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A Sorry State of Affairs: Chinese Arrivants, Indigenous Hosts, and Settler Colonial Apologies

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Abstract: We make and give gestures of apology every day, Canadians doubly so. Yet, grand acts of apology for more serious and sustained matters, such as historical and contemporary injustice against those with the least amount of social power, require far more ethical consideration and transformation than simply saying, “I am sorry.” Since the early 2000s, several political parties of the Canadian government have taken up the trend of making a spectacle out of national apologies to historically oppressed groups. Engaging with the concept of the settler colonial triad to theorize the histories of early Chinese arrivants’ experience, this work departs from the 2006 House of Commons apology made to Chinese Canadians on behalf of former PM Stephen Harper and explores the paradoxical operations behind state-sanctioned apologies, including the use of benevolence and hospitality as crisis management tactics resultant of Canada’s settler colonial configuration. Within this contradictory relation, those who identify as Chinese Canadian may find themselves questioning their belonging, given the historically- fraught social strategies used for the making of Canadian subjecthood. State-sanctioned apologies function to consolidate settler colonial reality and constitute a return to normalcy, which is why critical race scholars and scholars of settler colonial studies must look beyond unilateral relationships with the state.

Angie Wong is a critical race scholar and second-generation Chinese born in Canada. Wong is currently a professor of Women’s Studies at Lakehead University in Thunder Bay, Ontario. Reliant upon critical race theory, philosophy, settler colonial studies, and transnational feminisms, Wong continues to research the experiences of Asian women and histories of Chinese racialization in Canada in a forthcoming book project on the Chinatown community of Calgary, Alberta. Wong obtained a BCC from the University of Calgary (2012). Her MA (2014) and PhD (2018) in Humanities are from York University where she conducted the first extensive philosophical and critical race analysis of the small and powerful grassroots magazine publication, *The Asianadian*, under the supervision of Chinese Canadian and postcolonial scholar, Lily M. Cho. Wong’s approach to pedagogy and research is interdisciplinary, political, and cross-cultural.

Since the early 2000s, the government of Canada has fallen into a trend of performing national apologies to historically oppressed and racialized groups and peoples, including Indigenous peoples, the Chinese, and South Asians.¹ In the chic liberal push for political correctness and in the challenges that social justice cultural workers continue to pose to the settler colonial government regarding redress, reparations, and belonging, Canada’s national apologies are increasingly ambiguous and suspicious in their purpose. Given the underlying

nature of performativity associated with the gesture of national apologies, alongside the replication of similar phraseology and wording present in each 21st century national apology, this work assesses the aporetic function of state-sponsored apologies through Indigenous knowledges, Chinese Canadian social and political history, and political philosophy. Specifically, I question the triangular social and philosophical relationships among Chinese arrivants, Indigenous hosts, and white settlers to robustly interrogate the inauthenticity of settler colonial apologies. In this consideration of the aporetic function of national apologies, I will examine the historical and political trajectory that prompted the apology to Chinese Canadians in 2006 by former Prime Minister Stephen Harper and consider some philosophical notions of forgiveness, hosting, and how to be a good guest. I come to this work as a second-generation Asian person born in Canada, student of philosophy and Asian Canadian studies, and community activist. Temporally, I depart from the social and historical contexts of early Chinese arrivants on Turtle Island in order to understand the context of the Harper government's apology from the House of Commons in 2006 for the Chinese head tax and subsequent *Chinese Immigration Act* (1923-1947). Tracing and traversing various sites of 20th century Chinese exploitation and exclusion in Canada is meaningful in order to comprehend how apology and benevolence are used as tactics of settler colonialism that unethically absolve the state of historical injustice. This is a timely intervention as Canada recently celebrated its 150th anniversary as a country; indeed, revisiting the apology to Chinese Canadians more than a decade after it was given is a vital challenge against the practicality and continued use of state-sanctioned apologies, since the fundamental ontological participation, simultaneous exclusion, and eventual assimilation of the Chinese into Canada secured an ambivalent and passive acceptance of their belonging in fraught social orders of belonging.

