

Mirroring Dignity: Spatial Rhetorics of Indigenous Resistance

Embodied Spatiality

Dignity manifests physically in specific spatial formations, driven by human resistance, cultural practices, and nonhuman rhythms.

Active Mirroring

Indigenous practices actively mirror nonhuman teachings, ancestral wisdom, and circular temporalities to subvert colonial systems.

Pre-Colonial Frameworks

Ancient, place-based wisdom informs contemporary resistance, transcending geography and time to provide vital decolonial frameworks.

Symbolic Distribution

Spoken names, communal councils, and spatial/temporal disruptions restore dignity and forge counter-colonial assemblages.



The Panel Arc: Scales and Recognition Systems

Expanding
Trajectory Matrix

Foundational Teaching
(Beaver/Winnipeg)

Autonomous Practice
(Caracoles/Chiapas)

Transnational Survival
(Gurung/Nepal-NH)

Speculative Resistance
(Sandworm/Arrakis)

Temporal Sovereignty
(Slipstream/Borderlands)

Temporal Scale

Dot

Standing Block

Dotted Continuous Line

Forward Arrow

Coiled Loop

Past

Present

Ongoing

Future

Circular Time

Spatial Scale

Local

Regional

Transnational

Planetary

Cosmic

Alternative
Recognition
Systems

Pre-colonial

Autonomous

Diaspora

Post-human

Temporal

An illustration of a beaver swimming in a pond. The beaver is shown in profile, swimming towards the right. The water is depicted with concentric ripples. In the background, there is a dam made of logs and branches, with a small waterfall on the right side. The overall style is a watercolor or ink-style illustration with a grid overlay.

Mirroring Sacred Relations

Indigenous Knowledge Reflects Beaver Dignity in Tina Fontaine Rally

Presenter: Gwendolyn Inocencio, Ph.D. (Graduand), Texas A&M University

Grounding the Arc: The Pre-Colonial and the Local

The Starting Point

Grounding our trajectory in pre-colonial epistemologies (Past) and Winnipeg, Manitoba (Local).

The Core Tension



Extractive Force

Urgent, ongoing colonial violence.

