


POPULAR MUSIC AND THE POLITICS OF HOPE

Queer and Feminist
Interventions

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SOUNDING THE HALLUCI NATION

Decolonizing Race, Masculinity, and Global Solidarities with A Tribe Called Red

Alexa Woloshyn

The Emergence of the Halluci Nation

When DJ NDN and Bear Witness began DJing club nights devoted to Indigenous participants living in Ottawa, they likely could not have imagined either their success as A Tribe Called Red (ATCR) or the global, transnational reach of their music and message.¹ Electric Powwow Night was built on Indigenous solidarity within Ottawa among the diverse nations gathered in the city, and their work as local DJs producing tracks for this Indigenous community is reflected in their first album *A Tribe Called Red* (2012). The group—then consisting of DJs NDN (Ian Campeau) and Shub (Dan General) and Bear Witness (Thomas Ehren Ramon)—achieved success on a growing scale, and they reflected on their larger-scale responsibilities on *Nation II Nation* (2013). *We Are the Halluci Nation* (2016, with members DJ NDN, Bear Witness, and Zoolman—Tim Hill) recognized that the concerns of Indigenous sovereignty and the history of settler colonialism were global.²

The Halluci Nation is a concept articulated by Santee Dakota activist and writer John Trudell (1946–2015). Trudell himself had a significant recording career, including the acclaimed *A.K.A. Graffiti Man* (1986, re-released 1992) and *Johnny Damas & Me* (1994). Cynthia L. Landrum explains that Trudell's albums are each organized around a concept and that his creative work “represents solidarity for a people who could potentially scatter rather than unite” (2012, 202). With his concept of the Halluci Nation, Trudell offers a vision for ATCR to unite through decolonized solidarity. The Halluci Nation is grounded in the land and transcends time, even as they are forced to live “on an industrial reservation”: “Our DNA is of the earth and sky. Our DNA is of past and

future" ("We Are the Halluci Nation"). Trudell's Halluci Nation consists of people who "see the spiritual in the natural" ("ALie Nation"). The Halluci Nation has its origins as a poetic image that transforms the word "hallucination," or an apparition, into an empowered state-less collective. "Hallucination" refers to the inability of others to see Indigenous peoples as human beings. Through the actions of sonic solidarity, though, the Halluci Nation has become a real, vibrant nation. Its citizens are first those who participated on the album, but the invitation of citizenry extends to those who share the vision and labor of a broader decolonial project.

To contrast the Halluci Nation, Trudell describes the Alie Nation, another play on words: alienation. Again, Trudell uses a poetic image to articulate the realities he sees as humanity exploits itself and its earthly home. The Alie Nation becomes a powerful image for articulating the shared histories of colonial states around the world and state-sponsored violence against oppressed bodies. The Alie Nation's citizens "See the material religions through trauma and numb/Nothing is related/All the things of the earth and in the sky/Have energy to be exploited/Even themselves, mining their spirits into souls sold/Into nothing is sacred, not even their self" ("Alie Nation").

This concept shapes ATCR's entire *We Are the Halluci Nation* album. This album embodies in sound and action the "everyday acts of resurgence" (Comtassel 2012, 89) necessary to decolonize race and masculinity through global solidarities that undermine the history and legacy of settler colonialism. *We Are the Halluci Nation* reflects a hopeful politics of intersectional Indigenous feminism that both supports Indigenous sovereignty through a decolonized global solidarity and undermines a toxic masculinity that subjugates Indigenous men, women, and queer/Two-Spirit people.³

I begin by outlining how the work of Indigenous feminism and queer/Two-Spirit critique is crucial in dismantling the violent oppression of women and queer/Two-Spirit people within the heteropatriarchy implemented on Turtle Island through settler colonialism. I argue that ATCR's Halluci Nation parallels this work through musical collaborations and activism. I outline the challenges to Indigenous manhood because of "socially engineered masculinity" (McKegney 2014, 4) originating in the settler imagination and demonstrate how ATCR celebrates non-normative masculinity that rejects toxic and hypermasculinities. I then summarize how ATCR builds global solidarities with Indigenous and black musicians and musical practices. Their collaborative approach to *We Are the Halluci Nation* is part of the decolonization process of dismantling the settler-native-slave triad. The process of collaboration creates a distinct ecology in the studio, or what Georgina Born refers to as the first plane of mediation (2011). This mediation implicates wider social identity formations (what Born calls the third plane) as societal hierarchies around race, gender, and class (among others) are replicated in the studio. Thus, *We Are the Halluci Nation*

is both a musical and social collaboration that can address broader social tensions.

The Halluci Nation, while a sort of idealized vision, points to some of the harsher realities of allyship when allies work counter-productively to the broader decolonial project. Individuals may appear to be citizens of the Halluci Nation and support the work, but they can in fact undermine and directly challenge the values of decolonization. I touch on Trudell's work with the American Indian Movement, many of whose members are accused of misogyny, and "the Joseph Boyden Affair" about self-indigenizing and the potential harm in occupying a position of authority. I balance this critique with a summary of successful allyship that supports the broader projects of Halluci Nation members Lido Pimienta and Tanya Tagaq.