Theoretical Foundations

My basis for critiquing settler colonial apologies relies on inquiry into Chinese Canadian histories and their relationship to settler colonization. It is rooted in critical race theory and settler colonial social theory which seek to explain the relationship between primarily three groups of people: Indigenous peoples, white settlers, and racialized arrivants, who typically perform foundational work for nation-making to establish settler colonies and their economies. This relationship is known more broadly as “the settler colonial triad” and involves the intricate examination of the relationship among settler, native, and arrivant. Racialized arrivants who come to Indigenous lands do so through a spectrum of movements that have ranged from the violence of slavery to the voluntary movements of racialized professionals.ⁱⁱ The arrivant is a critical placeholder of the settler colonial triad who works to disclose processes of racialization (xenophobic immigration policies) from colonization (the continued theft of Indigenous land and resources) by mapping out a third space *between* the settler and the native. The arrivant is not only a racial designation in terms of being non-Indigenous and non-white. Arrivants are also analytically distinct in terms of their labouring capacities, desired and exploited by the state. According to Patrick Wolf--in *Traces of History* as well as the foundational article, “Settler Colonialism and the Elimination of the Native” (2006)--settler colonial societies are founded on logics of elimination wherein Indigenous peoples are targeted for destruction or assimilation in settler colonial projects seeking access to land. In its abundance and perceived cheapness, the introduction of racialized labour became crucial for the development of settler colonial economies.

Also prominent in the field of settler colonial studies is Lorenzo Veracini, whose schematic for understanding settler colonial societies in *Settler Colonialism: A Theoretical*

Overview (2010) informs the ways I approach the settler colonial triad, as well as the institutions and apparatuses that maintain whiteness through British-Canadian values in the form of federal policies, the national archive, and the official histories and metanarratives sponsored by the state. Veracini draws a distinction between colonial power formations, which typically operate through the appropriation of the labour power of Indigenous peoples, and settler colonial formations, which function by clearing out lands of their Indigenous habitants through genocidal projects of elimination and importing racialized borders to form foundational modes of labour. Of course, the most commonly cited example of the ways in which “settlers bring their work with them” (to borrow Wolfe’s formulation), is the use of Black slavery to provide the United States of America with a labour force that allowed it to enter markets of global capital and rise as a competitor and eventual leader of a neoliberal capitalist economy, forged in the violence of the Atlantic slave trade and westward expansion. Thus, particular formations of anti-Asian racism and Asian racialization, though not directly settler colonial in nature, are born out of settler colonial regimes of economic structuring and ideological construction. While both Indigenous people and arrivants are made subordinate or settler colonial nation-making projects, their experiences under settler colonialism differ vastly on the basis of being racialized differently. Settlers will allow agreeable or desirable arrivants to assimilate into the norms of the settler state, such as by way of extending apologies to an historically wronged group, but this is entirely for the benefit of the settler colony.

Situated as we are in a Canadian context, I approach histories of settler colonization, diaspora, and labour by and through the history of the completion of the Canadian Pacific Railway, which preceded the *Chinese Immigration Act* (also known as the *Chinese Exclusion Act*). It is the structural development of the railway that made evident the historical

consciousness that white Canada desired *cheap* Chinese labour and not Chinese subjects/citizens. For this reason, I echo Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang's article, "Decolonization is not a Metaphor." This article, itself written by an Indigenous and Asian scholar, names and thinks through the settler colonial triad. To anchor this context, I use the discourses on political-ethical responsibility by thinkers such as Derrida and Levinas and read them alongside Lee Maracle's explanation of Indigenous host laws. These thinkers offer profound insights for generating meaningful comparative and cross-cultural analyses which help us to rethink the intricacies that exist between Indigenous and racialized peoples, beyond a liberal politics of settler recognition, on both a material and ethical level.

The Apology

On June 22, 2006, then Prime Minister Stephen Harper made a statement of apology in the House of Commons to all Chinese Canadian affected by the 1885-1923 head tax and 1923 amendment to the *Chinese Immigration Act*, which attempted to prohibit all people of Chinese ancestry from entering Canada. The amendment outlined new restrictions for entry and landing in Canada and were confined to the following classes: members of diplomatic corps or other government representatives, children born in Canada to parents of Chinese origin who have left Canada for educational or other purposes, merchants, and students coming to Canada to attend university or college. Beginning in the Spring of 1923, no other class of Chinese people was authorized to enter Canada. The *Act* was not repealed until 1947. Harper echoed the apologies of the New Democratic Party and the Liberal party by affirming on behalf of the government of Canada and all Canadians: "We fully accept the moral responsibility to acknowledge these shameful policies of our past" and "On behalf of all Canadians of the government of Canada, we

offer full apology to Chinese Canadians for the head tax and express our deepest sorrow for the subsequent exclusion of Chinese immigrants.”ⁱⁱⁱ

