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## **Polar Similar: Intersections of Anthropology and Conservation**

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### ABSTRACT

Anthropologists and conservationists have a long history of conflict, largely stemming from the creation of protected areas that are frequently placed on the land belonging to Indigenous communities for which anthropologists advocate. While this paper does not wish to diminish the values of either group regarding this conflict, it argues that anthropologists and conservationists actually have much to agree upon. The industrocentric paradigm, which places great value on continuous growth and profit, is increasingly degrading the land and threatening both the humans and nonhumans who sustain off of it. Not only do activities such as mining, logging, and globalized agriculture pollute waterways, decimate valuable forest habitat, and facilitate the poaching of a number of species, but they also destroy the homes and impinge upon the lifeways of various human populations who rely on the land and the species that live there for survival. Recognizing that industry is a common adversary of both humans and nonhumans opens up possibilities of bringing people together for a mutual cause.

**Keywords:** Anthrozoology, anthropology, conservation, human rights, animal rights, environmental justice

Indigenous communities and conservation programs have a long history of conflict, often stemming from contrasting views of nature and wilderness, and “misunderstandings of one other’s perspectives on science and culture” (Dowie, 2010, p 460). Conservationists, who are facing biodiversity loss that is between one thousand and ten thousand times greater than the background extinction rate, are desperately trying to combat a sixth mass extinction driven by anthropogenic activities (Rose, 2011, p. 102). Habitat degradation, the main cause of such extinctions, has led to the creation of protected areas in hopes of preventing a competition for resources between humans and threatened species (Carsten, 2012). However, these continue to

be placed in areas occupied by Indigenous Peoples<sup>1</sup> who have histories of interrelationships with the land that date back millennia. This creates a number of complications, one being that for many Indigenous Peoples land is considered to be a part of their identity, connecting them with their ancestors and reminding them who they are as a people (Rose, 2011, p.102). In addition to histories of colonization, genocide, forced assimilation and marginalization faced by countless Indigenous cultures at the hands of the West<sup>2</sup>, conservationists focus largely on the level of species and ecosystems and hence tend to overlook the (human) cultures they are working with (Madden & McQuinn, 2014, p.98). It is therefore understandable that anthropologists and Indigenous communities are critical of such conservation programs, fearing they are simply another form of assimilation. However, with such a dire environmental situation at hand, there is a legitimate fear within the conservation movement that anthropologists are too focused on anthropocentric injustices and are therefore “pull[ing] the rug from under non-human species and ecosystems” (Shoreman-Ouimet & Kopnina, 2016, p. 66)

This article contains arguments that all beings who share Earth are inherently valuable as *individuals* through the inter-relationships between animate and inanimate matter that is evolution and co-dependency. More generally, the idea that *species* are inherently valuable as well is a recurring theme based on the basic ecological laws of biodiversity and genetic diversity. These two views dovetail into a holistic, inclusive position that all life on Earth can be vulnerable. Following Shoreman-Ouimet and Kopnina (2016), through this lens it appears that humans may have a moral responsibility to nonhuman species as humans all over the globe continually threaten—and cause—their extinction. However, something more abstract than our

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<sup>1</sup> We chose this term in hopes of encompassing diverse groups of people who are similar in that they have been adversely affected by colonization on their traditional lands by industrial economies, and/or displaced from their land.

<sup>2</sup> While we realize that the term 'West' creates the illusion of essentialism in a region that is culturally diverse, we chose this term in hope of expressing the institutionalized ways of thinking prevalent throughout Europe and North America.

own species, but nonetheless of our own construct, may be more of a root cause for problems plaguing both people and wildlife. Jason W. Moore (2016) states that “there is no doubt that capitalism imposes a relentless pattern of violence on nature, humans included. But capitalism works because violence is part of a larger repertoire of strategies that ‘put nature to work’” (p. 5). David Kidner (2014) developed this concept into what could be called “industrocentrism,” the ideological viewpoint that favors the accumulation of capital, growth, and competition above all else. In more precise terms, “within [the industrial] system, homes are redefined as ‘property’, people as ‘human resources’ within a ‘workforce’, members of an ecological community as ‘raw materials’, and almost everything as a ‘commodity’ (Kidner, 2014, p. 470). Highlighting the intersection of culture and conservation, within this system, “both humanity and nature are being dissolved” (Kidner, 2014, p. 469). The importance of industrocentrism, then, may lie in its potential to act as a significant unifying point of intersection between animal and human related causes, namely conservation and anthropology.

While this paper acknowledges differences between anthropology and conservation, it also attempts to encourage anthropology to aid conservation in breaking the silence of mass killings and extinctions of nonhumans by recognizing, and indeed focusing on, finding and building common ground. While complete agreement is unrealistic, this article does not simply ask both sides to “agree to disagree,” but instead to realize that there is already much to agree upon. With this request, we do not wish to devalue the worries and criticisms of Indigenous communities or conservation groups regarding this conflict, as we realize the history between the two is truly complex and we acknowledge our own limited understanding based off secondhand sources. However, with humbleness this paper addresses not only some possible limitations of an “anthropology without animals,” but also suggest ways in which anthropology may already be

particularly well-suited to be inclusive of nonhuman animals and the Earth. The guiding principle of this paper is “the thorny question as to whether anyone, advantaged or disadvantaged, has the right to prioritize their own interests to the extent that other lives are deemed expendable” (Shoreman-Ouimet and Kopnina, 2016, p. 33).

### **Non-anthropocentric anthropology**

Anthropology is, quite obviously, an anthropocentric discipline. However, there are many mutually beneficial ways in which anthropologists can widen their scope to include nonhuman animals, plants, and the environment in a symbiotic approach to conservation and culture. Anthropologists frequently work with people and in places that are situated at the nexus of where culture and conservation collide and therefore can potentially play a pivotal role in helping to curb environmental and cultural deterioration.

The notion of a non-anthropocentric ethic is not fundamentally new; breaching the anthropocentric barrier has already been championed by some anthropologists (Noske, 1989; Hurn, 2012; Shoreman-Ouimet & Kopnina, 2016). Thus the claim is made that it should not be viewed as radical to include nonhumans within anthropological pursuits, particularly in regard to conservation. In fact, similar inclusivity is also already occurring in many other academic areas. The rising discipline of anthrozoology is trying to open up academics in general to consider the realities of nonhuman others. Although the animal standpoint has been historically resisted, anthrozoology has gained significant acceptance academically leading to the creation of its own courses, undergraduate and graduate degree-granting programs, and its own textbooks (Walda, 2013; DeMello, 2012). Another traditionally anthropocentric discipline, sociology, has also begun to allow space for nonhuman animals. Kay Peggs penned *Animals and Sociology* in 2012 in this vein, encouraging sociologists to consider the inclusion of interactions with and among

nonhuman animals on the basis of a tri-fold benefit. Peggs observes: “sociology has... largely concentrat[ed] on what it expects to find rather than opening itself up to the possibilities of what might be out there” (2012, p. 1). Examples include the contributions that

- sociology can make to our understanding of human relations with other animals,
- sociology can make to understanding relations among other animals, and
- the study of other animals in society can make to sociology.

(Peggs, 2012, p. 3)

Essentially replacing “sociology” with “communications” in the bullet points above, Emily Plec (2015) recently took the analogous initiative with *Perspectives on Human-Animal Communication: Internatural Communication* which “like intercultural communication’s emphasis on relationships among and between different cultures, internatural communication explores interaction among and between natural communities and social groups that include participants from what we might initially describe as different classifications of nature” (p. 6). Plec in turn draws her inspiration from a book by Philo and Wilbert (2000), *Animal Spaces, Beastly Places*, in which Philo and Wilbert state:

What surely cannot be denied is the historical global significance of such human—animal relations for both parties to the relationship—to be sure, they commonly entail matters of life and death for both parties, the animals in particular—and any social science which fails to pay at least some attention to these relations, to their differential constitutions and implications, is arguably deficient (p. 4).

Here, in regards to (human) geography, Philo and Wilbert were drawing on and contributing to other disciplines that had already made some headway on non/human relationships, including Anthropology. They go on to proclaim that

A “new” animal geography has emerged to explore the dimensions of space and place which cannot but sit at the heart of these relations, and contributions here are now running alongside more established anthropological, sociological and psychological investigations into human—animal relations (Philo & Wilbert, 2000, p. 4)

In light of these comments, what is potentially the “greatest gift that anthropologists have to give” conservation is “discovering how to inspire, understand and explain how human societies may come to behave in a sustainable fashion” (Shoreman-Ouimet & Kopnina, 2016, p. 15). In fact, examples already exist that illustrate how Indigenous cultures can educate the West on how to “materially and spiritually enrich” the lives of all earthlings (Shoreman-Ouimet & Kopnina, p. 30). One such example provided by Deborah Bird Rose (1996) discusses the Arrernte peoples of Western Australia whose communities are located along major rivers which disappear into the Simpson Desert. While these rivers are a significant route used for ceremonies, trade, and the joining together of distant communities, many of the Arrernte respect the area’s natural rain cycles and only move further into the desert as the rain starts to fall and the rivers begin flowing again. Their enjoyment of “the temporary abundance of the flourishing desert” is a noteworthy example of humans living in harmony with nature, rather than artificially altering landscapes and forcing the natural world to submit to their will (p.52). Practices and concepts such as these, when used responsibly and with permission from the community of which they originate, can be very successful in breaking down the mindset that prevents the West from living in sustainable ways.

However, care must be taken to not generalize and romanticize all Indigenous Peoples. While Indigenous cultures have had, and continue to have, environmentally sustainable practices such as these, many other traditional activities have been converted into modern means and therefore should not be given unquestionable exemption from more recent laws, policies and even criticism (Kemmerer, 2004; Wuerther, 2015).

### **Deconstructing Dualistic Language**

Western cultures tend to think, act and speak dualistically, using binary opposites and hierarchical language. Speaking in these terms suggests a worldview that is artificially separated. Dualisms are overly broad and thus overly simplistic categories which are supposed to help humans make sense of the world. Such black and white viewing, however, blurs or can even eliminate differences occurring between individuals and obscures the more truthful fluidity between various categories. The tendency for humans to create classifications (often two and usually considered disjoint) has been disastrous for humans, nonhumans, and the environment. All such categories are socially and culturally constructed as evidenced by the many Indigenous worldviews which tend to see the world in a more cyclical and connected fashion as opposed to separated. In fact, for many Indigenous Peoples this idea of separation of human, non-human, and plant life is non-existent.

Of particular concern here is the construction of a boundary between people and (other) animals. The binary of society/nature runs essentially parallel to that of human/animal as humans are typically associated with possessing and engaging in a society and animals are relegated outside the realm of the social and in “nature.” Sallie McFague (1997) refers to this as “subject-object dualism,” where the first part of the dualism is valued and seen as a subject (here *society* and *human*), and the second member is considered an object and considered lacking in what the first part has (here, *nature* and *animals* lack *culture*). There is often discussion (and critique) of the human/nature dualism which stresses that such a dualism when viewed anthropocentrically *automatically* creates a “hierarchical division between humans and nature, in which social justice and human entitlement are persistently prioritized over ecological justice, or justice for all species” (Shoreman-Ouimet & Kopnina, 2016, p. 25; see also Collard & Gillespie, 2015). This hierarchy has been explicitly stated as the premise of what has been termed “Conservation

Science” (Kareiva & Marvier, 2012). For some, like Shoreman-Ouimet and Kopnina (2016), dualisms alone are not the issue, but instead the focus is on the seemingly inherent privileged status given to humans and the concomitant devaluation of nonhumans. However, others see a more nuanced problem with dualisms which is intrinsic to categorizing and separating. As Jason W. Moore (2016) explains, fundamentally

dualisms are part of the problem...intellectually and politically. No less than the binaries of Eurocentrism, racism, and sexism, Nature/Society is directly implicated in the modern world’s colossal violence, inequality, and oppression. This argument against dualism implicates something abstract—Nature/Society—but nevertheless quite material. For the abstraction Nature/Society historically conforms to a seemingly endless series of human exclusions—never mind the rationalizing disciplines and exterminist policies imposed upon extrahuman natures. These exclusions correspond to a long history of subordinating women, colonial populations, and peoples of color (p. 2).