Decolonization Through Indigenous Feminism: Nationhood and Gender in the Halluci Nation

The early days of ATCR at Electric Pow Wow Night in Ottawa are part of a broader story of urban Indigenous peoples reclaiming urban spaces as Indigenous land. The land is where Indigenous knowledge and ways of being can thrive through diverse and respectful relations (Tuck and Yang 2012). On Electric Pow Wow Night, the land is re-occupied and supports the work of sovereignty and solidarity that the settler state has worked hard to undermine and erase (Woloshyn 2015). Even as the settler state refuses to respect Indigenous sovereignty over the land, decolonization efforts to reclaim Indigenous life and relations persist in "everyday practices of resurgence" (Comtassel 2012, 89) including the musical practices of Indigenous artists. ATCR's new "Halluci Nation" seeks to decolonize gender and sexuality arising from the settler state's strategy to implement heteropatriarchy.

Indigenous nations on Turtle Island are heterogeneous, with distinct histories, customs, cosmologies, and cultural practices. The same is true for pre-contact nations. Nonetheless, many pre-contact nations emphasized balance, and this includes the notion of gender. Choctaw scholar Devon Abbott Mihesuah (2003) outlines pre-contact gender structures in a number of distinct nations, including several matrilineal societies in which women were stewards over the land, and husbands moved in with the wife's family.

Settler colonization sought to replace Indigenous worldviews with European ones to facilitate the dispossession of Indigenous lands. One tactic was to undermine the existing gender dynamics, particularly in matrilineal nations. For example, Mihesuah explains the Iroquois (Haudenosaunee) context: "[w]omen lost political power after white Europeans convinced Indian men not to listen to females' advice, a move that shifted women into less pivotal positions. By the early nineteenth century the matron-appointed leader system among the

Iroquois tribes was gone, replaced with a system of elected representative—and only men's votes counted" (2003, 50).

Thus, nations with more egalitarian gender roles—with women participating in contexts unheard-of in European culture (e.g. in charge of farming, owning land, selecting leaders, etc.)—were completely reconfigured through the strong influence of the European colonizers to strip women of their power.⁵ What replaced women's social power was an objectified and sexualized perception of Indigenous women through the settler gaze. This, combined with a hypermasculinity of Indigenous men emerging from the settler imagination, created a toxic masculinity that has come to define so much of Indigenous peoples' experiences—male, female, and queer/Two-Spirit. Mihesuah explains: "Native women were seen as sexual beings free for the taking, and indeed, sexual violence against Native women was common after invasion" (2003, 59).

ATCR's Halluci Nation parallels Renya Ramirez's (Ho-Chunk) "Native Feminist Approach to Belonging" (2007): while sovereignty is crucial to the vision and work of the Halluci Nation, ATCR seeks to embed balance and respect into the gendered positionalities within the Halluci Nation—to reject the influence of toxic masculinity seen in some male-dominated, Indigenous self-governance. Sonja John (2015) explains that the work of Indigenous feminism can complement the work of decolonization: Indigenous women have a shared experience of oppression not only as Indigenous peoples in a settler state but also as women in a patriarchal nation-state.⁴

ATCR has supported Indigenous women and queer/Two-Spirit individuals since their early work, which demonstrates an intersectional solidarity of Indigenous nationhood and gender. DJ NDN explained in an interview with CBC: "[w]hen you oppress women as you're trying to elevate your community, you're oppressing half of the people you're trying to elevate" (*Unreserved* 2016). One example of this support is the song "The Road" (see Woloshyn 2015), a musical tribute to Idle No More, a pan-Indigenous solidarity movement that began with the leadership of Indigenous women and continues to center women's voices as leaders in Indigenous communities across Canada (The Kino-nda-niimi Collective 2014). ATCR has also consistently created a space for diverse Indigenous artists' voices, such as early collaborations with Angel Haze, an African American/Cherokee rapper, who has addressed their own experiences with sexual abuse and their agender identity.

Decolonizing gender requires Indigenous queer/Two-Spirit voices, such as Cherokee scholar and poet Qwo-Li Driskill. Driskill explains that Two-Spirit "claims Native traditions as precedents for understanding gender and sexuality, and asserts that Two-Spirit people are vital to our tribal communities" (2010, 73). Many Indigenous individuals and communities use the term as a strong position against dominant Eurocentric binaries. Driskill emphasizes the diverse

understandings of gender and sexuality within various Indigenous nations and communities but also points to the shared experiences of the "heteropatriarchal, gender-polarized colonial regimes that attempt to control Native nations" (69). Driskill considers queerness an effective tactic for decolonization, and, when employed with race, disrupts "white supremacist heteronormative strategies" (75).

When ATCR's Halluci Nation includes queer voices, such as rapper Saul Williams, we witness a challenge to the heteropatriarchy, its rigid gender binaries, and the policing and control of sexualized and gendered bodies. Williams' self-identification as queer manifests most directly through his lyrics (e.g. "Talk to Strangers," 2004). Moreover, he performs a queer masculinity within a genre that is characterized by its braggadocio and "marginalizing and oppressing [of] anyone who is not Black, straight, male, and dripping in testosterone" (Pough 2004, 19). By declaring "vulnerability is power," Williams embraces a typically



FIGURE 7.1 Cover of *We Are the Halluci Nation*

Source: Album artwork by Christina Cassaro.

feminine quality and, thus, employs a queer critique of black identity through hip hop. Furthermore, his critique is anti-racist, given “the huge amount of homophobia that manifested itself most forcefully right at the strongest areas of black nationalism and the fight to end racial power imbalances” (Delany 1999, 263). He transgresses (i.e. queers) the boundaries of black nationalism by rejecting the erasure of Indigenous presence and resistance that pervades the fight against black racial oppression in both the USA and Canada (Amadahy and Lawrence 2010). For example, in the *Halluci Nation's* “The Virus,” Williams emphasizes collective resistance: “We are not a conquered people.”

