

"There's Something in the Water": Salmon Runs and Settler Colonialism on the Columbia River [Abstract]

Lindsey Schneider

This paper seeks to decentralize the human and interrogate the ways in which settler colonialism shapes the land itself by engaging with indigenous epistemologies that take seriously notions of place, relationship with the land, and the spatially located lifeways of non-human beings. Analyzing public discourse around the ongoing lawsuit filed by the Humane Society against the states of Oregon and Washington and the Columbia River Indian tribes over the "humane" trapping and euthanizing of sea lions that endanger salmon populations, I reveal that the dominant rubric for human/"nature" relationships in the Northwest—shared natural resource management—has become ossified. By deconstructing the hegemonic notions of "nature" and the commons and to whom they belong that are encoded within the lawsuit, this paper demonstrates that the conquest of Native peoples and conquest of the land are co-constitutive, and that processes of settler colonialism must be considered in light of their geographically specific locations.

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