In addition to this national apology, a monetary settlement of \$20,000 was given to each of the living head tax payers or their surviving spouse. By this time in 2006, there were less than ten Chinese Canadian elders alive who received settlement. This is a depressingly small sum of money when compared to the \$13.8 million in head tax revenues collected alone between 1905 and 1914, as well as the \$3-5 million saved by the Canadians state for hiring cheap Chinese labour.^{iv} Nevertheless, elders accepted the monetary reparation. With this performance, gestures, and financial exchange, Chinese Canadians were symbolically incorporated into the community of Canada.

This national apology was in some sense generative of a new cultural dynamic of apologism in Canadian politics, as it appeared to ignite a trend of state-sponsored apologies extended to other marginalized and racialized people in Canada. That is, the issuing of apologies for historical injustice have become symbolically vital to settler colonial performances that welcome certain marginalized people into the body politic while simultaneously relegating the actions and policies of the state to a distant past, thereby reinforcing the notion that present injustices bear no relation to the injustices of the past or to the injustices that may come in the future. Compartmentalizing the past through a linear conception of temporality to signify distance from historical wrongdoing ensures an emphasis on the present, the now, the finality of acceptance into the totality of white Canadian society after a century of settlers and arrivants living in passive proximation to one another.^v Though rhetorically and financially complex in their making, settler colonial apologies have far reaching implications that affect ancestral relations and white settler futurity.

This is not the first time the Canadian government has had to scramble to secure white settler futurity. As early as 1988, Japanese Canadians were the first racialized group to successfully lobby the government for a formal apology; they succeeded in attaining redress from the Conservative party and then Prime Minister Brian Mulroney apologized on behalf of the government of Canada for the internment of Japanese people in Canada during WWII.^{vi} This was a monumental victory for all Asians in Canada because it was the first time the Canadian government publicly claimed responsibility for systemic racism against Japanese people in Canada. Eighteen years later in 2006, an apology was made to Chinese Canadians for the head tax and the *Chinese Exclusion Act*. Following in 2008, Harper also apologized to Indigenous peoples for the residential school system.^{vii} On May 18, 2016, current Prime Minister Justin Trudeau apologized to the Sikh community for the 1914 incident of the *Komagata Maru*, in which 355 South Asian men were denied entry to Canada. In March 2017, Trudeau urged Pope Francis to apologize for the Catholic Church's abuse of Indigenous people; Francis has refused to offer any apology. Most recently in March 2019, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau offered an apology to the Inuit community for the federal government's mismanagement during the tuberculosis epidemic from the 1940s to the 1960s. In the theatre of Canadian settler colonial politics, these apologies appear to form a larger trend of settler conviviality that illustrates how the enactment of institutionalized hospitality and benevolence work together with the rhetoric of apology and forgiveness to preserve the tranquility of settler colonial hegemony and social identity.

Uncontestable Presences Behind Apology

The optics of the apology to Chinese Canadians were such that the state gave finality to much of the reconciliation process, even though redress and the request for an apology was decades in the making. As early as 1984, the federal government authorized the Chinese Canadian National Council (CCNC) to represent the victims of the *Chinese Immigration Act*; at that time, the CCNC compiled a list of 2,300 surviving Chinese who paid the \$500 head tax. The CCNC vowed to take their case to international tribunals if “legal channels were exhausted and there appeared to be no political will to redress the head tax by the government in 2003.”^{viii} An apology to Chinese Canadians thus became an act of political momentum, rather than one of governmental transformation. According to sociologist Peter Li, an official apology to the Chinese Canadian community was a campaign promise that Conservative member Stephen Harper was willing to fulfill in order to garner Chinese Canadian votes. Paul Martin of the Liberal Party, interestingly, initially refused to work into his campaign the promise of an apology, and although he later changed his mind, it is speculated that the head tax issue may have contributed to the loss of the Liberal Party in the election.^{ix} The apology to Chinese Canadians thus came to rest on the willingness of Chinese Canadians to vote in settler colonial elections and the seriousness of Chinese and Asian labour exploitation and historical injustice was reduced to an electoral promise.

