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Chapter 10

Anticolonial skate pedagogy: Skateboarding as decolonising education

Noah Romero and Douglas Miles

Introduction

This chapter aims to demonstrate how skateboarding can function as a site of decolonising education. It does so by theorising the social practice of Apache Skateboards through literature on decolonising education, or approaches to teaching and learning that build upon critiques of settler/invader colonialism, white supremacy and Euro-American imperialism. Such critiques inform concrete pedagogical efforts to foster reparation, reciprocity, connectedness, balance, healing, the rematriation of stolen lands, and the resurgence of Indigenous lifeways. This study deepens scholarship on skateboarding, decolonisation, and education by bringing the lines of inquiry associated with these disparate fields into conversation with one another.

We anchor this work in the concept of *anti-colonial skate pedagogy* (ASP), which bridges scholarship on skateboarding and decolonising education to show how the two have

much to learn from one another. Literature that frames skateboarding as a potentially emancipatory and holistic form of teaching and learning can be deepened by understanding the nuanced ways skateboarding facilitates the critique, contestation, and negation of settler colonialism. Similarly, anti-colonial pedagogues can partner with Indigenous, Black, and person-of-colour skateboarders to gain a deeper understanding of the informal, embodied, and community-embedded dimensions of decolonising education.

ASP can help us understand how decolonising education is not a simple matter of curriculum, teaching methods, vocabulary terms, consciousness raising, or knowledge transmission. ASP instead shows us how decolonising education must be a holistic endeavour that engages the mind, body and spirit while drawing us into kinship with land and community. Later sections will examine how various aspects of Apache Skateboards' community-engaged social practice specifically allow ASP to emerge. These analyses coalesce into an invitation for scholars and practitioners to view Apache Skateboards as a model for engaging in the dynamic and emergent practice of anti-colonial resistance.

A Note on Methods

Drawing from Linda Tuhiwai Smith's (2021) writing on *community research*, this chapter emerged out of a process of collaboration and consultation that took place before any writing occurred. As part of an Indigenous research agenda, community research refers to collaborative research activities undertaken by community members in order to achieve col-

lective goals. Importantly, Smith (2021, p.149) argues that the reciprocal and community-sustaining ethics that underpin community research initiatives are more artefacts than they produce: "In many projects the process is far more important than the outcome. Processes are expected to be respectful, to enable people, to heal and to educate. They are expected to lead one small step further towards self-determination". Co-written by an Indigenous studies scholar (Noah) and the multimedia artist who founded Apache Skateboards (Douglas), this chapter reflects our ongoing efforts to plan anti-colonial education events that also showcase the liberatory potential of skateboarding.

Our analyses are primarily drawn from our conversations. They also include reflections on the archive of commentary, critiques, and works of art Douglas has made publicly available elsewhere, including in social media outlets, magazines, documentaries, galleries, and museums, along with works screen printed on t-shirts and slapped onto the undersides of skateboards. Rather than rewriting in academic language, we found elaborating on these public texts to be a generative strategy for analysis. Centring public data was also important because academics, skateboarders, curators, and journalists often look to Douglas' public work to draw conclusions about Apache Skateboards, often collapsing it into generalised discussions about 'Native American skateboarding.' These generalisations risk oversimplifying the diversity of Indigenous skateboarders and the communities they inhabit and traverse. They also risk minimising Apache Skateboards' specific and singular contributions to decolonising the skate industry. As an exercise in community research, this chapter can be

encountered as a corrective exercise in self-determination that offers a first-hand theorisation of the importance of Apache Skateboards. We aim to subvert the anthropological impulse to extract and fetishise Indigenous knowledge. We instead prioritise the embodied social practice that Apache Skateboards has conceptualised, planned, executed, and introduced to the public. We do so to demonstrate how the organisation's efforts expand the possibilities of skateboarding and decolonising education alike.