Not only does putting humans above the rest of nature create an ideological and political space where violence can become institutionalized and thus rationalized, but in doing so it has the ironic effect of actually weakening the status of being “human” for many people. Stanescu (2012) explicitly highlights how tenuous, and even meaningless, focusing on human (only) rights can be, concluding:

[N]o matter how perfectly “human” rights are enshrined into law, as long as the nonhuman animal is wholly excluded, such rights will remain radically indeterminate since, . . . , humans can at any time be reduced to the level of nonhuman animals and therefore lose any rights or standing under law...(p. 95)

Hence, even if human rights appear to be firmly in place, if there is a category that is considered beyond the scope of this moral and/or legal consideration, said rights are constantly under threat of being stripped. This is due to the fact that

[T]he failure is seldom in the absence of legal rights...but the absence of the belief that the oppressed group is in fact “human.” Therefore, it is only after the nonhuman animal herself becomes protected under law ... will the human animal ever actually enjoy such protections. Until then, the speciesist rhetoric of human (only) rights discourse will fail to protect not only all nonhuman animals but also the human animal (Stanescu, 2012, pp. 95-96).

The plight of both humans and nonhumans are inextricably bound up within each other. If a goal of anthropology is to help preserve the integrity and autonomy of Indigenous cultures, then paying attention to nonhuman cultures and ecosystems is also a necessary component. This has the effect of leveling hierarchies that can lead to a cascade of the revocation of rights, protections and status for certain groups at arbitrary times, whenever it becomes convenient or deemed “necessary.” There are many instances where a lack of animal rights has lead to derogatory animal-related comparisons which were used to help justify the negation of human rights. Examples include the genocide of American Indians (often referred to as ‘beasts’), the American invasion of the Philippines (Filipinos were compared to dogs), and the Nazi persecution of Jews (who were equated with ‘vermin’).

Via the pursuits of sociocultural and environmental anthropology and ethnobotany, anthropologists are already keenly aware of the myriad intimate connections between people and the ecosystems they interact with and are codependent upon. Thus it is claimed that it is not only within the purview of anthropology but also of paramount importance that the discipline embraces a stance that eliminates dualisms such as human/animal and instead embraces conservation that considers the rights and protections for nonhumans as—not the same—but viewed as equal to those for humans.

### **Finding Common Ground in Industrocentrism**

The conflicts resulting from such divisive language have created a prohibitive tension between Indigenous rights and environmental rights, with each considering the other as an opposing force. While the authors of this paper do not intend to devalue the worries and criticisms of Indigenous communities or conservation groups regarding this conflict, it is

suggested that the greatest threat to these groups is not one another, but rather a societal mindset that drives Western culture. A particularly poignant example of an intersection of culture and conservation (or human and animal rights and environmental justice) is found in the concept of “industrocentrism,” which, as mentioned earlier, is an ideology that renders all living things a resource to be managed or a commodity to be consumed (Kidner, 2014, p 466.). It “tends to submerge both humans and nonhumans in a self-serving predatory system that is essentially anti-anthropocentric, as well as ecocidal, as it serves neither humans nor other beings and destroys cultural as well as biological diversity” (Shoreman-Ouimet & Kopnina, 2016, p. 71). This ideology is fueled the West’s colonial heritage, where large areas of land were searched for cheap natural resources, which in turn impoverished both the land and the people. Countless numbers of Indigenous people from across the globe have been forcibly removed from their homes in order to make way for highways, mines, cattle ranches, hydroelectric dams, crop plantations and illegal logging, making resource development markedly more threatening to Indigenous culture than the creation of nature reserves (Shoreman-Ouimet & Kopnina, 2016, p. 85).

