How Similar Are Indigenous North American and Leopoldian Environmental Ethics?

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1. Introduction

Aldo Leopold's land ethic is often compared to the ethics of many North American Indigenous communities, such as Tribes and First Nations. At the heart of Leopold's land ethic are the ideas that humans should consider themselves as "plain citizens" of the biotic community and that "a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community."[1] Leopold's centering value on the harmony of the biotic community and qualifying human status as relational serve as sources for such a comparison with Indigenous ethics. Indeed, North American Indigenous elders, scholars and writers argue for ethics based on reciprocal moral responsibilities among humans, other living beings (i.e. animals, plants, etc.), and interconnected collectives (i.e., forests, "the land," etc.).[2] In many Indigenous ethics, humans are understood as relatives of these beings and collectives. It seems to be quite plausible, then, that there is something similar between the notions of "plain citizens" (Leopold) and "relatives" (Indigenous) and notions like the "integrity of the biotic community" (Leopold) and the "reciprocal relations" (Indigenous) among beings and collectives called for in some Indigenous ethics.[3]

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[1] Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1981): 262.

[2] Robin Kimmerer, "Weaving Traditional Ecological Knowledge into Biological Education: A Call to Action," *BioScience* 52, no. 5 (2002); Winona LaDuke, *All our relations: native struggles for land and life* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press 1999); Raymond Pierotti and Daniel Wildcat, "Traditional Ecological Knowledge: The Third Alternative," *Ecological Applications* 10, no. 5 (2000); Deborah McGregor, "Honouring Our Relations: An Anishnaabe Perspective on Environmental Justice," in *Speaking for Ourselves: Environmental Justice in Canada*, ed. Julian Agyeman, Peter Cole, and Randolph Haluza-Delay (Vancouver, BC, Canada: University of British Columbia Press, 2009); Jace Weaver, *Defending mother earth: Native American perspectives on environmental justice* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis Books, 1996); Ronald L. Trosper, "Northwest coast Indigenous institutions that supported resilience and sustainability," *Ecological Economics* 41(2002); V. F. Cordova, *How it is: the Native American philosophy of V.F. Cordova* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2007); Vine Deloria, *Red earth, white lies: Native Americans and the myth of scientific fact* (Golden, Colo.: Fulcrum Pub., 1997); Melissa K. Nelson, *Original instructions: Indigenous teachings for a sustainable future* (Rochester, Vt.: Bear & Company, 2008).

[3] J. Baird Callicott and Michael P. Nelson, *American Indian environmental ethics: an Ojibwa case study*, Basic ethics in action (Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall, 2004); J. Baird Callicott, "American Indian Land Wisdom?: Sorting Out the Issues " in *In*

Such comparisons can be considered important today because they are a potential option for bringing together environmentalists of all heritages in North America based on a common ethical orientation. One of the effects of settler colonialism in North America is the establishment of political and social barriers between descendants of European and U.S. settler societies and the descendants of nations such as the Anishinaabe and Cherokee. In the 20th century, environmentalists from the settler groups often did not include Indigenous environmentalists in their collective actions to protect the environment.[4] Moreover, settler and Indigenous environmentalists have sometimes disagreed on the ethical correctness of various conservation practices related to the hunting and environmental stewardship.[5] But these conflicts are perhaps distractions from a much needed, and deeper, dialogue on the possible similarities in ethical orientation between some Indigenous persons and the subset of settler environmentalists who are inspired and persuaded by at least some version of Leopold's ethic.

At a theoretical level, the potential for comparison is certainly present. I argue, however, that there are at least three serious issues that must be reckoned with by any actual attempts to bring people together around the idea of a similar ethical orientation in Leopoldian and certain Indigenous ethics. The first issue is that Leopoldian ideas may be similar in the abstract to some Indigenous ethics, but Leopold's own work does not provide a model of environmental stewardship that many Indigenous persons would identify with or find useful. Such a lack of affinity on the part of some Indigenous persons may occur even in cases when settler environmentalists feel they identify strongly with the ideas embodied in certain Indigenous ethics. The second issue is that Leopold's history of ethics is based on a settler narrative the plot of which goes in the opposite direction of the narratives many Indigenous peoples would provide of their ethics. The third issue is the tendency by some people to prioritize Leopold as the interpreter and translator of Indigenous ethics, which can

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Defense of the Land Ethic: Essays in Environmental Philosophy (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1989); ———, *Earth's insights: a survey of ecological ethics from the Mediterranean basin to the Australian outback* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994); Dan Shilling, "Aldo Leopold listens to the Southwest," *Journal of the Southwest* 51, no. 3 (2009).