This was not the first time the Chinese in Canada faced intense racialization under settler colonialism. Chinese Canadians were not idle in protesting against the anti-Chinese laws, rumours, and attitudes that contoured their exclusion as subject/citizens. In the face of settler colonial rule, Chinese Canadians created self-determining opportunities that allowed them to survive the Canadian settler colonial governance. Here are a few examples: in 1907, they mobilized in protesting school segregation^x; with the 1923 amendment to ban all Chinese from

Canada, July 1st, Dominion Day, was renamed “Annual Humiliation Day” and many Chinese refused to participate in any celebrations; veterans of the First World War fighting on the Canadian side demanded citizenship rights upon their return and they won; and with the repealing of the *Chinese Immigration Act* in 1947, Chinese men and women of different generations across Canada lobbied against the federal government for immediate aid in family reunification. It is meaningful to note here, then, that while the spectacle of national apology focused on the ways in which the federal government expressed sorrow for the exclusion of early Chinese immigrants in Canadian history, it is compelling to see that the roots of resilience are always present.

Aporia of Apology

When considering these “grand acts of apology” in a general sense, an understanding of what forgiveness does, and more importantly, what forgiveness fails to do, is crucial, especially as one takes into consideration how current modes of systemic violence continue to disproportionately and negatively impact Indigenous and racialized communities. Indeed, these gestures of apology have proven to be an effective and useful political tactic (because they continue to be made) for settler colonial governments to legitimate and thus absolve themselves from historical and moral wrongdoing. Suspiciously, since the 2006 apology to Chinese Canadians, subsequent apologies made by subsequent governments have replicated the use of the term ‘dark chapter’ to reference specific histories of violence. While it is true that Canada has many dark chapters to account for in its fraught historical emergence, the recycling of cliché phraseology for multiple apologies signals a lack of sincerity and therefore a lack of ethical reflexivity. This becomes a fundamental ethical failure of settler colonial political parties that

cannot (or refuse to) distinguish between each historical event of injustice, thus highlighting the need to investigate the overall suspicious purpose, function, and authenticity of state-sponsored apologies. From a philosophical point of view, Derrida captures the suspicious nature of grand performances of apology in *On Cosmopolitanism and On Forgiveness*:

In all scenes of repentance, confession, forgiveness, or apology which have multiplied on the geopolitical scene since the last war, and in an accelerated fashion in the past few years, one sees not only individuals, but also entire communities, professional corporations, and representatives of the ecclesiastical hierarchies, sovereigns, and heads of state ask for ‘forgiveness’.... This sort of transformation structured the theatrical space in which the grand forgiveness, the grand scene of repentance which we are concerned with, is played, sincerely or not.^{xi}

The expression of sorrow, the ceremony of speeches, shaking of hands, an official declaration of apology, transfer of monies given to compensate for ‘lost time’—this is the spectacle of settler colonial apologies, which function to revitalize notions of good government with public gestures of repentance that are meant to capture and represent the grief of the entire nation. The potential for reconciliation is made all the more convoluted when the performative elements of apology are privileged as spectacle over and against genuine requests for forgiveness. On this basis, the sincerity of the apology is not what is crucial, but a convincing performance. Given that such grand acts of apology are made in an effort to promote the urgency of the past (of memory, as Derrida notes), the language of apology (which reuses poorly recycled phraseology) that shapes the request for forgiveness determines the finality of the situation and of the return to a state of normalcy. The very tension of authenticity here lies in the fact that “forgiveness is not, it should not be, normal, normative, normalizing.”^{xii}

“What kind of forgiveness wouldn’t be sincere?”, one may ask. It is indeed true that we exchange acts of apology and forgiveness every day; yet, we must acknowledge that the

variances of forgiveness and apology are amplified in the contexts of historical and/or longstanding legacies of colonialism and imperialism that we witness today. Forgiveness constituted by an average everyday sense of being cannot account for the weight of a forgiveness shaped by a settler colonial nation states' responsibility for numerous historical injustices. Rather, forgiveness as an act of ethical responsibility requires the perpetrator to do the impossible. For instance, reconciliation via decolonization, respecting treaty laws, and stopping the policing of Indigenous and Black and Brown bodies are the immediate and grim *impossibilities* confronting the Canadian state, even if it refuses to acknowledge this urgency. If “forgiveness must announce itself s impossibility itself,” Derrida notes, then the theoretical and practical conundrum of asking for forgiveness rests on how “it can only be possible in doing the impossible.”^{xiii} The *aporia* of settler colonial apologies, therefore, relies on the understanding that the implications for forgiveness rely on action, including vocalizing apology as transformative and transformational—what Derrida considers a “visions of forgiveness, pure forgiveness,”^{xiv}—and community-engaged action. Community-engaged action is “the reality of a society at work in pragmatic processes of reconciliation”^{xv} and can potentially function to address the uniqueness of each community and, more directly, each member granting forgiveness.

