

Introduction

The Indigenous warrior has long captivated Western imaginations. As vicious savages impeding the march of civilisation or loyal allies fighting alongside settlers, the be-feathered Indian, fierce Māori and elusive Aborigine were entrenched in the popular consciousness of Canadians, Americans, New Zealanders and Australians by the nineteenth century. Although pre-1939 Indigenous-settler relationships differed substantially across these four countries, each Indigenous population responded when the Second World War broke out by declaring their support for the cause and volunteering to serve. Thousands of Native Americans, Māori, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and First Nations men and women fought overseas or served at home in settler military forces, sometimes in segregated Indigenous units but more often as individuals integrated into massive settler military organisations.¹ Most Indigenous veterans recall experiencing respect and acceptance from their comrades in arms, something unimaginable before the war. At the same time, on the home front Indigenous families, communities and leadership offered voluntary, monetary and symbolic aid to national war efforts. Many men and women also found employment opened up as departing soldiers and wartime economic expansion created lucrative opportunities that would make the war years, in some ways, the best of times. Each Indigenous population's varied and extensive wartime contributions won admiration and appreciation from the settler nations. The result was a ripe, if ephemeral, climate for Indigenous policy and legislative reforms in the immediate post-war years. While Indigenous wartime energies and post-war lobbying produced some important reforms, the direction of change largely followed settler desires rather than Indigenous aspirations.

¹ We use the term 'Indigenous' to refer to Māori, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Native Americans and First Nations. The term 'Aboriginal' is often used in both Canada and Australia. To avoid confusion, when we refer to Aboriginal people, we specifically mean the Indigenous people of mainland Australia and Tasmania. We refer to Canada's Indigenous peoples specifically as First Nations and, where relevant, Inuit or Métis.

2 Introduction

In the decades that followed, Indigenous contributions to the Second World War were largely forgotten. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, Native American, Māori and First Nations veterans often languished without recognition, respect or adequate veterans' benefits. These circumstances began to change in parallel with the broader political resurgence of Indigenous peoples in all four countries since the 1970s. Veterans and their communities sought recognition for their service and sacrifices, agitated for restitution of grievances regarding pay or benefits and demanded inclusion in national and local ceremonies and monuments of remembrance. These striking parallels in historical experiences cry out for transnational and comparative examination. They also highlight the continuing relevance and political significance of wartime service in contemporary discussions about the place of Indigenous peoples in these settler societies.

This book explores Indigenous contributions and experiences in the Second World War in a transnational and comparative manner. This approach allows us to reflect on why these ostracised peoples chose to engage in the war effort. Without a sense of belonging or even basic citizenship rights in Australia, Canada and parts of the United States, Indigenous individuals were less personally invested in the well-being of the settler society and state – a crucial precursor for the sense of obligation to defend the larger collective. Yet thousands of Indigenous men and women chose to serve, and questions still swirl around why and what this choice meant, both to themselves and to settler societies during and after the war. Issues of citizenship, belonging and identity became more visible, their boundaries even redefined by the wartime roles assumed by Indigenous peoples. The sacrifices of Indigenous service personnel produced moral capital to demand change, leading to post-war policy reform and new legislation that set the stage for relationships between Indigenous peoples and settler societies/states through to the present.

Settler Colonialism

Whilst historical ideas about settler societies have long roots in the twentieth century, it is really since the 1990s that historians have examined the structures associated with what is now popularly referred to as settler colonialism.² Settler colonialism specifically describes situations where the main purpose of colonisation was to transplant persons from the home country into a new territory. As Patrick Wolfe writes, in settler colonies, 'the colonizers came to stay, expropriating the native owners of

² Lorenzo Veracini, "'Settler Colonialism': Career of a Concept," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 41, no. 2 (2013): 313–333.