In the *Halluci Nation*, bodies that have been policed, vilified, and oppressed embody the phrase “we are not a conquered people” on the dance floor. ATCR’s sound inspires this corporeal resistance. ATCR’s signature sound called “powwow step” (from powwow music and dubstep) builds on the recognizable sound of the powwow drum and combines it with urban dance beats. The central position of the drum is reinforced in the seal of the *Halluci Nation*: in the center is a turtle on whose back is the earth with North and South America outlined; four drumsticks surround the turtle, and the text reads “The Great Seal of the *Halluci Nation*: 500 Years and Still Drumming.”

ATCR’s powwow step beat unites the members of the *Halluci Nation* and grants its citizens the freedom to dance—an act of resistance against the settler state that sought to own, abuse, and erase the bodies of those it deemed inferior. In particular, Indigenous women and queer/Two-Spirit people can resist the settler male gaze, which has objectified them and dehumanized them and made them a target of violence (see Recollet 2015).

Decolonizing Masculinity and Celebrating Indigenous Manhood

Indigenous women and queer/Two-Spirit people have not been the only targets of the European heteropatriarchy. The stereotype of the noble savage—the creation of the settler imagination—prevents the complexity of real Indigenous men to be seen and understood. Brian Klopotek criticizes such a presentation: “‘Native American’ encompasses hundreds of different cultures with varying conceptions of masculinity, and even within each tribal culture, different people will have different ideas about the virtues, faults, and responsibilities of manhood” (2001, 270). Indigenous men have suffered from both externally enforced hypermasculinity and internalized toxic masculinity. This “socially engineered hypermasculinity” (McKegney 2014, 4) has been the ubiquitous image of Native men in media, and Indigenous men have internalized this as the true path of manhood.

Arvin, Tuck, and Morill argue “settler colonialism has been and continues to be a gendered process” (2013, 9) one that is both founded upon and perpetuates a heteropatriarchy based on a narrow gender binary. Sam McKegney’s

Masculindians (2014) brings together diverse voices to consider non-normative masculinity, to name manhood in a way that does not reinforce a European heteropatriarchal emphasis on dominating and oppressive power. McKegney seeks to first articulate and then undermine how Indigenous men have been implicated in what he calls, “the ‘arbitrary process’ of masculinity” (2013, 2). He recognizes a ubiquitous masculinity that is “conflated with strength and dominance” (8), a path that has led too often to “chauvinism and misogyny” (8). McKegney points to Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm’s (Anishnaabe) work in reclaiming power as non-oppressive but who bemoans that the association of power as dominance persists. Akiwenzie-Damm explains:

A lot of Indigenous men have learned what it means to be an Indigenous man from the worst possible sources, like residential school or CAS [Children’s Aid Society] or jail, or parents who went through one or more of those systems and lacked the parenting skills that they needed in order to guide their sons. I don’t think it’s a surprise to anybody that perpetrators so often are the men in our own communities, because they’ve been taught that violence against Indigenous women is a legitimate option and Indigenous women also have been taught that it’s an option for how they ought to be treated.

(*Qtd. in McKegney 2014, 181*)

ATCR has worked to dismantle toxic masculinity directly. For example, DJ NDN has been outspoken about racist sports team names and logos as part of a bigger movement to eliminate racist and stereotypical representations of Indigenous peoples in North American sports and media. He filed a human rights complaint against the Napean Redskins Football Club over its name and logo; they changed their name to the Napean Eagles. Native mascots are a caricature based on a European notion of masculinity—of ideal white male-ness. Challenging Native mascot culture is not only about tackling bigger issues of racist stereotypes but also dismantling toxic masculinity (Taylor 2013). DJ NDN has also received media attention (both negative and positive) for his “Caucasians” shirt, which replaces the familiar phrase “Indians” or “Redskins,” and includes a white version of the Cleveland Indians’ Chief Wahoo mascot.

This t-shirt parallels a critical visual intervention that ATCR makes in their videos and logos. ATCR’s early videos were created by Bear Witness and feature found footage of popular media representations of Native Americans. Witness’ samples, looping, and stylized effects highlight the artificiality of this “imaginary Indian” ubiquitous in settler cultural products. ATCR extends its visual intervention to their various logos on albums and merchandise. These visuals often unite traditional imagery, such as dreamcatchers or headdress, with images that reflect a contemporary urban-based existence, such as microphones



FIGURE 7.2 Group photograph (Witness, Shub, and Campeau) with Campeau in his “Caucasians” shirt

Source: Photo by Pat Bolduc.

or headphones. As I have argued previously (2015), “[w]ith their bodies and culture still on display, but reconstructed on their own terms, ATCR actively seeks to transcend a debilitating colonial legacy through various levels of agency and expectation” (9). ATCR demonstrates how logos involving Indigenous culture can undermine racist and hypermasculine stereotypes and build pride in and respect for Indigenous culture.

The Halluci Nation aims to break the patterns of “systemic oppression, historical trauma, and economic disenfranchisement [which] heighten the potential for lateral, intimate, and gender-based violence” (McKegney 2014, 8) by centering the work of female and queer/Two-Spirit artists and actively rejecting misogyny. ATCR have been intentional about addressing misogyny in their musical practice, such as through their use of hip hop and a broader sampling practice. ATCR speaks strongly about not supporting misogynist and sexist music in their sets. This includes not only specific songs with misogynistic lyrics but also musicians whose personal lives have stories of sexual and/or physical violence against women and children. This decision includes not sampling artists like Kendrick Lamar or James Brown. As these artists’ voices are avoided, ATCR can highlight other voices, such as the many women and queer artists on *We Are the Halluci Nation*.

Global Solidarities in the Halluci Nation

The decolonizing processes of the Halluci Nation, though, rely not only on the intersection of Indigenous nationhood and gender/sexuality but also solidarity “with like-minded people” (qtd. in Monture 2016). This includes those who have experienced colonialism around the world and those who are explicitly implicated in the settler colonialist project in North America.

On *The Halluci Nation*, ATCR works with Indigenous artists from around the world whose stories point to the shared experiences of settler colonialism. For example, Swedish Saami singer Maxima Mäarak performs on “Eanan” (meaning “Earth”) a laid-back track that features Mäarak’s sweet vocals. Mäarak’s solo practice of combining her joik vocals with underlying beats exemplifies what both Richard Jones-Bamman (2001) and Beverley Diamond (2007) have observed with other Saami musicians who experiment in the studio and combine traditional joik with contemporary popular music.⁵ Her individual aesthetic is well-suited to the collaboration with ATCR, who has crafted a supporting texture of sustained chords and minimal beat layers that does not compete with Mäarak’s voice. This track does not include sampling of powwow music, an approach for which ATCR is known. Rather, “Eanan”—like “The Light” with Pimienta, “The Music” with Jen Kreisberg, and “Sila” with Tagaq—offers little sonic competition with the featured vocalist. Mäarak’s unique vocal timbre and the Saami music practice from which it emerges are highlighted in this act of sonic solidarity: the Halluci Nation builds solidarity through the shared experiences within settler colonialism but also recognizes unique experiences within that structure.

The album also includes OKA, an Australian music collective that blends didgeridoo, vocals, woodwinds, and electronic beats. ATCR has explained that their travels opened their eyes to the legacy of settler colonialism around the world. By including OKA and Mäarak, ATCR is musically reinforcing the solidarity around these shared experiences and sonically imagining a future together outside the grip of the settler state.

Settler colonialism in North America requires the racialization of chattel slaves through expansive blackness and of Indigenous peoples through subtractive Native-Americanness to uphold the settler-native-slave triad (Tuck and Yang 2012). This triad refers to the fundamental structure of settler colonialism, which differs from colonialism in that the settler state seizes Indigenous lands for its own purposes and economic gains. While the contrasting processes of racialization are essential to remember, Eve Tuck (Unangax) and K. Wayne Yang explain, “[t]he racializations of Indigenous people and Black people in the US settler colonial nation-state are geared to ensure the ascendancy of white settlers as the true and rightful owners and occupiers of the land” (2012, 12). Even with the end of chattel slavery and supposed postcoloniality in North America, this

triad remains the foundation of the settler state because settler colonialism is a process—"a persistent social and political formation" (Arvin, Tuck, and Morill 2013, 12).

While settler colonialism in North America has been a function of European expansion (and used whiteness as a tool of justification and expansion), the position of "settler" is not exclusively held by so-called "white" people. Everyone who comes to Canada or the United States becomes part of the settler-native-slave triad. Whiteness is "an exceptionalized position with assumed rights to invulnerability and legal supremacy" (Tuck and Yang 2012, 18), a position that remains an impossibility for many minorities; nonetheless, people of color can still occupy a settler position—investing in, benefitting from, perpetuating—the settler state. The experience of racialization (as constructed by whiteness) does not guarantee solidarity with the decolonial project. Similarly, having a "white" body does not exclude one from contributing to the decolonial project. Shared subjugation under white supremacy perpetuated by the settler state is an opportunity for solidarity across racial lines. Calls for black-Indigenous solidarity in decolonization efforts (as well as criticism against Afro-Indigenous erasure) can be found in social media, such as in the Twitter activity of William Jamal Richardson (@DecolonialBlack) and Métis educator and writer Chelsea Vowel (@apihtawikosisan) who have over 16,000 and 26,000 followers respectively, and in published scholarship by Arica Coleman and Sakina Hughes, among others. ATCR's musical practice reflects a similar sonic solidarity.

ATCR's first album is a musical nod to the sonic solidarity between Indigenous peoples and the African diaspora in North America by merging hip hop, reggaeton (which blends Jamaican dancehall, soca, and hip hop), and moombahton (house music meets reggaeton) with powwow in the diverse remixes and original tracks. This musical integration reflects a strong relationship and history between African and Indigenous peoples in Canada, as both their individuality and collaboration are possible only because of settler colonialism and chattel slavery. Vibrant cultural practices in the African diaspora, such as Jamaican dancehall and the many genres based on Afro-Caribbean beats, and in Indigenous communities, such as powwow, speak to both resistance and cultural resurgence. Their combination in ATCR's music points to a power that comes from finding solidarity through their distinct relationships to the same settler colonialism, choosing solidarity over opposition. This first album signaled a vital solidarity that was picked up again on *We Are the Halluci Nation*.

On *We Are the Halluci Nation*, the musical expression of this solidarity is expanded to include the voices of black artists, artists who have been racialized as black through the same system of settler colonialism that racialized Indigenous peoples as red-skinned savages. These include American rapper Saul Williams, Canadian rapper Shad (parents from Rwanda; born in Kenya), and American hip hop artist Yasiin Bey (formerly known as Mos Def).

The Halluci Nation's Complicated Citizenry

The contributors on *We Are the Halluci Nation* can be considered the Halluci Nation's first citizens, whose music explains and models the message of solidarity and decolonial nation-building. However, as with any nation, citizenship is a complex issue. And allyship across gender and ethnic boundaries is also complicated when supposed allies work counter-productively to the decolonial project. In the decolonial project espoused by the Halluci Nation, counter-productive allyship can manifest in many forms. However, it comes down to continued investment in the structures that uphold settler colonialism, including Eurocentric heteropatriarchy and the settler-native-slave triad. To claim to be an ally means being responsible for increasing one's knowledge and accountable for one's behaviors. Trudell's association with the American Indian Movement (AIM) and the so-called "Joseph Boyden affair" are two examples of complicated allyship.

Trudell first gained notoriety for his involvement with the United Indians of All Tribes' occupation of Alcatraz Island, for which he was the spokesperson through the radio show *Radio Free Alcatraz*. He joined the AIM, a pan-Indian organization that sought to highlight the hardships for Indigenous peoples in the United States and to fight to improve conditions. The AIM is perhaps most famous for the Wounded Knee Incident (1973), a seventy-one-day siege involving Oglala Lakota from the Pine Ridge Reservation and AIM members. Trudell's presence on the album brings with it the weight of the AIM and places the Halluci Nation alongside the AIM in the long history of Indigenous resistance and solidarity. Trudell may not be directly responsible for the actions of his AIM colleagues, but I must address some of the issues in aligning the Halluci Nation with the AIM through Trudell. Mihesuah (2003) calls out the sexism and misogyny of many men in AIM and criticizes them for replacing egalitarian gender roles from their respective tribes (163) and allowing "self-serving behavior [to take] its place" (12). While Mihesuah does not specifically implicate Trudell in this behavior, he has become a surrogate for the entire movement. Most troubling is the implication of some AIM members in the death of Anna Mae Pictou-Aquash, a Mi'kmaq activist who joined the AIM and participated in the Wounded Knee siege. The FBI interrogated Pictou-Aquash about the killings of two FBI agents at the Pine Ridge Reservation on June 26, 1975 and "AIM members [believed] that she was an informer for the FBI" (Mihesuah 2003, 128). Pictou-Aquash's body was found on February 24, 1976 on the Pine Ridge Reservation. The initial coroner's report said she died of exposure, but a later autopsy noted a gunshot to the back of the head "at point-black range with a 32-mm handgun" (124). Pictou-Aquash's cousin Robert A. Pictou-Branscombe accused AIM members of interrogating her about being an informer and then executing her (126). In 2004, Arlo Looking

Cloud was found guilty of her murder; John Graham was found guilty of felony murder in 2010, and Thelma Conroy-Rios pled guilty to accessory to kidnapping.⁶ Mihesuah declares: “[t]he life of Anna Mae Pictou-Aquash demonstrates what it means to be a modern Native woman aggressively fighting racial, cultural, and gender oppression” (115). Pictou-Aquash seems to be an ideal member of the Halluci Nation. However, her contributions to the AIM remain under-appreciated, and her life was ended through violent murder.

Writer Joseph Boyden contributed two tracks to *We Are the Halluci Nation*: “BEFORE” and “SOON.” They merge aspects of Chanie “Charlie” Wenjack’s real-life story with Trudell’s fictional Alie Nation. Wenjack (1954–1966) was an Anishinaabe boy from the Marten Falls Reserve who, at the age of nine, was sent to Cecilia Jeffrey Indian Residential School. On October 16, 1966, Wenjack ran away from the school in search of his family. He died from exposure and hunger on October 23, 1966 on his attempt to follow the railroad tracks home. His story has been used numerous times since both to highlight the horrors of the residential school system and to symbolize Indigenous resistance against Canada as a settler state.

In “BEFORE,” the listener overhears “a collect call from an inmate at an Alie Nation correction facility.” The caller is “Jack” (voiced by Boyden), and he speaks (to the members of ATCR?) with urgency that they need to find Charlie “before it’s too late.” Jack’s desperate confession that he’s not sure if he (Jack) can survive in the facility is a clear reference to the residential school system in Canada, which took children away from their families, under threat of imprisonment and/or fine for the parents and forced children to live and be educated in under-funded schools far from their families with rampant hunger, illness, and abuse, in order to assimilate them into white culture.⁷ Though Boyden has taken on the character of Jack in this track, the text seems personal for the author, considering how Boyden has stated that he believed Charlie had “chosen” him to tell his story in the novella *Wenjack*.⁸ The second track “SOON” is another phone call from “Jack.” Charlie is still lost. Jack explains that he found a nation inside the facility and this can become the Halluci Nation. Boyden here uses his character Jack to emphasize the importance of finding a community even under state oppression—in this case, in a fictitious Alie Nation correction facility. While the story may be a fiction, it remains a metaphor for state violence against racialized bodies as well as a reminder of the alarmingly high incarceration rates of both Indigenous and black bodies on Turtle Island. “Jack” here reminds us that the Halluci Nation is a citizenry based on solidarity, not nation-states. “SOON” is the last track on the album: Boyden’s voice is left ringing in the ears of those who listen to the tracks in order.

ATCR explained to CBC’s Tom Power on the radio show *Q* that Boyden approached them with a desire to collaborate (“A Tribe Called Red” 2016). At

that time, Boyden was an award-winning Indigenous author whose work relating to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was widely praised, including the ballet *Going Home Star* (2015). Boyden had represented himself as an Indigenous author—albeit one of shifting nation affiliations—and he was quickly embraced within settler Canadian culture as an authority not only on Indigenous literature but also in Canadian–Indigenous relations. Métis scholars, in particular, have been critiquing claims to Indigeneity and citizenship since the results of the latest Canadian census suggested a significant increase in the Métis population, one that points to self-Indigenization and the rise of “Eastern Métis.”⁹ Many in Indigenous communities were troubled by Boyden’s seeming inability to coherently answer the questions “who do you claim and who claims you?” Robert Jago’s tweets through the account @IndigenousXca on December 22, 2016, and Jorge Barrera’s APTN article “Author Joseph Boyden’s Shape-Shifting Indigenous Identity” published on December 23, 2016 brought these concerns to the attention of Canadian mainstream news (Barrera 2016).