[4] Weaver, *Defending mother earth: Native American perspectives on environmental justice*; Donald A. Grinde and Bruce E. Johansen, *Ecocide of Native America: environmental destruction of Indian lands and peoples*, 1st ed. (Sante Fe, N.M.: Clear Light, 1995); Bunyan I. Bryant, *Environmental justice: issues, policies, and solutions* (Washington, D.C.: Island Press, 1995).

[5] George Wenzel, *Animal rights, human rights: ecology, economy, and ideology in the Canadian Arctic* (London: Belhaven Press, 1991); Michael L Chiropolos, "Inupiat Subsistence and the Bowhead Whale: Can Indigenous Hunting Cultures Coexist with Endangered Animal Species," *Colo. J. Int'l Envtl. L. & Pol'y* 5(1994); P. Nadasdy, "Transcending the debate over the ecologically noble Indian: Indigenous peoples and environmentalism," *Ethnohistory* 52, no. 2 (2005); Al Gedicks, *The new resource wars: native and environmental struggles against multinational corporations* (Boston: South End Press, 1993). Benjamin Richardson, "The ties that bind: Indigenous peoples and environmental governance," *CLPE Research Paper*, no. 26 (2008).

grant unsubstantiated and even offensive privilege to Leopold in relation to Indigenous ethics. If left unaddressed, each issue threatens to silence important dimensions of many North American Indigenous ethics that matter deeply to the Indigenous persons who adhere to them. I conclude the paper by arguing that a better exercise would involve approaching any potential comparison with a sobering acknowledgment of and openness to differences between Leopoldian and Indigenous ethics.

I begin in sections 2 and 3 of this paper by describing two views about how to compare Leopoldian and certain Indigenous ethics, the convergence view and the translational view. These view are important because they attempt to bring together environmentalists of all heritages around a common ethical orientation. Section 4 describes the three issues that must be considered by any attempt to compare versions of the two ethics, such as the two views. Section 5 concludes with my argument for the need to do more work premised on the appreciation of difference when exploring the relationship between Leopoldian and Indigenous ethics.

2. The Convergence View

The possibility that Leopoldian and Indigenous ethics have a similar ethical orientation promises for some people to be at least one step in decolonizing North American environmentalism. One way of comparing the ethics is to suggest there is a theoretical convergence among the key ideas underlying each ethic. I call this the convergence view, and provide two examples of this in this section, Dan Shilling's "Aldo Leopold Listens to the Southwest" (2009) and Baird Callicott and Michael Nelson's *American Indian Environmental Ethics: An Ojibwa Case Study* (2004).

Shilling, in the aforementioned essay, expresses one important basis for considering what the similar ethical orientation may be. He argues that there are definitely similarities between Leopoldian and Indigenous ethics. These similarities are somewhat apparent in comparisons between Leopold's attitude toward the land and the attitudes expressed in print by Indigenous persons about their ethics. Leopold's ideas of preserving the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community and of humans as plain citizens of the biotic community converge with what Shilling sees as two common attitudes of American Indian ethics, *restraint* and *reverence* toward the land: "restraint because, as people close to the land, [Native people] understood and embraced their dependence on Earth's resources; reverence because all was a gift from the Creator, whose reincarnated universe meant animals, trees, and rocks were another 'people'."[6] In this case, Shilling is trying to show that Indigenous and Leopoldian ethics both embrace a view of humans as part of interdependent systems of relationships among diverse beings (e.g. resources, water, animals, the Creator, etc.) and interconnected

[6] Shilling, "Aldo Leopold listens to the Southwest," 13.

collectives (e.g. "the land," the earth, forests, etc.). Shilling also seeks to show that Indigenous ethics endow humans and other beings with the moral status of relatives of one another since nonhumans are considered other people in some Indigenous ethics. This is similar to how Leopold considered humans as relatives of other beings in the sense of humans being plain citizens of a biotic community—instead of humans being considered superior beings. In terms of ethics, beings that consider themselves relatives of each other, whether as plain citizens of a community or "other people," are perhaps more inclined to recognize and be compelled by their moral responsibilities to one another to care for maintaining the harmony of their special relationships.

For Shilling, numerous passages from Leopold and Indigenous persons such as Intiwa and Black Elk have strikingly similar meanings on ethically important concepts such as respect for land, environmental preservation, responsibility, love, character, and purpose, among others discussed in the essay. Consider some examples. Shilling sees affinity between Leopold and Leslie Marmon Silko insofar as both convey that "[t]he land ethic encompasses more than forests, rivers, and wildlife; it is more than a tool to preserve resources and critters. It is, instead, a means to a greater social good. As Leopold saw in Germany, the way we treat the land speaks volumes about the way we treat one another."[7] The similarity Shilling suggests here involves the idea that both ethics assume the integration of social and natural communities and systems. Such integration ties the quality of human lives with the condition of the natural world. And since humans have the capacity to impact the natural world, the betterment of human communities is entangled with human treatment of the environment.