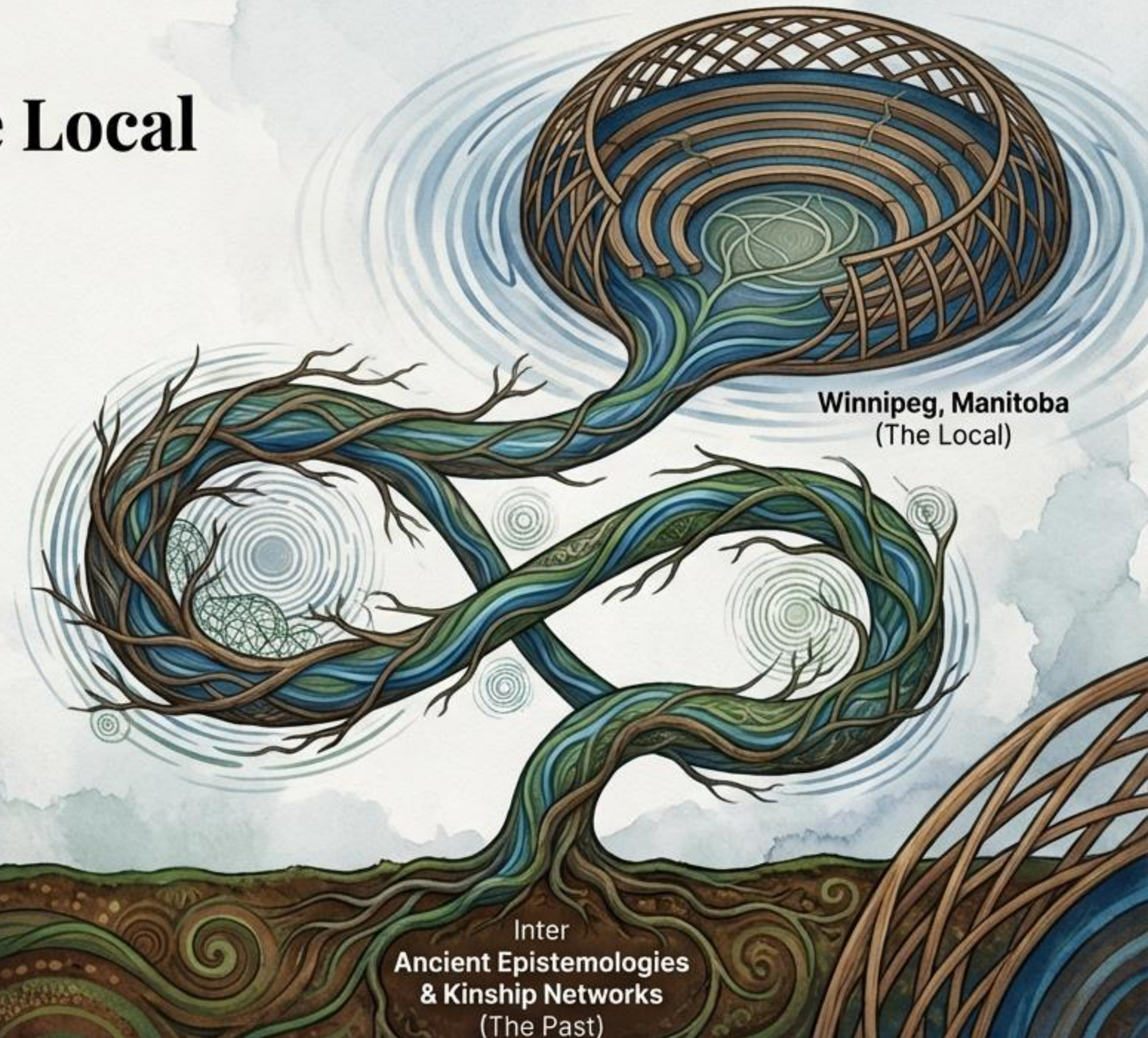


Protective Force

Ancient kinship networks and more-than-human wisdom.

Key Insight

Before we can look to transnational futures or slipstream temporalities, spatial resistance must first be grounded in the original teachings of the Land (Aki).



The Commodification of Life and the Fontaine Case

Nature as Resource
Top Stream

Historical reduction of sovereign Amikwag (beavers) to 400 million commodified pelts for felt hats.

1975: The beaver becomes an emblem of Canadian sovereignty and economic industry, stripped of its relational dignity.

Lives as Expendable
Inter Stream

The urgent crisis of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG).

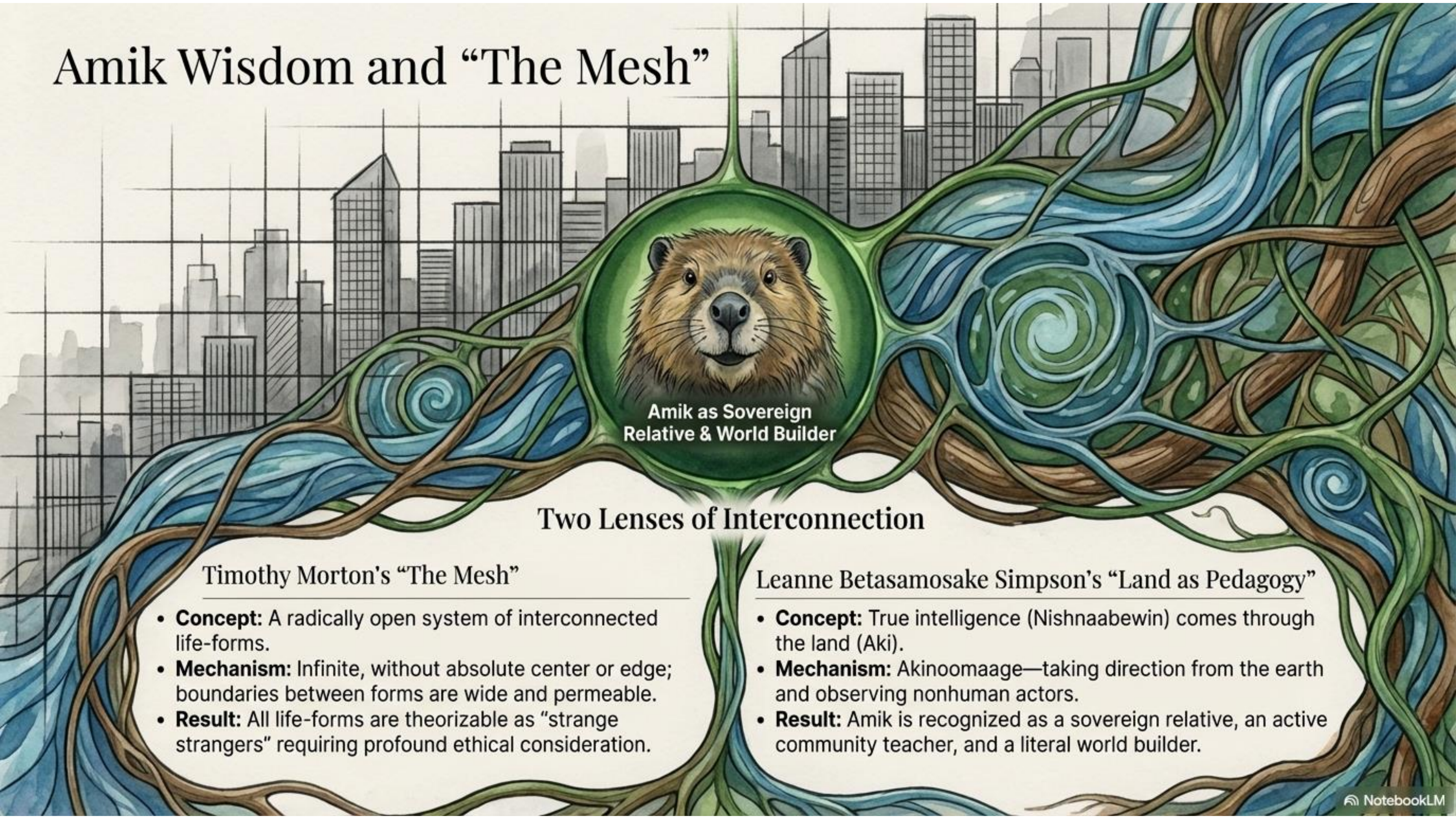
Tragic Catalyst: The 2014 preventable death of 15-year-old Tina Fontaine.