This idea that each community member could grant forgiveness to that one's perpetrator is a display of the radical notion that ethics is first philosophy. Levinas, a supporter of this ethics, contends that the ethical relation with the Other emerges by and through an invitation that welcomes the Other. A relation to alterity is the recognition of the Other's existence, wherein a dweller of a home “[comes] to him across the world of possessed things” and “at the same time to establish, by gift, community and universality.”^{xvi} The unfolding of this community and

universality is dependent upon an ethical relation with the Other. Thus, any politics founded on the abuse of forgiveness is one based on the calculability of human life, as Derrida notes, “because it always has to do with negotiations more or less acknowledged, with calculated transactions, with conditions...”^{xvii}, thereby truncating the attainability of an ethical relation from a Levinasian standpoint. The continued enactment of violence and calculation against the Other prevents the formation of this ethicality. The difficulty of being forgiven for the unforgiveable grounds the notion that apology must speak to the specificity and independence of each community member granting forgiveness, and to hold a relationship to standards of calculation and transaction negates what Levinas conceptualizes as the authentic face-to-face encounter.

Levinas’ radical position on ethics calls for a face-to-face relation (between guilty and victim, Self and Other) in order to fulfill the notion of ‘ethics as first philosophy’ and to make manifest sincere exchanges of dialogue and of apology and forgiveness. The resoluteness of Levinas’ position on ethics lies in the real-life impossibility of enacting such a relation. In terms of pragmatics, even if a head of state offered sincere and unconditional apology to victims on behalf of the guilty, Derrida contends that if anyone has the right to forgive, it is only the victim. There can be no substitute. Fulfilling this ethical relation calls for “the immense and painful experience of the survivor: who would have the right to forgive in the name of the disappeared victims?”^{xviii} In both these instances, Derrida and Levinas call upon us to reflect on what is essential to transcend average everyday forms of forgiveness and to ascend to a level of radical ethicality that transforms the guilty. These multilayered negotiations within the ethical relation resist the return to normative conceptions of governance, of which Derrida is rightly suspicious. The introduction of an ethical relation could also confront and potentially undermine what Tuck

and Yang call “settler colonial moves to innocence” (such as settler nativism, colonial equivocation, and conscientization^{xix}).

How one conceives of the aporia of settler colonial apologies does not solely lie in determining whether or not apologies should be given based on their sincerity. Sincerity, if it is unconditional, exists when the state is able to actualize its apologies by changing how it relates to the poor, the racialized, women, and policed bodies. Yet, each time apology seeks to mimic by replicating former apologies in language and intent, the apology itself becomes less about requesting forgiveness from the community and more about eliciting a manufactured response and feeling from a national audience, which falsely substantiate settler intimations of innocence and claims of multicultural benevolence. Tuck and Yang have referred to this state of affairs as the problematic attempt to “reconcile settler guilt and complicity, and rescue settler futurity.”^{xx} In re-stabilizing heteronormative paradigms of civility and benevolence, spectacles of settler colonial theatrics are “aimed at producing a reconciliation (national or international) favourable to a normalization.”^{xxi} The reinstatement of this hegemonic normalcy, thanks to the settler colonial tactic of apology, is thus strengthened by subsuming past injustices under the powerful paradigm of the “model minority”.

The restoration of normative and familiar values stands in deep juxtaposition to the unconditional forgiveness for which Derrida calls. Unconditional forgiveness is a form of forgiveness without power between the guilty and the victim. Yet, the possibility for an unconditional forgiveness is foreclosed, again, because of the false finality of apology and its reducibility to a performative spectacle. When apology is used as a political tactic to restore normative values of settler colonial hegemony, even if forgiveness is granted by the victims, its ethicality (its purity) is compromised. The implication of “never again” behind apology, even

though evidently vocalized, is difficult to actualize because it is ultimately anchored in an admission (which the state is not ready to make) that the same injustices of our past continue to occur today, though they may look very different from previous instantiations. Instead, the function of the spectacle operates to centralize a performance of conviviality and responsibility, while avoiding the overall structural predicament of racialization. An ethical position would be to see that “sometimes forgiveness...must be a gracious gift, without exchange, and without conditions; sometimes it requires, as its minimal condition, the repentance and transformation of the sinner.”^{xxii} Given the state’s refusal or unwillingness to fulfill such ethicality (at both the levels of individual and nation-to-nation), it becomes clear why countries founded on the state of exception, such as Canada, have had to rely on apologies (among other settler colonial tactics) as crisis tendencies in order that normative settler colonial social orders may continue to persist. Simply saying “Sorry” is not enough.

