REMEMBERING ATTU: IMPERIALISM AND THE CONTESTED MEMORY OF THE "FORGOTTEN WAR"

by

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INTRODUCTION

A flag flies in an Aleutian harbor almost 80 years after the Japanese attempted to invade these islands during World War II. It is not the American flag, but one of the most recognizable symbols of the Japanese empire, the Rising Sun Flag (Kyokujitsuki). On September 20th, 2021, a Japanese Navy training vessel, the JS *Kashima* docked in Dutch Harbor, Alaska, my hometown.[1] To many, the continued use of the Rising Sun Flag is proof that Japan refuses to fully let go of its imperial history, a history which is indelibly connected with the forced removal of Indigenous peoples from the Aleutian Islands during this war.[2]

In August of 1942, 40 residents of Attu, all Indigenous, were taken to a prisoner of war (POW) camp in Japan.[3] Twenty-one would die, and the survivors would never be allowed to return back to Attu.[4] This is a history that ought not be forgotten.[5]

The story of World War II in the Aleutians, however, has come to dominate historical memory of the Islands. The nonprofit Atux̂ (=Attu) Forever, an organization dedicated to helping Sasignan peoples, or the Indigenous peoples of the easternmost Aleutian Islands, implicitly pushes back on this historical memory of the Islands with this statement on the current state of scholarship on Attu: "The history of our people extends for 10,000 plus years – repeat that

[1] "Japanese Navy Training Ship Stops in Unalaska on Way to Pearl Harbor."
[2] "Tokyo 2020."
[3] One white resident, the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) teacher Etta Jones, was taken to another POW camp in Japan. Her husband who was also white, Foster Jones, was the radio operator for the village of Attu and was killed by Japanese soldiers after sending a radio message alerting American authorities of the invasion. Although several shots were fired at the village, he was the only occupant of the village of Attu who was killed in the invasion. Golodoff, *Attu Boy = Attsutō No Shōnen*, 59. "The Lone Civilian: One Alaska War Hero's Unique Place in History."
[4] The 21 dead include four out of the five babies born in Japan. 40 people would go to Japan as POWs and 24 would return to the United States. Golodoff, *Attu Boy = Attsutō No Shōnen*, 90.
[5] I am incredibly thankful to Helena Schmitz of Atux̂ Forever for sharing the information that these survivors of Attu have never been able to gain the government prisoner of war label needed for inclusion into, for example, the national Prisoner of War Museum. Schmitz, Brian Conwell Interview with Helena Schmitz.

10,000 years. Does a history book depict each year? We are a strong, smart, incredible group of people that have changed the world in small, yet big ways. That is our true history."[6]

This is worth repeating— there is 10,000 years of history on Attu. In popular discourse on the island, however, Attu has become eponymous with the Battle of Attu, a campaign of World War II which lasted 18 days.[7] Historian Rusty Ray Bartels, in his dissertation "War Memories, Imperial Ambitions: Commemorating World War II in the US Pacific National Park System," argues that the commemoration of war naturalizes U.S. colonial possessions as part of the nation-state of the United States. In other words, commemorating war loss is a way of saying that colonized peoples who have "sacrificed" on behalf of the country deserve to be considered part of the greater nation-state. This is fraught because it legitimizes the settler-colonists' claims to the land while absorbing colonized peoples into the imperial nation-state. In the context of Attu, the super-memorialization of World War II war dead on the island through a smattering of memorials have legitimized Attu's characterization as American "home soil" in the present day. This means that in order to make Attu a part of the American nation-state, the 10,000 years of history by Sasignan peoples are covered up— dominated by World War II. This is through the disproportionate number of memorials on the island that commemorate various aspects of World War II. Thus, in the dominant American historical memory, "Attu" effectively becomes "The Battle of Attu."

A rich example of a monument which does this mnemonic cover-up is a structure known as the Japanese Peace Memorial. As you reach the top of Engineer Hill on Attu, one starts to see a shiny, jagged silhouette through the mist. Against the tundra, which is painted yellow and light green with leftover crystalline snow filling the crevasses that spot the landscape, a 19-foot tall

[6] "Atuŝ Forever."
[7] Alaska at War Symposium Anchorage, *Alaska at War, 1941-1945*, 85.

titanium spire juts out of the earth. As one gets closer, the full structure emerges. It is a large, imposing metal starburst— three large spires shoot downward from the center acting as a tripod which props the structure up. Several smaller spikes explode from the center accentuating the length of the larger spires. Perplexed, one may wonder why such a strange structure exists on this uninhabited island in remote Alaska. As one walks even closer, a prominent titanium nameplate comes into view. Large Japanese kanji name the monument. Below this title, a Japanese inscription followed by an English inscription attempt to explain the monument's strange presence. Iridescent, intertwined rainbow shades that resemble an oil slick color these inscriptions. From the inscription, you can gather that it is a memorial commemorating World War II. Almost reminiscent of the metal monoliths in the science fiction film *2001: A Space Odyssey*, this large, metallic, and vaguely futuristic starburst appears out of place among the natural colors and shapes of this Alaskan landscape (see Figure 1).[8]

Figure 1: The Japanese Peace Memorial on a foggy day.[9]

[8] Hupp, *Peace Memorial on Engineer Hill, Attu.*
[9] Hupp.

This strange monument stands apart from the cornucopia of monuments that dot Attu Island, both aesthetically and in its creation. It was the product of international cooperation between the United States and Japan; in 1987 as Japan solidified itself as a world economic power, the Japanese government with the permission of the U.S. State Department placed this monument on the island ostensibly for the purpose of promoting peace and friendship between the two countries. American monuments are instrumental in understanding the creation of the modern American nation-state, as Rusty Ray Bartels has argued. This monument, however, as a negotiation between Japanese and American memory of World War II, is able to tell us about the international dynamics of empire borne out of the aftermath of this war. How have these countries gone about remembering (or forgetting) the Indigenous history of a place in its remembrance of World War II? But first: Why is it important to analyze monuments and memorials in the first place?

Monuments represent a shaping of the history of a place. Indigenous Studies scholars Lisa Blee and Jean M. O'Brien in their *Monumental Mobility: The Memory Work of Massasoit* argue that historical monuments help determine "how individuals and collectivities make meaning of the past as distinct from the concrete matter of what actually happened."[10] In other words, monuments shape how people think about history, whether or not these thoughts about history are truly what happened. While the study of history attempts to describe what actually happened in the past, the endeavor of memory studies is to find out how people have remembered what happened in the past. Memory can be faulty, can emphasize or de-emphasize key points of what happened, and even be suppressed by the exercise of a dominant power.

[10] Blee, *Monumental Mobility*, 7.

War memorials are a dominant way in which memory of war created. In his book *Nothing Ever Dies,* novelist and Asian American Studies scholar Viet Thanh Nguyen argues that every war is fought twice— first on the battlefield and second in memory.[11] The means by which these wars are fought in memory are many. Films, books, music, and memorials contribute to the remembrance of wars after they are explicitly fought. Additionally, war memorials are primarily concerned with speaking for the dead, who cannot speak for themselves.[12] Wrapped up in this is a multitude of questions central to understanding the project of a memorial itself. Ultimately, war memory is important because it informs how wars are fought in the present day. Nguyen explains:

> …new wars cannot be fought unless a nation has dealt with its old wars, however imperfectly or incompletely. The problem of how to remember war is central to the identity of the nation, itself almost always founded on the violent conquest of territory and the subjugation of people. …The battles that shaped the nation are most often remembered by the citizenry as defending the country, usually in the service of peace, justice, freedom, or other noble ideas. Dressed in this way, the wars of the past justify the wars of the present for which the citizen is willing to fight or at least pay taxes, wave flags, cast votes, and carry forth all the duties and rituals that affirm her or his identity as being one with the nation's.[13]

Nguyen's argument emphasizes that war memorials can be a powerful way in which a nation deals with its old wars. Thus, analyzing war monuments help to explicate exactly how the historical memory of past wars has led us to fight wars today.

In postcolonial contexts monuments can be particularly dangerous in causing the coverup of Indigenous history. Kanaka Maoli historian and theorist Haunani-Kay Trask, channeling theorist Franz Fanon, argues that mainstream histories colonize the mind. More specifically, "'By a kind of perverted logic, [colonialism] turns to the past of the oppressed people, and

[11] Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*, 4.
[12] Nguyen, 5.
[13] Nguyen, 5.

distorts, disfigures, and destroys it.'"[14] In the same vein, Blee and O'Brien argue that a monument can even represent a "replacement narrative" through which a colonizer can warp the history of a place to legitimize their sovereignty over the place.[15] Thus, in places laden with a history of imperial violence and colonial hegemony, like Attu, memorials can be vessels through which the past is constructed in a way that minimizes the Indigenous history and legitimizes the colonizers' history. Further, Attu is a place in which colonial violence against Indigenous peoples has been a perpetual struggle since the first colonizers appeared in the Aleutians from Russia. As Nguyen says, war memorials are concerned with speaking for the dead.[16] Speaking for the dead, however, is a fraught endeavor in a colonial context where Indigenous history is warped, replaced, distorted, and destroyed by colonizers aiming to legitimize their claim to the land.

In order to emphasize Indigenous claims to the land in the face of the colonialism that is wrapped up in any history of the Aleutians, I orient the Aleutians at the center of this project. The Aleutians are too often depicted as being on the fringes of the Russian Empire, the American Empire, or the Japanese Empire. When telling the story of the Aleutians for this project, it is important that this place is not treated simply as the culminating edge of a trudge across the Pacific by the Japanese military. To the Indigenous peoples who have lived in the Aleutian Islands since time immemorial, this place is at the center of the world.[17] In order to convey this, I reorient the story of the Aleutians as involving Russian imperialists coming from the west,

[14] Trask, *From a Native Daughter*, 120.
[15] Blee, *Monumental Mobility*, 13.
[16] Nguyen, *Nothing Ever Dies*, 5.
[17] I take inspiration from historian Daniel Richter's history of Indigenous St. Louis and his book *Facing East from Indian Country*, in which he attempts to "shift our perspective to try to view the past in a way that faces east from Indian country." In this view of history, "Native Americans appear in the foreground, and Europeans enter from distant shores." Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country*, 8.

American imperialists coming from the east, and Japanese imperialists coming again from the west. With this shifted perspective, the Aleutians lie at the center of my project.

Aleutian pre-history goes back approximately 10,000 years. Globally, the Aleutian Islands lie between mainland Alaska on the eastern end and Russian Kamchatka on the western end. The island chain itself is roughly 1,100 miles long, about the same distance between New York City and Miami.[1819] It is important to note the variance among the Indigenous nation that has historically inhabited the Aleutians. The Indigenous peoples of the Aleutians refer to themselves by two names, Unangan or Unangas depending on the dialect (or collectively the Unangax̂) and Aleut.[20] Unangax̂ comes from Unangam Tunuu, their Indigenous language, while the word Aleut is widely believed to have been given by Russian explorers when they began to colonize the region.[21] More specifically, the Unangax̂ in Attu use a regional identifier and call themselves the Sasignan people.[22] Because the Aleutians are such a vast area of land, regional identifiers are often helpful in differentiating between dialects and islands.

