THE GROUND REMAINS

A ludic performance of structural erasure by Adri M.

Inspired by the book "Indigenomicon" by Jodi A. Byrd.

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DESIGNER'S STATEMENT

THE GROUND REMAINS is a print-and-play game/zine designed as a commentary on Jodi A. Byrd's book "Indigenomicon." Its name is a direct reference to the tension the author establishes between a colonial grid of digital/legal structures of dispossession and the indigenous ground, the sovereign reality that remains even after the grid is imposed.

As a gender-diverse, nonbinary student at the Institute for Gender, Race, Sexuality and Social Justice at UBC, I second Byrd's words and, at the same time, denounce how that digital frontier has performed as a machine of dispossession that imposes rigid, colonial and binary categories for life and land. I also recognize that all of us, but especially non-normative individuals, are often coded into the system as *errors, anomalies,* or *edge cases.*

Following that premise, in this game, the player is *a glitch*: a malfunction, a hacker. A faulty component that is beginning to rupture the rigid grid and bring the ground back. The goal of this game is not to win, but to disrupt and make the colonial structures unreadable. By assuming this role, they refuse the position of compliance and reclaim a space of action and sovereignty.

This *glitch* is the only element on the board capable of physical transformation; meanwhile, the colonial grid is predefined, arbitrary and restrictive. The *glitch* can *puncture, cut* and *fold*. They do not seek to be correctly categorized within the colonial system; they try to dismantle it and render it obsolete.

The game ends with an act of defiance. A *severance*. When the player reaches the game's goal, they must rip the board in two. It is an active act of refusal to be subjugated. Holding in their hands what's left of the dismantled colonial structure, they can find a space of silence and write a new, unhindered future.

GAME RULES

The Indigenomicon demands legibility.

You are not a player. You are not an avatar. You are a *glitch*. An anomaly in a system that is already running. You must breach it before you can move.

You are the presence that refuses the binary 0 / 1 logic of the settler state. You do not move to win within the engine's parameters; you move to expose its seams, poke holes in it, and ultimately tear it apart.

Mapping (game setup)

Before the machine can be broken, its geography must be acknowledged. On page 8 you will find the *Colonial Grid*: a land that has been overcome by the rigidness and violence of colonialism. Take it and do the following:

1. **Make the initial Puncture:** Take a pen, and poke a hole in the [START] square in the middle of the board. This is the first error. You have permanently infiltrated the grid.
2. **Mark the Kinship Lines:** The grid is flat, but the ground has depth. Take the board and fold it twice, then unfold it. Make sure the folds intersect. These creases are your Kinship Lines. They represent what's beyond the rigid colonial grid. They allow you to move freely, overwriting the grid's arbitrary restrictions.
3. **Plant the Seeds of Resistance: (1)** Wherever a *Kinship Line* intersects a horizontal grid line, draw a circle. This represents a disk: **data**. A point where the system is most fragile. **(2)** Wherever a *Kinship Line* intersects a vertical grid line, draw a leaf. This represents the **land**, and where it remembers itself. **(3)** Where the two creases intersect, draw two human figures. This represents **kinship**. Draw one human figure in every square where a crease overlaps a word. You are finding life within the cacophony.

4. **Awaken Your Memory:** Acknowledge your legacy. Count every square your *Kinship Lines* pass through. For each, grant yourself 1 leaf (**land**) and 1 disk (**data**). You also gain 3 humans (**kinship**) as your ancestral legacy. You can write this down on the side of the *Colonial Grid*. This is the noise of those who stood here before you; it is the fuel for your fight.

Moving

On page 8 you will find the *Colonial Grid*: a discordant, overlapping array of statutes and legal fictions that obscures the land and is designed to impede the movement of sovereign bodies. Each turn, several things can happen:

1. **Transit:** You begin in the middle of the grid. Your non-dominant hand is resting a finger in the [START] square. Every turn, you can move one square. However, in order to do that you must overcome its weight. Count the number of words in that square: that is its *movement price*.
   a. If the square is marked with a [D], you must spend *data*. You are sacrificing your identity to move through the system.
   b. If it's marked with an [L], you must spend *land*. You are exhausting your physical territory to navigate the law.
   c. If it's hybrid, marked with a [H], you can spend any combination of both.

   In all cases, the total must be equal to the square's *movement price*. After you move, you must discount your available resources.

