When builders broke ground in 1866 to build Heck Hall on Northwestern’s campus, “two human skeletons, of more than ordinary stature, were excavated by the workmen” (Grover 1901, 3). The unearthing and theft of Indigenous burial grounds was not uncommon in early Evanston. Members of Evanston’s historical society “also found Indian skeletons in the bank of lake front, notably one well preserved, in the piece of ground that now constitutes the yard of Dr. Sheppard’s home” (Grover 1901, 4). It was not a quick process though, that by which Sheppard found himself able to build a fifteen-room, two-story house atop sacred graves. But white settler-colonialism was a deceptive, extractive, and coercive process. Moreover, it did not occur in the distant past but rather very recently. And it is still not over yet.

The shorefront of Lake Michigan, where Evanston now stands, is homeland to the Menominee, Miami, Ho-Chunk, Ojibwe, Potawatomi, and Odawa (these last three make up the Council of Three Fires) nations (CNAIR, 2019). The region was connected through roads and trade networks to other tribal nations to the north and south. Though the exact number and location of Indigenous villages and settlements in Evanston is unknown, most were probably located close to the lake for the nutrition and transportation it provided (Osborne, n.d.). Dorene Wiese, with the AICC, says these tribal nations “hunted, fished, birthed their children, prayed, and died right here in Chicago. The food was plentiful, and transportation was swift by canoe. Forests, rich with hardwood, stretched across the land” (Wiese, 2013).

Around the mid-eighteenth century, Potawatomi presence grew near what is now Evanston (Osborne, n.d.). Yet so did the presence of white settlers. The first white men landed in what would soon be Evanston in 1673 and their numbers grew. The area was rich in deer, buffalo, turkeys, partridge, and fish (Grover 1901, 6). A series of coercive treaties in 1795, 1816, 1821, 1829, and 1833 ensured the displacement of the Potawatomi people from Evanston and its surrounding areas through cession of land (Grover 1901, 23). One of the most recent treaties, signed in 1833 in Chicago, between US agents and the Council of Three Fires (Odawa, Ojibwe, Potawatomi), granted Americans control of the lucrative Chicago Portage. The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi successfully managed to stay on their ancestral lands west of Evanston (CNAIR, 2019). Shortly after, in 1844 and 1845, the land that would become Evanston sold for $1.50 per acre to white homesteaders (Grover 1901, 20).

From the time the last treaty was signed, not twenty years passed before these white interlopers established Northwestern University and the town of Evanston. In fact, old Evanstonians in 1901 could still recall Native villages and camps on the northern and eastern sides of town. On Sheridan Avenue, “fronting the lake shore and on the property belonging to Charles Deering, was an Indian Village consisting of from fifteen to twenty wigwams,” an “Old-timer” recalled. As recently as 1840, Indigenous groups made summer camp “at the foot of Dempster street” (Grover 1901, 21). John Evans arrived in Evanston during this time of transition, when Native people were still very much present physically and in the shaped geography as well. But Evans had grand, white plans for the “frontier” town. He established Northwestern University, and the town came to bear his name. He became territorial governor then also *ex officio* Superintendent of Indians Affairs of Colorado, appointed by President Lincoln in spring 1862 and 1865 respectively (Northwestern University 2014, 9). Though hardly fifteen years had passed between the 1833 Chicago treaty forcing out bands of Potawatomi and the construction of Northwestern University, white settlers were eager to relegate Native people to the past and treat their exhumed bodies as artifacts of a dead society.

Illinois is still home to over one hundred thousand Indigenous people who are also members of the tribal nations whose homelands Northwestern sits atop. In 2013, the university commissioned a committee to investigate Evans’s connection to the Sand Creek Massacre that occurred in Colorado in 1864, during his governorship. The committee concluded that no “known evidence indicates that John Evans helped plan the Sand Creek Massacre or had any knowledge of it in advance” (Northwestern University 2014, 85). However, the University has yet to critically examine its relationship with Indigenous communities here in Evanston and settler-colonialism more broadly, including grotesque accounts of exhumation and trade in the cultural and spiritual property of those people whose history it seeks to erase.