As undertakings of assimilation and erasure continue to be worked into the fabric of settler colonial social orders of belonging, forgiveness, as I continue to argue, is often used as a conditional and calculated transaction that reaffirms the tranquility of settler moves to innocence and the rhetoric of benevolence and hospitality. When the victim is deprived of speech or voice, whether it be in the moment that the crime is committed or in testimonial, forgiving the unforgivable is redirected as an average everyday sentiment and the weight of ascending to a radical transformation is made less urgent. Derrida posits that “when the victim and the guilty share no language, when nothing common and universal permits them to understand one another, forgiveness seems deprived of meaning.”^{xxiii}

It is important to note there that Derrida is not speaking literally here about two people speaking in a common language (indeed, Levinas has contended, especially in *Totality and*

Infinity, that the ethical relation transcends literal language). Rather, the shared language of ethics is what remains absent in these exchanges. When the bureaucratic work to control dictates the finality of forgiveness, it is not pure. When the performative work to control language recycles phraseology of darkness in a distant past or is used to represent apology on behalf of *all* Canadians—even those who do not want to apologize—it is not pure. Instead, the discussion of Asian labour and bodily exploitation, the stalling of what could have been the earlier development of second and third generations, the government’s slow response to enfranchisement and family reunification—these concerns of familial and social well-being are obscured or rendered historical in nation-making narratives. Hence, it appears that genuine requests for forgiveness and the conditional elements of state participation are polarized, and many who identify as Chinese Canadian may find themselves oscillating between these two seemingly irreconcilable polarities.

Learning to be Good Guests

In discussing the elements of apology, forgiveness, and responsibility that constitute settler colonial crisis management, I have found that Coast Salish author Lee Maracle’s conception of host laws and Levinas’ notion of ethical relation render a unique reading of the settler/native/arrivant paradigm in Canada. First, Maracle affirms an ethical engagement with which Indigenous people, as hosts, continue to share, despite colonialism. “Our laws say, quite simply: everybody eats. Secondly, every woman is entitled to a house. Everybody eats and every woman is entitled to a house... The third one is that everyone has access to unlimited wealth of the land.”^{xxiv} To be clear, these modes of maintaining an ethical relation with others and the land are not only place-based; they also have a history far deeper than the traditions of European

settler statehood, which are only as old as 1867. Maracle's explanation of these host laws—laws that have been in place for thousands of years—contain similar degrees of ethicality as Levinas' call to face the Other. The failure of white settlers to consider the hospitality of Indigenous peoples means that both host and guests are disadvantaged, albeit suffering disproportionately. The settler's struggle to remain free is a struggle "to hold the place of privileged, of white, Anglo-Saxon men against the backdrop of Indigenous resistance." As Maracle further contends, "when we oppose that, in order for it to be a political struggle, we have to have a counter law, and you have a counter law, and it's my law. It's the first law of Indigenous people."^{xxv}

Maracle takes to task Eurocentric notions of individuality and belonging by delineating a critical point for good relations: "there's no such thing as an immigrant. You're either a visitor or a citizen. If you're just visiting, be a good guest."^{xxvi} As the autochthonous hosts of the land, then, Indigenous peoples continue to be unjustly framed through alienation on their homelands, despite having practiced concrete ethical actions of care and welcoming far longer than the traditions of European colonialism. The limits of this relation under a settler colonial schema, for now, continue to be determined by the state on absolute conditions that disregard Indigenous laws in favour of a rudimentary and dichotomous assimilation or elimination model. The recent performances of national apologies are practices of hegemony that attempt to ensure selected non-white and non-Indigenous racialized beings are condemned to settler colonial laws. Maracle's mention that we are guests is a critical reminder that arrivants (ranging from settlers of colour to indentured labourers) are guests with specific responsibilities, and this can be read alongside Levinas' notion of ethical hospitality or hospitality as ethics.