Only weeks before the “pretendian” accusation, Boyden became embroiled in what came to be known as the “Galloway Affair.” The University of British Columbia (UBC) suspended the chair of the creative writing program Steven Galloway due to investigations of “serious allegations,” which Galloway himself explained were accusations of sexual assault as well as a consensual affair with a student. Boyden wrote an open letter calling for an independent investigation into UBC’s handling of this case and accusing UBC of a lack of transparency.¹⁰ The letter (and therefore its signatories) was accused of diminishing the complainants and “[reinforcing] power imbalances that are institutionally entrenched” (Freedman 2016). Métis anthropologist Zoe Todd explained in an interview why Boyden’s letter and lack of response to criticism were particularly troubling, noting that “Joseph Boyden has written extensively about his solidarity with indigenous women on issues of missing and murdered indigenous women, two spirit people, and girls. And his role in spearheading this letter and not tending to those nuances of experiences of sexual violence that many women experience inside of and outside of the academy really troubles me, because I have a hard time reconciling this letter with other public things that he has stated about his solidarity with indigenous women” (qtd. in Carter 2016).

For some listeners, Boyden’s presence on the ATCR album was something to erase. His shifting identity, his dominance in the world of Indigenous literature, his position in the Galloway Affair in opposition to many Indigenous women, his claim to a “Two-Spirit” identity that perpetuates a misunderstanding of that term, his claim to be “Métis” that undermines Métis nationhood, and his books that seem filled with violence against women and stereotypes of the savage Indian: for these reasons some listeners confessed to removing those tracks from the album’s playlist. For example, Red Indian Girl (@RedIndianGirl), who currently has over 12,000 followers, tweeted “How

many others have deleted JoBo off the #WeAreTheHalluciNation #ihadto #couldntstandit" (March 6, 2017 at 2:48 p.m.). Shawn J (@Evolving) is a Two-Spirit Anishnaabe photographer who tweeted: "[f]riend says to me 'I love the new Tribe Called Red album, but I skip all the track's [sic] with Joseph Boyden'" (December 6, 2016 at 2:55 p.m.).

Allyship in the Halluci Nation

While *We Are the Halluci Nation* has highlighted voices that demonstrate a kind of complicated citizenry, other voices stress the importance of supporting broader creative and political agency. As a global solidarity and sovereignty project, the Halluci Nation gives visibility to artists who also have important decolonial and solidarity projects. The album *We Are the Halluci Nation* is noteworthy for its many collaborators who, for the first time on an ATCR album, include new lyrics from rappers and singers from distinct but intersecting ethnicities and nationhoods. For example, this album includes Inuk avant-garde vocalist Tagaq, Afro-Columbian/Wayuu singer Lido Pimienta, Swedish Saami singer Mårak (whom I discussed above), and Tuscarora (North Carolina) singer Kreisberg. Many of these women are known for their work in supporting marginalized women of color: I will highlight Pimienta's and Tagaq's contributions here.

Pimienta is an Afro-Columbian artist whose 2016 Spanish-language album *La Papessa* won the 2017 Polaris Prize, a noteworthy success for a non-English (and non-French) album.¹¹ *La Papessa* takes on the heteropatriarchy that is Canada through Pimienta's distinctively strong yet sweet and agile vocals over electronic beats. The album's title refers to the High Priestess tarot card and signifies a feminine power that Pimienta brings to all of her creative work. She self-produced and self-released the album, thereby bypassing the often male-dominated institutions entrenched in the recording industry. She also tackles the heteropatriarchy through her lyrics. For example, in "La Capacidad," she sings "You know for you/I would give everything/But I come first." She makes it even plainer in the final lines: "I was not born to fit into a heteronormative novela/I was not born to push back world feminism."¹²

In interviews, on social media, and at performances, Pimienta frequently stresses solidarity with Indigenous peoples in Canada (and Turtle Island more broadly), all people of color, and a specific focus on women of color. She has explained that in a settler colonial and heteropatriarchal society like Canada, women of color are frequently pushed aside and feel unsafe; by contrast, she wants those same individuals to feel safe to enjoy her concerts fully. In an interview with Karen Bliss, Pimienta explained:

I started asking men specifically to go to the back of the room because in my 15+ years of attending shows, both on stage and in the audience, men

make it unsafe for me to be in such spaces.... But still for us, the children of these immigrants, it is still quite strange, the act of enjoying ourselves uninterrupted by a white person who feels threatened by our presence.... I never ask men to leave my show, I ask them to share the space in a more significant manner as an act of love and solidarity with people who, outside of the music show bubble, have to constantly justify their existence to the world.