the soil, which they [colonizers] typically develop by means of a subordinated labor force (slaves, indentureds, convicts) whom they import from elsewhere'.³ Donald Denoon argues the 'fact that settler societies resemble one another in several respects, is not a consequence of conscious imitation, but of separate efforts to resolve very similar problems'.⁴ Indeed, James Belich similarly asserts that Anglo settler societies emerged from a so-called 'settler revolution' in the nineteenth century. Cyclical patterns of population boom, followed by busts and then new economic exports combined with a recolonising of ties to the metropole, led to exponential growth in the population and wealth of these societies.⁵ The eventual outcomes of settler colonialism are 'societies in which Europeans have settled, where their descendants have remained politically dominant over indigenous peoples, and where a heterogeneous society has developed in class, ethnic and racial terms'.⁶

In contrast to other colonial states – where the primary aim of colonisation was to exploit Indigenous labour – in settler states, Indigenous people en masse were only intermittently useful and often were an impediment to settler aspirations. The goal of the settler state – capitalist land acquisition – required technological, ideological and social methods to exclude Indigenous peoples from the settler state.⁷ Patrick Wolfe summarises this relationship between settlers and indigenes as a 'cultural logic ... of elimination [which] seeks to replace indigenous society with that imported by the colonisers'.⁸ In most places, the prospect of eliminating Indigenous presence was not a stated doctrine. Instead, as a cultural 'logic', any government policies, even those espoused allegedly to help Indigenous people, still had underpinnings to preserve the settler states' interests over Indigenous vitality and sovereignty.

At the time of the Second World War, all four settler societies studied in this book – Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States – were implementing assimilation policies over their Indigenous

³ Patrick Wolfe, "Land, Labor, and Difference: Elementary Structures of Race," *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 3 (2001): 868.

⁴ Donald Denoon, "Understanding Settler Societies," *Historical Studies* 18 (1979): 518.

⁵ James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783–1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

⁶ Daiva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis, "Introduction: Beyond Dichotomies – Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Class in Settler Societies," in *Unsettling Settler Societies: Articulations of Gender, Race, Ethnicity and Class*, ed. Daiva Stasiulis and Nira Yuval-Davis (London: Sage Publications, 1995), 3.

⁷ Patrick Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race* (London; Brooklyn: Verso, 2016), 15.

⁸ Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: The Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (London; New York: Cassell, 1999), 27. See also Patrick Wolfe, "Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native," *Journal of Genocide Research* 8, no. 4 (December 2006): 387–409.

4 Introduction

populations and were highly racialised societies. They had also developed, to varying degrees, mythologies surrounding settlement, nationhood and relationships to empire, especially the British Empire for Australia, New Zealand and Canada. As Lorenzo Veracini argues, the settler society was premised on the violent dispossession of Indigenous peoples, yet the settler consciousness also disavowed that violence. By focusing instead on notions of taming frontiers and developing democratic traditions, the very idea that the land was previously inhabited disappeared from the settler consciousness and justified settler claims of sovereignty.⁹ The Second World War, too, was a powerfully affirmative experience for these settler societies' mythologies but also a contested place with Indigenous peoples. The democratic nature of the societies, the citizen-basis of the defence forces, and the 'good war' crusade all fed nationalist mythologies in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States. The good war crusade also provided grounds for Indigenous people to challenge and contest settler mythologies and/or to assert their own sovereignties. This was, and remains, the locus of the moral leverage and the significance of Indigenous participation in the conflict.

Historiography

This book builds on the existing national historiographies of Indigenous Second World War service in all four countries. As Riseman argues, all four national historiographies have witnessed significantly growing interest in Indigenous military histories since the 1990s. Prominent scholars of the Second World War include:

CANADA:	R. Scott Sheffield, P. Whitney Lackenbauer, Grace Poulin
NEW ZEALAND:	Monty Soutar, Wira Gardiner, Claudia Orange
UNITED STATES:	Tom Holm, Jeré Bishop Franco, Alison Bernstein, Kenneth Townsend, William C. Meadows, Al Carroll
AUSTRALIA:	Robert Hall, Noah Riseman, Elizabeth Osborne ¹⁰

All of these scholars provide critical foundational work and pose broadly similar arguments in their national contexts: notwithstanding some countries' efforts to restrict military service, Indigenous peoples overwhelmingly supported the war effort as servicemen and servicewomen as well as on the home front. For those who served in regularly enlisted units, military service was an experience of equality – often for the first time in their lives. Upon their return home, veterans were discontented with

⁹ Lorenzo Veracini, *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical Overview* (Basingstoke, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 75–86.

¹⁰ Noah Riseman, "The Rise of Indigenous Military History," *History Compass* 12, no. 12 (2014): 901–911.

the return to inequality and this presaged battles for civil rights and self-determination in the 1960s–70s. Almost all of these scholars have interpreted Indigenous experiences within a national – rather than a global, comparative or transnational – framework. An advantage to this national approach is that it facilitates a clear narrative and analysis of the policy issues, politics, Indigenous perspectives and national impacts of Indigenous service. National or local histories provide the opportunity to focus on particular aspects of military service, such as recruitment policies, labour or remote regions, as well as the (re)actions of specific Indigenous communities.

Memorialisations of war have gained increasing civic importance in all four states, particularly since significant anniversaries such as the fiftieth-anniversary ceremonies of D-Day and VE-Day in 1994–5 and the seventy-fifth anniversary of the ANZAC Gallipoli landing in 1990. These events catalysed a broad revival of interest in veterans and military history amongst the Allied nations of both the First and Second World Wars, which historian Jay Winter refers to as the ‘memory boom’.¹¹ In all four countries existing Indigenous veterans groups, as well as newly emerging ones, capitalised on the climate of recognition – a process accelerated in Australia and, to a lesser extent, New Zealand, by the centenary of the First World War. From an academic perspective, studies of Indigenous military history only emerged between the mid-1980s and the 2000s. Before then, scholars of military history tended to focus more on operations or generalised histories of soldier experiences. Researchers in Indigenous history focused primarily on themes like trade/exchange, dispossession, frontier conflict and child removal. Indeed, these were the very matters at the heart of Indigenous people’s own struggles for recognition, justice, restitution and self-determination. Essentially, the area of twentieth-century Indigenous military history fell through the cracks, situated between these two historical fields. Now, driven both by Indigenous communities and historians – and sometimes with the support of veterans’ affairs departments – previously forgotten Indigenous military service is on the public and political agenda in all four settler states.

Many of the national histories have, as a result, developed a ‘forgotten warrior’ trope that sought to salvage Indigenous military contributions from their historical purgatory and foster greater recognition within settler societies.¹² While such scholarship has revealed a broad historical

¹¹ Jay Winter, *Remembering War: The Great War between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2006).

¹² See P. Whitney Lackenbauer and R. Scott Sheffield, “Moving Beyond ‘Forgotten’: The Historiography on Canadian Native Peoples and the World Wars,” in *Aboriginal People and the Canadian Military: Historical Perspectives*, ed. P. Whitney Lackenbauer and Craig Leslie Mantle (Kingston, ON: Canadian Defence Academy Press, 2007): 209–232;

6 Introduction

landscape surrounding Indigenous military service and its meanings to both the settler states and Indigenous communities, it has tended to adhere to binaries: settler versus Indigenous objectives, enlistment as assertion of citizenship/sovereignty versus participation as collaboration with colonial states, Indigenous loyalty versus opposition, Indigenous loyalty versus state perfidy, racial discrimination versus equality. We acknowledge that some of our earlier work was shaped by and subscribed to many of these dichotomies. Of course, such narratives are important because they can elucidate general patterns, trends and macro-histories of Indigenous peoples in the Second World War. Even so, such binary constructs are not always sensitive to the nuanced diversity of responses across Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, over-simplifying a tremendously complex history.