Imperialism in the Aleutians begins with the Russian Empire. By the 1760s, several "companies" of Russian fur traders took over the islands, accompanied by various imperialist institutions like the Russian military and the Russian Orthodox Church. Driven by the voracious appetite of the global fur trade, by the 1860s the Russian Empire had overharvested the lucrative fur bearing animals of the region, such as the sea otter, and sold the colony of Alaska in 1867. This period was characterized by overt war by the Russian military against Unangan peoples, the

[18] "Aleutian Islands | History, Climate, & Facts | Britannica."
[19] "Distance Miami > New-York - Air Line, Driving Route, Midpoint."
[20] Veltre, "Unangax̂ Culture Before the Russians."
[21] Veltre.
[22] "Atux̂ Forever."

indoctrination of Unangan peoples into the Orthodox Church, and the forced, virtually unpaid labor of Unangan men in the fur trade.[23]

American imperialism in the Aleutians brought different extractive industries, the erasure of Unangam Tunuu through the residential school system, and militarization of the region during and after World War II. In June of 1942 after the Japanese attack the Aleutians, the U.S. military evacuated 881 Indigenous Unangan residents from all across the Aleutian Chain to abandoned fish camps in Southeast Alaska. This evacuation resulted in massive loss of life among the Unangan community, with many elders and youth dying of preventable disease resulting from the sparse conditions of the abandoned fish camps, which were never meant to house people over the winter, only during the fishing season in the summer.[24]

In scholarship, discourse of imperialism in the Aleutians often ends with this attempt by imperial Japan to colonize the Aleutians in June of 1942. Initially as a tactic to divert American ships from the Battle of Midway, the Japanese imperial military invaded Attu and Kiska. When the Japanese landed, they told the Unangan peoples living there that they were freed from their American oppressors.[25] After the horrendous loss of life in the POW camp in Japan, in the postwar period the American government refused to allow the surviving Attuans to return to their ancestral homelands. As a result, the surviving Attuans largely moved to other islands on the Aleutian Chain.[26]

In the contemporary postwar period, Japan and the United States, as well as other postcolonial states, are still perpetrating colonialism. As Okinawan postcolonial theorist Koya

[23] Veltre, "Unangax̂ Culture Before the Russians."
[24] Veltre.
[25] Golodoff, *Attu Boy = Attsutō No Shōnen*, 58.
[26] Golodoff, 109.

Nomura argues, "this is the most important meaning of postcolonialism."[27] Nomura argues that today the U.S. and Japan still collaborate in a kind of "unconscious colonialism" all over the world.[28] Nomura, channeling postcolonial theorist Edward Said, argues that: "even though 'direct colonialism has largely ended,' colonialism itself has not. Just as imperialism 'lingers where it has always been,' so will colonialism as 'a consequence of imperialism.' …Colonialism has not ended."[29] In other words, Japan, although it is ostensibly a state which has renounced its colonial and imperialist past, still retains its claim on land that it occupied during the imperialist Meiji Period. Namely, Okinawa and Hokkaido, which were home to Indigenous Okinawans and Indigenous Ainu peoples, are still occupied by Japan. The same is true of the United States— the land going back to the founding of this country is unceded Indigenous land.

The imperial mission of Japan has a long history that involves the covering up of Indigenous peoples in favor of a historical memory in which the Japanese control the narrative. During the Meiji Period, Japan expanded the boundaries of its empire, ostensibly to defend itself from Western imperialism.[30] Starting in 1940, Japan termed the region of its imperial control the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, thus imagining pan-Asian unity under rule by the Japanese Emperor. Underscoring this conception of empire was the idea that it would be an empire substituting inevitable Western imperialism with Japanese imperialism. In other words, the Japanese believed they were "saving" other Asian and Pacific countries from Western rule by placing them under Japanese rule instead. In keeping with this theme, when the Japanese invaded

[27] Nomura and Shimabuku, "Undying Colonialism," 93.
[28] Nomura and Shimabuku, 105.
[29] Nomura and Shimabuku, 96–98.
[30] This expansion began with the annexation of Hokkaido (the northern main island of modern Japan) and Okinawa (the southern main island of modern Japan). This was followed by Taiwan's annexation in 1895. After Japan's victory in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, Japan took control of the Korean peninsula and then opened the door for its 1931 invasion of Manchuria. Territories outside of Japan were hierarchized as *gaichi*, or outer territories, while Japan was termed *naichi*. Nomura and Shimabuku, footnote 1.

Attu they told the residents that they were liberated from their American oppressors and could now call themselves subjects of Japan.[31] This, however, was simply the same dynamic of imperial rule just by a different imperialist nation.

In this postwar era, it is imperative to, as Nomura says, "analyze, critique, and dismantle" lingering colonialism, such as that which exists within the story of Attu.[32] In order to highlight the legacies of imperialism, war, and peace in the Aleutian Islands, this project focuses on the Japanese Peace Memorial. This memorial includes both Japanese and English, and the translation work I undertake breaks down the Japanese kanji and elucidates the different aims of the memorial for both the Japanese and the U.S. historical memories of war and imperialism, and how these memories neglect the Indigenous history of Attu. Further, this project focuses on two histories of Attu, the documentary *Red White Black & Blue* and the book *Attu Boy* to further negotiate the different memories of Attu and how they neglect Indigenous history. Overall, in breaking down this historical memory of Attu, I argue that the equivocation of "Attu" with "The Battle of Attu" neglects the Indigenous history of the island and perpetrates a lingering form of colonialism which aims to legitimize the colonizers' claims to the unceded Indigenous land of Attu.

In chapter 1, I first trace a history of Japanese memorials on Attu Island starting with the first expedition to put up a monument after the Battle of Attu and ending with the placement of the Japanese Peace Memorial. Then, I translate and analyze the inscription of the Peace Memorial, drawing out the intricacies of the memorization of war dead and its connection to the pursuit of peace embodied by the memorial. I cover the Japanese myth of "starting over" after World War II and how that his embodied by the futuristic look of the memorial. Finally, I engage

[31] Golodoff, *Attu Boy = Attsutō No Shōnen*, 58.
[32] Nomura and Shimabuku, "Undying Colonialism," 97.

the structure of the memorial in order to elicit the settler-colonial dynamics at play within its concretization of the memory of Attu and specifically, the Battle of Attu. With this, I conclude that the true meaning of the peace that the Japanese Peace Memorial embodies is a peace between the U.S. and Japan borne out of the end of World War II. The memorial embodies the end of just *one* war, World War II; the ongoing occupation of Indigenous land continues.

In chapter 2, I analyze the popular documentary on World War II in the Aleutians, *Red White Black & Blue*. By analyzing this documentary, I establish the dominant historical memory of Attu through the prevailing way in which Attu has been described— as a place with bad weather, rough terrain, and a place filled with eerie reminders of the dead. Then, I analyze Nick Golodoff's memoir *Attu Boy* as a text which subverts this hegemonic memory. I argue that *Attu Boy*, countering *Red White Black & Blue*, presents Attu as a place with an Indigenous Unangan community at its center and as a place filled with richness of life. Further, *Attu Boy* instead centers Indigenous oral history and storytelling. I conclude that *Attu Boy* counters the equivocation of Attu with the Battle of Attu by remembering the island's vibrant, community-filled past and thus opens the door for imagining Attu's verdant future.

CHAPTER 1: THE JAPANESE PEACE MEMORIAL, THE RHETORIC OF PEACE, AND INDIGENOUS ERASURE

In 1953, Japanese officials returned to Attu and placed the first Japanese memorial on the island. This first memorial placed by the Japanese government on Attu Island was a gravestone-like object on Engineer Hill, which simply reads, according to a translation by volunteer translator for the Anchorage Museum Mayumi Ito: "Memorial for Japanese People who died in the War" followed by the date and "Government of Japan" (see Figure 2).[33] The pretext for these Japanese officials' visit to Attu was to search for the bodies of war dead who were buried in mass graves near the sites of the major battles on the island.[34]

Figure 2: Two military officers stationed on Attu stand by the newly placed Japanese memorial (1953).[35]

In 1978, another visit by Japanese officials yielded another Japanese memorial on the island near the 1953 memorial. This was a smaller memorial and was again a small gravestone-like object, this time made of brass. It reads, in large kanji: *chinkon* (鎮魂), which according to

[33] This monument is right next to where the Peace Memorial would later be put. It is actually visible in the background of Figure 1. Cloe, *Attu*, 176.
[34] Cloe, 176.
[35] Thorla, *NH 69570 Monument on Attu*.

my translation means “RIP,” “requiescats,” “requiem,” or “repose of souls.” Ito translates it as “The Response of Souls,” which may be a typo for “repose.”[36] Either way, marking the spot with *chinkon* is a way of marking the land as a place of remembrance for war dead. According to historian John Haine Cloe, this spot is meant to cover a vault where visitors have left coins.[37] In much smaller text under these large kanji, according to Ito’s translation, reads: “The Governor of Hokkaido, Naochiro Dogakinai” (see Figure 3).[38] Again, there is the tendency on these Japanese memorials to designate that they were placed by a government entity, but instead of giving it the broad designator of the federal government of Japan, it is a regional government, the government of Hokkaido prefecture.

Figure 3: The Japanese memorial placed in 1978.[39]

Another memorial, which is dated Showa 53 July 26 (July 26, 1978), was placed by the family of a medical officer during the Battle of Attu, Lieutenant Ohmura (see Figure 4). This memorial is covered in poetry and features a picture of the deceased soldier.[40] According to John Cloe, this memorial was badly deteriorated in 2013 and was gone on a subsequent trip to Attu in

[36] Cloe, *Attu*, 173.
[37] Cloe, 173.
[38] Interestingly, in 1973 a large memorial to the Japanese war dead on Attu and Kiska was placed in Sapporo, Japan, the capital and largest city in Hokkaido. “「アッツ島玉砕雄魂之碑」と副碑。= Attu Island ‘Jade-Breaking’ Male Soul Monument and Accessory Monument.”
[39] Alholm, *Attu 1999 #8.*
[40] Cloe, *Attu*, 173.

2016. On the Alaska Region U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife Service Flickr, however, there is a picture of the memorial dated August 13th, 2017. It is possible that the memorial was refurbished and reinstalled after Cloe's visit in 2016.

Figure 4: The memorial to Lieutenant Ohmura. Gloved hands are visible at the top corners of the frame which are helpful for understanding the size of the memorial.[41]

[41] Alaska Region U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service, *Japanese Memorial, Attu*.