Shilling goes on to cite Leopold regarding his view on the similarities regarding sense of place. "[M]any of the attributes most distinctive of America and Americans are the impress of the wilderness and the life that accompanied it." Shilling compares this with Indigenous author N. Scott Momaday, who said "To [the Indian] the sense of place is paramount. Only in reference to the earth can he persist in his true identity."[8] While the concept of wilderness is problematic for many North American Indigenous persons because of its roots as a settler notion, the idea Shilling is drawing on is the connection between people's sense of who they are in relation to the places where they live, work and play.

Shilling especially sees the concept of love as figuring importantly in both ethics. Leopold claimed that "It is inconceivable to me that an ethical relationship to land can exist without love, respect, and admiration for land, and a high regard for its value. By value, I of course mean something far broader than mere economic value; I mean value in the philosophical sense." Shilling then quotes D'Arcy McKnickle, who wrote that "We want the river to be strong, we sing to it, feed it deer meat—tell

[7] Ibid., 16.
[8] Ibid., 15-16.

it that we love it—old men and children."[9] Shilling also suggests in his paper that Leopold may have directly respected Indigenous ethics in his own lifetime. Leopold's experiences in the Southwest must have shaped his well-known statement: "Five races—five cultures—have flourished here. We may truthfully say of our four predecessors that they left the earth alive, undamaged."[10]

For Shilling, then, we can explore a common ethical orientation by comparing ethical concepts such as respect for land and love across texts expressing Leopoldian and certain Indigenous ethics. Shilling also makes an interesting speculation that Leopold himself could have respected Indigenous ethics because of their similarity to his own as evidenced in his remarks about previous North Americans leaving the "earth alive, undamaged."

Baird Callicott and Michael Nelson in *American Indian Environmental Ethics: An Ojibwa Case Study* also explore the possibility of a common orientation between Leopoldian ethics and their interpretation of Anishinaabe (Ojibwa) ethics. They primarily look at accounts of Anishinaabe language and stories and then compare with Leopold's own writings. They draw, then, from different literatures than Shilling does for their comparison of the different ethics. Based on their analysis, they claim that a "foundation in community and the multiple and distinct rights, duties, and obligations generated by community membership and relationships suggests that the Ojibwa environmental ethic most resembles the land ethic, first articulated by Leopold."[11] Callicott and Nelson, here, draw similarity from the fact that both ethics understand the key relationship among humans, non-humans and interconnected collectives as community based, and hence moral responsibilities flow from how the various relationships within the community are defined.

Callicott and Nelson make light of another similarity in how Leopoldian and certain Indigenous ethics understand the agency and identity of non-human animals in relation to humans. "One similarity between Leopold's communitarianism and that revealed in the Ojibwa narratives is that some animals are portrayed as living in communities that are very much like human communities. But the likeness of animal communities to human communities is less complete in Leopold's portrayal than in that of the Ojibwa narratives.:[12] Callicott and Nelson discuss how Leopold described "mouse-engineer[s]" who act as "a sober citizen who knows that grass grows in order that mice may store it as underground haystacks, and that snow falls in order that mice may build subways from stack to stack: supply, demand, and transport are all neatly

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[9] Ibid., 15-16.
[10] Aldo Leopold, "Conservation in the Southwest," in *The River of the Mother of God and Other Essays by Aldo Leopold*, ed. Susan L. Flader and J. Baird Callicott (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 96.
[11] Callicott and Nelson, *American Indian environmental ethics: an Ojibwa case study*: 121-22.
[12] Ibid., 124.

organized."[13] Callicott and Nelson go on to suggest that Anishinaabe ethics tend to go much further in the ascription of agency and human qualities to animals, and that this is a difference in degree, not kind. Here the similar ethical orientation centers on the assumptions about the agency and identity of other living begins within the community. Both Leopoldian and Indigenous ethics do not find it problematic to ascribe human and other agential qualities to animals.

Both Shilling and Callicott and Nelson see many convergences between Leopold's land ethic and the ethics of North American Indigenous peoples. Shilling sees convergence by comparing accounts of contemporary Indigenous persons with Leopold, and Callicott and Nelson generate comparison from their historical analysis of Anishinaabe stories and language. An important implication of the convergence view is that for those of us who come from or are persuaded by versions of Leopoldian or North American Indigenous ethics, there is perhaps a common ethical orientation that can help bring us together in our thinking regarding our relationships with and responsibilities to our relatives who share membership in entangled biological and ecological communities.