Rather than construct this book in a way that feeds that binary perspective, we seek to comprehend Indigenous interactions and relationships with the war and state as contested processes, constantly negotiated over ever-shifting terrain. Indigenous attitudes and experiences of the war were not static and their identities and attitudes shifted in particular times and contexts. As relationships with(in) the wartime settler states changed, so too did the nature of Indigenous roles in the conflict. Indigenous peoples consistently sought to exercise as much control as possible over their wartime contributions, though the amount of influence they exerted varied enormously from state to state, community to community and issue to issue. Many Indigenous people had little capacity to be heard (especially in Australia and Canada), but by comparison, Māori were able to gain substantial autonomy over their war effort. Indigenous actions or reactions were also situational and tailored to the challenges/opportunities before them. Some communities that strongly encouraged voluntary enlistments, for instance, could just as vigorously oppose and even resist the effort of the settler state to conscript their young people. Some communities could obtain tangible rewards out of being in the war effort, such as Native American or First Nations communities that allowed their land to be used for military purposes while others were coerced into working for the armed forces, as in parts of northern Australia. Such examples caution against essentialising or reifying particular experiences beyond a specific context.

Importantly, our book owes a debt to the work of scholars in all four countries and builds upon their foundations. Each of these national

Elizabeth Rechniewski, “Remembering the Black Diggers: From ‘the Great Silence’ to ‘Conspicuous Commemoration’?,” in *War Memories: Commemoration, Recollections, and Writings on War*, ed. Renée Dickason and Stéphanie A. H. Bélanger (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2017), 388–408.

literatures has developed independently and exhibits different strengths. New Zealand has a strong tradition built upon unit histories, especially the 28th Maori Battalion. The United States contains excellent national surveys which link the war years to civil rights and fundamental shifts in US Indian policy. There is also a significant subset of the historiography focusing on code talkers. Australia has a strong tradition of community-based studies, particularly about remote parts of northern Australia and the Torres Strait. Canadian literature's strength lies in its diversity of approaches. Each country's scholarship can inform and enhance understandings in other countries, raising questions or developing analytical approaches not undertaken elsewhere. This is one of the key benefits of and principal aims of this book: to lift each country's experience out of its domestic silo for collective transnational examination, comparison and cross-fertilisation.

The little transnational or comparative work undertaken in this field thus far has only dipped the proverbial toe into potentially deep waters. Riseman has used case studies of the Navajo Code Talkers, Papua New Guineans and the Yolngu people of Arnhem Land, Australia to extrapolate histories of how settler governments exploited Indigenous knowledge and skills for military purposes.¹³ Sheffield's work on Indigenous veterans' post-war access to benefits and settler society perspectives on Indigenous peoples during the war has revealed the potential value of such an approach.¹⁴ These studies, though, have been limited in their scope and focus. Timothy Winegard's study *Indigenous Peoples of the British Dominions and the First World War* has begun the project of more broadly examining the experiences of Indigenous participation in the First World War.¹⁵ Our book represents an extension of that transnational methodology to the Second World War.

Transnational and Comparative History

Transnational and comparative analysis in the field of Indigenous-settler relations has exploded in the new millennium and holds great promise

¹³ Noah Riseman, *Defending Whose Country? Indigenous Soldiers in the Pacific War* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2012).

¹⁴ R. Scott Sheffield, "Veterans' Benefits and Indigenous Veterans of the Second World War in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States," *Wicazo Sa Review* 32, no. 1 (Spring 2017): 63–79; and "Rehabilitating the Indigene: Post-war Reconstruction and the Image of the Indigenous Other in Anglo-Canada and New Zealand, 1943–48," in *Rediscovering the British World*, ed. Phillip Buckner and R. Douglas Francis (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005), 341–360.

¹⁵ Timothy Winegard, *Indigenous Peoples of the British Dominions and the First World War* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012).