Nodes of Systemic Failure: CFS housing youth in downtown hotels; WPS failing to intervene during August 8 traffic stop; The 2018 acquittal.

Profound Systemic Failure

Settler capitalism operates through a machinery of elimination—extracting value while treating sacred landscapes and Indigenous bodies with systemic indifference.

Amik Wisdom and “The Mesh”



Amik as Sovereign
Relative & World Builder

Two Lenses of Interconnection

Timothy Morton’s “The Mesh”

- **Concept:** A radically open system of interconnected life-forms.
- **Mechanism:** Infinite, without absolute center or edge; boundaries between forms are wide and permeable.
- **Result:** All life-forms are theorizable as “strange strangers” requiring profound ethical consideration.

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s “Land as Pedagogy”

- **Concept:** True intelligence (Nishnaabewin) comes through the land (Aki).
- **Mechanism:** Aki noomaage—taking direction from the earth and observing nonhuman actors.
- **Result:** Amik is recognized as a sovereign relative, an active community teacher, and a literal world builder.

Mirroring as Strategic Obstruction

Destructive Flows
Colonial Machinery
of Elimination

**Life-Sustaining Ecosystem
Affirmation**

Drought-proofs the landscape,
opens canopy spaces, and
generates safe habitats for a
multitude of species.

Strategic Intervention
The Blockade

"Both a refusal and an affirmation."
(Leanne Betasamosake Simpson)

Grounded Normativity

Glen Coulthard's concept—ethical and
spatial foundations for resistance rooted
directly in territorial relationships.

Takeaway: Amikwag build dams to block flows. This is not just a biological function; it is an ethical practice of wisdom and a template for protecting the vulnerable.

The Oodena Circle Rally as a Human Beaver Dam

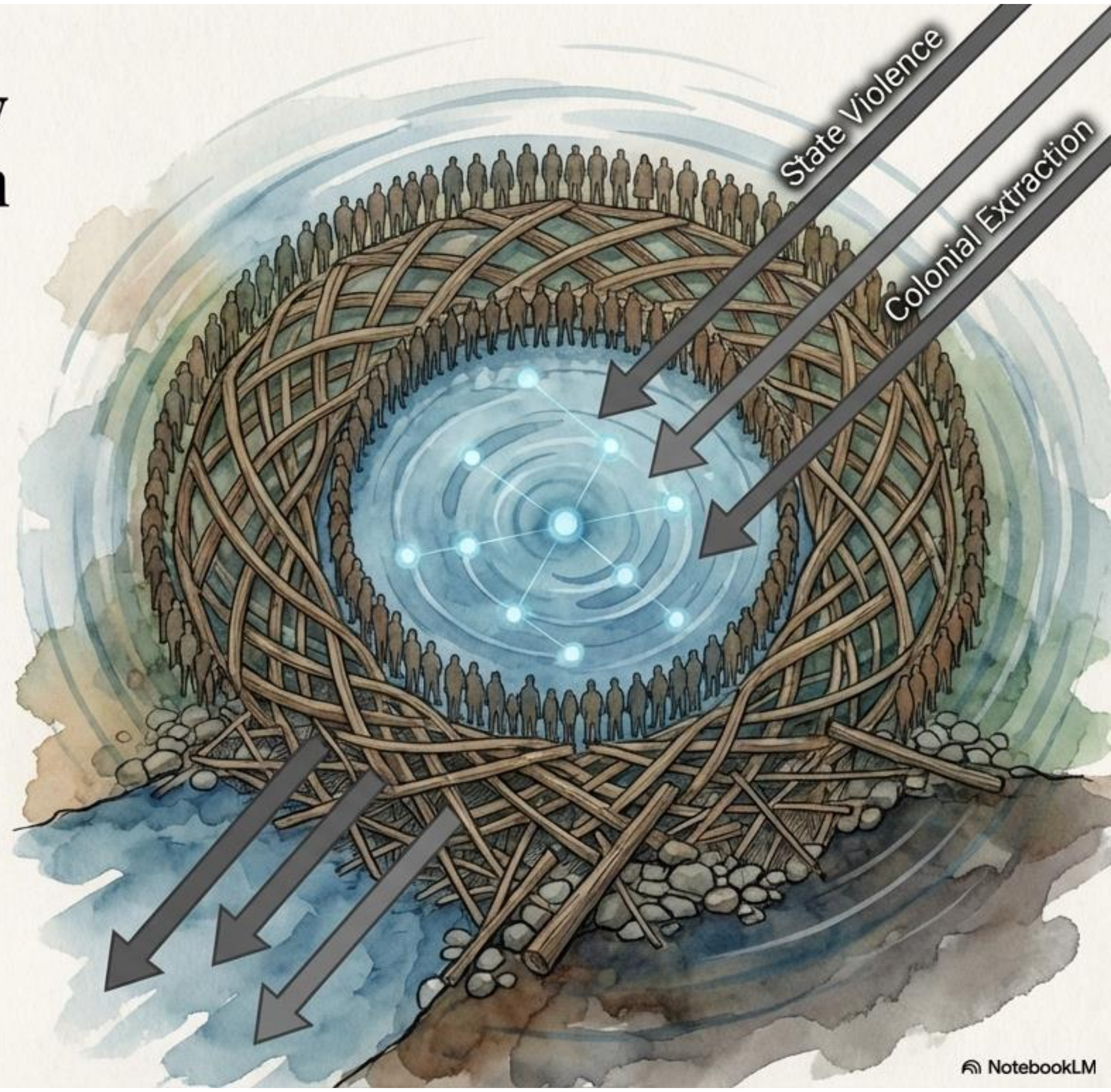
Embodied Spatiality

Protesters used their collective physical presence to form a literal human beaver dam.

"I watched them as they used their bodies to build a beaver dam."
— Leanne Betasamosake Simpson

Obstructing Harmful Flows

- **State Systems:** Allowed the linear, harmful flows of colonial violence to continue unchecked (as seen in the Fontaine case).
- **Spatial Rhetoric:** The community physically mirrored Amik to block these flows, reclaiming the territory to demand justice and create a safe harbor in the center of the city.



Symbolic Distribution and Kincentric Ecologies

Pillar 1

Redistributing Attention

Where physical beaver dams redistribute water to create deep pools, the Oodena Circle protesters redistributed societal attention, grief, and care.

Pillar 2

The Power of Naming

The rally utilized the symbolic distribution of Indigenous names, spoken aloud to honor the missing and murdered. This vocal activation effectively forged a protective, counter-colonial space.

Pillar 3

Kincentric Ecologies

Drawing on Robin Wall Kimmerer, this mirroring practice expands our moral responsibility. It restores kincentric relationships, bringing human and non-human relatives together to heal the community and restore profound dignity.

Physical Obstruction (The Dam) + Symbolic Distribution (The Names) = Kincentric Healing & Reclaimed Sovereignty

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