3. The Translational View

Another way create comparison between Leopoldian and some Indigenous ethics is what I call the translation view. On this view, one ethic is used to interpret, in some respect, the meaning of the other ethic. Baird Callicott, in *Earth's Insights*, offers a translational view of comparison because his core idea is that Leopold's land ethic can interpret and evaluate all other ethics, including Indigenous North American ethics. He begins by asking "[h]ow…might we unite the environmental ethics of the world's many cultures into a systematic whole?"[14] Callicott poses this question to seek "a genuine multicultural network of environmental ethics, rather than an eclectic and conflictive patchwork."[15]

For Callicott, Leopold's land ethic is the key that can unlock the possibility of striking on unity, or a common ethical orientation. Its scientific evolutionary and ecological framework gives it a special priority over the ethics of Indigenous peoples: "[The land ethic] is not just one option among many, standing alongside, say, the Jain *ahimsa* environmental ethic, and appealing only to members of a specific sect or culture. It is a sister environmental ethic, but it is also proffered as a universal environmental ethic, with globally acceptable credentials, underwriting and reinforcing each of the others. Further, it is also intended to serve as a standard for evaluating others."[16] For Callicott, the land ethic can interpret and validate all Indigenous ethics. For example, Callicott claims that "…the woodland American Indian concept of

[13] Ibid.
[14] Callicott, *Earth's insights: a survey of ecological ethics from the Mediterranean basin to the Australian outback*: 186.
[15] Ibid., 187.
[16] Ibid., 188.

multispecies socioeconomic exchanges… was, abstractly speaking, identical to the ecological concept of a biotic community, which is foundational to the Leopold land ethic."[17] Based on this similarity in the abstract, Leopold's land ethic can then be used to show why the concept of multispecies economic exchanges is important as part of a more general scientific (evolutionary-ecological, for Callicott) understanding of coupled human and natural systems. A Leopoldian ethic provides a framework for interpreting a more global sense of why particular ethics should be taken seriously. It also provides a framework for linking the good aspects of different ethics across the planet. Leopold's ethic, then, is in the position to provide an important role in bringing together what appear initially to be diverse ethics around the world, certain North American Indigenous ethics being examples.

Callicott is aware that his proposals in *Earth's Insights* come dangerously close to suggesting that Leopold's land ethic ought to colonize the other ethics. He offers a set of reasons explaining his immunity from this criticism by stressing the global consensus on the merits of privileging science. First, "Western ideas have become a pervasive cognitive ether that nearly everyone breathes in—more or less deeply."[18] Based on this, Callicott sees the ubiquity of science as "[inoculating] all other cultures with Western attitudes and values."[19] Second, "[o]ne worldview may consistently comprehend more of human experience than another,"[20] which the land ethic does (for Callicott). Third, "The scientific worldview is, therefore, epistemologically privileged—not because it and it alone is uniquely true but because it is self-consciously self-critical."[21] For Callicott, then, Leopold's ethic operates also at a more general level than other ethics, which positions it to be a more encompassing interpreter of them. People from all over the map are also more habituated to the basics of approaches such as Leopold's and in conversation with Western scientific disciplines.

Callicott's is a translational view because its core idea is that a Leopoldian ethic can interpret and evaluate most other ethics. The land ethic is a privileged translator. This is different from the convergence view, which seeks to strike upon possible similarities in thought across Leopoldian and Indigenous ethics. The translation view seeks to show why at least one of the ethics (in Callicott's case, the Leopoldian) has special insight into the others. On the translational view, people of all heritages who value the different ethics could come together by using Leopold's ethic as the privileged tool for interpreting the importance of the non-Leopoldian ethics. The common ethical orientation, then, is the Leopoldian interpretation and evaluation of the other ethics.

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[17] Ibid., 189.
[18] Ibid., 187.
[19] Ibid., 189.
[20] Ibid., 190.
[21] Ibid., 191.

4. Three Issues Involving Comparisons Between Leopoldian and Indigenous Ethics

The convergence and translation views suggest some common ground for comparison of versions of Leopoldian and some Indigenous ethics. Though these views certainly make interesting arguments about the possible connections in the abstract, they should not—however—be taken as a cue for letting down our skeptical guard regarding just how similar the ethics really are. In this section, I argue that there are at least three issues that complicate any attempt to compare versions of Leopoldian and Indigenous ethics. These issues must be reckoned with by any actual attempts to bring people together around the idea of a similar orientation in the ethics.