Toward an Anti-colonial Skate Pedagogy

ASP critically synthesises literature on skateboarding and decolonising education to demonstrate skateboarding's potential as a site of anti-colonial resistance. Drawing from the work of skate scholars like Indigo Willing, Ben Green, and Adele Pavlidis (2019), I (Noah) have elsewhere used the concept of *skate pedagogy* to refer to the educative dimensions of skateboarding (Romero, 2021). Skate pedagogy involves the entangled physical and cognitive processes involved in learning to ride a skateboard. It also involves the process of learning skateboarding's values, which broadly prioritise autonomy, rebelliousness, anti-authoritarianism, and a "jaundiced eye toward what constitutes public space" (Romanoff, 2024, n.p.). Anti-colonial skate pedagogy builds upon this definition to refer to skateboarding practices that foster educational experiences that specifically advance Indigenous struggles and a critique of colonial power relations. Defining anti-colonial movement building, the late Diné artist, activist, and land defender Klee Benally notes that:

> Anti-colonial struggle assumes the position of engaging in attack of colonial structures to end them. To abolish them. You'll see a range of anti-oppression or collective liberation analyses that…are not articulating their relationship to Indigenous Peoples whose land they're on.
>
> The analysis there is that no matter how liberated they're going to be against heteropatriarchy or white supremacy, they're still occupying Indigenous lands and they're still settler colonizers.
>
> To be able to reconcile that is to reconfigure the analysis through an anti-colonial struggle framework and engage in supporting Indigenous struggles *to their conclusion*, which is to liberate the land and their people as well. (PeopleLiveTV, 2017, n.p.)

Framing skateboarding as a potential site of anti-colonial attack requires analysis of how skateboarding might unsettle the mechanisms of Euro-American imperialism and make its abolition inevitable. Our analysis goes beyond an examination of how skateboarders repurpose public space and exercise individual freedom. We pay closer attention to how Apache Skateboards' holistic social practice contains the raw material for the destruction of settler reality. We are not interested in promoting skateboarding as a way to keep 'vulnerable' youth 'out of trouble'. We are not interested in theorising skateboarding as a tool for bringing people from different cultures together while naturalising settler colonialism and the nation-state. We instead draw attention to how Apache Skateboards engages in community-sustaining pedagogies that create new worlds built on the old ways – Indigenous

worldviews that actively maintain intersubjective bonds based on reciprocity and responsibility.

Still, it is important to note that skateboarding communities exist in relation to dominant culture and can therefore reflect its prejudices (Beal & Weldman, 2003). Institutionalised versions of skateboarding, like competitive and Olympic skateboarding, for example, are critiqued for the ways they compel skateboarders to follow rules and protocols that reproduce the gender binaries, racial hierarchies, and eugenic obsessions of the colonial project. In Olympic skateboarding, participation is further adjudicated according to the International Olympic Committee's rules on gender expression and its competitive format that pairs sport with statecraft (Romero, 2021).

Such impositions can be mandated by governing bodies, but they can also be policed by skateboarders. A rule in the Berrics' SKATE competition series, for instance, states that competitors cannot grab their boards, plant their feet on the ground, or allow their toes to drag on the floor. These rules necessarily limit skateboarders' ability to utilise the breadth of their physical and creative vocabulary. Still, rules do not always go unchallenged. On an episode of *Battle of the Berrics*, Mike Vallely responds to host Steve Berra's recitation of the rules by asking "who makes rules for skateboarding?" (The Berrics, 2014, n.p.). Vallely's protest compels Berra to discard the rules entirely, allowing Vallely and his competitor, Chris Cole, to allow foot plants, grabs, handstands, and unfashionable 'old school' tricks. Negating Berra's rules, the ensuing contest becomes an educational demonstration of skateboarding's past and future, rife with street plants, no

complys, and mutual admiration. Viewer @BijanCamp (2014, n.p.) notes that despite the creeping commodification and policing of mainstream skate culture, the video reminds us that “games of SKATE are all about respect, having fun, and learning from each other”.