(*Qtd. in Bliss 2017*)¹³

Pimienta is on three tracks on *Halluci Nation*, including "Alie Nation" with Tagaq. She is featured as the soloist on "The Light" and "For You (The Light, Pt. 2)," the former in Spanish and the latter in English. ATCR's sound fits well with Lido's: these could be tracks on *La Papessa*. Her vocal talent shines through on "For You" with light manipulation of her voice to create a stilted rhythmic quality as contrasting electronic material.¹⁴ Pimienta's voice—the sonic signifier of her presence and identity—is not minimized or erased through ATCR's production. Her phrase "for you" is clipped to the open vowel "oo" (0:44–1:04) and set into an off-beat and syncopated rhythmic pattern that retains her distinctive vocal timbre. The rhythmic quality is expanded, intensifying the corporeal response of dancing. While popular music production values tend to place the lead vocals in the center of the mix (and this is the case for much of the track), at 2:03, dramatic panning from left to right of Pimienta's voice represents an expanding presence. This motion and the increase in vocal layers reject the historical constraints placed on Indigenous bodies.

Inuk artist Tagaq has established a reputation for disrupting stereotypes and societal norms, both within her Inuit community and the non-Indigenous community. As Sophie Stévanec outlines, Tagaq engages a "strategy of agency" (2017, 54) by referencing and then rejecting elements of *katajjaq*, the Inuit vocal games tradition, and transgressing certain musical codes of western popular music. On *Halluci Nation*, Tagaq contributes to two tracks: "Sila" and "Alie Nation." The latter features samples of Trudell, Pimienta, and Northern Voice as well. This track focuses on Trudell's poetic summary of the Alie Nation through a laid-back, heavy beat. Tagaq's rhythmic vocalizations add urgency to Trudell's vision. As Tagaq drifts further away from *katajjaq* vocal gestures, her vocalizations conjure images of inner monsters that develop through trauma and exploitation.

"Sila" features only Tagaq above ATCR's beats; the title is Inuktitut for "air" or "breath." It is one of the most frenzied tracks on the album, though its tempo is not remarkably fast (130 bpm). This impression is due to Tagaq's vocalizations, which frequently subdivide each beat in half or quarters. While I suspect that Tagaq did not record these vocalizations as rapidly as we hear them here, the track does underline her real-life vocal virtuosity. ATCR varies the

track's energy, though, by shifting throughout to vocalizations every four beats. For example, at 0:43, her vocal rhythm slows down to one exhalation every fourth beat as a heavy syncopated beat continues beneath. Then when her vocalizations shift suddenly to sixteenth-note subdivisions (0:58), the low bass rhythm cuts back to every eight beats. Tensions rise through the addition of a second Tagaq rhythmic layer until the percussive layers cut out completely. Tagaq's voice is exposed for a mere second before the heavy beat drops, initiating an electronic break (1:13–1:42). This is the only time in the track that Tagaq's voice is not present, other than a single vocalization at the mid-point of the break (1:28).¹⁵ "Sila" initiates a second build-up (similar to 0:43) but with slightly different vocal layers. However, this time when the electronic break begins (2:11), Tagaq's voice remains. In "Sila," Tagaq's breath is emphasized and offers a striking contrast to the driving electronic beat.

Tagaq's creative output and social media presence work together to "[undermine] mainstream representational practices regarding indigenous identity (particularly in Canada) and [present] indigenous-centered sounds and perspectives" (Woloshyn 2017). Tagaq seems fearless in calling out individuals and organizations that she considers sexist or racist, especially those who challenge Inuit sovereignty regarding life in the North (e.g. seal hunting) and Indigenous women. For example, she joined the #sealfie movement to draw attention to the importance of the Inuit seal hunt. The vicious attacks Tagaq endured on social media due to her identity as an Inuk woman and mother inspired her to speak out all the more about Inuit sovereignty. In a previous article, I explain: "[b]y transforming the reactions to her #sealfie post into an opportunity to reinforce her broader artistic practice (specifically, animism) and political project, Tagaq expresses her agency and disrupts simple binaries, unravelling those placed on indigenous peoples as either past or present, traditional or modern, savage or civilized, and so on" (2017, 7). She models an intersectional approach in both her music and activism as she centers her positionality as an Inuk woman.

Hope in a Decolonized "Elsewhere"

Settler colonialism relies on division. It requires that black peoples (specifically those of African ancestry who are on Turtle Island because of the Atlantic slave trade) and Indigenous peoples be invested in oppositional processes. The former either continue to occupy the "slave" position of the triad or are granted limited participation in the settlement process; the latter are erased, deemed "vanished." Both Indigenous and black communities are fighting merely to exist. Amadahy and Lawrence declare: "[t]he colonial system greatly benefits from the fact that our communities are in a perpetual state of crisis. But do we not owe it to the coming generations to find a way of supporting each other and the land that

sustains us all" (2010, 131)? Indigenous-black solidarity in the decolonizing project requires both recognizing that they have unique experiences of suffering and disempowerment *and* rejecting narratives that use these experiences to "cancel out any form of criticism of one group's behaviour toward another group" (106). Though the notion of blood quantum (USA) and the Indian Act (Canada) are structures of the settler colonial state that do not reflect pre-contact notions of citizenship and belonging, the fear of some Indigenous groups "of ceaseless cultural dilution by those who are perceived as 'outsiders'" (113) results in anti-black racism. With Canada's official policy of multiculturalism, communities of color fight with each other for limited support from the state (which prioritizes the British and French "founding" cultures). Ultimately, "[the] strength of the historic connections between black and Native people has been weakened by exclusionary racial classification, by anti-black racism among Native people and a profound ignorance on the part of many contemporary black people about indigenous presence" (126). What decolonization requires is a break in the settler-native-slave triad. Tuck and Yang explain: "the goal is not for everyone to merely swap spots on the settler-colonial triad, to take another turn on the merry-go-round" (2012, 31). Here, they refer specifically to the challenge of reparations for slaves (in the past) and their descendants. Often, the solution has been to perpetuate the dispossession of Indigenous lands. For example, General Sherman promised former slaves 40 acres and a mule. More recently, the Occupy movement "for many economically marginalized people has been a welcome expression of resistance to the massive disparities in the distribution of wealth; for many indigenous people, Occupy is another settler re-occupation on stolen land" (23).

