

Walls, Fences & Resistance

Settler Colonialism from Turtle Island to Palestine

Franklin López
Clifton Ariwakehte Nicholas

2025

When we talk about settler colonialism, we're not just recounting the past, we're describing a system that is alive and expanding today. It's important to break down the terms: colonialism today often means invading a place to extract resources—a mine, a plantation, an oil field—before retreating. Canadian companies, for instance, loot minerals from Latin America and Africa, but when the mine runs dry, no “New Canada” pops up in Ghana or Guatemala. The colonizers take and leave.

Settler colonialism is different. It's about permanent occupation. It's about pushing Indigenous peoples off their lands, erasing their presence, and replacing them with settlers to populate, police, and profit from the land. That's the story of Turtle Island and the story of Palestine.

In our upcoming documentary, “A Red Road to the West Bank,” we, Clifton Ariwakehte Nicholas (Kanien’kehá:ka from Kanehsatà:ke) and Franklin López (of Amplifier Films), explore these deep, often painful parallels between Indigenous resistance on Turtle Island and Palestinian resistance under occupation.

Many of the insights that ground our understanding come from Gord Hill, an anarchist, artist, and historian from the Kwakwaka’wakw nation, who we interview for the film. In that conversation, Gord broke down how settler colonialism operates in phases. First, there is military conquest. in North America, massacres, broken treaties, and scorched-earth campaigns; in Palestine, bombings, mass expulsions, and apartheid walls.

Then comes containment. In Canada, Indigenous peoples were confined to reserves, their movement controlled by a brutal pass system. Today, Palestinians must navigate Israeli checkpoints and permit systems just to move across their own fragmented territory. Gaza, walled off and besieged, is a modern reservation under military siege.

In Clifton’s home community of Kanehsata:ke, fences now separate the people from the town of Oka and the golf course that still symbolizes colonial encroachment—a wound opened wide during the 1990 Oka Crisis, a 78-day armed standoff when the Canadian military laid siege to Kanehsata:ke after community members tried to stop the golf course expansion that desecrated their graveyard. [See “Indian Summer: Canadian Army vs. the Mohawks,” FE #335, Winter, 1990–91.]

Assimilation and erasure follow. Residential schools and forced adoptions sought to “kill the Indian in the child.” In Palestine, education and history are rewritten to deny Palestinian existence and heritage. Languages, cultures, and ways of life are systematically attacked.

In both struggles, resistance is criminalized. Indigenous land defenders on Turtle Island are labeled extremists; Palestinians resisting occupation are branded as terrorists. These labels are not just rhetorical, they are used to justify raids, arrests, surveillance, and the crushing of movements for liberation.

Settler colonialism on Turtle Island has been grinding forward for over 500 years in Palestine. It has been 77 years since the *Nakba*. Different timelines, but the same machine of dispossession.

With “A Red Road to the West Bank,” we aim not just to highlight these connections, but to forge solidarity across struggles. To show that walls, fences, passes, and prisons are all part of a global colonial system and that liberation anywhere helps crack its foundations everywhere.

The film is currently in development. We are fundraising to complete this project and bring these vital stories to a broader audience. You can check out clips from the film and support the project at amplifierfilms.ca/redroad.

Franklin López is a Puerto Rican anarchist filmmaker based in so-called Canada. He runs Amplifier Films and previously founded **subMedia**.

Clifton Ariwakehte Nicholas is a Kanien’kehá:ka activist, filmmaker, and land defender from Kanehsata:ke, and a lifelong anarchist committed to Indigenous self-determination.



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<https://www.fifthestate.org/archive/417-winter-2025/walls-fences-resistance>
Fifth Estate #417, Winter 2025

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