While skateboarding’s ‘rules’ are under constant negotiation, this interaction demonstrates how skateboarding’s idealisation of unimpeded freedom exists in tensile relation to the constraints imposed by larger forces and internalised by individuals. Skateboarders must often balance exercising freedoms with either adhering to or enforcing collective norms. To follow this chapter’s line of argumentation, it is important to take note of *where* the rules that give skateboarding communities their ideological, aesthetic, ontological, and epistemological boundaries come from. It is equally important to note *who* gets to decide what these norms are and *what* social, political, and economic realities these impositions produce. Finally, we ask *how* colonial obsessions with categorisation and control might be undone through anti-colonial approaches to skateboarding.

When placed in conversation with decolonising education, studies of skateboarding help us understand how resistant ways of being forecast collective experiences that refute colonial conquest and its bedfellows – white supremacy, mass surveillance, overpolicing, racialised capitalism, and punitive forms of schooling that assume children require disciplining before they can be considered fully human (Cajete, 2012; Styres, 2019). Decolonising education critiques, recognises, and transforms the ways in which schooling has been used as a wartime technology that invading forces impose on besieged, occupied, and

enslaved peoples. Schooling is the key technology invaders use to extinguish Indigenous cultures, primarily by forcibly assimilating children into individualistic and exploitative western ideologies and construals of self, oftentimes at the crack of a whip. Colonial educators also used organised sports to discipline bodies thought to be immutably deviant. In the Philippines, American teachers introduced baseball to teach Indigenous peoples concepts thought to be wholly alien to the Philippine psyche, like self-control, sportsmanship, and thrift (Gleeck, 1976; Grande 2015).

Decolonising education responds to the debilitating mandate of colonial schooling in varied ways across contested terrains. In Aotearoa, efforts to decolonise education have directly contributed to the resurgence of the Māori language and culture. Te Kohanga Reo is a network of Māori immersion schools for pre-Kindergarten children and their families (Rona & Maclachlan, 2018). Te Kura Kaupapa Māori, established in 1985, offers primary and secondary schooling options dedicated to fostering Māori language, culture, and self-determination (Tocker, 2015). At the university level, Te Whare Wananga o Awanuiārangi offers degrees grounded in Māori epistemology and ontology, including PhDs in Māori Studies, Indigenous Studies, Environment Studies, and Education (Smith, 2015). According to Smith (2015), Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi centres the decolonising objectives of conscientisation, resistance, and transformation, concepts which Freire (1976) introduced to education research but have animated Indigenous communities since time immemorial:

> Conscientisation: Coming to understand the stark realities of the neoliberal economic changes in New Zealand and its overt and inequitable impact on Māori and therefore the subsequent conscientizing of Māori to the fact that our struggle was not just about our culture, but also over structural elements such as economics, power, and ideology, that is, a need to simultaneously struggle for structuralist and culturalist change.

Smith (2015, p.57) notes that Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi was established because Māori "argued for the recognition and validity of their own cultural frame of reference as well as increased economic and resource parity in their own right alongside the dominant Pākehā (non-Māori population) in NZ". In the United States, institutions like Diné College and Haskell Indian Nations University were established out of a similar need to protect Indigenous students and preserve and revitalise Native American cultures. Tribal universities were also established out of the recognition that predominantly white institutions are often ill-equipped to serve the needs of Indigenous students and seldom offered degree pathways that were responsive to their backgrounds and needs (Haskie, 2013). In Guatemala, the Ixil University was established to protect Ixil culture and territory (Batz, 2019). Ixil University was also founded to contest the notion that economic progress and social mobility were contingent upon abandoning one's Indigenous identity and community, an idea heavily promoted in Guatemalan schools (Batz, 2019).