The first issue is that Leopoldian ideas may be similar in the abstract to some Indigenous ethics, but Leopold's own work does not provide a model of environmental stewardship that many Indigenous peoples would identify with or find useful. The second issue is that Leopold's history of ethics is based on a settler narrative that unfolds in the opposite direction of the historical narratives many Indigenous peoples would provide of their ethics. The third issue is the tendency to prioritize Leopold as the interpreter and translator of Indigenous ethics, which can grant unsubstantiated and even offensive privilege to Leopold in relation to some Indigenous ethics. If left unaddressed, each issue threatens to silence important dimensions of many North American Indigenous ethics that matter deeply to the Indigenous persons who adhere to and value them.

The first issue arises in the context of how Leopold offered an abstract articulation of his land ethic using concepts such as "plain citizen of the biotic community" and "integrity, stability and beauty." But he also offered some models for what such ideas would look like in practice. As Shilling notes, Leopold thought the land ethic must be part and parcel of the reformation of society, being instilled in education, cultural rituals, and family relations; Leopold also advocated for community-based cooperatives. More importantly in this essay, Leopold himself can also be seen as a practical model based on how he approached his own work, especially his writing and experiences restoring the land around his now famous cabin in what is now referred to by most settlers as Wisconsin. But in what sense did his writing and cabin-restoration processes model the sort of environmental stewardship suggested by his views on the reformation of society?

Leopold's writing is almost exclusively about his first-hand experiences observing and learning from the land and his memoirs from working for the U.S. government. We know that Leopold's weekend trips to the cabin were family events, and that his wife and children worked together with him to improve the land. We know from the testimonies of his children how much of a family experience the time spent at the cabin was. But the importance of family does not take center stage in Leopold's writings. He does not write about how much he learned from and about

his wife and children, what they contributed to the cabin area, and how learning about the land was not an individual enterprise but an experience integrating socialization and knowledge production based on communication and storytelling among them about their experiences each weekend. Leopold, in his major writings, seems to inquire rarely about the heritage of the cabin land and the lives and struggles of Indigenous peoples in the region both historically and during his time.

Though perhaps it is unfair to suggest Leopold had to model anything in his own character and writing, but I think it is nonetheless important to consider how he might come across to some Indigenous peoples. Consider Deborah McGregor, an Anishinaabe woman who writes about Indigenous ethics and participates in Anishinaabe women's movements that seek to protect water in particular. In her writings of one example, the Mother Earth Water Walk, she emphasizes how The Water Walk began with Anishinaabe women elders making great physical and emotional sacrifices to walk around the Great Lakes in ceremonial fashion as way of fulfilling their ethical responsibilities as relatives to water. She discusses how the Water Walk has not only expanded in the last 10 years to involve more women outside of the Anishinaabe communities and the Great Lakes, but has also been tied to actual water policy changes in Canada. It has been connected to social and environmental justice transformations that have increased Aboriginal women's involvement in water policy and challenged the Canadian and U.S. settler states.[22] McGregor describes this work as being motivated by the Anishinaabe creation story, which designates a key ecological and spiritual role for water. Water is an integral component of all life and is responsible for nourishing the lives of many species. Human beings, and especially women, according to McGregor, have special responsibilities to live closely with water, protect its quality and speak for it. For the Anishinaabe women McGregor describes, their responsibilities to water are part and parcel of maintaining family/kin, community and ceremonial relationships across many human, plant and other relatives:

> We must look at the life that water supports (plants/medicines, animals, people, birds, etc.) and the life that supports water (e.g., the earth, the rain, the fish). Water has a role and a responsibility to fulfill, just as people do. We do not have the right to interfere with water's duties to the rest of Creation. Indigenous knowledge tells us that water is the blood of Mother Earth and that water

[22] D. McGregor and S. Whitaker, *Water Quality in the Province of Ontario: An Aboriginal Knowledge Perspective* (Toronto, ON Canadda: Chiefs of Ontario, 2001); Deborah McGregor, "Traditional Knowledge: Considerations for Protecting Water in Ontario," *The International Indigenous Policy Journal* 3, no. 3 (2012); ———, "Traditional Ecological Knowledge: An Anishnabe Woman's Perspective," *Atlantis: Critical Studies in Gender, Culture & Social Justice* 29, no. 2 (2005).

> itself is considered a living entity with just as much right to live as we have.[23]

In this passage, McGregor emphasizes all of the contributions of the different relatives tied to water. Water, then, is tied very closely to family, community and ceremonial relationships that must be structured so as to facilitate people's responsibilities to water and facilitate water's responsibilities to every relative. For McGregor, the practical model for an ethics involves people, such as the water walkers, who are finding courageous ways to live their responsibilities by challenging structures of settler colonialism that degrade land and water and seek to eliminate the capacity of Indigenous peoples to exercise ethics that focus on systems of interconnected responsibilities shared by many human and nonhuman relatives who each have important contributions to make to each other's flourishing.

There are many other examples in Indigenous writings of authors such as McGregor who seek to bring out the perspectives and contributions family members, including elders and ancestors (e.g. traditional knowledge) and relatives (e.g. water) as ways of contesting settler threats to the environment. For example, the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC) produces literature on wild rice and maple stewardship. GLIFWC is an organization that protects Anishinaabe treaty rights to certain lands and waters in the Great Lakes through research and policy advocacy, education, conservation and monitoring environmental quality. GLIFWC's educational literature emphasizes the importance of children, intergenerational relationships, the ongoing responsibilities of Anishinaabe people to wild rice and maple and the significance of both species as irreplaceable parts of ceremonial and family life throughout the year. GLIFWC's literature, though based on Indigenous and "Western" knowledge and scientific systems, is sometimes written from the perspective of children, and includes testimonies from elders, women and other members of particular communities. These testimonies are not interpreted by an overarching author of each writing; rather the testimonies are left, in a sense, to speak for themselves.

The literature makes clear that each human or non-human actor has a special contribution to make and perspective to share with respect to monitoring, harvesting, processing and consuming rice and maple. GLIFWC sees its role as a political organization protecting treaty rights as serving to maintain the conditions needed for Anishinaabe people of all ages to continue traditions that are important simultaneously to their sense of responsibility to place, environmental literacy, health and subsistence and family life. Similarly, in a piece by McGregor discussing climate change impacts on maple, she claims such impacts are primarily disruptive of cultural and familial activities that span generations of children, elders

[23] _____, "Honouring Our Relations: An Anishnaabe Perspective on Environmental Justice," 27-28.

and ancestors, community members, and siblings, all of whom make special contributions to stewardship in their own ways, whether through caretaking of the trees themselves to being keepers of traditional knowledge.[24]

Though more detail is not possible in the space allotted for this essay and readers may have to draw some of their own conclusions on my point here, I want to note a potential difference to consider between some versions of Leopoldian ethics and what I have just described in the last few paragraphs. In the case of Leopold, his own individual learning, perceptiveness and ideas are implicitly celebrated in his writings. And, commentators such as Callicott and Nelson will often refer to Leopold as the "first" to have done something, such as articulate a land ethic.[25] I contend that, though Leopold does discuss the contributions of some non-human living beings to his understanding of the land and suggest that the land ethic should be part of family and culture, the way he writes about his ideas and his own life is just not compelling for some Indigenous peoples who may be drawn to different traits and styles of communication than Leopold provides. In the writings of McGregor, the Anishinaabe model of environmental stewardship is expressed in writing that brings out the importance of the others, such as children, elders, ancestors and relatives like water and animals. This is similar in the GLIFWC literature I referenced earlier too that discusses more generally the contributions of different members of Anishinaabe families to stewardship. That is, it is through directly thinking through family relations, the perspectives of children, the testimonies of elders and one's living heritage of traditional knowledge that some Indigenous persons are motivated to take their responsibilities seriously in times when settler societies seek to eliminate Indigenous ways of life. For some Indigenous peoples who see environmental stewardship modeled through family relationships and a celebration of the perspectives and contributions of other peoples and beings, it may be hard to identify with where Leopold is coming from in his more individualist writings about restoring a cabin, his memoirs of his government and academic careers and his broad observations about civilizations and land-use practices.

There is also a difference regarding how the Anishinaabe women McGregor describe are also courageous against settler ways of life that degrade water and eliminate Indigenous ways of life. The connection to courage is also not prominent in Leopold's writing. In the Anishinaabe

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[24] Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission (GLIFWC). *Manoomin (Wild Rice).* www.glifwc.org/WildRice/wildrice.htm; GLIFWC. *Iskigamizigan (Sugarbush) a Sequel to Growing up Ojibwe, Mazina'igan Supplement*: Great Lakes Indian Fish & Wildlife Commission, 2006; St. Arnold, Jim, and Sue Erickson, eds. *Mazina'igan Supplement*. Odanah, WI, USA: Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission, 2008. Cave, Kate, Paul General, Jodi Johnston, Bradley May, Deb McGregor, Ryan Plummer, and Peigi Wilson. "The Power of Participatory Dialogue: Why Talking About Climate Change Matters." *Indigenous Policy Journal* XXII, no. 13 (2011): 1-10.

[25] Callicott and Nelson, *American Indian environmental ethics: an Ojibwa case study*: 121-22.

case offered by McGregor, environmental stewardship is modeled by people who seek to engage in conduct that explicitly honors their many relationships and also seek to address courageously social and environmental justice issues and the recalcitrant structures of the settler state. In the case of GLIFWC, its role as a treaty organization involves contesting injustices such as treaty violations inflicted by settler society, such as pollution. In Leopold, environmental stewardship comes across as being based on his own individual learning; the contributions of others, especially his immediate family or even a reference to ancestors, are deemphasized in his writing. Moreover, there is not a strong social and environmental justice component throughout Leopold or a critique of the U.S. settler state as an oppressive force against Indigenous peoples, despite some instances where he may have addressed some of the problems of his time or shown strong emotional responses to the unethical treatment of animals and the land and problematic forms of settlement.

The first issue that I am highlighting may come across as a bit confusing to some readers. It is meant to suggest that while abstract comparisons may reveal similarities between Leopold's ethic and the sort of ethic described by McGregor, there are nonetheless different possible accounts of what it means to model the environmental stewardship that puts abstractions into practice. These different accounts can make it hard for some Indigenous persons to really find affinity in Leopold's writings. The Anishinaabe women described by McGregor appear to be doing very different things than Leopold was doing in his own time and be motivated by very different memories, heritages, traits and aspirations. So even when some members of settler society who are persuaded by certain versions of Leopoldian ethics feel a strong affinity toward descriptions of Indigenous ethics; Indigenous persons may not feel the same way when they read Leopold's writings in relation to the practical model of environmental stewardship he embodied. That is, while members of settler society have a lot to gain for themselves by saying that Leopold's ideas are similar to some of their own, it is not obvious what, say, members of GLIFWC or the elder women of the Mother Earth Water Walk, really gain or learn from thinking about the abstract ideas in Leopold. In my case, for example, if someone invited me to compare some Indigenous ethics with another ethic, I would expect to see that that ethic would put the contributions of children, elders, ancestors and other relatives at the forefront and address injustice and the dominance of settler states.

The second assumption issue involves the narrative given by Leopold to explain the development of the ethic. Some Leopold readers and environmentalist ethicists are familiar with this ethical sequence. According to the sequence, the first ethics concerns relations among individuals. Later ethics concerns the relation between humans and society. Today, humans are evolving toward a third ethic: a moral relation to the land. Leopold wrote that "The land-relation is still strictly economic, entailing privileges but not obligations…The extension of ethics to this third element in the human environment is…an evolutionary

possibility and ecological necessity….I regard the present conservation movement as the embryo of such an affirmation…"[26] This ethical sequence is more than an explanation of what motivates the conservation movement of Leopold's time. It is a social theory that only makes sense if we have in mind a particular interpretation of settler history: a narrative of the progress of society from pre-industrial periods to industrial/settler-colonial times to the environmental crises brought about by overproduction and overconsumption. Leopold's ethic seems to offer a vision that will redeem members of settler society from the historical destruction of the environment that they have caused.

Yet this sequence does not necessarily include many Indigenous peoples within it. Many Indigenous peoples would view their current ethics as inherited from the practices of their ancestors. Their ancestors were likely even more dependent on subsistence lifestyles, and lived lives that had ethics fully inclusive of many living and non-living beings and interdependent collectives. Many Indigenous people would see the colonialisms of the last 500 years as introducing ethics that were less inclusive of non-human entities and collectives. Anishinaabe leader Jimmie Mitchell writes that "upon the arrival of the dominant society, its effects began to negatively tilt the delicate balance of our world…As the balance of the environment teetered out of sync, new concepts like 'resource management' and 'public trust doctrine' were coined to leverage the needs of the dominant society against those of the Anishinaabek, causing negative environmental consequences that reverberate into our current landscape. Likewise, with the loss of leadership, land, and naturally occurring sustenance, the once vibrant cultural kinship between earth, animal and the Anishinaabek wilted."[27] Mitchell, in this passage, is concerned about Indigenous persons having lost touch with the former webs of relationships they once had. For Indigenous peoples who have narratives similar to Mitchell's, it would be hard for them to see themselves in Leopold's historic sequence because they do not see the progression of their societies as moving toward a land ethic; rather, the fear is that their societies are moving away from being societies in which their ethic is fully entrenched in their perceptions and lifestyles. Not taking this issue seriously silences the fact that Leopold's historical account of the evolution of history is infused with settler assumptions and entirely implausible from many Indigenous perspectives. Leopold's narrative literally unfolds in the exact reverse direction of what many contemporary Indigenous peoples would see as the narrative sequence of their own ethics. It would be hard for people to come together around a common ethical orientation given the differences in their assumptions about the histories that engendered the current situations of the ethics in the first place.

