I will approach my topic of family legacy by investigating further into my family’s history. In pursuit of this I will research my ancestors in Wyoming who were some of the first people to start ranching there. I will conduct this research because it will provide context for my family’s position as immigrants then settlers.

I am not sure what project I am going to employ. I am leaning towards creating a zine or writing a personal essay. The zine would follow a genealogical timeline and highlight my family’s journey from various parts of Europe to Wyoming where we have been for the past six generations. It would illustrate my family’s transition from immigrant to settler while still discussing my colonial European roots. It would contain visuals and I would like to create a physical version. The personal essay would be much more textual and would most likely steer away from a timeline, and would take on a narrative form where I tell the story of my family while adhering to the same aforementioned points.

I would like to designate my audience to be general public or other university students. I think my project would be interesting and informative to both of these groups.

My project will largely tackle and apply ideas and concepts such as white savior complex and the white man’s burden, the European imperial project, and colonial patriarchy.

I will need to conduct ancestral research and interview my family to fulfill the research required for this project.

1. The project – The communication of your research and analysis in the mode you identified in the proposal and modified based on David’s feedback

a. **Equivalent of a 2000-word academic essay**

b. Format: (Depends upon the form of communication)

c. Citation: You MUST cite in a form appropriate to the mode of communication. An academic essay should use MLA or Chicago author-date, an essay designed for online publication can use hyper-links and footnotes, an oral presentation can clearly identify sources in the presentation, etc.

d. All assignments must include a complete bibliography of research sources, using MLA or another established academic format.

Personal/Family Legacies: This approach invites you to **examine your personal and family histories of colonialism**. Students who are from Turtle island, might reflect on their positioning as Indigenous, as settlers, immigrants/arrivants, or complicated mixes of these kinds of family lineages. In my case, this might mean researching Richard Beasley, an ancestor of mine, who was one of the first European settlers at the head of Lake Ontario, or it might mean talking with my brother about why this lineage is so important to him today. For some students, this approach might focus on **acknowledging how their family histories, and hence their own lives**, are imbricated in colonialism as “explorers,” early settlers, or immigrants who benefited from the displacement of Indigenous peoples; for some students it might focus on how their family histories reflect resistance, resilience, and cultural resurgence, in the face of colonialism. Of course, there are many other possibilities. You will want to analyze the stories and images of your family past, utilizing theories and concepts from the course and research.

Drawing on knowledge from my early education, when we had the opportunity to learn about “Native Americans”, I would like to reflect on these teachings while addressing their colonial implications and how I have come to understand my place as a settler. In doing so, I would like to elevate the work of Indigenous scholars and minimize my opinions. Though, much of this essay will entail anecdotal information from my personal history and reflections on my engagements with colonial learning, my goal is to offer meaningful reflections on these instances as I attempt to decolonize my mind.

I am fortunate enough to have a history of my family told and retold to me throughout my life. Naturally, I will be drawing on my memory of my family’s history for the majority of this personal essay. I will start from the beginning, or rather, when my family’s ancestors left Europe for what was to become the United States.

They were some of the first, but not the very first to settle the ‘new world’. Their arrival upon a boat that was not designated as the Mayflower has cast that vessel’s name into the void of history. But none-the-less they arrived. For some time, my ancestors are said to have spent in the original colonies of the United States. There they remained until the era of westward expansion. Again, it is said that my ancestors were some of the first, though not the very first of a group of settlers who desired to settle in the west. Six generations ago, my great to the sixth grandfather was born in what is now known as Albany County, Wyoming. My branch of the ancestral tree has resided in Wyoming since. This is, in brief, my family’s history. It is not special; many of my peers from the States have similar stories. Though, many of my peers have a different story too.

So, what has my family been doing for six generations? Well, they have been ranchers, wheel wrights, blacksmiths, oil prospectors, and architects. My grandfather was the oil prospector and geologist. He discovered an abundance of natural resources hidden beneath the soil throughout Wyoming. Our family still maintains leases on land that he prospected. James Cobb, the first of my family to be born in Wyoming was a wheel wright and a blacksmith. He provided his services to westward travelers who owned wagons, and technology that required specialized maintenance. I am of the opinion that there aren’t any more people in Wyoming now than there were in his day (the state population of Wyoming is approximately 500,000 and it is 253,596 square km).

