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"ALASKA" IS NOT A BLANK SPACE

Unsettling Aldo Leopold's Odyssey

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Abstract: This Element supports Gwich'in, Iñupiat, and all Alaska Natives' collective continuance and reparative justice from the perspective of a settler in the traditional territories of lower Tanana Dene Peoples. It stands with Alaska Natives' recovering and safe-keeping: kinships obstructed by settler-colonialism; ontologies and languages inseparable from land-relations and incommensurable with English-language perspectives; and epistemologies not beholden to any colonialist standard. These rights and responsibilities clash with Leopoldian conservation narratives still shaping mind-sets and institutions that eliminate Indigenous Peoples by telling bad history and by presuming entitlements to lands and norm-making authority. It models an interlocking method and methodology – surfacing white supremacist settler-colonialist assumptions and structures of Leopoldian conservation narratives – that may be adapted to critique other problematic legacies. It offers a praxis of anti-colonialist, anti-racist, liberatory environmental-narrative critical-assessment centering Indigenous experts and values, including consent, diplomacy, and intergenerational respect needed for stable coalitions-making for climate and socio-environmental justice.

Keywords: decolonization, Alaska Native sovereignty, Aldo Leopold, environmental justice, land ethics

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