These monuments are a great case study in *who* cares about war memorials— it is a combination of governments, the bereaved families, and veterans themselves. These three memorials, which came before the grand memorial, the large titanium Attu Peace Memorial, all were all claimed by slightly different entities— the federal government of Japan, the government of Hokkaido prefecture, and Lieutenant Ohmura's family. Further, to realistically get to Attu, one needs the support of the U.S. military as the U.S. Coast Guard operated a LORAN station there until 2010.[42] Thus, these were all at least tacitly allowed by the U.S. government. As will be discussed in regard to the Attu Peace Memorial, the negotiations between these factions coalesce into a tacit argument embodied by a memorial which can be instrumental in understanding what the memorial itself remembers, forgets, de-emphasizes, and emphasizes.

Today, the island of Attu is designated as part of the World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument by the U.S. National Parks Service (NPS). Anthropologist and former NPS historian Paul A. Shackel argues that monuments "help to create an official public memory" which can be established by "(1) forgetting about or excluding an alternative past, (2) creating and reinforcing patriotism, and/or (3) developing a sense of nostalgia to legitimize a particular heritage".[43] The World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument and its local manifestation on Attu is no different.

Dedicating the Japanese Peace Memorial

In 1987, the Attu Peace Memorial was placed by the Japanese federal government in cooperation with the U.S. federal government. On this occasion, a dedication ceremony was held. At the dedication ceremony, several descendants of war dead who perished at the Battle of Attu attended and spoke. Alejandro Montanez, the son of an American soldier who died at Attu,

[42] LORAN was the precursor to GPS navigation. "Loran | Radio Navigation | Britannica."
[43] Shackel, "Public Memory and the Search for Power in American Historical Archaeology," 655.

was profiled in a United Press International (UPI) article along with Tomoyuki Ohmura, the son of the Japanese Lieutenant Ohmura, the subject of the 1978 memorial. In the 1987 article, they were characterized as sharing tears and pledging that "we don't have to do this again," implying war between the U.S. and Japan.[44] The same article mentions that Yasuyuki Yamazaki, the son of the number one Japanese commanding officer on the island who also died at Attu did not show emotion.[45] At the dedication, flowers were placed at the foot of the memorial by a U.S. Wildlife Refuge official on behalf of U.S. President Ronald Reagan and a Japanese official placed wreaths on behalf of Emperor Hirohito and Prime Minister Nakasone.[46] This is as clear a sign as any that this was a monument endorsed at the highest levels by both governments. Eijiro Hata, a relatively high-ranking Japanese official, hoped that this monument would "forever keep telling the value of world peace to the people of the world and… will be a symbol of friendship between the United States and Japan."[47] The rhetoric of peace wholeheartedly endorsed by both governments, bound up in the grieving of sons who lost their fathers, thus punctuated this dedication. From this source, there is no mention of the Indigenous perspective.

In another article by the UPI, however, an inkling of the Indigenous perspective comes through. Perescovia Wright, one of the Attuan POWs, according to the unnamed author of the article said that this dedication ceremony ostensibly for peace "was not an occasion for celebration."[48] She said: "It's not fair. It (Attu Island) belongs to the native people."[49] Likely gesturing toward the injustice of these Attuan POWs not being able to return to the island while a contingency of Coast Guardsmen were, she said of her return to Attu in 1973 that: "All I could

[44] "Peace Monument Brings Sons of Enemy Fathers Together."
[45] "Peace Monument Brings Sons of Enemy Fathers Together."
[46] "Peace Monument Brings Sons of Enemy Fathers Together."
[47] "Peace Monument Brings Sons of Enemy Fathers Together."
[48] "Peace Monument Rises from Battleground."
[49] "Peace Monument Rises from Battleground."

see was sadness."[50] In the article, the unnamed author notes that "Japan recalled the tragedy of Attu," but seemed to imply that the tragedy was related to the immense amount of Japanese war dead, and not the tragedy of the Attuan POWs. It is clear that Indigenous perspective and the story of the Attuan POWs were not emphasized in the 1987 dedication ceremony if they were mentioned at all.

The Inscription of the Peace Memorial: The Intricacies of War Dead and Peace

There are two main names for the Attu Peace Memorial, one in Japanese and one in English. The first is the Peace Memorial (or variations on this such as the Japanese Peace Memorial, or the Attu Peace Memorial). This name is largely used by American sources. The second name is the North Pacific War Dead Monument, which is actually what is inscribed on the memorial itself in Japanese in large kanji at the top. In other words, this is the name that the memorial calls itself. Interestingly, there is no corresponding English title on the monument; this is a key difference in the Japanese inscription and the English inscription (see Figure 5). Thus, I use the name Peace Memorial, or Attu Peace Memorial, because that is how the monument is written about and remembered in the United States today. It is important to note, however, that the Japanese inscription calls itself something different.

[50] "Peace Monument Rises from Battleground."

Figure 5: The Inscription of the Japanese Peace Memorial.[51]

That the Japanese inscription uses the name North Pacific War Dead Monument implies that the overall aim of the monument, to the Japanese viewer at least, is to commemorate war dead. This actually falls in line with the previous Japanese monuments placed on the island, which are all also explicitly in commemoration of war dead. Why does the English title of the monument differ so much from the Japanese title? On one hand, the Japanese title commemorates war dead, while on the other hand the English title makes the monument's aim out to be the promotion of peace. If there is meant to be a message about peace from the point of view of a Japanese viewer, it is secondary to the message about commemorating war dead. One way to reconcile these two messages is to say that the message espoused by the Japanese inscription is that in order to prevent the heinous, wasteful tragedy that is represented by these

[51] Hupp, *Peace Memorial Inscription, Attu*.

war dead, Japan and the U.S. ought to promote peace. This reading of the memorial makes the most sense in rectifying these two seemingly conflicting titles.

Specifically, this pursuit of peace embodied by the Peace Memorial is a forward-looking aspiration based *only* on the destruction and bloodshed of World War II. Relatedly, the memorialization of war dead and the pursuit of peace born out of that death are intertwined. The strange grammar of the English inscription highlights this inextricable connection. The English text reads:

In memory of all those who sacrificed
Their lives in the islands and
Seas of the North Pacific
During World War II and
In dedication to world peace

Constructed by the Government of Japan
In Cooperation with
The Government of the United States of America
On 1 July 1987 [52]

The grammar of the English inscription is strange because it could be read as two different complete thoughts. The first thought is: "In memory of all those who sacrificed their lives… during World War II" and the second is: "In memory of all those who sacrificed their lives… in dedication to world peace." Read together, this wording implies that the American war dead died so that world peace could happen: "In memory of all those who sacrificed their lives… during World War II and in dedication to world peace." With this, the English inscription makes it seem like the war dead sacrificed themselves in World War II so that there could be world peace. In this way, the English inscription matches the main Japanese memory of the Battle in that it says that the memory of the war dead ought to inspire these two powerful countries to pursue peace.

[52] Sumitomo Metals Ltd., *Attu Peace Memorial*.

The American memory, however, differs a little in how it reaches that conclusion. This version implies that it was the fallen soldiers themselves who pursued peace through the act of sacrificing their lives in the fighting. The active "who" in "all those who sacrificed themselves" implies grammatically that these war dead actively "sacrificed themselves" (or died) under their own volition and were not, for example, killed against their will. This fits with the overall American memory of this war, in which paradoxically the Americans *had* to fight and in order to stop aggressors like Germany and Japan in order to achieve peace. In other words, this inscription suggests that the Americans had to step in and use violence in order to stop another imperial power from taking their land in an unjustified way. By doing violence, the Americans achieve peace.

Conversely, the Japanese inscription (see Figure 5) shows that conventions about writing about the war dead in Japan dictate that the war dead of the Japanese imperial military died in vain, which elicits the necessity of remaking of those soldiers' purpose for death. Put simply, these war dead's new purpose on the monument is being the inspiration for peace. According to my translation, the inscription of the Japanese section of the monument reads:

North Pacific War Dead Monument
In the previous Great War,
In the North Pacific's islands and ocean,
To remember (or imagine, or envision) people who were killed in action, (and)
With the thought of moving toward peace, (we) build this monument.
Completion: Showa 62 (1987) July 1 Government of Japan Cooperation: United States of America Government [53]

With this, in the Japanese version, the text divorces the actions of the war dead from the concept of world peace. This is in comparison to the English version, which places the two concepts together in a way where it could be read that the American war dead died so that world

[53] Sumitomo Metals Ltd.

peace could happen. Firstly, the difference in wording between "killed in action" and "sacrificed their lives" shows the Japanese government's hesitancy to say that the Japanese war dead died for some noble cause, whereas the English version saying "sacrificed" implies that there was something worth sacrificing lives for. "Killed in action" denotes a comparative lack of choice on the part of the soldiers to be killed; "sacrificed their lives" implies that the soldiers who died were choosing to do so. Essentially, the Japanese version has no false impression that the Japanese war dead died in Attu so that there could be world peace; there is implicit acknowledgement in this sentence construction that those who were killed in action did so at the direction of the leaders of an empire who were pursuing greedy, wanton imperialism. In other words, the English inscription, which better represents American memory of the war, says war dead sacrificed themselves so that world peace could occur. On the other hand, the Japanese inscription says that war dead, in the moment at least, died in vain. For these war dead to have some sort of meaning ascribed to their deaths, however, we ought to make sure no one ever dies in this way again. Hence, the U.S. and Japan ought to aspire to and promote peace.

This forward-looking pursuit of peace is one that is born out of the destruction of World War II, and specifically the Battle of Attu. The singular focus on World War II is significant because this was a war fought between imperial powers, and in the Aleutians these imperial powers were fighting over unceded Indigenous land. Thus, the concept of peace that the Attu Peace Memorial embodies is a concept of peace that emphasizes that war between two world powers, as what happened on Attu, is horrendous and bloody for both sides. At the same time, however, the monument stays silent on these same imperial powers' violence against Indigenous peoples. In not mentioning this, the memorial is propagating a view of world peace that disavows war between these large imperial powers but neglects the constant struggle of Indigenous

peoples and other marginalized groups within empire against these large imperial nations, like Japan and the United States.

Practically, an implication of this silence on the part of the memorial is that imperial powers can conceivably take land from Indigenous peoples. After all, this memorial lies on unceded Indigenous land in the first place. At best, then, the memorial stays silent explicitly on the occupation of Indigenous land by imperialist powers but implicitly allows it by virtue of its placement. In what sense, then, does the monument espouse peace? When one imperial power tries to take another imperial power's land through war, the memorial says that this is wasteful and destructive and ought not be allowed by the world order. Recall that World War II took place between the massive imperial powers of the world— Germany, the U.S., Japan, the United Kingdom, France, and others. Thus, these countries ought to maintain peace among themselves in order to prevent this bloodshed that occurs when imperial countries war. These same countries' violence and war on Indigenous peoples in order to maintain control of Indigenous land, however, is forgotten about by this memorial. This is because this violence does not involve imperial nations warring against each other, which was the subject of World War II.

Further, given the attention to "war dead," the Attuan POWs are conspicuously absent from the inscription. This also highlights the lack of care the Peace Memorial has for peace for Indigenous peoples. The plaque on the Peace Memorial says that it is dedicated to those "who sacrificed their lives in… the North Pacific" in the English inscription and "people who were killed in action" in the Japanese inscription. Firstly, this implies that the memorial is commemorating dead soldiers, not "collateral damage" such as the Attuan POWs. Secondly, this fails to mention the imperialist and colonial ambitions of the nations that fought to control this region, and the collateral damage that the Indigenous peoples of this region suffered. Japan

wanted to conquer the Aleutians. The United States succeeded in conquering the Aleutians, at least militarily.

The rhetoric of the monument's inscription, in which soldiers "sacrifice" their lives and are "killed in action," presuppose that World War II was justified, and concretizes the memory of World War II as a "good" war. Recall that the story of imperialism in the Aleutians constitutes the Russian Empire coming from the west, the Americans coming from the east, and the Japanese again coming from the west. The way the memorial talks about World War II makes it seem that all that was happening was the fight between the United States and Japan. In reality, World War II can be seen as another iteration of imperialist violence against Indigenous peoples. The Attu Peace Memorial ignores that.

The Peace Memorial as a New Future and the Myth of "Starting Over"

The current scholarship in the field of Indigenous Studies on time elucidates how this monument places Indigenous peoples in the past. Theorist Juliana Pegues in her book *Space-Time Colonialism* explains that European American identity is premised on time moving forward in a linear fashion.[54] Because time is conceived of as being linear, civilizations in the present day appear to be the culmination of the progress and breakthroughs of each previous generation. With this, the peoples of Western Europe, the United States, Japan, and other imperialist countries become the consummation of all of these thousands of years of progress and are thus justified in imposing their vision of history onto the places that they colonize. Pegues, channeling political scientist Kevin Bruyneel, argues that colonial time "encompasses the economic, cultural, and political narratives of the settler state that 'place temporal boundaries between an 'advancing' people and a 'static' people, locating the latter out of time.'"[55] In other words, with

[54] Pegues, *Space-Time Colonialism*, 12.
[55] Pegues, 12–13.

this view of time, Indigenous peoples are "either relegated to the past or exist inauthentically in the present."[56] An example of this is that in American memory, Indigenous peoples are often imagined as belonging in the "wild West" or generally in the past.

The Peace Memorial's memory of World War II that covers Indigenous history connects to the larger tradition of postwar monuments in Japan. The Hiroshima Peace Park attempted to build a futuristic and utopian city on top of the ruins of Hiroshima in order to memorialize the vast civilian deaths from the atomic bomb blast. In the same way, the Peace Memorial on Attu attempts to cover up what was destroyed by war with a new retelling of history built upon the barren, destroyed landscape of Attu. In Hiroshima, the designers of the Peace Park surrounded and juxtaposed the old surviving architecture from the atomic bomb, most notably the *Genbaku* (Atomic Bomb) *Dome*, with the smooth, and futuristic aesthetics that comprise the Hiroshima Peace Park (see Figure 6). The Peace Park is a symbol of the rebuilding of postwar Japan, which architectural historian Hyunjung Cho, quoting historian Carol Gluck, calls an embodiment of "the mythic sense of starting over of 1945."[57] This "starting over" is a myth because it is simply not true that the end of World War II signaled the end of the violence, nationalism, and imperialism of the Japanese government, although it did signal the end of a large part of their empire under the American occupation.

[56] Pegues, 13.
[57] Cho, "Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park and the Making of Japanese Postwar Architecture," 72.

Figure 6: The Peace Park on the left.[58] Through the arch, you can see the *Genbaku* Dome in the distance. A closer shot of the *Genbaku* Dome on the right.[59]

These tendencies within Japanese memory to willfully forget Japan's imperial past continue to the present day. Yasukuni Shrine, one of the most notable emblems of Japanese nationalistic memory regarding World War II war dead, represents a way that the imperialistic tendencies of the Japanese government have refused to die.[60] In a study which compares the different war memory espoused by nationalistic Yasukuni Shrine in Tokyo and the Hiroshima Peace Park which attempts to promote denuclearization and world peace, historian Jouyoun Lee argues that despite the significant difference between the two versions of historical memory espoused by the two memorials, they are alike in one way. According to Lee, "the museums in Yasukuni and Hiroshima share a commonality in neglecting to exhibit or draw lessons from Japan's colonial past in Asia, leaving a profound effect on younger generations."[61] Chief designer of the Peace Park, Kenzo Tange's final design "embodied [his] future-oriented

[58] Greyjoy, "Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park."
[59] Zekkei Japan, "Atomic Bomb Dome."
[60] Another example is the imperialist roots of the Peace Park itself. Cho argues that the Peace Park represents a fusion of modernist architecture and traditional Japanese styles and acted as an "emblem of the postwar hegemony of international modernism" in architecture. Kenzo Tange's design for the Peace Park was chosen in 1950, and Tange worked as an architect during Japan's imperial period including World War II, when his career took off after winning three competitions for notable imperial government buildings, including the never finished East Asian Co-Prosperity Sphere Memorial Hall, of which the design of the Peace Park was influenced. However, in the postwar period Tange's willingness to work in the dangerously contaminated city of Hiroshima was seen as an act of repentance for his contributions to the Japanese empire during the War.
[61] Lee, "Yasukuni and Hiroshima in Clash?," 1.

ideology", which came from his belief that this was an opportunity to construct a completely new and utopian city on top of the ruins of Hiroshima.[62] As is apparent from other futuristic memorials built in postwar Japan similar to the one on Attu, there is an attempt to remake history out of the ashes of World War II in an attempt to promote a future of peace.

Tange's sentiment on building a new future on top of the ruins of war applies to the design of the decidedly futuristic-looking Attu Peace Memorial, wherein the Japanese took the opportunity to remake history on this perceived "blank slate" after the destruction of World War II. As their militaries destroy the land through bombs and person-to-person combat, Japan and the U.S. destroy Indigenous history of the land before World War II through their memorialization practices. On Attu, in building atop the ruins of war, the constructors of the Peace Memorial have to contend with erasing the previous Indigenous history of the place. Especially because by 1987 when the Peace Memorial is completed no Indigenous people live on Attu, a truthful and responsible definition of "peace" on the island must include actively disavowing the imperialist violence done onto those Indigenous people who never were able to return.

The Structure of the Peace Memorial and the Concretizing of Memory

The futuristic look of The Attu Peace Memorial signifies a performative aspiration for a future with world peace in line with the status quo international attitude following World War II and during the Cold War. Firstly, it is important to note the difference between "peace" in the Japanese inscription of the memorial and "world peace" in the English inscription. These are two different words that gesture toward different concepts, with "world peace" connoting a more international and political concept influenced by the end of the Cold War (the monument was

[62] Lee, 1.

placed in 1987 and the Cold War "ended" in 1989). The Japanese version uses the more common word *heiwa* (peace) instead of *sekai heiwa*, which would match more literally to the English conception of the word "world peace." However, the use of "peace" and "world peace" in the inscription on the memorial are both derived from the need to take meaning from the horrendous bloodshed of American and Japanese soldiers during World War II. Although the Japanese inscription does not use the same word "world peace", the design of the structure hints that this is the same sentiment that they are getting at even though they just use the word *heiwa*.

The Attu Peace Memorial, with its simple, angular monochrome starburst design that does not take obvious influence from any traditional Japanese or Western style, represents a generally modern and international architectural style, which makes it unique compared to other American monuments that often draw from neoclassical influences. Hyunjung Cho argues that the Hiroshima Peace Park represents a fusion of modernist architecture and traditional Japanese styles and acted as an "emblem of the postwar hegemony of international modernism" in architecture.[63] In the same way, by choosing not to take influence from any obvious Japanese or Western aesthetic styles, the Peace Memorial stays inoffensive to people who might try to interpret the memorial as a symbol of Japanese superiority.

Mnemonically the materials used to construct this memorial show further attempts to "freeze time" at the instance of the Battle of Attu and reconceptualize Attu's history and future around that moment. The memorial itself is made of titanium and was specifically created to withstand the notoriously harsh storms of the Aleutians. This aspiration for permanence, as evidenced by the use of titanium, is another example of the settler-colonial urge to paint time as linear in history. Recall that a consequence of linear time is that civilizations in the present day

[63] Cho, "Hiroshima Peace Memorial Park and the Making of Japanese Postwar Architecture," 72.

are the culmination of the progress and breakthroughs of each successive generation. When settler states such as the U.S. and Japan leave a permanent monument in a location, they are signaling that they are leaving a lesson on Attu.

With this, the titanium build of the memorial aids in a conceptualization by outsiders that Attu, along with other parts of remote Alaska, are virtually uninhabitable. Throughout the Japanese occupation of Attu and Kiska, journals from Japanese soldiers lament the awful weather and the difficulty of the terrain, especially during the Battle of Attu which was waged in mid-May with snow still on the ground. These same sentiments are repeated even more emphatically on the American side, with harsh landscape along with the boredom of life on these remote islands being the emphasis of many accounts by GIs across the Aleutians in diaries and letters home. By making this memorial titanium, the memorial implies that only the most durable things human beings can design can withstand the elements of Attu. In other words, by making the structure out of titanium, the Peace Memorial insinuates a question along the lines of, "When the elements are so harsh and unforgiving, why would anyone want to live in Attu in the first place?" This forgets that Indigenous peoples have not only withstood the elements but have thrived in the Aleutians for thousands of years. There is no hint of this Indigenous resilience on the monument. Ironically, the Unangan peoples of the Aleutians did not thrive through structures like the Peace Monument which juts out of the ground and almost attempts to fight the elements with its spikes. Instead, Unangan peoples thrived through living with the elements, and creating structures like the *barabara*, or sod house, that used the Aleutian landscape to their advantage.[64]

The Peace Memorial and the Abstraction of the Land

[64] Veltre, "Unangax̂ Culture Before the Russians."