Industrocentrism can be used as a way to unify proponents of either the ecocentric or anthropocentric philosophies. There has been a historic divide between these two schools of thought but the modern capitalist economy is a point of intersection. Such a viewpoint encourages an attitude that all are vulnerable and likewise all deserve protection:

The industrialized world tends to render everything living as a resource.... The main distinction thus should be between industrialist versus anthropocentric and ecocentric worldviews, as destructive tendencies of industrial neoliberal capitalism are good for neither humans nor nonhumans” (Shoreman-Ouimet & Kopnina, 2016, p. 9)

Industry is indeed an enemy of both culture and conservation, for it tends to cheapen both humans and nonhumans. Following Moore (2016), the word “cheap” is intended to function in

two ways: “to make Nature’s elements ‘cheap’ in price; and also to cheapen, to degrade or to render inferior in an ethico-political sense” (pp. 2-3). The whole of the plant and animal kingdoms, as well as ecosystems, are cheapened as needed and as much as possible (e.g., sweatshop labor, clearcutting forests, bottom trawling, confiscating indigenous land for mining or cattle, etc.) in the pursuit of continuous profit. Because anthropologists are often involved in working with traditional owners who are fighting for land rights, and most of the time their land is being taken away to be used for things that negatively impact local ecosystems, it would appear advantageous that anthropologists are acutely aware of this and become involved.

This commonality has already been recognized by some Indigenous studies scholars. Haudenosaunee scholar John Mohawk agrees: “The technologies and social systems that have destroyed the animals and the plant life are also destroying the Native people” (Notes, 2005). In fact, “Many researchers agree that the global forces of capitalism and consumerism are responsible for the current relationship between humans and the environment,” but the problem is that they largely “disagree on how to resolve apparent differences in interests, needs, and values” (Shoreman-Ouimet & Kopnina, 2016, p. 15). Intimate, first-hand knowledge of these differences between cultures, or between culture and conservation, is precisely what anthropology rightfully boasts is its specialty, so anthropologists possess expertise that can help mitigate such conflicts.

### *Case Studies*

Samantha Hurn supports the industrocentric viewpoint in her book *Humans and Other Animals*, where she argues that conservation should be a central issue for anthropologists because the anthropogenic activities that are negatively impacting the environment and non-human species are also a severe threat to human communities (2012, p. 165). The need for a “call

to consciousness” is very evident when reviewing case studies presented in both anthropological and environmental journals. Some notable examples of this shared threat include logging, mining, and agriculture. We briefly single out a specific case study of each of these industrial practices which show how they negatively and simultaneously affect non/humans<sup>3</sup>.

### 1. Illegal logging and remote communities in Indonesia

The excessive logging that has been occurring in recent history due to an ever-growing human population is resulting in serious environmental and socio-economic problems across the globe. Soil erosion, landslides, lower water quality, and increased CO<sub>2</sub> release are common in heavily logged areas, as the “protective functions” of the forests are destroyed (Roboredo, 2013, p. 296). Illegal logging, which largely occurs in areas with little or no sustainable forest management systems, can be even more damaging, as there are no regulations or guidelines being followed to mitigate these effects. As a result, some of the world’s most biodiverse forests are quickly being degraded, and many high profile species now “face a real and ever present threat of extinction” (Suhariyanto & Purnama, 2013, p. 1). In addition to deforestation and habitat loss, logging trails facilitate the poaching of Borneo and Sumatra’s critically endangered<sup>4</sup> Tiger, Rhino, and Orangutan populations, who are used for their skins, horns, or for entertainment (“Endangered Species,” 2016).

Roboredo (2013) expands upon these negative consequences by highlighting the human-rights abuses that are occurring alongside environmental ones. He explains that due to the lack of land tenure rights, illegal logging forces many Indigenous communities to migrate from their homes, often into areas densely populated by other groups, which strains the land’s resources (p.

