ceremony, lit a support fire, and smudged the area. Despite the tension, an amazing sense of community was created. Relationships were built, difficult conversations were had, and a deep respect for each other emerged.

Over the course of the three weeks, we witnessed many interactions that verified why we were there. Protestors counted the number of individuals in each vehicle (frequently exaggerating), wrote down license plate numbers, took pictures of drivers and passengers, shined flashlights in the faces of those in the vehicles, and blocked the trucks while they yelled aggressive, racist comments. They also verbally harassed and taunted Indigenous individuals holding the support fire, as well as those participating in smudging and drumming traditions, and they attempted to assault an elder as they left the area.

Some individuals went as far as to say this had never been Indigenous land.

The stance that HALT maintains is that the settler community (which both the protestors and ourselves are a part of) have no right to intervene in the traditional practices of Onkweh'on:we. It is also not acceptable for us to impose our beliefs of veganism onto Onkweh'on:we. Both of these actions replicate colonial patterns of oppression and demonstrate white saviorism. Restricting access to traditional foods, and food more generally, has always been a tool of colonial domination.

We stand behind the frontline land-defenders and protectors: struggles which are fore fronted by Onkweh'on:we. Placing the conversation of veganism aside, it becomes clear that those fighting for animal liberation would be most effective if we chose to also support those resisting pipelines, mines, clear-cuts, water and air contamination, and the corrupt governments and corporations who instigate these actions. The fact that the Haudenosaunee hunt – which includes a minimal amount of deer once a year – is being protested so ferociously by animal advocates while other larger scale hunts by white settlers are left untouched, as is the effect on wildlife from clear cutting, deforestation, and pipelines, makes it difficult for us to believe that it is not geared by racist ideology.

In the past we have listened to stories of racist discrimination towards hunters and supporters at the park – and this year we witnessed those actions for ourselves. This, unfortunately, has led us to believe that protestors of the hunt are not simply misguided. There is an unwillingness to abide by treaties, land agreements, and Indigenous sovereignty. We refuse to support these ideas and instead choose to oppose manifestations of colonialism inside the animal rights circles. From a place of deep respect and solidarity – HALT will continue to fight for animal liberation in our own communities in our own way while acknowledging the Two Row Wampum. We will continue to stand with land and water defenders, and we will continue to oppose the Short Hills

hunt protests.

Signed,
Hamilton Animal Liberation Team

AUTHOR NOTE

Melissa Marie Legge, BSW, MSW, PhD (c.)
McMaster University

Contact:

Email: leggemm@mcmaster.ca
Telephone: (647) 467-4835

Rasha Taha, BSc
McMaster University