Thus, the creative collaboration on the Halluci Nation is an essential step in achieving a decolonized global solidarity. The recording process required the active negotiation of the broader social context, specifically settler colonialism. The musicians themselves engaged in the work of solidarity, the album provides a message of solidarity, and the Halluci Nation concept calls on Indigenous, black, Afro-Indigenous, and other allies to join the political work of decolonization. What I have articulated in this chapter is the many ways that this album and the Halluci Nation project demonstrate global solidarity across racial and gendered lines, and the tracks themselves evidence this claim.

Through ATCR's signature sound and diverse collaborators, the Halluci Nation is sounded: the sounds of heterogeneous Indigenous identities, gendered positionalities outside of the heteropatriarchy, and solidarity between various stakeholders in the dismantling of settler colonialism. Settlers can become allies—citizens—in this Halluci Nation. However, as Arvin, Tuck, and Merrill outline, "becoming an ally will require a long-term commitment to structural change" (2013, 19). This commitment requires that allies learn about settler colonialism and become "more proactive in their critiques of settler colonialism" (19).

Tuck and Yang clarify: “[d]ecolonization offers a different perspective to human- and Civil Rights-based approaches to justice, an unsettling one, rather than a complementary one. Decolonization is not an ‘and.’ It is an elsewhere” (2012, 36). The Halluci Nation is one possible “elsewhere,” where “everything is related” and “everything is sacred.” In this chapter, I have pointed to some of the significant ways in which the album *We Are the Halluci Nation* not only sounds the vision and inspires its implementation but also acts on it through the dismantling of toxic masculinity and creative acts of resistance and solidarity. We cannot know what comes next, or how the Halluci Nation will survive. But hope persists.

Notes

- 1 Some versions of ATCR’s origins include DJ Frame (Jon Limoges); see Cowie 2015.
- 2 DJ NDN (Ian Campeau) announced on October 18, 2017 that he was leaving ATCR.
- 3 While a broad category like “queer” can be problematic, for clarity in this chapter, the term captures opposition to heteronormativity (which normalizes cisgender and heterosexual identities). When appropriate, I use the terms that specific individuals apply to themselves. The term “Two-Spirit” was coined at the third Native American/First Nations gay and lesbian conference in Winnipeg in 1990 to “[indicate] the presence of both a feminine and a masculine spirit in one person” (Anguksuar 1997, 221). Two-Spirit is not a term that all Indigenous LGBTQ+ individuals claim, sometimes because they choose to use distinct terms for gender from their own nation’s language. Women and queer/Two-Spirit are not necessarily incompatible categories as individuals may see themselves as both.
- 4 Renya Ramirez explains that some Indigenous writers reject the term feminism because “[n]ative scholars have privileged race and tribal nation over gender issues, citing the importance of tribal sovereignty” (2007, 35). Other critiques include Sandy Grande’s claim that “whitestream feminism” (2003) is complicit in “the projects of colonialism and global capitalism” (346) or that feminism still perpetuates the binary gender framework of the heteropatriarchy (Mihesuah 2003). By contrast, Smith (2005) explains that issues of race, gender, and tribal nationhood must work together to combat the disturbing trends of violence against Indigenous women.
- 5 Joik (or yoik) is a traditional Saami musical practice with singing that often contains no lyrics and, instead, evokes a person, animal, or place.
- 6 John Trudell gave evidence in Looking Cloud’s trial; the evidence was also used to convince a Canadian judge to extradite Graham to the United States.
- 7 For more information on the history and legacy of Canada’s residential school system, read the “Executive Summary” and “Principles of Truth and Reconciliation” reports of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: www.trc.ca/websites/trcinstitution/index.php?p=893.
- 8 Boyden wrote about this in *Macleans* magazine (2016). Debbie Reese (Nambé Pueblo), who started “American Indians in Children’s Literature” (AIICL; <https://americanindiansinchildrensliterature.blogspot.com>) criticized *Wenjack* for embellishing the known suffering of a child with an unconfirmed rape scene and for an outsider telling this painful story: <https://twitter.com/debreese/status/835845799288406016>.
- 9 Métis scholars Darryl R.J. Leroux and Adam Gaudry address this issue in their essay “Becoming Indigenous: The Rise of Eastern Métis in Canada” (2017).
- 10 The “Galloway Affair” and “The Joseph Boyden Affair” intersect further in that Margaret Atwood tweeted (November 24, 2016 at 1:02 p.m.) that Boyden confirmed that Galloway was Indigenous. Jago credits this tweet as part of the motivation for his Twitter thread.
- 11 The Polaris Prize is an annual award (worth \$50,000 CAD in 2017) given to the full-length Canadian album with the highest artistic merit as deemed by a jury of music journalists, writers, and broadcasters.
- 12 Thank you to Marina Lopez for confirming the English translation of the lyrics.
- 13 Pimienta gained extensive media coverage following a 2017 concert in Halifax at which Pimienta invited “brown girls to the front,” and there was an altercation with a white female volunteer photographer.
- 14 This track has a humorous video that highlights Pimienta’s experiences with colorism and classism in South America. www.youtube.com/watch?v=N7chvQWL9rI.
- 15 I suspect the sound heard on every fourth beat is a sample of Tagaq’s voice.

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