**UNEDITED:**

When ground was broken in 1866 to build Heck Hall on Northwestern’s campus, “two human skeletons, of more than ordinary stature, were excavated by the workmen.” (Grover 1901, 3) The unearthing and theft of Indigenous burial grounds was common in early Evanston. Members of Evanston’s historical society “also found Indian skeletons in the bank of lake front, notably one well preserved, in the piece of ground that now constitutes the yard of Dr. Sheppard’s home.” (Grover 1901, 4) It was not a quick process, that by which Sheppard found himself able to build a fifteen-room, two-story house atop sacred graves. But white settler-colonialism was a deceptive, extractive, and coercive process. Moreover, it did not occur in the distant past but rather very recently and it is still not over yet.

The shorefront of Lake Michigan north of Chicago, where Evanston now stands, is the homeland of the Menominee, Miami, Ho-Chunk, Ojibwe, Potawatomi, and Odawa (these last three make up the Council of Three Fires) nations. (NAISA) The area was connected through frequently traveled roads and trade networks to other tribal nations to the north and south. These paths connected the Evanston and Chicago regions to northern areas such as present-day Milwaukee and Green Bay. The exact number and location of Indigenous villages and settlements in Evanston is unknown, but most were probably located close to the lake for the advantages it provided for fishing, hunting, and transportation. (Osborne) Dorene Wiese, with the AICC, says these tribal nations “hunted, fished, birthed their children, prayed, and died right here in Chicago. The food was plentiful, and transportation was swift by canoe. Forests, rich with hardwood, stretched across the land.” (Wiese)

Around the mid-eighteenth century, Potawatomi presence grew around what is now Evanston. They established a village and trading center where Chicago now stands. (Osborne) So did the presence of white European colonial settlers. The first white men landed in what would soon be Evanston in 1673 and their numbers grew, slowly at first but increasingly so. The area was rich in deer, buffalo, turkeys, partridge, and fish. (Grover 1901, 6) A series of coercive treaties in 1795, 1816, 1821, 1829, and 1833 ensured the displacement of the Potawatomi people from Evanston and its surrounding areas through cession of land. (Grover 1901, 23) One of the most recent treaties, signed in 1833 in Chicago, between US agents and the Council of Three Fires (Odawa, Ojibwe, Potawatomi), granted Americans control of the lucrative Chicago Portage. The Pokagon Band of Potawatomi, located about 125 miles west of Evanston at the time, successfully managed to stay on their ancestral lands. (CNAIR) Shortly after, in 1844 and 1845, the land that would become Evanston sold for $1.50 an acre, none of which went to any tribal nation. (Grover 1901, 20)

From the time the last treaty was signed, not twenty years passed before white interlopers established Northwestern University and the town of Evanston. In fact, old Evanstonians in 1901 could still recall when Native villages and camps stood on the northern and eastern sides of the town. On Sheridan Avenue, “fronting the lake shore and on the property belonging to Charles Deering, was an Indian Village consisting of from fifteen to twenty wigwams,” an “Old-timer” recalled. As recently as 1840, Indigenous groups made summer camp “at the foot of Dempster street.” (Grover 1901, 21) John Evans arrived in Evanston during this time of transition, when Native people were still very much present physically and in the marked geography as well. But Evans had grand plans for the “frontier” town. He organized Northwestern University, and the town the college is located in came to bear his name. He was also territorial governor then also *ex officio* Superintendent of Indians Affairs of Colorado, appointed by President Lincoln in spring 1862 and 1865 respectively. (Northwestern University 2014, 9) Though hardly fifteen had passed between the 1833 Chicago treaty forcing out bands of Potawatomi and the construction of Northwestern University, white settlers were eager to relegate Native people to the past and treat their exhumed relics as artifacts of a dying society.

Illinois is still home for hundreds of thousands of Indigenous people who are also members of the tribal nations whose homelands Northwestern sits atop. In 2013, the university commissioned a committee to research and draw up a report on the Sand Creek Massacre that occurred in Colorado in 1864, during Evans’s governorship. The committee concluded that no “known evidence indicates that John Evans helped plan the Sand Creek Massacre or had any knowledge of it in advance.” (Northwestern University 2014, 85) However, the University has yet to critically examine its relationship with Indigenous communities here in Evanston, including grotesque accounts of exhumation and trade in the cultural and spiritual property of those people whose history it seeks to erase.