Levinas writes: "In order that I be able to free myself from the very possession that the welcome of the home establishes... I must know how *to give* what I possess."^{xxvii} While Levinas

is suggesting here that the home welcomes the Other as an individual through the concrete actions of giving food, shelter, and comfort, Maracle explains the concept of host laws on the basis of nation-to-nation relation. Both understand that an ethical relation emerges on this basis of sharing as individuals within the same community.

To understand Levinas' schema of dweller, Other, and Third in more clearly, consider the introduction of the Chinese arrivant into the settler/native relation. The arrivant is analogous to the arrival of the Levinasian Third, which David Gauthier describes as the coming of the "Other to the Other".^{xxviii} Corresponding to the position of the arrivant in the settler colonial triad, the introduction of the Third into the home is the presenting of a new communicative situation, wherein language must expand its boundaries beyond the settler/native dialectic to include "the entire human collective". Language in this sense, again, is not the literal commonality of shared language, but the language of humanity (of humanism) which grounds ethical action. The exchange of language must adapt to incorporate the larger human community in order to shake off the tranquility of normalcy and to form a new communicative situation. Arriving at a time when their own homelands were deprived by European imperialism, Chinese arrivants were socially and politically held to similar degrading standards as most Indigenous communities by the settler state. To be certain, I am not contending that Chinese and Indigenous peoples come from identical histories of trauma (that would be unfair and reductive). Rather, Indigenous and critical race scholars have noted the unique position of the arrivant as a vital placeholder in the triad who has unique responsibilities to Indigenous peoples and decolonization. In all Levinasian accounts, then, the dweller welcomes the Other and the Third into the home; the relationships are constituted differently and can be renegotiated for new communicative relations and such ethical hospitality can account for the welcoming of multiple Others and Thirds. The relationship

between dweller, Other, and Third from the position of ‘ethics as first philosophy’ is supposed to be one of mutual belonging and mutual responsibility. If this relation were to manifest meaningfully in Canada, it would mean a transformation of settler colonial modes of governance that eliminates the metaphysical divisiveness that prevents mutual communication and responsibility.

Reviewing the ethics behind the 2006 apology to Chinese Canadians for the head tax and *Chinese Immigration Act* is a sobering reminder that there are always traces of historical violence and injustice attached to actions and attitudes towards the poor and oppressed today. If, when, and until we transcend facile performances of apology that function to uphold the thin veneer of settler colonial conviviality, genuine requests for forgiveness and the formation of ethical relations remain concealed and the challenges against settler colonial hegemony continue. Social, economic, and political control over Asian migrants in the past is a part of a larger body of crisis management that began with wanting cheap Chinese labour, but not Chinese subjects or citizens, to forge the nation’s transcontinental economy. It is meaningful here to examine the end of the Chinese exclusion in Canada. In 1947, in a scramble to save international face and appeal to the United Nations statement on human rights, Canada transformed the way it socially and politically engaged with Chinese people when it completely repealed the *Chinese Immigration Act* and put an end to nearly 25 years of Chinese exclusion and family separation. Importantly, Peter Li has written that with China’s victory over Japan at the end of the Second World War, Canada’s racist anti-Chinese policies became an embarrassment for the state. Not only did the *Exclusion Act* come to contradict the emerging human rights discourse brought forth by the U.N.,^{xxix} it was woefully embarrassing for an emerging democratic country such as Canada to maintain racist exclusionary laws against people of an allied nation. It was a bitter-sweet victory

for Chinese Canadians, especially for those who had not seen their families before 1923. Arguably, these transformations towards being a more convivial and hospitable democratic nation arise out of a short genealogy of political scrambles and crisis management that evidently demonstrate the unsustainability of settler colonialism. While many Chinese Canadians were and are right to be satisfied with Harper's apology, I cannot help but feel resistant to the idea of reconciliation that posits Chinese Canadians as having finally "made it".

It was not so long ago, after all, that white Canadian society turned its back on early Chinese labourers and railway workers, who then relied deeply on the gracious hospitality of Indigenous peoples, some of whom welcomed only the Chinese as their guests. We now have an opportunity to return that ethical favour to the descendants of the Indigenous ancestors who helped our Chinese ancestors survive. This is done by forming political, social, and economic strategy and action against the same sorry state that denied our belonging and the belonging of others. The rejection of Chinese belonging brought us to the gracious welcoming of Indigenous hosts, and it is time to return the ethical favour and uphold our responsibilities to decolonization and Indigenous peoples by learning to be good guests.