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<sup>3</sup> In using this term we follow George & Shatz (2016) and employ it to refer to either humans, nonhumans, or both as a way of emphasizing the relatedness between human and nonhuman relationships and realities.

<sup>4</sup> Although we see all lives as inherently valuable and not only at-risk species, we include this label to emphasize the magnitude of harm that industry is responsible for.

296). Due to their dependence on forests for food, medicine, and fibers, many violent conflicts arise between Indigenous Peoples and loggers, who are said to be “trespassing” on the logger’s land. Specifically, in Indonesia, destruction of property, severe injuries, and deaths of Indigenous Persons due to such conflicts are seen on a daily basis.

## 2. Garimpeiro mining and its impact on the Yanomami of Brazil

Due to development laws and policies in Brazil that favor creating opportunities for businesses over cultural preservation, Indigenous communities are under severe threat from mining companies who come to exploit the country’s great mineral deposits (Plummer, 2015, p. 484). With only 10% of Brazilian land being allocated for mining, prospectors turn to Indigenous protected areas to gain access to these resources (Plummer, 2015, p.484). However, due to the difficulties in obtaining permission to legally mine on protected land, much of the mining is conducted illegally which causes significant damage to the land’s inhabitants. The Yanomami, the largest semi-nomadic isolated Indigenous group in the world, are especially impacted due to their dependence on soil regeneration and biodiversity (Plummer, 2015, p. 484). According to Brazil’s Indigenous affairs agency, Fundação Nacional do Índio, there are approximately 3,000 gold prospectors currently mining on Yanomami protected land, which has not only created conflicts over land rights and loss of territory, but has led to the pollution of major water sources, killing aquatic species and poisoning the Yanomami who sustain from them (Plummer, 2015, p. 485). Plummer (2015) explains that during the gold amalgamation process, illegal miners use large amounts of mercury, which pollutes both water and sediment, and accumulates within the bodies of fish, birds, reptiles, mammals, and insects (2015, p. 488). Mercury exposure is shown to negatively impact the neurological and hormonal systems of vertebrates, which in turn affects their ability to reproduce, care for offspring, and run from predators. For example, fish exposed

to mercury tend to form “loose, sloppy schools,” lay fewer eggs, and have significantly slower responses to predators (Kessler, 2013).

### 3. Palm-oil plantations and their impacts on the Palawan of the Philippines

Palm oil plantations were first introduced to Palawan Island in the Philippines in 2007, and the government has been working diligently to expand cultivation to over 15,469 hectares of land (“Palm Oil Expansion,” 2014). Acquiring land for these plantations is frequently done without Free Prior and Informed Consent from the Palawan people who are impacted by this decision, despite the legitimate land claims of this Indigenous group (Larsen, 2014, p.12). The Palawan utilize shifting cultivation, or clearing small sections of the forest to cultivate food, and shortly moving on so the area will revert to its natural state before being used again (“Palm Oil Expansion,” 2014). However, with the land being taken without their consent, and in turn being environmentally degraded due to pollution and deforestation, their sustainable lifeways are threatened. According to studies conducted by the Stockholm Environment Institute and the International Land Coalition (2014), palm-oil plantations often cause water pollution from runoff and mill effluents, resulting in water with a concentration of sediment that is 500 times higher than normal (p. 14). The plantations themselves, which are “structurally less complex” than regular forests, have sparse undergrowth, and a “less stable microclimate,” greatly influence biodiversity (Fitzherbert et al., 2008, p. 539). Palm-oil plantations were found to have only fifteen percent of those species found in primary forests, with species reliant on specialized diets and large trees for dwelling making up the majority of those lost. Furthermore, low tree density creates an environment that is highly susceptible to fire. In Indonesia, one of the leading countries for palm oil production, these plantations were responsible for over half of the fires that occurred in the country in 2013, and resulted in a loss of nearly 1 million hectares of land

(Fitzherbert et al., 2008, p. 539). This loss of land, which was once prime habitat for orangutans, monkeys, and wild boar, has forced species into surrounding villages increasing human-wildlife conflict (“Endangered Species Threatened,” 2016).