The San Carlos Apache Reservation's own school district exemplifies decolonising education. Responding to how contemporary issues facing young people in San Carlos (like

poverty, suicidality, and drop-out rates) have their roots in historical traumas associated with removal and forced re-education in American Indian boarding schools, the district has transformed its curriculum to bridge student-centred culturally-responsive, and social-emotional learning paradigms with Apache language, culture, history, and knowledge (San Carlos Unified School District, 2024). The district also implemented comprehensive mental health services, school-family partnership programs, and academic policies that prioritise student well-being and happiness. The district's efforts increased attendance and graduation numbers while reducing disciplinary, drop-out, and suspension rates. They have created educational conditions needed for Apache youth to articulate and pursue their educational goals and succeed *as Apache*. The district's effort is best understood as a community effort to reflect the Apache philosophy of shiłgozhoo, which 15 year-old student Lorena Cosen defines as:

> …the definition of beauty and happiness. A strong word that describes an Apache life. I can't say what it means to me personally, because I am still young and learning the N'nee life. I still have a lot to learn. This weekend I was told beautiful and pretty are two different characters. Beauty is something you see inside, outside, and around a person. Pretty is just what's on the outside but on the inside is awful. Shiłgozhoo is beautiful. A beautiful word that takes me back to my past, when I had my sunrise dance.

> I saw the beauty in the sun rising behind the mountains, my feathers and ribbons floating as I pounded my cane, hearing the bells as my spiritual leaders danced, and feeling the white paint run through my whole body. Shiłgozhoo—a beautiful word, inside, outside, and all around me. (San Carlos Unified School District, 2024, n.p.)

While their ideological aims and pedagogic strategies shift according to historic and geographic contexts, efforts to decolonise education share two overlapping aims. The first is to resist Eurocentrism while acknowledging the inherent sovereignty of Indigenous, oppressed, and colonised peoples. The second is the pursuit of social justice, or the righting of historical wrongs and the equitable redistribution of resources and opportunities. ASP, as such, deepens decolonising education by showing how people from targeted and minoritised communities create equitable realities without mediating entities or pre-planned curriculum, actualising liberatory modes of teaching and learning that respond to the historical traumas and contemporary needs of communities they sustain on their own.

Anti-colonial skate pedagogy extends the analytical trajectory of Indigenous and decolonising education, primarily by bridging radical and ancestral learning paradigms with the physical pedagogies that emerge from the act of skateboarding itself. Learning to skate requires a high level of discipline and the ability to persevere through hardship (Adi, Aditya, & Citrawati, 2010). Skateboarders often work on the same manoeuvres for years, sustaining a high level of effort and attention even into adulthood (Willing, 2019). Along with the self-directed way one learns to skate, skate pedagogy

instils skate culture's "most cherished values" (Kassel, 2016, p.4) – orientations toward resistance, rebelliousness, repurposing public space, support for other skateboarders, and an appreciation for consent and bodily autonomy (Beal, 1995; Chiu, 2009; Lombard, 2010; Atencio, Beal, & Yochim, 2013). As such, anti-colonial skate pedagogy calls attention to the iteratively unfolding decolonising education that skateboarders develop as they embody skate culture's oppositional orientations toward (colonial) authority and the contested politics of place.

These divergent ways of knowing emerge largely sans formal instruction, as skateboarders come to embody them through their interactions with cityscapes, other skateboarders, skateboards themselves, and the regimes of regulation that map the contours of dominant culture. Examples of the latter include anti-skateboarding policies and the police officers, security guards, and private citizens who enforce them. They also include identitarian discourses that say people's abilities and options are tied to their bodies, minds, and skin colours – a broad assumption that is anathema to ASP but is foundational to schooling. Other enemies of skate culture include *posers* – uninvited guests from the dominant culture who appropriate the aesthetics of skate culture. Skateboarding's antagonists also include architectural aggressors designed to prevent skateboarding, like *skate-stoppers*, or metal deterrent devices on public property. Intrepid skateboarders routinely challenge themselves to elude and *undermine* all of these and more. Still, theorisations of skateboarding that portray it solely as a rebellious act overlook the fact that the ultimate purpose of skateboarding is simply to *have*

fun. If nothing else, ASP's move to afford analytical consideration to skateboarding allows for examinations of a particularly underdeveloped notion of decolonising education: that it too can be fun.

Apache Skateboards as Anti-colonial Skate Pedagogy

Apache Skateboards is the world's first Native-founded skateboarding company, established by San Carlos Apache and Akimel O'odham artist Douglas Miles Sr, and his son, professional skateboarder, photographer, filmmaker, and community organiser Douglas Miles Jr. Apache Skateboards provides a counterpoint to colonial conquest, capitalist consumption, and Olympic statism by promoting a skate culture whose legitimacy is not derived from the exercise of dominion but from the relationships between people, community, history, and land. The entanglement of skateboarding and Indigenous ontology is showcased in *The Mystery of Now* (2019), a documentary on the history of Apache Skateboards. In addition to tracing the growth of skate culture in Apacheria, the film functions as a source of sensory data on the affective capacities of ASP, introducing audiences to educative settings that uplift Indigenous ways of knowing and being through skateboarding. The film situates Apache Skateboards' work within the broader collective endeavour of securing the rematriation of Indigenous lands and the preservation of Indigenous ways of knowing and being (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005). Endemic to Southern Arizona, the Apache Nation was forcibly exiled and resettled on reservations as a result of the US military confiscation and occupation of Apache land in the late 1800s.

Laluk (2017) notes, however, that displacement and genocide have not diluted the Apache sense of kinship with their lands:

> Despite continuous deception, mistreatment, dehumanization, and eventual exile of various Apache groups from southeastern Arizona, Apache communities retain strong social ties through kinship and clan obligations and retain significant associations to their former homelands (p.97).

Laluk (2017) further notes that Apache identity, which is defined by the relationship Apache have with land, becomes more interrelated and complex over time. The contingent relationality that weds Apache personhood to Apache land is evident in the contemporary struggle to protect Oak Flat, a sacred site known by the San Carlos Apache for its cultural and spiritual significance. Oak Flat and its protectors currently face development aggression and state violence stemming from a proposed mining project by Resolution Copper, a domestic appendage of foreign mining conglomerates. Resolution Copper's project involves excavating one of the largest copper deposits in the US, reproducing the genocidal compulsion to eradicate Indigenous lands, knowledges, and peoples in the name of settler progress. The mine would secure a limited supply of raw materials to be used in semiconductors, gadgets, and trinkets at the cost of permanently destroying Oak Flat and the cultural protocols, land-based knowledges, and endemic species associated with it (Apache-Stronghold, 2024). The Protect Oak Flat campaign involves advocacy, litigation, and public awareness efforts to halt the mining project and safeguard the land.

An Apache skateboarder skating on Apache land could accordingly represent an evolving understanding of the contingent relationality of bodies, land, and matter. It is a reminder that we come from the land – we journey with it, and will eventually return to it. This respect for the unfolding bond between land and human vitality underpins Miles's art:

> When I look out at San Carlos, I see the power of the past. I see the way Native American people resurrected themselves and why. Because the land is forever. And when you realize the land is forever you realize you are forever. We are forever (Buchanan, 2019, n.p.).

Apache Skateboards has continually served as a means for connecting Apache understandings of the interconnectedness of human beings and nature, or what Styres (2019) terms *literacies of Land,* with the contemporary priorities of Apache youth, or their need for "access to goods and services like everyone else" (Buchanan, 2019, n.p.). Apache Skateboards pursues this mission by combining skateboarding, art, and community building to dynamically practise and preserve Apache knowledge while affording varied educational, economic, creative, and pro-social opportunities to Native youth.

Apache Skateboards began when Doug Jr. took up skateboarding as a teenager but noticed a lack of Indigenous representation in commercial skate culture, apart from a small number of boards bearing crude images that reproduced harmful stereotypes. Activating his artistic training and repertoire, Doug Sr. sought to address this Indigenous erasure in both art and skateboarding by painting and designing custom boards for his son and other community members. Apache

Skateboards then grew their operations to include consulting on the design and construction of skateparks in San Carlos and other Native nations (Rocker, 2022). They also embarked on public health, voter registration, and public education campaigns, along with supporting Indigenous youths to develop skills in filmmaking, photography, marketing, social media, entrepreneurship, and art. Apache Skateboards also founded the Apache Skate Team, the world's first all-Native crew of professional skateboarders.

Apache Skateboards' expanding practice is inextricable from Douglas Miles Sr.'s art, which pairs themes of Apache history and Indigenous resurgence with bright colours, warm textures, and human figures rendered in ways that portray perpetual motion. Taken together, Miles's work defies the anthropological gaze and the settler imaginaries that are often brought to bear on the collection, exhibition, and production of Native American art. Miles's joyfully radical negation of colonial conquest, cultivated in part through his deep enmeshment with skateboarding culture, assails stereotypes of Indigenous cultures as lifelessly stoic, encased in amber, and fading away. Skateboard decks and other merchandise (like keychains, t-shirts, sweatshirts, and stickers) can serve as powerful material and documentary attestations of the subculture's values and aesthetics. Skateboarding's visual repertoire, writ large, contains iconography that can serve as key curricular tools of anti-colonial skate pedagogy. Decks, hoodies, t-shirts, and stickers bear slogans like *Skate and Destroy* and *Skate or Die* accompany drawings of monsters, aliens, and Eldritch Abominations like Santa Cruz's screaming hand logo. Skateboarding's visual vocabulary, writ large,

has the tendency to assail the imposition of colonial order and respectability (Brayton, 2005; Lombard, 2010). Apache decks, shirts, and stickers take the anarchic preoccupations of skate culture's prevailing aesthetic further by augmenting them with explicitly anti-colonial assertions of Indigenous autonomy and vitality. The brand's most recognisable board, recently featured in an exhibition at the Phoenix Art Museum, combines a historic photo of Apache warriors with a drawing of a grinning skull and a prescient reminder: *You're Skating on Native Land*.

Many of Miles's other designs – like *Apache Presidents* (inspired by the Hughes Brothers' seminal heist film, *Dead Presidents)* and *Apache Skateboards is a Love Machine* (which winks toward "Love Machine" by The Miracles) – highlight his appreciation for Black creatives and communities. These works showcase how anti-colonial skate pedagogies might inform horizontal solidarity building and forecast mutual futurities, thus defying the racial technologies of categorisation and segregation imposed on nonwhite peoples under the rubrics of colonial statecraft. Apaches Skateboards' artistic catalogue can be appreciated as a congealment of reflection, practice, community-building, and agency – material testimonies to the complex educative processes in which individuals and collectives critique conditions rooted in cultural genocide before asserting their kinship and survival in direct and intentional ways.

ASP is evident in Miles's previously published analyses of decolonisation, which reminds scholars and skateboarders alike that resisting colonial imposition requires an understanding that the front line is everywhere, not only in the classroom:

> There are a lot of ways to talk about decolonisation. The word decolonisation is really just a fancy way to talk about the deconstruction and/or disruption of old and tired systems…you know, [systems] that don't have much diversity — like skateboarding, they need a brand like Apache Skateboards to talk about that. And we're not just diversity, we're not checking a box — this is our life. (Koelkebeck, 2024, n.p.).

Apache Skateboards' work does not aspire to the fleeting gains associated with profit-generation, representational balance, or purporting to liberate peoples' minds by introducing them to academic jargon. Rather, the mission of Apache Skateboards emerges out of the celebration of Indigenous survivance and is actively accountable to the needs of Indigenous communities. While Apache Skateboards' ongoing practice began and remains grounded in the San Carlos Apache Reservation, it has since expanded to enfold other Indigenous communities and communities of colour. The rhizomatic and relational nature of Apache Skateboards' anti-colonial skate pedagogy accordingly demonstrates how fragmented communities can bond over shared experiences and agitate together toward collective liberation.