I would like to engage with the work of Chelsea Vowel to address my view of land and territory acknowledgements. Because of my family’s embedded history in my homeland for six generations, I have come to understand myself as tied to this land. Keeping in mind that the Indigenous nations of Wyoming, the Shoshone and Arapahoe have occupied and used the same land for much longer. Thus, my sentiments of disdain regarding the overwhelming onslaught of wealthy second home owners in my hometown are but trivial in comparison to what members of the Shoshone and Arapahoe nation must feel. Vowel, in her essay “Beyond Territorial Acknowledgements” argues that “Merely mouthing the names of local Indigenous nations does not automatically confer understanding”. This is in response to Jennifer Matsunaga’s words where she “takes issue with the institutional standardization and expectation of these acknowledgments” because “it is important for people to do their own searching and learning” (Vowel). I understand her issue with land acknowledgments for failing to confer understanding behind their purpose. Earlier in the article, my own institution’s is highlighted for purporting an example of a “fairly short” land acknowledgement (Vowel). Bear in mind I am not attempting to absolve UBCO’s flat land acknowledgement, however, if it were not for this acknowledgement, I would not have been motivated to conduct my own searching in learning about Indigenous peoples.

To the contrary of Vowel’s point with this statement, and I may be an outlier, the mere presence of a land acknowledgement spurred curiosity that led to my engagement with Indigenous knowledge holders such as UBCO’s own Sam Marlowe, Jeanette Armstrong, and Kerrie Charnley. Alas, this is a cyclical experience of learning, for now that I have engaged with these teachings, I now recognize that the same land acknowledgement that initiated my journey of searching and learning is part of an evolving process. Vowel addresses this process quite profoundly:

best practices must evolve over time through deeper engagement with the purpose and impact of territorial acknowledgments (Vowel).

Incidentally, these words resonate with my own experience of land acknowledgments. It is not simply acknowledging the land in a verbal or written statement that matters, what is most important is that because it is spoken or written, some person will interact with it and become inspired to learn more. Though current land acknowledgements fail to confer deep understanding of the meaning behind acknowledging the land, each one is a seed of knowledge and information that challenges colonial values. In the hands of the curious, this seed has the potential to contribute to dismantling colonialisms in society.

Vowel’s words on land acknowledgments highlight a significant feature of the Indigenous worldview; land is important. It is important for many reasons. Though, colonial knowledge certainly has a different opinion of land. Armstrong provides an insightful take on the importance of “the land”:

…we grew up loving the land. We grew up loving each other on the land and loving each plant and each species the way we love our brothers and sisters and that’s the point I want to get across (Armstrong 67).

Just before this passage, Armstrong expressed her displeasure with ongoing disappearances of endangered species. Moreover, the land is a symbol for the bigger picture. What lives in the land and occupies it? In addition, to the land, the inhabitants of the land are important. Effectively, everything is important; the land, its inhabitants, and how it all interacts together. Armstrong’s words best convey this as she explains the love in her community:

It happens as a result of how we interact with each other in our families, in our family units, in our extended family units, and in our communities; the networks that we make outward to other people who surround us on the land. Those networks are extremely important insofar as what happens to the land and how we interact with the land (Armstrong 67).

These words provide an insightful look into holistic relationships. That is, relationships with everything. Armstrong suggests that *all* relationships matter. Further, the greater network of relationships implies that to some degree, everything is interconnected. Because everything is interconnected, positive or negative actions at any part of the network will percolate throughout. This concept of holism clashes with colonial notions of land exploitation.

Unfortunately, I have witnessed and even benefitted from exploiting the land. Previously, when I elaborated on my family’s history, I noted that my grandfather was a geologist—and an oil prospector. He used his knowledge of rocks and soil to poke and prod the land for oil. Oil that, in his day had minimal known consequences. I recall learning about oil spills, the dark truths behind fracking, and the consequences of GHG emissions from oil powered vehicles. What a disgusting substance oil is. Clearly, I have stark opinions on the stuff.

Sources:

Simpson, Armstrong, Tuck & Yang, Vowel, Hargreaves, smith