#### *Conservation and Indigenous Rights Organizations*

Not only are common threats to Indigenous Peoples and the environment evident in case studies reported in scholarly research, but the importance of anthropology’s acceptance of conservation efforts is made very apparent when looking at the campaigns being run by major human rights organizations. Groups such as Survival International, Idle No More, and Cultural Survival cite industrocentric activities as the main threats to the communities advocated for in their campaigns, making it ever clearer the importance of anthropology and conservation working together. Survival International alone, which currently advocates for 37 Indigenous groups across the globe, cites logging, cattle ranching, mining, and large crop plantations as the main threats to the majority of these communities. Perhaps their most well-known campaign, for the Awá of the Brazilian Amazon, was aimed at expelling troops of illegal loggers from their government-protected territory. According to their campaign webpage, the Awá have lost over 34% of their land since the construction of a railway 1987 which gave illegal loggers and cattle ranchers easy access to their land (“Earth’s most threatened,” 2014).

Similarly, an article by Adam Fix (2014) illustrates that the Indigenous rights organization Idle No More, while not being exempt from speciesist critiques, truly has a “more-than human worldview” in its message, which is often overlooked by mainstream media coverage (p. 95). This is apparent in the bear and bird imagery utilized within the movement, which portrays their special relationship with these species, as does their group vision and manifesto on their website. Citing Eriel Deranger, an Athabasca Chipewyan First Nations

Person, Idle No More calls for Indigenous communities to fight for the right to refuse the development of their land: “Our people and our Mother Earth can no longer afford to be economic hostages in the race to industrialise our homelands. It’s time for our people to rise up and take back our role as caretakers and stewards of the land” ([Idlenomore.ca](http://Idlenomore.ca)). This message of First Nations people being “caretakers and stewards of the land” is a common theme within the movement. Pam Palmater, director of the Center for Indigenous Governance at Ryerson University, explains: “Idle No More arises from [First Nations people’s] responsibility to live up to the sacrifices of our ancestors and to the duty we have as guardians of the earth” and describes it as “Canadian’s last best hope of stopping Canada from the mass destruction of our shared lands, waters, plants and animals” (quoted in Fix, 2014, p. 99). One of Idle No More’s major campaigns calling for an “Indigenous Climate Change plan” is trying to do just that. Not only are they fighting to keep fossil fuels in the ground, but also for the rights of Indigenous Peoples to say no to energy extraction and infrastructure on their territories, and that these rights are respected.

## **Conclusion**

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Throughout this paper, we hoped to show that anthropologists and conservationists do, in fact, have much to agree upon. The industrocentric neoliberal paradigm, which places great value on continuous growth and profit, is increasingly degrading the land and threatening both the humans and nonhumans who sustain off of it. Not only do activities such as mining, logging, and industrial agriculture pollute waterways, decimate valuable forest habitat, and facilitate the poaching of a number of species, but they also destroy the homes of various human populations who rely on the forest and the species that live there for survival. Recognizing that industry is a

common adversary of both humans and nonhumans opens up possibilities of bringing people together for a mutual cause.

In order to create successful programs which tackle both conservation and Indigenous rights, situations need to be evaluated for what will work best for the species, the people and the land involved, “not with one being subordinated to the other, but simultaneously” (Shoreman-Ouimet & Kopnina, 2016, p. 15). Coming together over commonalities could have significant impacts on both movements. This article is not asking that conservationists and anthropologists “agree to disagree,” but rather work through their differences to achieve a common goal.

Although collaborating will most certainly not be easy, the threats to our global ecosystems, Indigenous cultures and both human and non-human wellbeing are serious, and failure to work together could result in “irrelevance and inefficacy” of both groups (Shoreman-Ouimet and Kopnina, 2016, p.79). As stated by Brosius (2006), “discovering modest agreements in unexpected places is our best hope for creating a foundation of emergent understandings in our efforts to preserve a diverse world” (p. 685). This is a useful message which stays focused on alleviating suffering in the present and into the future.

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