In addition to helping build skateparks on reservations throughout Turtle Island, Apache Skateboards regularly hosts demonstrations and artistic activations at universities, schools, and local communities. There, members of the Apache Skate Team participate in speaker panels, film screenings, skate jams, and actively model their approach to community sustaining practice. In 2024, the authors partnered with the University of Nevada Las Vegas' Porter Troutman

Jr. Center for Multicultural Education on a two-day event that hosted Apache Skateboards and the Apache Skate Team, represented by professional skateboarders Tray Polk (San Carlos Apache), Tyniesha Thompson (San Carlos Apache), Cecely Todacheenie (Diné), Savannah Chischilly (Diné), Breeze Miles (San Carlos Apache), and Lane Begay (Diné). The event, naturally titled *You're Skating on Native Land*, featured a speaker panel, film screening, beading circle, and skate demo. It also featured opportunities for local youth, community members and students, staff, and faculty to design their own skateboard decks and zines. This constellation of activities was curated in an effort to approximate ASP in microcosm. Outside of this formal curriculum, the skate team was granted free rein to skate the campus, in defiance of the several visible and plainly threatening signs (and only after Dr. Danielle Mireles, a fellow skater and anti-colonial activist, politely and fearlessly re-educated university police, in consummate skater fashion).

Apache Skateboards's deep involvement in this event was intentional. As the organisation becomes more visible to academic audiences and non-Indigenous communities, Miles has noted the need to assert authorial vigilance over how it is perceived. Miles warns academics, gallery owners, and white-owned skateboarding companies against assuming that Apache Skateboards' work is indicative of skateboarding's broader popularity in Indigenous communities. In reality, skateboarding's popularity on Native nations, and the ensuing investment it has attracted from major entities like the Tony Hawk Foundation, is very much indebted *to* Apache Skateboards and its decades of tireless advocacy. As such, we

cannot understand Apache Skateboards simply as a skateboarding company – it is a comprehensive and multi-faceted creative phenomenon rooted in responsibility to Indigenous communities. On social media, Miles has previously gone on record to state that:

> [due] to its love affair with Eurocentricity, academia is oblivious to why Apache Skateboards is important. They can't conceive how Apaches in community could lead, create, build impact on Indian country outside of academia, media or 501 C-3 culture (for 20 years).

Pale attempts to whitewash or exclude our contribution to art, community and culture in favor of gimmickry, trend or spectacle is apparent. We make observations too: Academia doesn't make new cultural shifts, we do (Miles, 2024).

At the same time, Apache Skateboards cannot be pigeonholed as a narrow operation that only serves a small community. Apache Skateboards' diverse team represents numerous Indigenous communities along with gender identities and ages, challenging the stereotype that skateboarding is a subculture that belongs solely to young white men. In the elder Miles's words, "I decolonized the skate industry. We wanted to create a brand that Indigenous kids could be proud of. Representation matters but good representation matters even more" (60 Second Docs, 2020, n.p.).

Douglas Miles Jr. exhibits a similarly relational understanding of his numerous roles as a skateboarder, community leader, and subcultural insider. Instead of focusing on individualistic pursuits like securing lucrative sponsorships from skateboarding companies, Miles primarily uses his status as

"the rez skateboarding expert" to create opportunities for Native youth. Miles's ASP underpins the *Apache Passion Project*, a grassroots initiative he leads and whose mission is to expand skateboarding on the rez:

> Skateboarding is the fastest growing "sport" on Native reservations. Most of our communities do not have spots or parks we can skate. We are taking the initiative and raising funds to build skateparks and ramps in our communities and neighbouring towns.
>
> These funds will go directly to building skateparks and DIY skate spots for the younger generations to come. Most people continue to leave us out because we are not into mainstream sports but we love what we do and want to help others too. (Lerner, 2021, n.p.)