8 Introduction

for helping us to see the patterns, commonalities and anomalies across these relationships. Historian Ann Curthoys suggests transnational histories ‘are less concerned with comparison, and more with tracing patterns of influence and networks of connection across national boundaries, perhaps ignoring the nation altogether’.¹⁶ Comparative history is equally as valuable, if for different reasons. George Fredrickson recognises the value of comparative history to ‘inspire a critical awareness of what is taken for granted in one’s own country, but it also promotes a recognition that similar functions may be performed by different means’.¹⁷

Book-length comparative analyses of settler-Indigenous histories have been more common than transnational investigations. The purpose of comparative analysis is to assess what is unique within and what is common across national boundaries.¹⁸ Scholars such as Margaret Jacobs, Ann McGrath and Katherine Ellinghaus have produced prominent texts focusing on intimacy and welfare while Penelope Edmonds, Miranda Johnson, Julie Evans, Patricia Grimshaw, David Philips and Shurlee Swain have drawn useful comparisons of political-legal regimes and cross-cultural relations.¹⁹ Such comparative histories enable separation of the local elements from the broader structural factors operating in the global phenomenon of British colonialism. Even in these texts, though, much of the comparative work is really parallel national histories where the actual comparison is reserved primarily for introductions and conclusions. An additional value of comparative analysis, as Andrew Armitage notes, is that it opens a door to scholars who otherwise struggle

¹⁶ Ann Curthoys, “Does Australian History Have a Future?” in *Challenging Histories: Reflections on Australian History*, *Australian Historical Studies* 33, special issue no. 118 (2002): 145–146.

¹⁷ George Fredrickson, “From Exceptionalism to Variability: Recent Developments in Cross-National Comparative History,” *The Journal of American History* 82, no. 2 (September 1995): 604.

¹⁸ See Theda Skocpol and Margaret Somers, “The Uses of Comparative History in Macrosocial Inquiry,” *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22, no. 2 (April 1980): 174–197.

¹⁹ Margaret Jacobs, *A Generation Removed: The Fostering and Adoption of Indigenous Children in the Postwar World* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2014); Margaret Jacobs, *White Mother to a Dark Race: Settler Colonialism, Maternalism, and the Removal of Indigenous Children in the American West and Australia, 1880–1940* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); Ann McGrath, *Illicit Love: Interracial Sex & Marriage in the United States and Australia* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2015); Katherine Ellinghaus, *Taking Assimilation to Heart: Marriages of White Women and Indigenous Men in the United States and Australia, 1887–1937* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006); Miranda Johnson, *The Land is Our History: Indigeneity, Law and the Settler State* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016); Penelope Edmonds, *Urbanizing Frontiers: Indigenous Peoples and Settlers in 19th-Century Pacific Rim Cities* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010); Julie Evans et al., *Equal Subjects, Unequal Rights: Indigenous Peoples in British Settler Colonies, 1830–1910* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2003).

to extricate themselves from the national paradigm.²⁰ As a practitioner, not only does getting outside the national box enable one to learn about another country's historical narrative and historiographical debates, but it also grants scholars an outsider's eye with which to reassess their own national story. Comfortable and uninvestigated assumptions are laid bare by new questions and potentially productive and novel lines of enquiry suggested by the work of scholars in a different context.

Transnational approaches are increasingly becoming more common in settler-Indigenous histories. Gary Magee and Andrew Thompson have argued that 'Part of the attraction of focusing on settler societies as a way of writing transnational history is that their ideas and institutions stemmed from common roots; they also faced similar problems, especially with respect to indigenous populations'.²¹ Many of these texts break down chapters into case studies of particular nations to show how particular ideas or concepts manifested across time and place. Stuart Banner's *Possessing the Pacific*, Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds' *Drawing the Global Colour Line*, Patrick Wolfe's *Traces of History* and Penelope Edmonds' *Settler Colonialism and (Re)conciliation* are examples of this approach: brilliant concepts, parallel history chapters of differing locales/case studies from different Indigenous peoples, bookended by an introduction and conclusion that extrapolate some fascinating comparative insights.²² Less common, and more challenging, is to organise the book thematically, to provide consistent transnational and comparative synthesis of secondary and primary source material across two or more national histories. That is the approach taken in Cecilia Morgan's *Building Better Britains?*, James Belich's *Replenishing the Earth*, Angela Woollacott's *Gender and Empire*, Tracey Banivanua-Mar's *Decolonisation and the Pacific*, and Kenneth Coates' *A Global History of Indigenous Peoples*.²³ This is also