Willfully forgetting this Indigenous history of the place by painting the land as barren and uninhabitable is possible because Attu was only ever valuable to either the United States or Japan as an abstract place on a map, strategically positioned between imperial powers. Despite Japan's imperial ambitions, Attu was never a piece of land that the Japanese particularly wanted militarily or even for use in empire-building. It only served a diversionary purpose initially as a way to divert American naval forces from the Battle of Midway, and then a purpose in propaganda, where the Japanese could brag that they had conquered what was technically American soil. There was no attempt to extract any resources from Attu, as was done in other colonies of the Japanese empire. To the Japanese, this piece of land was important because it was owned by another imperial power who they wanted to defeat, the United States. To the United States, this land became important because it was "home soil" that was taken by Japan. Neither imperial power even had any interest in the inherent aspects of the land that made the land itself valuable.[65]

Further, the placement of the Peace Memorial on Attu highlights how the memorial promotes the abstraction of the land. The Japanese Peace Memorial sits atop Engineer Hill, the bloody site where the Japanese conducted the first suicidal banzai charge of World War II. This is where the Battle of Attu ended; by placing the monument here, it implies that this is a place where the battle ends and where the resultant pursuit of peace can begin. This is another aspect of the monument that fuses the memorialization of war dead with the pursuit of peace— this is where the final death toll was tallied and where the bloodshed and destruction finally ended. If one conceptualizes the history of Attu as revolving around this watershed moment of the Battle

[65] For example, Attuan people frequently state that the best grass for weaving in all of the Aleutians grows on Attu. Attu is not valuable just for its strategic location in the Pacific, it is valuable for things like these, the inherent characteristics of the land. Golodoff, *Attu Boy = Attsutō No Shōnen*, 109.

of Attu and the deaths of these soldiers fighting for their respective empires, then this is where the waste of war ends and the pursuit of peace inspired by that waste begins.

In reality, the bloodshed and destruction did not end here. While the Battle of Attu ended on Engineer Hill, Unangan people were still dying at the POW camp in Japan. While planes stopped dropping bombs on Attu after this battle, the destruction of the way of life of the Attuans who lived on the island never ended, because when the POWs were sent back to the U.S., the U.S. told the Attuans that they could not return to their homeland.

The placement of the Peace Memorial also redefines the land as something important only as the site of this enormous bloodshed, and not important for its ability to nurture the people that live on Attu. This value of the land, the ability of it to provide subsistence, support, and be a plentiful place to live, are covered up by imperial powers that, in the past, defined the value of the land as it related to military diversion, propaganda value, and the need to take back "home soil" which was never really paid attention to by the U.S. government in the first place. After the fact, the land of Attu is defined as a site that is important because of the enormous bloodshed that took place there and as a reminder to never repeat it.

The placement of the monument elicits a broader pattern of establishing settler-colonialist memory through placenames. The place where the Peace Memorial stands, Engineer Hill, was named after the 50th Engineer Regiment, a name that memorializes the main regiment that fought in the final and deadliest battle of the Attu campaign. Placement of the memorial on Engineer Hill re-defines the geography of Attu as being defined around battles from this war, and not the geographical markers that Indigenous peoples have used since time immemorial. For example, on Attu, American forces landed in Massacre Bay, which was not named for anything related to World War II but was instead named for a battle in which Russian fur traders killed 15

Unangan people in 1745. This reveals that the geography of Attu, as it is gradually taken by colonizers and imperialists, becomes more defined by the violent occupation of Attu within history books and maps rather than by characteristics of the land with implicit value.

The memorial's placement is not only significant for it being on Engineer Hill; it is also significant for being on Attu, a geographical place right between Japan and the United States. This is not conceived as a place where people lived, it is a place conceived as perfect for a monument to peace between the U.S. and Japan because of its convenient and symbolic geographical location between the two countries.

The Only Peace is for Imperial Nations

In creating this specific conception of peace derived from the memory of the war dead of the Battle of Attu, this memorial effectively freezes time around the battle. It ignores the history of everything, including imperialist occupation, in Attu before the battle, and conceptualizes the future as one in which this specific, limited version of peace born out of the destruction of World War II ought to prevail. The memorial redesigns the history of Attu by making the battle the watershed moment around which all of Attu's history turns. It makes the Battle of Attu, and the pursuit of peace inspired by that battle, the reason why the history of the island is significant in the first place. In doing so, the Peace Memorial willfully forgets the Indigenous history of the place before and during World War II, and intentionally prioritizes the awful bloodshed of the Japanese and American soldiers as the foremost event of Attu's history. The consequence of this is that the Peace Memorial erases the possibility of an Indigenous future on Attu by rendering the tragedy of war dead from World War II as Attu's legacy.

Because there is no significant Indigenous history on the island when the memory of the Battle of Attu dwarfs everything else, an Indigenous future on the island becomes harder and

harder to imagine. This lack of Indigenous future on the island is exactly what occurred— neither the Japanese nor the Americans tried to achieve reparation for the awful experiences of the Attuan POWs, nor did they help them return to Attu in the decades following the war.

The sentiment embodied by the Peace Memorial continues to the present day. In the 2008 presidential proclamation that President George W. Bush signed that established the World War II Valor in the Pacific National Monument, it says that "we must always remember the debt we owe to the members of the Greatest Generation for our liberty. Their gift is an enduring peace that transformed enemies into steadfast allies in the cause of democracy and freedom around the globe."[66] The question to ask here is: Peace for whom? It is certainly peace for the imperialist powers of the world. As is evidenced by the Attu Peace Memorial, it is not peace for Indigenous peoples.

Looking at the Attu Peace Memorial, it is apparent that "peace" in this context does not indicate the absence of war— in this case it is simply *one* war, World War II. While the end of World War II signaled peace between the U.S. and Japan, it did not signal peace for Indigenous peoples. This Peace Memorial is an example of a colonialist memory of history just by virtue of its placement on Indigenous land. Its architectural style is a reminder that Japan attempts to remake history in a way that forgets its imperial past to this day. Its inscription willfully forgets the loss experienced by the Attuan POWs and instead focuses on the war dead of the U.S. and Japan. Its conflation of Attu with the Battle of Attu renders the 10,000 years of Indigenous history in the region ignored. There is no peace— the struggle between Indigenous peoples and imperialist nations like the U.S. and Japan continues.

[66] "Foundational Statement - Alaska Unit: World War II Valor in the Pacific," 1.

CHAPTER 2: *RED WHITE BLACK & BLUE* AND *ATTU BOY* AS HISTORY AND COUNTER-HISTORY

One flight from Boston-Logan International Airport to Seattle, Washington is a little over 5 hours. To get to Anchorage, the largest city in Alaska and the transport hub of the state, it is another 3-hour-long flight. The most populous town in the Aleutians, Unalaska/Dutch Harbor, is another 3-and-a-half-hour flight from Anchorage.[67] On a typical day, there is only two or three flights between these two cities operated by one airline. As you might expect, the weather is bad in the Aleutians and if there is fog, excessive wind, or excessive precipitation, you can expect your flight to be cancelled. When I used to make this trip, it would usually take me 24 hours to complete the journey with layovers. As people from the Aleutians know, it is hard to get to the Aleutians.

If you want to get to Attu, where no one lives today, it is even harder. When a group of descendants of Attuan POWs went in 2017 to commemorate the 75th anniversary of the Attuans' dislocation, they hitched a ride on a research vessel operated by the U.S. Department of Fish and Wildlife.[68] Right now, the only way onto the remote island is by chartered plane or by boat. If a visitor on Attu needed medical assistance, the nearest and most accessible hospital would be in Anchorage, over 1,000 miles and several plane or boat rides away. Thus, a reasonable person might ask: Why build a memorial in a place that is so inaccessible, and in a place where no one lives? Wouldn't the creators of a monument want the greatest number of people to see it?

Often, monuments are put up simply as a public relations move. In the often-dysfunctional political systems of the U.S. and Japan, it is difficult to enact meaningful change in

[67] Unalaska and Dutch Harbor are interchangeable names for the same town. The town's government is the City of Unalaska, while the port is called The Port of Dutch Harbor. The airport abbreviation is Dutch Harbor (DUT).
[68] U. S. Dept. Fish & Wildlife Alaska, "Refuge and Remembrance."

the form of policy— it is much easier to simply commission the creation of a monument as a symbolic gesture. Further, the previous missions to Attu from Japan which resulted in the establishment of a monument were related to looking for and returning the bodies of war dead— endeavors partially paid for by bereaved families. Recall that these previous memorials were more similar to gravestones, with the 1978 memorial even placing the word *chinkon* (鎮魂) in prominent kanji, which can be translated to "RIP." Even the monument featuring a picture of the deceased Lieutenant Ohmura reads similarly to a more elaborate gravestone. Thus, although in the moment that the Peace Memorial was put up there were grand speeches about peace between the U.S. and Japan, perhaps in the present day the Attu Peace Memorial is meant more for respecting the dead than actively teaching something to the living.

What does it mean, then, to have a massive monument to the dead on Attu? By analyzing the 2007 documentary *Red White Black & Blue*, it becomes clear that the sacralization of the war dead on Attu makes inhabiting the island all the more difficult. In addition to the Japanese Peace Memorial, which is a large part of the documentary, there is a smattering of smaller memorials and war debris on Attu which the documentary prominently displays. These all contribute to the feeling within the documentary that it would be almost taboo to live there. One Coast Guard officer remarked that Attu is possibly haunted— there has been so much death on the island and reminders of it persist everywhere.[69] These reminders, in the form of memorials and war debris, reinforce the dominant historical memory that the history of Attu is simply the Battle of Attu, which is why cleaning up the island is so important. When Attu is simply the Battle of Attu, the site of so much death, it becomes impossible to move past that death and imagine life on Attu, both in the past with Indigenous peoples and in the future.

[69] Putnam, *Red White Black & Blue*, 25:00.

The Dominant Historical Memory of Attu

Red White Black & Blue is a well-known documentary in Alaska among researchers on the Aleutians and is a documentary that has been used to shape Alaskans' understandings of history. In correspondence with other historians in the Aleutians it often comes up, and I actually remember being shown the film as a way to learn about the history of World War II when I was in elementary school in Dutch Harbor. Further, *Red White Black & Blue* is one of very few extant and accessible histories of the place. The Battle of Attu is often called the "Forgotten Battle" for the relative shortage of scholarship and the resultant lack of public knowledge on the battle compared to other World War II battles of comparable scope.[70] Believe it or not, *Red White Black & Blue* is one of the few full-length documentaries out there that actually tackles Attu, and which is geared to the contemporary non-expert American audience.[71]

Further, *Red White Black & Blue* represents a mode of storytelling common in histories of World War II in the Aleutians, and which is a mode which has served to minimize and marginalize the Indigenous. In its storytelling, it presents the Battle of Attu as chiefly taking place between the Americans and the Japanese with an American veteran as its protagonist and primarily interviews U.S. veterans in order to tell its story. U.S. military historians and military officials add background context. A large portion of its b-roll consists of film shot by U.S. soldier-videographers and does not emphasize any Indigenous depictions of Attu.

I analyze *Red White Black & Blue* in contention with the 2012 memoir *Attu Boy* by Nick Golodoff, which remembers Attu as a place where people once lived and thrived. *Attu Boy* is a memoir which affirms the importance of analyzing individual accounts of the war, whether they

[70] Cloe, *Attu*, xi.
[71] Tadashi Ogawa's documentary *When the Fog Clears* is another such documentary. It, however, is in Japanese, is relatively new, and does not have the same reach in schools and among average people.

are completely factually true or not. This is a book that utilizes oral history and storytelling as affirmed by the elders Golodoff learned from in his community. These oral history and storytelling aspects of *Attu Boy* emphasize the Indigenous history of Attu and push a vision of Attu that is not dominated by death. By analyzing *Attu Boy*, I attempt to emphasize a different memory of Attu— Attu as a place of life as opposed to death, ecology as opposed to difficulty, and community as opposed to isolation.

***Red White Black & Blue*: Japan Versus the United States**

Red White Black & Blue is about a U.S. veteran of the Battle of Attu, Bill Jones, who takes offense to the Japanese Peace Memorial and endeavors to get it taken down. A documentary film crew follows Jones along with his friend and fellow veteran from the Battle of Attu, Andy Petrus, as they return to Attu to shed light on the Battle of Attu and Attu's place in American history. The documentary as a whole emphasizes individual soldiers' experiences through interviews and intersperses facts about the Battle of Attu with footage from U.S. military war videographers and the filmmakers' own footage.

The tagline used in promotional materials for the film emphasizes the framing of the Battle of Attu through the eyes of the filmmakers— this framing is that Attu took place between the Japanese and the Americans. The tagline is telling— it reads: "On June 7, 1942 Japan invaded Alaska. 60 years later, one man has come to take it back."[72] Of course, 60 years later, the Unangan people who lived on the island and were "collateral damage" in the battle are not mentioned. Emphasizing Attu as a story about a battle between the United States and Japan ignores the centuries of ongoing imperialist occupation of Attu. This recalls the major takeaway of Chapter 1— that war between the U.S. and Japan only worsened conditions for Indigenous

[72] Putnam, *Red White Black & Blue*.

peoples, and once that war was over, the peace between the U.S. and Japan did not mean a peace for Indigenous peoples.

This dramatized tagline also emphasizes that the documentary seeks to reclaim the memory of Attu for the U.S. veterans. The feeling that the tagline presents is that the storyline of the Battle of Attu has been taken away from U.S. veterans. The documentary seems to say that instead of the veterans, it has been taken over by government officials, both Japanese and American, who do not know what they are talking about. In this way, the documentary seems to be fighting on the side of veterans so that they can get the memory of Attu back and control the narrative of this battle.

By emphasizing the stories of the individual soldier and veteran, the documentary obfuscates the larger structural violence done by the military on Attu.[73] Rusty Ray Bartels argues that "the individualist approach to military memorialization… elides the structural violence of the military at the expense of remembering individual soldiers."[74] The documentary spends considerable time detailing Bill Jones's life— his upbringing as a "farm boy from South Jersey" and his wartime friendship with Petus.[75] As Bartels argues, this separates the activity of being a soldier from the context in needing soldiers in the first place.[76] The U.S. needed soldiers to "reclaim" the land that was "stolen" from them by the Japanese. In depicting these soldiers defending "home soil" during World War II and again as Jones protests the Japanese Peace Memorial, the documentary takes the American occupation of the Indigenous land for granted. It neglects to acknowledge the context of U.S. imperialist occupation of the Aleutians, and how

[73] This analysis is inspired by Rusty Ray Bartels's analysis of monuments. Specifically, it is inspired by how, in his words, "the individualist approach to military memorialization… elides the structural violence of the military at the expense of remembering individual soldiers." Bartels, "War Memories, Imperial Ambitions," 109.
[74] Bartels, 109.
[75] Putnam, *Red White Black & Blue*, 5:40.
[76] Bartels, "War Memories, Imperial Ambitions," 144.

that contributed to the war coming to Attu in the first place.[77] If the U.S. had never stepped in for Russia as the imperial power in the Aleutians, Japan would have never attacked the Aleutians as a diversion from the Battle of Midway.

Red White Black & Blue: The Land of Attu as Antagonistic

Throughout the documentary Attu is depicted through its weather as being too "wild" for people to reasonably want to live there. This comes in the documentary's depiction of the harsh weather. At one point, a Coast Guard officer narrates that in the Aleutians, "the weather controls everything" while b-roll footage shows the quickly-changing weather on Attu.[78] He implies a lack of human control over the landscape, which reflects the settler-colonial discomfort with a lack of power or domination over the land. On Attu, half of the fight is soldiers versus weather, and often the weather wins. This is driven home by b-roll taken by U.S. war videographers depicting soldiers' hats flying away, soldiers struggling to walk in the extreme wind, and soldiers wandering around in a blizzard.[79]

This fixation on the weather emphasizes that the filmmakers and veterans have an abstract knowledge of Indigenous peoples' presence on Attu but a simultaneous lack of understanding of how and why they wanted to live there. Bill Jones narrates in this section that everyone from the Aleutians will tell you about "the williwaw, the Aleut name for hurricane" (Aleut is pronounced a-lee-oot, but Jones pronounces it a-loot).[80] Jones clearly tries to rely on Indigenous peoples as a credible source for his remark on the weather of the Aleutians, but is not familiar enough with the Indigenous peoples of the place to pronounce their name correctly. This highlights an important dynamic within the film— the veterans understand that Indigenous

[77] Bartels, 146.
[78] Putnam, *Red White Black & Blue*, 36:30.
[79] Putnam, 36:45.
[80] Putnam, 37:00.

peoples lived on Attu in an abstract sense, but do not pay them much mind. Although they lament the bad weather, they do not wonder how the Indigenous people on Attu dealt with it. They constantly discuss the war dead who died taking back the land, but do not ask why the U.S. possessed the land in the first place.

The filmmakers also highlight the harsh terrain of Attu, further painting it as a "wild" place unfit for habitation. In one particularly memorable scene, the filmmakers get their truck stuck in the mud.[81] As this happens, a narrator laments the geology of the Aleutians, saying that the islands are all coated with volcanic ash under a layer of about 8 inches of tundra, saying "once you break through that tundra, you just sink."[82] This is all while war videographers' b-roll show soldiers laboring to move steel barrels across the tundra and sinking into the mud, eliciting a dynamic in which soldiers are trying, and failing, to "conquer" this wild environment.[83] In showing the filmmakers' modern truck also getting stuck in this tundra, the documentary implies that even today, human beings might not want to try to live in such a wild, difficult place, erasing the ways that this was a strong, inhabited, Indigenous community.[84] Jones caps off this scene by saying, "Walk, if they want to walk. Don't drive a vehicle. This isn't vehicle country."[85] Saying that "this isn't vehicle country" implies that this is a "wild" place, where human beings cannot simply impose their will with modern technology. Jones's comment implies that to drive a vehicle on the tundra of Attu is a fraught endeavor— there is no point; it will just get stuck.

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[81] Putnam, 51:30.
[82] Putnam, 51:50.
[83] Putnam, 51:50.
[84] When the filmmakers finally get the truck out of the mud, the screen fades to b-roll showing rusted-out tractors which got stuck in the mud during the Battle. Here, the emphasis is that the U.S. military seemingly gave up on getting these tractors unstuck, so they still lie in the tundra of Attu to this day. There is a metaphor here that relates to the war dead still interred on the island— the documentary seems to suggest that maybe we ought to leave this island alone and not go through the trouble of attempting again something which involves moving people and development to Attu.
[85] Putnam, *Red White Black & Blue*, 52:15.

Red White Black & Blue: Attu as a Land of the Dead

The emphasis on the difficult terrain and bad weather reminds the viewer of the mass death of the Battle of Attu, thus painting Attu as a veritable land of the dead. In one scene, Jones and Petus talk about whether the Battle of Okinawa or the Battle of Attu was worse, and Petus says that "there's no comparison at all" and Jones chimes in and says Attu was "ten times as bad" because, as Petus says, it was "bad when you're not fighting and just being here is bad."[86] The b-roll of soldiers on Attu stumbling through snow overlayed on Petus's voice suggests that he is referring to the weather and the harsh terrain. At the same time, however, Jones and Petus are constantly bombarded with the traumatic memory of their service in the Battle of Attu. Thus, this comment likely also applies to the emotional baggage of being on Attu— a place where so many, especially so many people they knew, died. The vast majority of the wounded of the Battle of Attu were actually victims of non-battle injuries from the harsh environment and poor equipment.[87] Further, battle conditions were much worse for American soldiers who suffered from trench foot and gangrene.[88] Jones and Petus's emphasis on the weather and terrain of Attu act as a reminder of the war dead whose ailments from the weather and terrain impacted their deaths.

From the very beginning of *Red White Black & Blue*, the dead define Attu's land. In the opening credits of the film, an image of a small streambed on Attu as it was during the filming of the documentary fades into a shot of that very same location just after the Battle of Attu. In this second image, the bodies of war dead fill the ravine (see Figure 7).[89] This b-roll footage is repeated throughout the film and comes back at the end when the soldiers discuss the "clean-up"

[86] Putnam, 55:40.
[87] Cloe, *Attu*, 113.
[88] Cloe, 9.
[89] Putnam, *Red White Black & Blue*, 3:20.

of the battle— burying war dead in mass graves.[90] On one hand, this emphasizes exactly how the filmmakers are going about telling this story— they are hoping to remind the viewer of a "forgotten war," by using this b-roll they are visually signifying the dredging up of an unseen and largely unknown history. On the other hand, however, this footage depicts Attu as a veritable land of the dead and casts an eerie light on the land. After all, who would feel comfortable being constantly reminded that any one of the many ravines on Attu could have held a pile of bodies like this one? Based off of Attu's characterization in *Red White Black & Blue*, it is understandable that no one lives on Attu anymore, just from the sheer taboo of living in a place that has been depicted so disturbingly.

Figure 7: The image on the left fades into the image on the right. The image on the right was presumably taken by the filmmakers while image on the left was taken by a war photographer during the aftermath of the Battle of Attu.[91] The two photos fading into each other gives the impression that these dead bodies used to be in that same location.

At the end of the documentary, Jones and Petus's final thoughts on the Battle of Attu cement the redefinition of the land of Attu around the war dead of that battle.[92] Jones says the following at the top of Engineer Hill at the foot of the Peace Memorial: "It's a hallowed piece of ground we are standing on. A hallowed piece of ground. Our blood, our American boys' blood, the 658 of them that died in this battle. A lot of it was shed right here on Engineer Hill. And I say the Japanese had the audacity to come to our government and ask to put— ask this to be put

[90] Putnam, 1:14:00.
[91] Putnam, 3:20.
[92] Putnam, 1:13:30.

here."[93] Thus, Engineer Hill was the site of the last fight of the Battle of Attu, and continues to be the site of a battle— of Bill Jones against the Japanese government. These are the questions that the documentary asks— Ought the Peace Memorial be there? In doing so, it defines the discourse around Attu as revolving around these questions of the Battle of Attu. Further, these questions do not have to do with Indigenous peoples; they have to do with the United States versus Japan. Earlier in the documentary, Jones laments: "They stole the island from us! I don't know how you can get that point across! They stole it!"[94] Ironically, this same sentiment, if said by an Unangan person of the Russians or the Americans, would make perfect sense. This documentary focuses on the main problems of Attu as all relating to World War II and the conflict between American and Japanese forces, while the ever-present conflict between these imperialist nations and Indigenous peoples lies invisible, in the background.