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Endnotes

ⁱ The first apology ever given by the Canadian government to racialized group was under former Prime Minister Brian Mulroney in 1988, who apologized to Japanese Canadians for their internment during and after the Second World War. See Roy Miki, *Redress: Inside the Japanese Canadian Call for Justice* (Vancouver: Raincoast Books, 2004); Roy Miki and Cassandra Kobayashi, *Justice in Our Time: the Japanese Canadian Redress Settlement* (Vancouver: Talon Books, 1991).

ⁱⁱ See Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, "Decolonization is Not a Metaphor," *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012), pp. 1-40.

ⁱⁱⁱ Stephen Harper, House of Commons Debates, 39th Parliament, 1st sess., June 22, 2006, No. 46.

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Pub=Hansard&Mee=46&Language=E&Parl=39&Ses=1>

^{iv} See Lien Chao, *Beyond Silence: Chinese Canadian Literature in English* (Toronto, TSAR Publications, 1997).

^v “Contact with popular attitudes, rather than with the Chinese themselves, was quite enough to keep [racism] alive.” Because white settlers were the most powerful community group in British Columbia in the early 20th century, nativism fused with racism “...to form the tough crust of attitudes which moulded the pattern of race relations that prevailed in British Columbia throughout this [20th] century.” See Peter Ward, *White Canada Forever: Popular Attitudes and Public Policy Toward Orientals in British Columbia*. (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1978).

^{vi} See Audrey Kobayashi, ‘The Japanese-Canadian Redress Settlement and its Implications for “Race Relations,”’ *Canadian Ethnic Studies* 24, no. 1 (1992): pp. 1-18.

^{vii} Paulette Regan, *Unsettling the Settler Within: Indian Residential Schools, Truth Telling, and Reconciliation in Canada* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 2010).

^{viii} See Peter Li, “Reconciling with History: The Chinese-Canadian Head Tax Redress” *Journal of Chinese Overseas* 4, no. 1 (May 2008), pp. 127-140; 137.

^{ix} “It is unclear as to how much the head tax issue contributed to the loss of the Liberal Party in the election, and it is believed that the Liberal lost the support of some ridings over the Chinese head tax controversy (*Globe and Mail*, 2006).” See Li, “Reconciling with History,” pp. 137-8.

^x See Timothy J. Stanley, *Contesting White Supremacy: School Segregation, Anti-Racism, and the Making of Chinese Canadians* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011).

^{xi} Jacques Derrida, *On Cosmopolitanism and On Forgiveness*, trans. Mark Dooley and Michael Hughes. (New York: Routledge, 2001): pp. 28-29.

^{xii} Derrida, *OCOF*, p. 31.

^{xiii} Derrida, *OCOF*, p. 31.

^{xiv} Derrida, *OCOF*, p. 51.

^{xv} Derrida, *OCOF*, p. 51.

^{xvi} Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1969), p. 76.

^{xvii} Derrida, *OCOF*, p. 39.

^{xviii} Derrida, *OCOF*, p. 44.

^{xix} See Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 1, no. 1 (2012), pp. 1-40.

^{xx} Tuck and Yang, “Decolonization is Not a Metaphor,” p. 3.

^{xxi} Derrida, *OCOF*, p. 31.

^{xxii} Derrida, *OCOF*, p. 44.

^{xxiii} Derrida, *OCOF*, p. 48.

^{xxiv} See Lee Maracle, “Lee Maracle speaking at May Day Assembly 2011,” Toronto: No One is Illegal campaign. April 11, 2011. Available online: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FNK3KDFMrRc&t=55s> [accessed May 10, 2017].

^{xxv} Maracle, “Lee Maracle speaking at May Day Assembly 2011.”

^{xxvi} Maracle, “Lee Maracle speaking at May Day Assembly 2011.”

^{xxvii} Levinas, *Totality and Infinity*, 171.

^{xxviii} “Whereas the Other refers to the other person, the Third refers to another person. Thus, the Third is not only an Other to the self, but is also an Other to the Other.” See David J. Gauthier, *Martin Heidegger, Emmanuel Levinas, and the Politics of Dwelling* (Boulder: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2011), p. 135.

^{xxix} See Peter Li, *The Chinese in Canada*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1988), p. 86.