Cameron Greensmith, *Queer Professionals and Settler Colonialism: Engaging Decolonial Thought within Organizations*. Toronto; University of Toronto Press, 2022. 152 Pages. ISBN 9781487525347. $29.95 paperback.

Cameron Greensmith's *Queer Professionals and Settler Colonialism* is unique in both scope and focus as it analyzes practices of white settler colonialism within queer organizations. Greensmith makes an important contribution to not only the landscape of non-profit scholarship, but to 2SLGBTQ centres and organizations looking to meaningfully decolonize their own services, policies, and practices.

During 2012 and 2013, Greensmith conducted more than forty in-depth interviews with non-Indigenous LGBTQ+ people working in queer-serving organizations in downtown Toronto. Through these narratives, Greensmith demonstrates the degree to which both the interviewees and the organizations they work for operate uncritically as white settler colonial structures. In practice, this means that the organizations reinforce Canadian nation-building, whereby diversity becomes a mark of "otherness" and dominant narratives reinforce a paternalistic model of helping-as-charity for that distanced subject. Sharing a previous experience of working for an HIV/AIDS organization within the area, Greensmith is also critical of "queer liberalism" (49) and its problematic reliance on regulatory narratives of recognition and citizenship, narratives which reinforce the assimilation of queer subjects into dominant society, rather than seeking to transform oppressive and colonial systems themselves.

Greensmith thus sets out to explore the ways that non-Indigenous LGBTQ+ helping professionals can better recognize their complicity in settler colonialism and in so doing work to dismantle oppressive models of charity and care work. Mapping the history of Toronto's queer (largely gay) movement and providing greater context for some of the larger organizations discussed throughout the book, Greensmith notes the key triggers around which LGBTQ+ organizations were formed. The 519 Church Street Centre (The 519) was started in 1975 in the face of increasing need for safe and accepting healthcare services for LGBTQ+ people, while the AIDS Committee of Toronto (ACT) was started in 1983 in response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic. These were also some of the first organizations of their kind to form in the country and as such, they are no strangers to the complicated expectations placed on the non-profit sector such as navigating disparate funding expectations, having to balancing the ethics of corporate sponsorships and expanding influence, and providing frontline services to some of the most marginalized communities in the city. Greensmith rightly notes that larger NPOs quickly eat up the bulk of available resources for community programs, a factor that limits grassroots and other volunteer or mutual-aid driven initiatives. This model also streamlines programs according to the largest common denominator, which in Toronto's case has long been white gay men. Such trends limit differences and unique approaches, particularly, as Greensmith argues, those which engage meaningfully with Indigeneity and other racialized experiences within the queer umbrella.

Through interviews with employees of both large and small NPOs, Greensmith documents a general lack of awareness of the experiences of Indigenous people within the sector. The interview narratives also identify an ethical model whereby the white volunteer finds their way to the sector through seemingly well-intentioned "I want to help people like me," a model that both excludes anyone who isn't white and reinforces white saviour narratives intent upon "helping the

helpless." Greensmith argues that the combined desire for a white-gay sameness experience and a lack of understanding of the impacts of colonization, results in a necropolitics such that Indigenous people are excluded from the scope of imagined persons who access services at the very outset, due to their being cast as too difficult, impossible to help, or already *gone.*

Ultimately Greensmith argues that the interviewees demonstrate an abjection of responsibility when it comes to decolonization, deflecting their responsibility for white settler colonialism (116) and actively manifesting expressions of innocence and complicity. To close, Greensmith provides a handful of practical recommendations and strategies for ways that organizations might hold themselves accountable to their own complicity within queer settler colonialism. The final chapter's brevity is a great disservice to its content, as it represents one of the most able to be taken up outside of academic circles thanks to a clear list of reflective questions for both organizations and individuals within the 2SLGBTQ sector (130-1).

Reflecting on the book in its entirety, Greensmith speaks to a near-absent landscape of investigation into the presence and power of whiteness within 2SLGBTQ organizations, including the histories of colonialism that are amplified in the present as a result of their presence. Likewise, Greensmith's conversations with non-Indigenous helping professionals offers rare glimpses of such observations about whiteness and settler colonialism as they were occurring in Toronto's queer sector at the time. Another strength of the text is Greensmith's succinct recap of the downfalls of "cultural competency," a term that has assuredly overstayed its welcome as it continues to reinforces Indigenous people as "other" in its very offer of a speculative competency in the face of diverse cultural and racial experiences.

A notable limitation of the text, however, is that by the time the text was published, Greensmith's interview data speaks to a temporal slice of Toronto (and Canada's) queer organizing that has since passed. Of course delays such as these are often out of the control of the author (i.e. the delays of ethics proposals, publishing timelines, and other contributing factors). Although Greensmith draws on much more contemporary literature in the larger analysis, addressing some of the more recent events that have happened within Toronto's queer sector, the landscape of Canada's queer movement has experienced monumental shifts since the interviews were conducted in 2012 and 2013, shifts which I would go so far as to say, have rendered the landscape unrecognizable.

Key shifts have included the growth and leadership of Two Spirit organizations at local and national levels (2 Spirits in Motion, Edmonton 2 Spirit Society, Wabanaki Two Spirit Alliance), the growth of queer organizations led by and for QTBIPOC, and a never-before seen federal funding relationship with queer organizations through the Department of Women and Gender Equality (WAGE) which just announced a 100 Million dollar investment in 2SLGBTQ+ organizations (*The Globe and Mail* 2022). I draw this present into view, not to discredit Greensmith's argument, but rather to remind us that our social movements never occur in a vacuum and so to amplify their relationality. For example, although Greensmith references the powerful halting of the Toronto Pride Parade by Black Lives Matter that occurred in 2016, what is missed is the ripple effect that event had on every 2SLGBTQ centre and pride festival from coast to coast to coast. And more importantly, Greensmith's interviewees had not yet experienced that visceral moment that queer communities experienced country-wide when BLM set forth their list of demands; an action that brought shifts to community centres across the non-profit sector, not just

within queer organizations. Even the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action (2015) and the Calls for Justice, the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (2019) had yet to be published, the latter of which provides clear calls in relation to Two Spirit and queer Indigenous people and which have become touchstones within many 2SLGBTQ organizations. The Calls for Justice have also sparked important conversations about misogyny, transmisogyny, and their reliance on racism, a factor which shines a light on the notable absence of any analysis of sexism and misogyny on Greensmith's part, particularly as they operate within 2SLGBTQ communities.

I agree wholeheartedly that settler colonialism is deeply embedded within the bones of many 2SLGBTQ organizations, particularly those that have benefited from time and resources such as those Greensmith references. I also agree that this history continues to reinforce white supremacist ideologies. I am less convinced, however, that the conversations and awareness of such things are at the same stage today as they were ten years ago due to a shifting demographic of 2SLGBTQ community centre leaders, educators, counsellors, and administrators. And if not in Toronto, then certainly not in Western Canada where Two Spirit leadership is increasingly centrally situated within the sector. I found myself wishing that Greensmith had taken the opportunity to recognize that the "present" around which the book's central arguments take shape is on shifting ground. As such, it would have been more compelling to read interviews from the past alongside such a present and to see Greensmith engage more meaningfully with the Two Spirit and QTBIPOC leaders and organizations that are already leading the way.

Works Cited:

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Rachel Loewen Walker
Political Studies
University of Saskatchewan