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[26] Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac*

[27] Jimmie Mitchell, "N'me," in *The Great Lake Sturgeon,* ed. Nancy Auer and Dave Dempsey (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2013). 23.

The third, and final, issue concerns the extent of participation by Indigenous populations when Leopold's positions are taken as a means for establishing a common ground, as in the translational view. Robust participation concerns the degree to which reciprocal, dependence in acts of interpretation connecting different ethics is fully appreciated and accommodated. For example, Callicott develops the point that there are multiple reasons for why Leopold's ethic should serve to translate other traditional environmental ethics: the integration of science already within many cultures, its self-critical nature, and its ability to explain the other ethics. The pressing issue here is not actually whether Callicott is correct about this. Rather, the issue is deeper because it concerns *who* gets to decide if he is correct; that is, who will be at the table for determining the criteria for correctness regarding the proper relationship between Leopold's land ethic and the many other ethics. As it stands, members of Indigenous peoples look to be epistemically dependent on Leopold, without a reciprocal epistemic dependence on the contributions of members of Indigenous peoples. As long as Leopold's positions are preemptively used to create a common orientation without genuine consultation with Indigenous peoples, then the framework for cooperation does not include Indigenous interpretations and evaluations of how their ethics relate to Leopoldian ethics. This kind of epistemological framework can effectively silence the populations that it aims to include and this would ultimately undermine the hopes that Callicott expresses for staving off colonizing Leopold upon Indigenous and other environmental ethics.

Non-Indigenous environmentalists who have made up their mind about the translational view and approach potential Indigenous collaborators and friends will have already silenced them before dialogue has even begun. Callicott is right that Western science is widely accepted, an implication of which is that sustainable communities will in some way blend Western scientific expertise and the expertises of other systems of knowledge production.[28] Contemporary Indigenous peoples are self-critical and have their own ideas about how their own traditions can guide integration with Western science, as a large literature shows.[29] There is no reason why authority over how to blend traditions should be vested in Leopold's land ethic in advance. It is hard to see what the benefit to members of Indigenous peoples would be if Indigenous leaders suggested to their constituencies that their systems of ethics and knowledge

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[28] Nicholas Reo and Kyle Whyte, "Hunting and Morality as Elements of Traditional Ecological Knowledge," *Human Ecology* 40, no. 1 (2012).

[29] Marty Holtgren, "Bringing Us Back to the River," in *The Great Lake Sturgeon*, ed. Nancy Auer and Dave Dempsey (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2013); Zoltan Grossman and Alan Parker, *Asserting Native Resilience: Pacific Rim Indigenous Nations Face the Climate Crisis* (Oregon State University Press, 2012); Mandaluyong Declaration, "Mandaluyong Declaration of the Global Conference on Indigenous Women, Climate Change and REDD Plus," in *Indigenous Women, Climate Change & Forests*, ed. Tebtebba (Baguio City, Philippines: Tebtebba Foundation, 2011); Anne Ross et al., *Indigenous Peoples and the Collaborative Stewardship of Nature: Knowledge Binds and Institutional Conflicts* (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2010).

production must be expressed and legitimized through a foreign land ethic, especially one arising from a different experience of how land and society are entangled and that has a different historical narrative. Though Callicott has good intentions, environmentalists who take his points too seriously will have a hard time avoiding procedural injustices against Indigenous North Americans. Procedural injustice is not a virtue of bringing people together. Members of Indigenous peoples simply will not be as captivated as non-Indigenous people might be with the land ethic as the Rosetta stone for an inclusive environmentalism.

5. Conclusion

A far better approach to thinking about similar ethical orientations between versions of Leopoldian and Indigenous ethics must involve a sobering and critical acknowledgment of and openness to differences between the ethics. Such acknowledgment and openness must push beyond linking abstract ideas as the primary basis of comparison. Often abstract ideas privilege certain dimensions of ethics and exclude other dimensions, such as the exclusion of the importance of differences in models of environmental stewardship, conceptions of the history of environmental ethics and the procedural justice of acts of translation. While abstract ideas such as respect for human interdependence with the earth are nonetheless quite important, the actual bringing together of people who subscribe to the varying ethics must involve more careful consideration of potential differences. I simply offered a few examples of issues. I have also not foreclosed in any way the possibility of future conversations that negotiate and better understand these differences. But the viability of these conversations depends on whether the participants are able to respect differences and the possibility that they will not immediately understand what all the issues may be, no matter how well they think they grasp the premises of the ethic to which they are trying to compare their own ethic. Future work in this area should look rather closely—and critically—about what it would really mean to come together as people of all heritages when we face differences across our models of environmental stewardship, assumptions about the historical trajectories of ethics, and ideas about what interpretative frameworks to privilege.