Although death is a part of all communities, the way that *Red White Black & Blue* portrays death makes it seem that the war dead of World War II are the only dead that are worthy of attention on Attu. The documentary does this in two ways— through the constant reminders of the World War II dead on the land (memorials and war debris) and through dramatic war b-roll that show gruesome images of death and decay. These hyperbolic renderings of death work to distort Attu as a singular story of American and Japanese loss, thus neglecting the ways that both life and death and everything in between preceded this battle for centuries.

Introducing *Attu Boy*

While *Red White Black & Blue* relegates the Indigenous story on Attu to the background, *Attu Boy* brings it to the forefront. *Attu Boy* is first and foremost the memoir of Nick Golodoff,

[93] Putnam, 1:13:05.
[94] Putnam, 30:45.

who was 6 years old when the Japanese imperial military invaded Attu.[95] He and his family were taken to a POW camp in Otaru, Japan where his father, brother, and sister died. He was incarcerated in Japan for approximately three years, and upon his return to the U.S. his mother settled him and his surviving siblings in Atka, Alaska, a village on an island east of Attu on the Aleutian Chain.

Near the end of his life, Golodoff wrote down and recorded via tapes his memories, and his granddaughter Brenda Maly transcribed, copied, and edited them. U.S. National Parks Service historian Rachel Mason learned of Golodoff's memoir materials in 2008, and paired Golodoff and Maly with the Parks Service when she found out that they were looking for a publisher. Mason eventually became the editor of the book, rearranging Golodoff's statements in chronological order, weaving them together with other first-hand accounts of the Attuans' experience, and producing the secondary historical research within which these accounts are couched.[96] The full account including the other first-hand accounts and Mason's secondary scholarship was published in 2012 with a limited run of 2,200 copies which were given out for free. Nick Golodoff passed away in 2013. After his death, due to high demand for the book, Maly and Mason worked to republish it, this time to be sold.[97] In 2015, Attu Boy was republished by the University of Alaska Press with different cover art and a subheading, *Attu Boy: A Young Alaskan's WWII Memoir*.[98]

Put simply, Golodoff's story is a major intervention in the history of Attu that had theretofore not boosted Indigenous voices. Although there had been prior publishing of the accounts of Attuan survivors, such as that in the appendix of Ethel Ross Oliver's *Journal of An*

[95] Golodoff, *Attu Boy = Attsutō No Shōnen*, viii.
[96] Golodoff, x.
[97] Paulin, "Relative Hopes to Republish Out-of-Print 'Attu Boy.'"
[98] "Attu Man Imprisoned in Japan as Child Tells Story."

Aleutian Year, this was an account boosted by the National Parks Service and the first account in the form of a book. In a letter to the reader included with the first print-run of *Attu Boy*, the program manager of the Aleutian World War II National Historic Area Janis Kozlowski remarks that "Attu Boy brings to light, and tells in a moving way, an almost completely untold part of the history of World War II in the Aleutians."[99] Also, in the introduction of *Attu Boy*, Rachel Mason writes that "[Golodoff's] book is a gift not only to the descendants of Attu and other Unangan, but to all of us who need to hear this previously untold story."[100] The book is a new way of looking at the history of the Aleutians and is thus a staple in this project which aims to highlight the Indigenous experience.

Attu Boy: Emphasizing the Indigenous Within a Discourse that Emphasizes Warring Imperial Nations

Within his account, Golodoff frequently refers to family relations, which highlight the innumerable generations of history his family has on Attu. For instance, on the third page of his memoir, there is a family tree going as far as his grandmother and grandfather, born in 1874 and 1861 respectively.[101] On the previous page, Golodoff remembers his uncle telling him that he used to let him suck on sea urchins as a baby.[102] Notably, his grandfather was born when Attu was still a part of the Russian Empire, as Alaska was purchased by the U.S. in 1867. Though not explicitly stated, his family and the rest of the Unangan population of Attu has lived through the history of imperial occupation of Attu going back to the Russian empire.

With this, Golodoff rarely explicitly relates his story to larger contemporary issues of Indigenous peoples. In one instance in which he does, he cuts straight to the point:

[99] Kozlowski, February 23, 2012.
[100] Golodoff, *Attu Boy = Attsutō No Shōnen*, xii.
[101] Golodoff, 3.
[102] Golodoff, 2.

> I am sure people have lived here on Atka before the Russians did. What I do not like is that we Alaskans owned and lived on this land and Russia came around and sold it to the United States and now we have to buy it back from the United States. The Fish and Wildlife Service owns Atka except for the private lands.[103]

What Golodoff says here is the crux of this project. No matter what, the original occupants of the land are gatekept by the occupying power, the Russians, the Japanese, or the United States.

In doing this, Golodoff highlights that the conception of Attu as American "home soil" distracts from Attu being unceded Indigenous land. In much of the discourse on Attu, historians and journalists often depict the Battle of Attu as involving the retaking of "U.S. soil"[104] or "their [American soldiers'] own soil".[105] Calling Attu "home soil" assumes that the American claims to the land are legitimate; it effectively ignores Indigenous claims to the land. At the time of the war, there were only two residents of Attu who were white, Etta and Foster Jones, who were there to run the U.S. Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) school.[106] Etta Jones wrote in a letter before the war that "the American flag flew proudly above the village".[107] Whether the flag flew proudly or not before the war, calling the place "home soil" as if it were thoroughly integrated into the American nation-state is a mischaracterization. Attu was still an imperial possession where the majority of food was harvested through subsistence,[108] where very few outside visitors ever came,[109] and where the very few visitors that did come often remarked at the happiness present in this insulated village despite its isolation from "the world".[110] Of course, from the point of view of someone like Golodoff and his family in Attu, Attu is not isolated from "the world", from their point of view Attu *is* the world.

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[103] Golodoff, 117.
[104] "75 Years After The Battle Of Attu, Veterans Reflect On The Cost Of Reclaiming U.S. Soil."
[105] Bartels, "War Memories, Imperial Ambitions," 151.
[106] Golodoff, *Attu Boy = Attsutō No Shōnen*, 28.
[107] Golodoff, 33.
[108] Golodoff, 13.
[109] Golodoff, 16.
[110] Golodoff, 17.

Relatedly, a common "fun fact" relayed about Attu is that it is the site of "the only land battle fought in North America during World War II."[111][112][113] The implication in this "fun fact" is that it is surprising that any land battle occurred at all during World War II in North America, given the United States' military dominance of the continent. Similar to characterizations of Attu as "home soil," this "fun fact" assumes American sovereignty over the continent and discounts the sovereignty of Indigenous nations.

Attu Boy: The Land, Life, and Liveliness of Attu

Golodoff's few memories of playing in Attu highlight Attu as having a vibrant, healthy community. For example, Golodoff remembers: "I could not live without the sight of the ocean, so when the weather was nice I would be at the beach almost every day… I was on the beach wanting to go out in the boat, but the adults would not take me and if they did not I was told I would cry and throw rocks at them."[114] Here, Golodoff does not remember treacherous seas or bad weather. He remembers the good weather, the beach, and his youthful desire to go out on the boat with the adults. This highlights a sense of community in Attu— Golodoff's desire to go out with the adults implies a desire to be like them and gain their level of responsibility within the community someday. The ocean is invaluable for Unangan peoples as a place to get food, resources, and skills in hunting so that one can provide subsistence for the community.[115] Further, Goldoff notes that "[he] was told" that he would cry and throw rocks when he was not able to go out on the water; with this statement, one can imagine an older relative teasing Golodoff about his tantrum as a child. With this, Golodoff again implies a greater community on

[111] "Foundational Statement - Alaska Unit: World War II Valor in the Pacific."
[112] Jon Wertheim, "Attu Is The Site Of The Only Ground Campaign Waged In North America During The Entire War And A Surpassingly Brutal Battle, CBS."
[113] Editors of history.com, "Battle of Attu."
[114] Golodoff, *Attu Boy = Attsutō No Shōnen*, 9.
[115] Veltre, "Unangax̂ Culture Before the Russians."

Attu. In short, Golodoff shows with this quick vignette that there was a strong, tight-knit community in Attu that he was aspiring to join when he got older. Golodoff does eventually gain this role in Atka, where he was resettled and where he was able to grow up hunting, fishing, and going out on the water. The war, however, stopped him from being able to do so where his ancestors did on Attu.

Golodoff's rich descriptions of life and the land on Atka emphasize what is possible on Attu. As Golodoff talks about Atka, he is bringing his vantage point as someone who grew up in Attu and Japan— he is, after all an "Attu boy." In the section "Reflections on Life in Atka," Golodoff says: "I lived six years in Attu and a little over three years in Japan and the rest of my life in Atka. I do not want to disappoint anybody by saying something about the Aleutians that I don't know too much about."[116] With this, Golodoff signals his discomfort with speaking any more on Attu than he knows, given how much longer he's lived on Atka. At the same time, however, Golodoff gives amazing descriptions of life in the Aleutians, and how rich it can be. He talks about a killer whale taking a seal off of an elder's kayak, keeping an eaglet as a pet but letting it go because "it was too mean," and building his 14-foot boat with a hammer, a hand-saw, and wood salvaged from old World War II buildings.[117] With these stories, one cannot help but wonder about all of the life that existed on Attu before the war.

The photographs curated and interspersed by Rachel Mason do a lot to highlight Attu as a place of life and liveliness. Especially in the colorized pictures, one can get a sense of Attu as a village where people lived, worked, ate, and played.[118] The reason the color pictures are highlighted is that when a contemporary reader sees black-and-white pictures, they are

[116] Golodoff, *Attu Boy = Attsutō No Shōnen*, 117.
[117] Golodoff, 123–25.
[118] Golodoff, 6.

compelled to think about the past, and in the context of Attu in which the habitation of Attu is seen by the dominant historical memory as being in the far past, the color pictures give the impression that there could still be life and liveliness put back onto Attu. For example, interspersed in Rachel Mason's secondary historical background on Attu before the war, the below two pictures are placed, taking up the full page (see Figure 8). These pictures showing a young mother in bright colors and two young children emphasize the generations of Indigenous community on Attu and the vitality and hope represented by kids. Further, the green hills in these photos highlight the inherent life present within the island, which is in contrast to the stills from *Red White Black & Blue* which show brown, dead-looking ravines even before the dead bodies are superimposed onto the land.[119]

Figure 8: From *Attu Boy*: On the right: "'Attu Native, M.G.7/41.' This is likely Annie Borenin, who became Mike Hodikoff's second wife, with her son Victor. She was also Nick Golodoff's father's sister. (Source: Alaska State Library, Evelyn Butler and George Dale)."[120] On the left: "'Attu Native, M.G.7/41.' (Source: Alaska State Library, Evelyn Butler and George Dale)."[121]

Attu Boy: An Indigenous Counter-History

Attu Boy aims to correct the dominant memory of the Aleutians by centering Indigenous peoples at the center of a story in which several imperial powers, the U.S., Japan, and Russia all

[119] Putnam, *Red White Black & Blue*, 3:20.
[120] Golodoff, *Attu Boy = Attsutō No Shōnen*, 29.
[121] Golodoff, 30.

intervene in and occupy the Aleutians. From the first page of the book, *Attu Boy* is explicitly aiming to correct the narrative of Unangan peoples in the Aleutians. Nick Golodoff writes:

> In most books that I have read about World War II in the Aleutian Islands, there is some truth, but there is a lot of dishonesty in the books. I know this because I have been through it. I am also talking about Aleuts in this book because I never saw any true stories about Aleuts.[122]

This is the first paragraph of the first page of his narrative in the book. When he says that he "never saw any true stories" he is referring to the books out there about Unangan people at the time he wrote his memoir. He implicitly separates the knowledge-production of the elders he learned from on Atka, of whom he constantly refers back to and draws upon for *Attu Boy,* from Western knowledge-production in the form of books, which as he says do not contain truth about Unangan people.