²⁰ Andrew Armitage, *Comparing the Policy of Aboriginal Assimilation: Australia, Canada, and New Zealand* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1995), 7.

²¹ Gary Magee and Andrew Thompson, *Empire and Globalisation: Networks of People, Goods and Capital in the British World, c. 1850–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 25.

²² Stuart Banner, *Possessing the Pacific: Land, Settlers, and Indigenous People From Australia to Alaska* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard, 2007); Marilyn Lake and Henry Reynolds, *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the Question of Racial Equality* (Carlton, VIC: Melbourne University Publishing, 2008); Wolfe, *Traces of History: Elementary Structures of Race*; Penelope Edmonds, *Settler Colonialism and (Re)conciliation: Frontier Violence, Affective Performances, and Imaginative Refoundings* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

²³ Cecilia Morgan, *Building Better Britains? Settler Societies within the British Empire 1783–1920* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016); James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783–1939* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009); Angela Woollacott, *Gender and Empire* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Tracey Banivanua-Mar, *Decolonisation and the Pacific*:

10 Introduction

the approach we take in this book. Indeed, we engage a blend of transnational and comparative history because such a mixed-methods approach best elucidates the complex histories of Indigenous military service. We do not carefully delineate one approach from the other necessarily, nor have we structured chapters for rigid comparison. Transnational analysis predominates, and typically, we draw comparisons when and where the subject matter and interpretation make it appropriate or insightful. In practice, we shift between transnational and comparative approaches seamlessly.

There is a risk that this approach, employing such broad lens, might be criticised for homogenising Indigenous experiences. Augie Fleras and Jean Leonard Elliott's book on settler-Indigenous relations notes this: 'In painting a picture with such broad brush strokes, the challenge is to avoid homogenization and excessive generalization. Yet the task of simplifying complex matters for the sake of clarity or space is daunting.'²⁴ We acknowledge Fleras and Elliott's caution, but like them, our transnational approach in the thematic chapters requires exploration of common patterns and careful generalisations, without permitting mention of every anomaly across the four countries. For every pattern or trend we analyse, there are exceptions across and within nations, as Indigenous nations and settler regimes operated differently at local levels. Moreover, there was no uniformity within Indigenous nations or settler institutions, with particular personalities playing significant roles to shape individual and collective experiences. To address that level of detail across four countries would produce an unwieldy and unreadable text, but more importantly, it would miss the purpose of transnational analysis to provide a broader backdrop that more localised research cannot otherwise glimpse. Crucially, such caution is not a rationale to disavow or turn away from such work; Wendy Kozol asserts: 'transnational perspectives do not so much supplant as work in dialogue with theoretical approaches ... [and] utilize historical methods and methodologies that have proven effective in studies of local or national contexts within a framework that encourages new perspectives on major global events and processes like war, migration, or neocolonialism'.²⁵ One purpose of a book like this is to

Indigenous Globalisation and the Ends of Empire (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016); Kenneth Coates, *A Global History of Indigenous Peoples: Struggle and Survival* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004).

²⁴ Augie Fleras and Jean Leonard Elliott, *The Nations Within: Aboriginal-State Relations in Canada, the United States and New Zealand* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1992), x.

²⁵ C. A. Baylyl, Sven Beckert, Mathew Connelly, Isabel Hofmeyr, Wendy Kozol, and Patricia Seed, "AHR Conversation: On Transnational History," *American Historical Review* 111, no. 5 (December 2006): 1462.