The Apache Passion Project demonstrates the younger Miles's priorities – he has largely opted to leverage his notoriety and standing to create sustainable creative outlets for Indigenous youth, a mission that notably extends beyond skateboarding:

> When kids go here to skate, this isn't only going to create skateboarders. This park is going to create filmmakers and it's going to create photographers, it's going to create business owners, it's going to create social media people (Lerner, 2021, n.p.).

Miles Jr. recognises that the skatepark's communal functions might also offer Apache youth the resources needed to pursue self-defined learning goals and a wide array of creative, social, and professional competencies. Miles's version of skate culture transforms it from a largely solitary

pursuit into a catalyst for systemic change that emerges from the self-directed actions of Indigenous youth. The Apache Passion Project, in this manner, functions as an anticolonial pedagogy because it emphasises the autonomy of Indigenous people themselves, in direct refutation of colonial approaches to Indian education that use the technologies of teaching and learning to obfuscate a mission of eradication, assimilation, and the imposition of dependency on settler welfare (Grande, 2015; Yellowhorse, 2020; Romero & Yellowhorse, 2021; Romero, 2023).

Through skateboarding, art, and activism, Apache Skateboards, its founders, and its riders demonstrate how decolonising pedagogies trouble "the ways colonist ideologies become normalized within national discourses and internalized among minoritized peoples" (Styres, 2019, p. 32). Apache Skateboards also augments, informs, and strengthens the work of organisations like Unity Skateboards, Skate Like a Girl, Skateistan, Pushing Boarders, Slow Impact, and other Native-owned brands like Lakota Skateboards and Wounded Knee Skateboards. These collectives all work within local contexts to create physical and figurative space for people from under-represented communities in skateboarding. What makes Apache Skateboards revolutionary, in other words, "is the fact that the skate industry is pretty much a white dominated industry, but we are the longest standing Native American skate group, skate brand and skate company…we are constantly working, doing demos, consultation events, community building, skatepark planning, art projects, design projects, branding and co-branding — all in the last 20 years" (Koelkebeck, 2024, n.p.).

For Apache Skateboards, anti-colonial skate pedagogy means staying engaged and providing opportunities for Indigenous youth to articulate and advance the goals they create for themselves, in real time. ASP is a means for safeguarding and sustaining Apache futures. While the photographers, researchers, journalists, and curators will come and go, the Apache Skate Team will continue skating, creating art, and securing Apache self-determination on Apache terms. The anti-colonial skate pedagogy of Apache Skateboards also underscores the fact that the Apache people *have been and always will be*.

Conclusion

Apache Skateboards, above all, should be appreciated as a collective and community-embedded effort to exercise Indigenous autonomy and livingness in ways that are reflexive to the changing needs of real communities. This interpretation forms the crux of skate pedagogy's contributions to decolonising education, as it suggests that teaching and learning to subvert all forms of Euro-American colonialism involves pairing unceasing resistance with respectful engagement with one's community, surroundings, and self. Anti-colonial skate pedagogy shows how decolonising education is not simply a matter of instituting the 'correct' curriculum, using the most appropriate and non-offensive terms, and making teaching practices and assessment tools less oppressive, pathologising, or surveillant.

ASP shows us that decolonising education might instead be a matter of uplifting forms of learning that encourage

people to work for *the people* and reject the colonial mandates of competition, categorisation, and domination- be it over territories, bodies, industries, polities, or knowledge. Skate pedagogy shows us that developing a critical consciousness about oneself and one's surroundings requires a simple willingness to come into relation, an act of agentic association in which the skateboard might serve as a talisman and guide. On two feet, it is easy to dismiss a handrail as just a handrail, a curb as just a curb, and a human being as just a human being. Anti-colonial skate pedagogy shows that on four wheels, each of those things has the capacity to become a formidable obstacle, a catalyst for growth, and an agent of change.

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