Golodoff's desire to sell his book to Japanese-language readers highlights his narrative-changing mission, and how that is aided by the vantage point of having been a child during World War II. *Attu Boy* is so important to the history of the Aleutians because it is an account of the experiences of the Attuan POWs when most Attuan POWs refused to talk about their traumatizing experiences. For instance, Golodoff writes this book as a way to tell his story to Japanese people. The first print-run of Attu Boy features in smaller letters below the title "アッツ島の少年", or "Attu (Island) Boy", which reflects Golodoff's desire to sell his book in Japan.[123] Today, a translation is in production, but has yet to be published.[124]

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[122] Golodoff, 1.
[123] Golodoff, 1.
[124] Golodoff's evaluation of Japan as a nice place to live highlights his unique vantage point as a child. Many Attuan survivors understandably resented the Japanese for their awful treatment in POW camps. Golodoff, on the other hand, mentions in Attu Boy that he thought Japan was a nice place to live when he was there, but also says that his older siblings and mother never "really wanted to talk about it." With this, he hints that from the vantage point of a child who did not fully understand the war and death as an adult might, he does not carry the same burdens of

Because we know that Golodoff passed away shortly after the publishing of *Attu Boy*, there is the inclination that one might treat this book as Golodoff looking back over a long life as if he is the last of the Attuans who remember what Attu was like, or as if it is an ode to a place that no longer exists or can exist. Golodoff's writing in *Attu Boy* suggests that that is not how one ought to read his account. He constantly writes about his connection with the elders in Atka. Golodoff writes that he received little formal education and instead of through school learned a lot from his elders. From this vantage point, it is easy to see that Golodoff's book is a way to correct the record on Unangan people and at the same time spread his memory of the life and vitality of Attu. In this way, Golodoff is not the last to remember what Attu was like— the mission of his book ensures that other people, too, can see what Attu was and still could possibly be.

Overall, Golodoff's mission fundamentally challenges the memory of Attu as presented by sources such as *Red White Black & Blue*. Although Golodoff presents his mission as to simply get information out there rather than to promote some cause, he says in the end of his account: "There is little info about Attu and Atka out there. Hardly anyone knows about the islands or Aleuts. The Aleuts today all turned modern."[125] Although there is a relatively low amount of information out there about Attu and Atka, the real emphasis in Golodoff's assertion here is that hardly anyone knows about Unangan peoples. Golodoff recognizes that there has been plenty of books before his about the Aleutians, but none which quite portray Attu the way he remembers it. Part of the problem is that these books have all followed the same historical formula in which an amalgamation of different points of view are added together to form a

memory. Because Golodoff was a kid during World War II, his experiences have more to do with observations and play rather than the political and the really dark aspects of living as a POW. Golodoff, 131.

[125] Golodoff, 134.

coherent history of Attu. The problem with this is that before Golodoff, Attuan survivors either were not asked or did not feel comfortable sharing their traumatic experiences in the form of something like a book. What little accounts exist besides Golodoff's are short and often unedited and hard to read.

Golodoff subverts these prior histories in a structural way by utilizing oral history and storytelling in his account as affirmed by the elders in Atka. In this way, Golodoff injects his oral history and storytelling into the discourse on Attu to make a historiographical argument that Attu's history is not just The Battle of Attu. For instance, the morning of the Japanese invasion of Attu, Golodoff was on his way to church with his family when he saw an apparition in the air. When he told this to an elder in Atka, the elder affirmed him seeing this by saying "kids see what adults can't see."[126] The point here is not whether Golodoff actually saw anything in the air that morning— the point is that the elder affirmed Golodoff's story, possibly giving Golodoff the courage to include it in *Attu Boy* in the first place. This underscores that the point of oral histories and storytelling is not necessarily to get everything factually correct. The point is to make sure that every voice, especially marginalized voices like those of the Attuan survivors, are included into the historical record and given the chance to be influential. Remember that Golodoff's memoir was created in a large part out of audio recordings sent to his granddaughter. This is a form of oral storytelling from one generation to the next. Indigenous communities have done this since time immemorial to pass information onto the next generation. Respecting this within the historical record means truly grappling with these oral histories and stories, especially given the rich value they add to analyses of history.

[126] Golodoff, 130.

In summary, in presenting Attu this way, Golodoff subverts the historical memory of Attu as being dominantly the Battle of Attu— a place of difficulty, death, and war between the U.S. and Japan without mention of the Unangax̂. While *Red White Black & Blue* represents the death, barrenness, and in-hospitability of Attu, which closes the door for remembering Indigenous life and liveliness on the island, Golodoff through *Attu Boy* subverts that memory. With *Attu Boy*, Attu becomes more than just the Battle of Attu, and becomes a place in which people lived rich lives, the land provided subsistence, and a tight-knit community thrived.

CONCLUSION

When I was in the fifth grade, a substitute teacher put *Red White Black & Blue* on for my class to watch during social studies class while our regular teacher was away. In one scene, near the end of the film, Jones talks about how when he went on a vacation to Hawai‘i in 1975, he saw “busload after busload of Japanese” and was uncomfortable “to see that many Japanese coming to American soil again.”[127] As a multiracial Japanese American, I naturally thought something along the lines of: “Isn’t that kind of messed up to think of Japanese people like that?” I remember expressing this to a friend in the class, who is Unangan, and I clearly remember him replying, “Yeah.” Then, he paused and said, “Well, I kind of understand it.”

This story points to a larger question about history and what questions we ought to ask about the history of the Aleutians. The discomfort of a veteran of World War II toward Japanese people on U.S. land is different than the discomfort of an Indigenous person’s. In the moment, I was a little sad— I did not understand where my classmate was coming from when I asked that question. Now, however, I understand the historical and cultural context my classmate was coming from and realize that the ways history was taught to us in that moment prevented us from really understanding what was at play. In that moment, provoked by *Red White Black & Blue*, I asked the wrong question to my classmate. What if we asked each other questions like: What led the two of us, a half-Japanese child and an Unangan child to be in class together? That path of inquiry would lead us to examine the nature of settler-colonialism in the Aleutians, the history of imperialism, and the continued occupation of Indigenous land by the United States.

If we had been exposed to sources that led us down these paths of inquiry, we would have possibly tried thinking harder about the Attu Peace Memorial. Although ostensibly for peace,

[127] Putnam, *Red White Black & Blue*, 1:02:05.

this memorial is really only referring to *one* peace— peace between the United States and Japan. The ongoing struggle between imperialist nations like the United States and Indigenous nations continues.

Further, we may have even looked more critically at *Red White Black & Blue*. In our very own hometown of Dutch Harbor, we saw how much Indigenous community still existed despite the destruction of Russian imperialism, World War II, and this continuous struggle. If one went to various places in Dutch Harbor, one could film a documentary much like *Red White Black & Blue*, filled with b-roll of abandoned World War II-era bunkers and rusted-out artillery stations. That does not mean that Dutch Harbor was, is, or could in the future be devoid of life.

Lastly, we may have discovered *Attu Boy,* a book which would have been published the year we watched that film together in class. This is a book more in line with what we understood to be true based off of our own upbringing in the Aleutians. This is a book that affirms the richness of life in the Aleutians despite sources that say it is nothing but bad weather and harsh terrain. This is a book which also remembers the life and community that existed on Attu, and in doing so leaves the door open for people to again return.

Although starting a permanent village on Attu seems out of reach right now (being able to receive state funding for a public school requires 10 students), there is movement on getting descendants of Attu access to Attu again. Atuŝ Forever is a nonprofit which attempts to do just that. One of their asks, for example, is to acquire a boat so that they can take trips to this remote site and again experience the place that their ancestors did. They plan to build a yurt on the island so that they can camp for extended periods. There are also conversations about getting descendants of Attu organized as a federally recognized tribe, which is hindered by the U.S. government because they do not all live in the same location; they are scattered around the

country at this point.[128] Ironically, the government displaced the Attuans, and now many of the barriers to going back to Attu remain because of this same government.

Ultimately, our common goal between the government, ordinary people, and the descendants of Attu ought to be peace, but *true* peace. In the context of this story, peace is storytelling— learning from those like Nick Golodoff who came before about what has been forgotten in the present day. Golodoff did not, however, tell his story without the support of the elders in Atka, his granddaughter Brenda Maly, and helpers at the NPS like Rachel Mason. Thus, peace is also the community building which facilitates that storytelling.

Words without action, however, can only do so much. With this, peace is action— turning the dreams spurred by Golodoff's stories into a future, like what Atuŝ Forever is trying to accomplish. In many ways, accomplishing this vision means acting against the very government that remains culpable for many of these problems in the first place. Thus, where Golodoff gives us his vision and imagination, Atuŝ Forever gives us action and the potential to realize that vision. In order for this to occur, however, more people need to realize that this is a problem in the first place. This can occur through a historical project like mine, which attempts to reorient the history of the Aleutians to place more emphasis on these marginalized stories.

Finally, peace is constantly reminding oneself that history is warped by the dominant powers of the world. As an inherent characteristic of history, things are forgotten, covered-up, and erased— thus, peace is fighting that by reading "against the grain" of history in an attempt to search for what has been marginalized. By doing this, it is possible to imagine a world that is ultimately better than the one we were born into. As I attempt to do this myself, however, I recognize that this project is just one attempt to reorient the history of the Aleutians and cannot

[128] Schmitz, Brian Conwell Interview with Helena Schmitz.

hope to be perfect. In the end, I am encouraged by figures like Golodoff who simply tell their story and trust that their effort will end up resonating with the right people. From Golodoff, I see that true peace is a constant process— continuing to listen, write, think, and pursue no matter what barriers remain.

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