

OUT OF THE TOOLBOX **Settler Colonialism**

At Standing Rock a group called the Solidariteam compiled awesome resources about settler colonialism. Their definition was:

Settler colonialism is a process of “destroying to replace.” A colonizing power exports resources and people, and seizes and settles on land, exercising violent control over the original inhabitants. Indigenous versions of governance, land management, cultural practices, etc. are destroyed through conquest, disease, land theft, and cultural genocide, and are replaced with the settler versions of those things. Settler colonialism is not an event that we can neatly box into the past, but rather a persistent form of violence that impacts every aspect of life in settler states. Settler colonialism is still happening.⁵

Like everything, understanding settler colonialism is life work because the legacy and current-day practices of colonization run deep and are often unconscious or unrecognized. Some of the things I am learning about include:

We must start with ourselves, working with forgiveness for what we have done and how we’ve been taught.

We can educate ourselves by reading books like *An Indigenous Peoples’ History of the United States* by Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz or *Our History Is the Future* by Nick Estes. The Indigenous people on this continent had advanced societies, stewarding the land for thousands of years before the Europeans came, and they have resisted colonization ever since.

We must own up to the fact that we live on stolen land and that millions of people were murdered so that what we call the United States could come into being.

We can learn the history of the Indigenous peoples and nations whose territory we live upon. Were the Indigenous people displaced? What treaties did the US sign or break? Where are they now, and what efforts for land return, land protection, sovereignty, or federal recognition are they engaged in?

We can recognize that an understanding of settler colonialism has been left out of much of the anti-racist teaching offered today. It was the Europeans who brought white, male, Christian, and capitalist superiority to this land.

We can become an ally by earning it. Better yet, we can become accomplices, as called for by Indigenous Action Media, by truly putting our skin in the game.

We can learn to show up in any space in a good way, in right relation. This means listening more than speaking, honoring elders, being humble, and recognizing that each of us is sacred and worthy of humane treatment.

If we’re working with Indigenous people, we must come with respect, be open to ceremony and prayer, and observe and follow the leadership offered.

We can learn to live more simply, throwing off the culture of consumerism and the myth of materialism as a path to happiness. We can conserve and protect natural resources, knowing that our insatiable desire/greed for more and more is killing us all. We live in a world of abundance, not scarcity, and must use our resources wisely and with respect.

We can educate others about the struggle and stories of Indigenous peoples, raising money, or returning land like the Jesuits did by giving back 525 acres to the Rosebud Sioux Tribe.