2. **Drift:** If you are in a square where a *Kinship Line* (a crease) passes through, the system's tracking mechanism fails. You can freely move along this line at no cost to any other square it also passes through. You are moving through the parallax, slipping the colonial gaze.
3. **Gather:** If the square you are in has resources, remove them from the board and add them to your tally.
4. **Extract:** The colonial system is a one-way street. If you find yourself trapped by a lack of *data*, you can discard 2 *land* to generate 1 *data*. You have been *archived*. Note that *data* can never become *land* again. Once the Ground has been converted into Inventory, the system refuses to see its physicality.

Reclaiming

After you move, you don't simply occupy space: you liberate it.

Whenever you land in a square, you can choose to reclaim it. In order to do so, you must spend *kinship*. If you are in a square that has a *human* icon, you must spend 1 extra *kinship* to liberate it. If it doesn't, you must spend 2 (the square is barren of kin).

To liberate the square, you must physically puncture it. Take your pencil and poke a hole through it. This will obliterate its colonial weight.

That square now becomes part of the Ground. Its word count is now permanently 0, and you can move freely through it.

Severing (game end)

The goal of this game is not to win; it is to exit the genre of dispossession entirely. To finish it you must:

1. Create a chain of liberated Ground (holes) from the [START] to any edge square.
2. Once any edge is breached, you must take this whole zine and rip it in two, along the path of your punctures.

At that moment, the grid is gone. The words of the law are torn. Turn the leftover pieces around and find a blank space. In the silence that remains, write a single sentence describing a world that exists beyond.

Look at the fragments in your hands and realize you were never part of the code.

You are the silence that follows the end of the world.

Patent (D)	Frontier Logic (L)	Terra Nullius [L]	Settler Affect [H]	Status Indian [D]	Digital Archive [D]	Protocol [H]
Indian Act [H]	Right of Way [L]	Digital Ruins [D]	Blood Quantum [D]	Shitty Future [H]	New Frontier [L]	Binary [D]
Discovery [L]	Land as Inventory [L]	Property [L]	Eminent Domain [L]	Data Node [D]	Zone of Extraction [L]	License [D]
Forced Transit [L]	Manifest Destiny [L]	Living Asset [H]	**[START]**	Master Code [D]	Image of Law [H]	Resource Frontier [L]
Frontier Spirit [L]	Quantum Logic [D]	Binary Code [D]	Data Extraction [D]	Patent [D]	Informatic [D]	Final Solution [H]
Discovery [L]	Social Contract [H]	Human Rights [H]	Boundary [L]	Territory [L]	Title [L]	Patent [D]
Protocol [H]	Metadata [D]	Zone B [L]	State Sovereign [H]	Stock Inventory [D]	Indian Status [D]	Terminal Solution [H]

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Byrd, J. A. (2025*). Indigenomicon: American Indians, videogames, and the structures of dispossession*. Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.1215/9781478061496
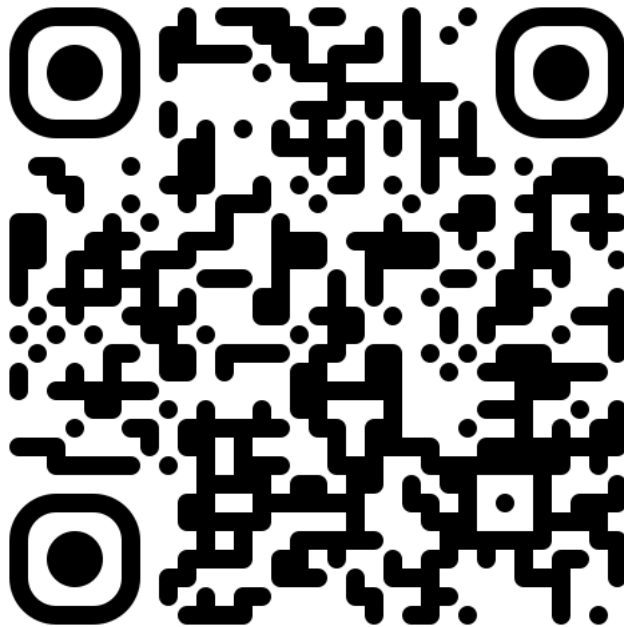
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You can find the most current version of this zine in PDF format here:

https://polivoxia.ca/the_ground_remains/

Or by scanning this QR Code: