Indigenous Women and Research: Global Conversations on Indigeneity, Rights, and Education

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"The sun is rising, and people are dancing and people are watching. Rain is coming down, people are eating, and the dancers are making the rain come. It’s a big celebration and everyone is wearing beautiful costumes. One person is studying. There are dancers and drummers and hearts. The sun is giving light."

- Eliza Naranjo Morse's art students at the Kha'p'o Community School in Santa Clara Pueblo, New Mexico, 2019

Special Issue
Indigenous Women and Research: Global Conversations on Indigeneity, Rights, and Education

Elizabeth Sumida Huaman & Tessie Naranjo
Table of Contents

Guest Editors’ Introduction


Research Articles


Notes from the Field


Community-Based Commentaries


Book Reviews


Indigenous Women and Research: Conversations on Indigeneity, Rights, and Education

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I am moved by my love for human life;
by the firm conviction that all the world
must stop the butchery, stop the slaughter.
(Lee Maracle, from “War”)

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Guest editors’ introduction

We open this special issue with Stó:lō woman poet Lee Maracle’s words in order to set the tone for readers that this collection is about three things—love of land and people, naming and transcending injustices, and our responsibility to heal our world for future generations.

As guest editors, we have known each other for nearly a decade, and our respect for each other is grounded in mutual understanding of the significance of our homelands, cultural practices, languages, and ancestral values. We observe and appreciate the ways in which our peoples resist and reshape the conditions that coloniality has created in our communities; meaning, we see the practicality, sacrifice, and beauty in everyday acts—those who offer prayers at first light, the farmers who wake up in the middle of the night to irrigate their fields, the teachers who bring everything that they are to their classrooms. We also see the persistence of coloniality, which as an ongoing system of conflict and oppression impacts those everyday acts—prayers are said amidst widespread language loss and shift; the plants and animals with whom we share our homelands are threatened by environmental contamination and climate change; and fewer and fewer Indigenous teachers confront increasingly powerful neoliberal agendas.

Challenges are part of the human experience, but our resilience does not mean that we do not feel each assault on our lands and beings and over generations. At the same time, what we hold close and dear and how we imagine a future “full of both history and desire” (Arvin, Tuck, & Morrill, 2013) for ourselves and our communities constitutes how we define and exercise being Indigenous on our own terms. Today, Indigeneity based on life, land, and cultural practices requires claiming our right to Indigenous self-determination and self-development—freedom to choose the ways we want to organize our lives and the ability to do so over time (Gray, 1986, p. 7).

We are also Indigenous women of two different generations witnessing changes and continuities in the places that matter most to us. We have been doing research in our own villages and elsewhere and writing about and with our people, which are experiences that require reflection (of
what we see and hear), circumspection (regarding knowledge seeking and dissemination), and action (contributing to transformation). Thus, this special issue is also the result of our questions as Indigenous women researchers seeking to learn how others define self-determination and navigate whose interests are represented, as well as through what lenses we process our research and how other Indigenous women see themselves in relation to community and the global social, cultural, and political movement of Indigenous self-determination.

**Indigenous rights as reconciliation with the feminine**

A strategy of imperialism, colonization is anchored by principles that have informed international law, like the Doctrine of Discovery, which is based on ten elements—first discovery, actual occupancy and current possession, preemption/[European] title, Indian [Indigenous] title, tribal limited sovereign and commercial rights, contiguity, *terra nullius*, Christianity, civilization, and conquest (Miller, 2011). Each element establishes and justifies the expansion of imperial power and leaves an indelible mark on colonized lands and peoples. Each element also provides a point of entry for examining impact to Indigenous communities, including when and where certain community members have been disproportionately affected and how Indigenous peoples have been responding over time. For example, from early European colonizer accounts, we can glean that despite their encounters with Indigenous peoples, *terra nullius* or “nobody’s land” fit a political and economic agenda that would lead to exponential wealth and prosperity for colonizer nations and the construction of Indigenous lands as ‘unused,’ ‘uncivilized,’ and gendered as a ripe and bountiful female ready for the taking. Counternarratives therefore become an important part of Indigenous responses to these constructions, and the work of Seneca scholar Mishuana Goeman offers exceptional insight regarding the discourse of mapping the colonial imaginary. Through the use of Native women’s literature, she asserts that Native women are at the center of how Indigenous and settler nations have been imagined (2013). Furthermore, in other writing, Goeman
urges us to also reconsider how we conceptualize ideas of land and participate in its oversimplification. She argues that despite evoking “Indigenous identity, longing, and belonging” (2008, p. 24), land is a living term attached to Indigenous knowledge systems and specifically, our stories. She writes,

By organizing meanings of land around ideas of territory and boundaries in which our rights are retained, we miss out on very important mechanisms of fighting colonialism. Seeing land as storied and providing stories from time immemorial, rather than as a confined place within rigid boundaries, will remind us of the responsibility to each other. The people still speak of the sacredness of places now claimed by the parks services for instance, or even those gravesites found under shopping malls. (2008, p. 32)

These are reminders to Indigenous peoples that in our fight to maintain access to our lands, there is distance between the ways in which land and natural resources are limited in their conceptualization on the one hand by historic and ongoing colonial exploitation, and on the other hand, through ostensibly benevolent contemporary rights discourses.

Amongst Indigenous women scholars, there is general agreement that mainstream public and political discourses must be consistently interrogated as they can often reflect colonial heteropatriarchal normative ideologies. This process includes discourses that Indigenous peoples have (re)claimed, including Indigenous rights. For example, within Indigenous communities and beyond, the idea of universal rights brings to the forefront debates between collective and individual rights, which Sami scholar Rauna Kuokkanen argues is illusory (2012). Tracing the relationship between Indigenous rights and women’s rights, Kuokkanen explains that as third generation human rights, Indigenous rights focused on self-determination reflect aspirational declarations of international law difficult to enforce.

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1 For more information on rights relating to women and the codification of these rights see 1979 CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women): https://www.ohchr.org/en/professionalinterest/pages/cedaw.aspx. See also the
(2012, p. 227). She challenges us to consider who is represented in Indigenous peoples’ rights—who are the “peoples,” what are their distinct experiences, and how are we addressing gender and violence in Indigenous self-determination efforts? While she recognizes that Indigenous women strive for self-determination for their communities, she also argues that “un-gendered research on Indigenous self-determination conceals patriarchal structures and relations of power” and that Indigenous women must “pursue a human rights framework that not only simultaneously advances individual and collective rights, but also explicitly addresses gender-specific human rights violations of indigenous women” (2012, p. 226 and 232).

Building on these arguments is Sam Grey who views the individual and the community as “parts of a constellation of human rights capable of accommodating the needs, aspirations, experiences, and perspectives of both women and peoples” (2014, p. 529, Grey’s emphasis). Theoretically, there should be no tension between individual interests and the collective because as Grey writes, individuals operationalize, promote, and protect collective human rights while also holding rights by virtue of their place within the collective wherein Indigenous self-determination and women’s rights are therefore co-equal concerns (2014, p. 529). However, she acknowledges that conflicts arise when co-equal concerns are resisted for whatever reason, both within and outside of Indigenous communities, and so Kuokkanen’s illusory question remains relevant—Can Indigenous self-determination can be achieved without considering women’s issues?

We propose that rather than perpetuating colonial gender divisions, which promote normative and often oppressive ideas in Indigenous communities, that we take up Goeman’s call for decolonial conceptualizations of what matters to us as Indigenous peoples, or what we

believe constitutes our Indigenous selves. We must comprehend the workings of settler colonialism as we also maintain and revitalize our connections to our sacred places, languages, and cultural practices. The task is then to consider with community members what our Indigenous self-determination involves while trusting Grey’s assertion that the framework of Indigenous human rights (re)defined in our own Indigenous languages and using our own knowledge systems is malleable and big enough for our respective work. In other words, in order to look to stories of how our societies functioned and to decolonize our thinking, we must actively seek knowledge as we navigate the remnants of the colonial world and its material and new neoliberal trappings.

There is a role for all of us here. Maile Arvin, Eve Tuck, and Angie Morrill underscore a crucial point: They write that because the U.S. “is balanced upon notions of white supremacy and heteropatriarchy, everyone living in the country is not only racialized and gendered, but also has a relationship to settler colonialism” (2013, p. 9). This is true of numerous settler colonial societies. As Indigenous women writing, they address the academy, challenging ethnic and Indigenous Studies to address theories of heteropatriarchy and gender and women’s studies to center settler colonialism and Indigeneity. Towards these shifts, they offer “Native feminist theories” as theories “that make substantial advances in understandings of the connections between settler colonialism and both heteropatriarchy and heteropaternalism” (2013, p. 11). Most importantly, they offer five challenges that Native feminist theories offer feminist discourses, which we see as critical if the academy is to institutionally address the marginalization of Indigenous scholars: 1) problematize settler colonialism and its intersections; 2) refuse erasure, but do more than include; 3) craft alliances that directly address differences; 4) recognize

2 The authors also note that Native feminist theories can be differentiated from Native feminism in that Native feminist theories are not necessarily labeled as “feminist,” nor are they produced solely by Indigenous, feminist, or woman-identified scholars. For information on feminist scholarship, see the special issue in Wicazo Sa Review guest edited by Goeman & Denetdale, 2009, which includes Luana Ross’s From the “F” Word to Indigenous/feminisms.
Indigenous ways of knowing and its emphasis on land, sovereignty, and futurity and decolonization; and 5) question academic participation in Indigenous dispossession.

Further problematizing the invisibility of Indigenous women researchers and the idea that Indigenous women are absent in the production of theory is Yaqui scholar Elizabeth Archuleta’s argument for “Indigenous women’s feminist theory.” She asks, “Because mainstream research has not used Indigenous women’s intellectual traditions—constructed and utilized within our own communities—are we to believe that the ways in which we make meaning of our lives or understand the world are not theory?” (2006, p. 88). She further notes,

we do theorize our lives but that we theorize differently, meaning, Indigenous women do not rely solely on Western tools, worldviews, or epistemologies as methods of interpretation. Indigenous women reject paradigms that ask us to disassociate ourselves from our lived experiences before we can claim to have the skills and knowledge to theorize. We believe theory comes not from abstract written ideas but from the collective knowledge of Indigenous women whose lives have not informed feminist theories, methods, or policy concerns and whose lived experiences mainstream feminists will continue to ignore unless Indigenous women question and deconstruct existing methodologies. (2006, pp. 88-89)

Archuleta’s strong defense of Indigenous epistemologies and Indigenous women’s processes of knowledge acquisition and theorizing speak back to colonial and academic claims over knowledge production that are persistent in their deception. She asks us to look at ourselves and to look to each other and recall that what Indigenous women contribute intellectually and through all our capacities, whether within universities or elsewhere, is rooted in and has life beyond the academy.

One of the most eloquent examples of this point is Laguna Pueblo scholar June Lorenzo’s work on spatial justice, Indigenous rights, and reconnection with the feminine (see this special issue; 2017). Her work draws from Paula Gunn Allen, also from Laguna, whose writing questioned
among other processes the transformation of Indigenous societies through the displacement of female creators with male figures, the replacement of Indigenous women clan leaders, and the institution of the Western nuclear family as not only normative, but also as a marker of being civilized (Allen, 1992). Lorenzo notes that these deliberate and concerted shifts restructured Indigenous communities politically, economically, socially, and culturally. However, despite the institutionalization of Spanish laws (in the case of the Pueblos), Lorenzo maintains that Pueblo people continue to hold profound ties to the feminine:

Many sacred deities and sacred places and landscapes are known by feminine names to Pueblo peoples, and appear in publications on Pueblo peoples. In our Laguna Keres language, words used to describe “our land” or “territory” are the words for “Our Mother.” The female is venerated as giver of life and symbolized as such in the Pueblo world. (2017, p. 65)

We add that if the struggle for Indigenous rights across distinct communities prioritizes Indigenous self-determination, which is reliant upon the centrality of our relationships with our earth and her cycles, that we as organic beings of earth and stardust must recognize our connection to the feminine as inherent. It is this connection that must be reconciled in any discussion of how we will understand and transform our present and future.

**Indigenous women writing**

Inside every body, every single body, and particularly the girl bodies is our old old old ancient memory. You get your brains from your mother, but you also get this ancient lineage memory that goes back to the beginning of time...We began first with our relationship to the earth, and then the relationship to the sky world and then the relationship to the plant world and then the relationship to the animal world and
then the relationship to each other. (Maracle, 2012)³

As Quechua and Tewa women, we do not speak on behalf of our communities or for other Indigenous peoples. We cannot say if Indigenous self-determination will be reached for such and such people through renewed consideration of women’s issues, and we cannot say if dominant societies will become just based on acknowledgement and action taken to redress pervasive and persistent colonial brutality against Indigenous and minoritized peoples. We can say that we fear for our most vulnerable populations, which include our own and other peoples’ children, and for the earth’s plants and animals who also have their own languages, communities, and responsibilities, which Lee Maracle reminds us of in terms of relationships. As such, we continue to think about why we do research, how we engage others, and who research serves and to what ends. As Indigenous women researchers and allies, we think carefully about our audience/s—Do we write for the academy? Do we write to make convincing arguments to the public? Do we write for Indigenous-serving institutions, allies, policymakers? Do we write for ourselves, for each other, for our own and other Indigenous peoples? In truth, Indigenous women researchers, whether affiliated with the academy or not, may speak to all of these groups at one time or another.

This special issue is an attempt to reach multiple audiences with research that centers Indigenous peoples. We issued a call for submissions to this special issue in order to attract those who would highlight the relationship between Indigenous women’s research, rights discourses, and socially transformative community-centered work across diverse contexts. We were not looking for self-identified Indigenous feminist theorists or human rights and human rights education (HRE) experts, but we believe that through Indigenous women’s work and research, we have something to say about the intersection between what we wish for our communities and

tools of social transformation, like HRE, that we can help shape. For example, Tessie’s lifelong work as a Tewa language teacher, Indigenous languages advocate, and Pueblo scholar has prioritized collective sense of place, collective practice of values, and co-building spaces for Pueblo people’s literature, history, agriculture, education, and women’s studies. Similarly, we asked authors rooted in their own research and worldviews to rethink rights, research processes, gender, notions of community, and education. We were interested in submissions that explored, among other major themes, women’s reflections on self-determination and human rights, theory as healing (hooks, 1991), decolonial freedom and Indigenous well-being, identities transcending race and class (Mihesuah, 1996), and culturally-based notions of femininity (Allen, 1992).

As Indigenous women working with our own communities, we were also interested in the mechanics of research related to Indigenous self-determination, including exploring rights issues and work that was directly related to researcher positionalities. We were also interested in research methodologies and methods in relation to Indigenous community/ies, and perhaps most importantly, discussions of healing, strengths-based work and interventions, ultimately adding to the ways in which transformative human rights education (Bajaj, 2011, 2017; Sumida Huaman, 2017, 2018) is pushing the field of HRE.

In building this special issue, we sought connections where local research could be seen as in dialogue with Indigenous contexts elsewhere, creating a sense of fellowship across researchers. We are honored to have worked with researcher-practitioner-scholars who are intimately connected to Indigenous places and peoples. What they have produced is the result of their histories, identities, values, and hopes—inhherited, forged, maintained, and rekindled over time. To this special issue, each contributor brings perspectives that speak to their understandings of life across generations, disciplines, and contexts. We therefore frame this special issue as conversations—among authors, in dialogue with the Indigenous communities and institutions that constitute the sites of our research, and with you, the readers, whoever you may be and wherever you are.
Danelle Cooper (Hopi, Tewa, Diné, Mvskoke Creek), Treena Delormier (Kanien’kehá:ka), and Maile Tauali‘i (Kanaka Maoli) begin the conversation with research focusing on Indigenous sacred sites, including Mauna Kea and Nuvatukya‘ovi. Their work articulates the essential relationship between sacred places and Indigenous physical, mental, and spiritual health. Underlying their research is lead author Danelle’s protocol of honoring participants at all stages of the research, including ensuring that their words are carefully represented in her first peer-reviewed publication. Furthermore, the article exemplifies the vital and compassionate relationship between Danelle and her Indigenous women scholar mentors, Treena and Maile. Extending the conversation on land is June Lorenzo’s (Laguna Pueblo/Diné) work, which combines a lifetime of observations of family and community interfaces with the Jackpile uranium mine with her local and international human rights work and decades of community environmental and sacred place advocacy, qualitative, and quantitative data collection. June explores the social, cultural, political, and economic, impacts of uranium mining in Laguna through a gendered lens that ultimately expands our understanding of gender beyond human limitations by pointing us towards profoundly cultural conceptualizations of “the feminine.”

As Indigenous places and sacred spaces are central to Indigenous people’s lives and identities, so too is language. Patricia Fjellgren (Sami) and Leena Huss (Sweden Finnish) offer us a strikingly beautiful narration of their collaborative work on Sami language revitalization in Sweden. They recount testimonies of language loss and reclamation, and they introduce an innovative and joyful program of language learning and sharing through the Gïelečirkuš/Language Circus method developed by Patricia and in cooperation with Giron Sámi Teáhter. Their work reminds us of the hope and creativity that is present across all our research, even as we move with Indigenous community members through the sorrow of loss.

Also engaging hopefulness and innovation is Tiffanie Hardbarger’s (Cherokee) work with Cherokee youth in Oklahoma. Utilizing participatory action research and visual research methods, Tiffanie’s research seeks to include often overlooked youth perspectives on community development,
and in this case, their own decolonizing educational experiences. She introduces IPAR (Indigenous participatory action research) as a research method particularly effective with Indigenous youth and shares the ways in which IPAR has been iteratively shaped with youth and through their interpretations of Indigenous-centered theoretical frameworks that rethink Indigenous rights through centering Indigenous knowledge systems.

Indigenous women’s connections to their communities and knowledge systems are highlighted through the critical research presented with Indigenous women educational leaders by Robin Zape-tah-hol-ah Starr Minthorn (Kiowa/Apache/Nez Perce/Umatilla/Apache) and Heather Shotton (Wichita/Kiowa/Cheyenne). Robin and Heather share testimonies of contemporary Indigenous women and their reflections on their leadership trajectories, which offer important considerations for nurturing Indigenous women in leadership positions beyond calls for diversity and inclusion. Similarly utilizing testimonies is the work of Elizabeth Sumida Huaman (Wanka/Quechua) who offers preliminary considerations through an Indigenous community-based participatory project with Quechua women in Peru. She examines the history of gendered and racialized oppression through Spanish colonialism and focuses on the experiences of the grandmother generation of domestic servants.

Our “notes from the field” section is extensive because it includes our category of “community-based commentaries,” which are reflections from Indigenous community members, practitioners, or leaders who wish to directly address their own and other Indigenous communities, as well as Indigenous-serving or other institutions. Notes from the field typically offer research considerations relevant to the field but do not have to include research methods and empirical data. We ask readers to note that the journal has combined community-based commentaries under the notes from the field category, but we delineate the categories here.

Starting our notes from the field is the moving educational reflection by Konai Helu Thaman (Tongan), which outlines her observations of the trajectory of colonial systems of schooling in the Pacific. Her reflection is made even more powerful by the use of her own poetry, which eloquently captures moments and feelings across time and contexts. Next, as scholar-
educators and Indigenous women transforming pedagogy through critical theory, Flori Boj Lopez (Kiche Maya) and Sandy Grande (Quechua) offer reflections on their experiences with Hacer Escuela/Inventing School, their fellowship with other educators transforming educational design and practice, and they call for a reconsideration of rights as state-sponsored recognition frameworks. Flori and Sandy ask us to rethink education as a right due to its implications as a means of upward economic mobility and citizen production. Without addressing settler colonialism and anti-immigrant policies, they ask how education can be transformative and thus offer their own insights and critical teaching strategies.

Beginning our community-based commentaries section through their description of arts-focused pedagogy and content at Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) is Cheryl Crazy Bull (Sicangu Lakota), Colleen “Co” Carew (Mescalero Apache), and Bridget Skenadore’s (Diné) celebration of Native arts linked with cultural shifts and historical traumas that continue to impact Indigenous women today. They highlight the relationship between traditional and contemporary arts and gender, and they demonstrate how Indigenous peoples are naming, resisting, and healing from violent colonial acts still manifesting, such as the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls and Queer and Trans community members (MMIWGQT).

Focusing on Indigenous women and vulnerable populations in Indigenous communities who remain unprotected through tribal policy is the work of attorney and scholar Peggy Bird (Kewa). Peggy offers a heartfelt reflection of her own journey as an advocate for Indigenous women’s issues locally, nationally, and internationally. She pays homage to Indigenous women mentors, and based on her observations and decades of work with tribal communities, she carefully outlines recommendations for bringing Indigenous women into policy construction to address their safety as she explores culturally-based notions of well-being and the idea that “practice” is something we can all consider.

The notion of Indigenous well-being is also elegantly addressed by three Māori women scholar-practitioners, Glenis Mark, Amohia Boulton, and Donna Kerridge. Writing from Aotearoa/New Zealand, they examine
the commercialization and mainstreaming of Rongoā Māori, community-based healing practice inextricable from Māori knowledge systems. They offer key principles for the protection of Rongoā Māori that call for Indigenous rights-based frameworks that must do better. As they are practitioners of Rongoā Māori, we hold these women in high regard, and we make special note here that for all of our authors, the Western label of scholar is likely too small and limited to describe their rich knowledges and experiences.

In this special issue, we are also pleased to offer book reviews by two young Indigenous women researchers, Blythe George (Yurok) and Anna Reed (Chickasaw), and we celebrate with them their desires to engage the world of ideas through their analysis and writing.

As a collection of writing that unapologetically utilizes an academic venue for dissemination of our research, critiques, and ideas, in all instances, authors have aimed to speak from within and not from above. In so many ways, then, this special issue is recognition, gratitude, and celebration of Indigenous communities, peoples, places, and the ways in which we can contribute to human rights education discourses. In kind, we are pleased to share the cover artwork by 3rd grade children from Kha’p’o Owinge (Santa Clara Pueblo), which is Tessie’s home community in Pueblo Indian Country, what is now northern New Mexico territory in the U.S. Each child contributed a drawing, which was then compiled by brilliant artist and Kha’po’o Community School art teacher, Eliza Naranjo Morse, who also graciously facilitated the children’s discussion to craft their artist statement together:

The sun is rising, and people are dancing and people are watching. Rain is coming down; people are eating and the dancers are making the rain come. It’s a big celebration and everyone is wearing beautiful costumes. One person is studying. There are dancers and drummers and hearts. The sun is giving light. (Artists Kailynn Archuleta, Anthony Munu Chavarria, Julián Chavarria, John Tonka Dominguez, Kylan Fragua, Illena Suazo-Garcia, Katherine Willow, 2019)
The work of these children offers us inspiration beyond words, and the images they have shared serve as a reminder of why we as Indigenous women and allies do the work we do—so that our world’s children enjoy the freedom to observe, learn, participate, and to do and be what makes them happy.

**Acknowledgements:** Elizabeth and Tessie would like to thank our fellow authors in this special issue, their families, and their communities. We are grateful to our families and the communities of Kha’p’o Owingeh and Chongos Bajo. We also offer heartfelt thanks to Eliza Naranjo Morse and the wonderful elementary school students of Kha’p’o Community School. We thank the IJHRE team—Monisha Bajaj, Ria DasGupta, Lina Lenberg, Michiko Kealoha, David Tow, Maria Nieves Autrey Noriega, and Susan Katz. We also offer special thanks to University of Minnesota, Twin Cities graduate student Tiffany Smith for working with us to promote the work of our authors. Most importantly, we think about the memories of the grandmothers, back before our time. Their memories are inside of our bodies, and they motivate us to be who we are. We remember Sue Ellen Jacobs, Gia, Gia Khun, Rina Sventzell, Mama Jesusa, Tia Mari, Tia Flora, and Mama Yola. All of those people are gone now, but we move forward with what they have taught us as we make the way for the others who are to come.


“It’s Always a Part of You”: The Connection Between Sacred Spaces and Indigenous/Aboriginal Health

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Abstract

Since colonization, Indigenous/Aboriginal Peoples (IAP) have fought for their inherent rights to follow their ways of life on their traditional territories. One continuing battle is the protection of sacred spaces. Sacred spaces are places recognized by IAP as deeply spiritually and powerful. Relationships to sacred spaces sustain spiritual connections integral to our concepts of holistic health/well-being and are vital for cultural integrity. Though all of the natural world is sacred to IAP, the particular cultural and spiritual significance of sacred spaces and impact on health merits attention. Drawing from qualitative research, this article investigates IAP’s perspectives and experiences regarding the connection between Indigenous/Aboriginal and sacred spaces, and we conclude that the desecration of sacred spaces has negative impacts on IAP’s health.

Keywords: Sacred Spaces; Indigenous/Aboriginal People; Indigenous health and well-being; environmental desecration; cultural identity

Introduction: IAP’s sacred spaces, health, and research needs

Indigenous/Aboriginal People (IAP) around the world are uniting to protect their sacred spaces from desecration. In what is now the United States but was first Indigenous homelands, current examples are Mauna Kea in Hawai‘i, Nuvatukya‘ovi and Oak Flat in Arizona, and Standing Rock in North Dakota. The authors of this article maintain that sacred spaces are crucial to IAP’s ways of life, and we argue that the desecration of these places has negative impacts on health. Most notably, because colonization is designed to terminate, assimilate, and relocate IAP, the elimination of their existence and connection to their land and culture remain constant threats. Examples are replete worldwide—from the United States’ Code of Indian Offenses of 1883, the Revised Laws of Hawaii, to Canada’s Indian Act of 1876, which outlawed traditional healing and ceremonies (First Nations in Canada, 2013; Department of the Interior, 1883; Medicine, n.d.). We assert that like a disease, colonization spreads and causes harm to the
“physical, social, emotional, and mental health and well-being in traditional societies” (Gracey & King, 2009).

International agencies acknowledge these connections between health and environment. As early as 1946, the World Health Organization (WHO) stated,

Health is a state of complete physical, mental, and social well-being and not merely the absence of disease or infirmity. The enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being without distinction of race, religion, political belief, economic, or social condition. (2007)

Today, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) addresses Indigenous People's rights to sacred spaces and cultural practices. As Indigenous researchers, we claim that the highest standards of health and human rights possible are not upheld for IAP because of the ongoing, current, and emerging destruction of sacred spaces. Ongoing colonization has led to negative health effects, such as higher mortality and infectious disease rates, poor social determinants of health, and non-communicable diseases, which can be linked with racism, loss of languages and cultural practice ties, and spiritual, emotional, and mental disconnectedness linked with land removal (Gracey & King, 2009; King, Smith & Gracey, 2009). However, additional public health research is required to better understand these links.

We write as three Indigenous women whose goals are to improve the health and well-being of Indigenous People. Danelle Cooper, MPH, is Hopi, Tewa, Diné, and Mvskoke. She writes,

Although I grew up mainly in the city, I consider my home Moencopi, Arizona. As an Indigenous woman my responsibility and intentions are to protect and heal my people, ancestors, future generations, all living beings, sacred spaces, and Mother Earth. From my family, I have learned that we are connected to Mother Earth and every living being, and that we have to care for and respect them. My responsibility to write this paper is to aid in the protection and healing of sacred spaces and IAP. As Indigenous People we understand that sacred spaces are a part of us and connected to our health, but some of the world does not. Therefore, I hope this article
will help in spreading awareness around the issue of desecration of sacred spaces and IAP’s health and prevent further destruction of sacred spaces.

Treena Delormier PhD, PDr, is a Kanien’keháːka (Mohawk) woman and mother who was raised from birth on the reserve community of Kahnawake which is on the south shore of the St. Lawrence River, about 10 miles from downtown Montreal, in Quebec, Canada. She writes,

I am a health professional and professor of public health and nutrition. My research training is both academic and community based, primarily in my home community. I believe research is a process of coming to an understanding through pursuits of knowledge that aim to improve the human condition and achieve social justice. As a supervisor of research trainees, I emphasize the through systematic inquiry. As an Indigenous researcher I endeavor to center Indigenous knowledges and methodologies in research and supporting the self-determination of Indigenous communities.

Maile Taualii, PhD, MPH, is Kanaka Maoli, a wahine (woman) and mother. She writes,

I am a Clinical Transformation Healthcare Researcher for the Hawaii Permanente Medical Group, where I bring cultural, ethical, and community-oriented perspectives to clinical transformation. In 2015, I established the world’s first global Indigenous Master of Public Health degree program and was awarded the University of Hawai`i, Board of Regents Excellence in Teaching Award. I live with my husband, five children, and three dogs on a 20-acre food forest with our `ohana, who aim to feed the community traditional, plant-based food from the land.

In this article, we together investigate IAP’s perspectives and experiences regarding the connection between IAP’s health and sacred spaces, and we provide some specific discussion about Mauna a Wākea and Nuvatukyaʻovi as examples of sacred site desecration.
Background: Sacred spaces and Indigenous health and well-being

Sacred Spaces

We begin by sharing our understanding of sacred space and our usage of this notion throughout this article before providing specific snapshots of sacred spaces and their relationship to IAP's health and well-being.

IAP have relationships with vital parts of the world considered sacred spaces, which are sites, places, and areas that are believed by IAP to hold power. We understand this relationship as IAP philosophy that asserts, 1) sacred spaces are foundational to Indigenous/Aboriginal ways of life; 2) IAP are attached to sacred places; and 3) IAP express responsibility to sacred places. As Deloria Jr. (2003) states, “Sacred places are the foundations of all other beliefs and practices because they represent the presence of the sacred in our lives” (p. 285). Most IAP will articulate connection with the land and the natural environment in their homelands and consider natural elements sacred—that is, our environments are our cultural identities, origins, religions, and worldviews, and our relationships to our environments require actively bonding with elements that include mountains to forests to deserts (Tsosie, 2000). Tewa scholar Gregory Cajete further writes, that this active bonding means harmonizing with place as “a matter of spiritual, psychological, and cultural survival for Indigenous People” (1994, p. 81). Harmonizing is to connect with places not only on a physical level of being in a place, but bonding at the mental, emotional, and spiritual levels. In plain speak, to have a relationship with a place and to know this place for IAP is similar to knowing and relating to one’s family.

We believe that as IAP, we have a responsibility to care for sacred spaces and for the Earth, and that this caring is a “sacred covenant with the land” (Cajete, 1994, p. 84). We illustrate our view of sacred spaces with a model (see Figure 1) based on Hopi beliefs about the centrality of corn. IAP are like the corn, illustrated by the blue corn seed. The sun represents sacred spaces, and just as corn needs the sun to grow, IAP are nourished and healed by the power of sacred spaces and the cultural practices that are associated with them. People grow like corn and gain their cultural identity...
through the cultural practices that connect them to these spiritual places. The fully-grown corn represents people's health and well-being, because when sacred spaces are thriving, people are healthy. This relationship with sacred spaces promotes IAP as mentally, emotionally, physically, and spiritually healthy. Without interaction with sacred spaces, IAP lose connection to their spirituality, ancestors, community, and the future generations.

*Figure 1. Hopi corn model*

Mauna a Wākea and Nuvatukyaʻovi

Mauna a Wākea (Mauna Kea) in Hawaiʻi and Nuvatukyaʻovi (Hopi for San Francisco Peaks) in Arizona serve as focal examples for our discussion on sacred places and Indigenous health connections. Kanaka Maoli Leon Noʻeau Peralto (2014), expresses that Kanaka Maoli (Native Hawaiian Peoples) have direct familial relationship with Mauna a Wākea, which means they are related to Mauna a Wākea, and the mountain is their family. Mauna a Wākea is the child of Papahānaumoku (Earth Mother) and Wākea (Sky Father), and this is where Poliʻahu (snow goddess) other akua (god/goddess) live (Peralto, 2014; Nā Puke Wehewehe ʻŌlelo Hawaiʻi, 2003). Peralto states, “Mauna a Wākea is the piko [navel] that connects us
to the heavens,” and like the navel on human bodies, “Mauna a Wākea represents our physical and spiritual connections to past, present, and future generations” (2014, pp. 236-238). Peralto further shares,

*We are the Mauna*, and our treatment of it reflects a deeply ingrained notion of the ways in which we now view and treat ourselves and each other. In neglecting our kuleana [responsibility] to mālama [to take care of] this ‘āina [land], we ultimately neglect our kuleana [responsibility] to the future generations of our lāhui [nation]. (Nā Puke Wehewehe ‘Ōlelo Hawai‘i, 2003, p. 241)

Kanaka Maoli are a part of Mauna a Wākea, and how they treat the mauna is how they treat themselves. Currently, there is proposed scientific development on Mauna a Wākea, which is desecration to Kanaka Maoli. The University of Hawai‘i (UH) is the main proponent behind planned construction of a Thirty-Meter-Telescope (TMT), and as the colonial powers, they believe they have control over this area (Brown, 2016; KAHEA: Timeline of Mauna Kea Legal Actions Since 2011). Since the 1960s, Mauna a Wākea has held 13 telescopes overall (HNN STAFF, 2019; Andone, Jorgensen, Sandoval, 2019). Because Mauna a Wākea is considered “ceded crown lands,” the State Land Department has been leasing this sacred space to UH (HNN STAFF, 2019; Andone, Jorgensen, Sandoval, 2019; see KAHEA: The Hawaiian Environmental Alliance). Furthermore, UH has then sub-leased Mauna a Wākea to other organizations through the Department of Land and Natural Resources (HNN Staff, 2019), including the TMT International Observatory LLC (TIO) members, which include a number of institutions—Caltech, University of California, Natural Institutes of Natural Sciences of Japan, the Natural Astronomical Observatories of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, the Department of Science and Technology of India, National Research Council of Canada, the Association of Universities for Research in Astronomy (AURA), and the Gordan & Betty Moore Foundation. Kanaka Maoli believe that Mauna a Wākea is already suffering desecration through the 13 telescopes presently occupying the space, and that the added TMT will cause further harm.

Across the ocean on the United States mainland is Nuvatukya‘ovi (San Francisco Peaks), a sacred space for Hopi People in Arizona being desecrated by a ski resort called the Snowbowl (Wilson v. Block, 1983; Hopi
Tribe v. Arizona Snowbowl, 2018). The San Francisco Peaks are sacred to 13 Indigenous Nations in the region, which include Diné, Zuni, Hualapai, Havasupai, Yavapai-Apache, Yavapai-Prescott, Tonto Apache, White Mountain Apache, San Carlos Apache, San Juan Southern Paiute, Fort McDowell Mohave Apache, Acoma, and Tohono O’odham (see Protect the Peaks for more information).

The Hopi People oppose the privately-owned ski resort, which leases the land from the United States Forest Service (Schlosberg & Carruthers, 2010). Furthermore, the Snowbowl is using reclaimed wastewater to make artificial snow for skiers (Wilson v. Block, 1983; Hopi Tribe v. Arizona Snowbowl, 2018). In Hopi, Nuvatukya‘ovi is central to Hopi culture, critical to ceremonies.

Indigenous/Aboriginal Concepts of Health/Well-being: Land and Identity

It is widely argued that IAP view health differently than western society. Western conceptualizations of health focus on physical elements related to the biomedical being, while Indigenous epistemologies focus holistically on the physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual being (King et al., 2009). IAP’s ways of life and health incorporate philosophies of people in/striving towards harmony and spiritual relationships with the land, community, ancestors, and the spirit world (Gracey & King, 2009; Liu, Blaisdell, & Aitaoto, 2008). There is extant scholarship and testimony that supports the claims that connection to land is integral to IAP’s health (King et al., 2009), and that IAP’s notions of health include the overall wellbeing of family, community, and the Earth (Crivelli, Hautecouer, Hutchison, Llamas, & Stephens, 2013; Gracey & King, 2009).

For example, the Ojibwe peoples of the Northwoods of the United States and in Canada will refer to their health and well-being as resulting from balanced relationships between family, community, environment, and the mental, emotional, spiritual, and physical elements that must be engaged in those relationships (Malloch 1989; Richmond & Ross, 2013). Maori health models developed by Mason Durie (1994) are founded in the Whare Tapa Whā model, which incorporates the Taha tinana (physical), Taha wairua (spiritual), Taha hinengaro (mental), and Taha whānau
(extended family). Along with these elements are the Te ao turoa (environment) and Te reo rangatira (identity) (Durie, 1994; Maori Public Health Action Plan, 2003-2004). Kanaka Maoli regard wellness as “lōkahi (oneness) and pono (harmony, balance),” with people and the world by maintaining “proper thoughts, feelings, and actions,” toward everyone (Liu et al., 2008, p. 6). Thus, we advocate for embracing and understanding multi-dimensional concepts of health as critical and including the role that sacred spaces play in affecting holistic constructions of IAP’s health.

To date, empirical research addressing links specifically between sacred spaces and IAP’s health presents a gap in the literature. However, there is work on the relationship between IAP’s health and land. Here, we delineate the two. For example, research linking IAP to their lands has introduced “solastalgia”:

the pain or sickness caused by the loss of, or inability to derive solace from, the present state of one’s home environment. Solastalgia exists when there is recognition that the beloved place in which one resides is under assault (physical desolation). (Albrecht, 2006, p. 35)

Solastalgia is an “attack on one’s sense of place, in the erosion of the sense of belonging (identity) to a particular place and a feeling of distress (psychological desolation) about its transformation” (Albrecht, 2005, p.45). Albrecht explains that solastalgia occurs when place-based distress transpires, and people feel homesick due to their environment being destroyed (2006). Relatedly, somaterratic illnesses refers to primarily physical illnesses related to environmental contaminants, while psychoterratic illnesses relate to mental well-being threatened through the disconnection between Indigenous peoples and their lands (Albrecht et al., 2007). We believe that these concepts also apply to the destruction of sacred sites. For example, we see testimonies of somaterratic illnesses from our participants, including a New Mexico Acoma Pueblo participant who observed, “There’s exposure from extractive industries such as mining, which has led to cancer.” This person then emphasized “unity” or the collective in upholding responsibilities and maintaining ceremonies linked with preventing illness:

when we do not uphold this traditional based knowledge,
when we allow our ceremonies to go unattended, and not
participate in the full capacity...on numerous occasions you’ll see physical ailments too...if we don’t have that spiritual mental connection to our ceremonies, our spiritual calendar, and we assimilate to mainstream society, there’s negative consequences there...Just even our change in lifestyle...Look at how many of us today are facing illnesses that we never faced historically in the past...High blood pressure, diabetes, heart disease.

Testimonies like these are critical today, and we also note the work of Richmond and Ross (2009) focusing on colonial policies and IAP’s environmental dispossession, a process that results in Aboriginal people’s reduced access to the resources of their traditional environments. They further argue that environmental dispossession leads to cultural disconnections between land and identity, which contributes to poor health experienced by Inuit and First Nations in Canada (Richmond & Ross, 2009). We add that the impacts of colonization through historical trauma cannot be emphasized enough here. Indigenous historical trauma is a worldwide phenomenon among IAP due to colonization (Wesley-Esquimaux, 2007). Historical trauma is defined as “cumulative emotional and psychological wounding across generations, including the lifespan, which emanates from massive group trauma” (Brave Heart, 2003, p. 7). Researchers further explain that historical unresolved grief stemming from colonial violence constitutes “the current social pathology, originating from the loss of lives, land, and vital aspects of Native culture promulgated by the European conquest of the Americas” (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998, p. 60). Historical trauma results from oppression, negative dominant policy impacts, and the spiritual persecution of IAP’s beliefs (Brave Heart & DeBruyn, 1998).

Additionally, Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Indigenous historical trauma have been associated with American Indians in the U.S. who face ongoing incursions (Manson, et al., 1996). A prominent example is the Exxon Valdez oil spill in Prince William Sound, Alaska, on March 14, 1989, which has been correlated with anxiety, depression, PTSD, and other negative health impacts among Alaska Natives (Palinkas, Peterson, Russell, & Downs, 1993). This environmental disaster affected Alaska Native traditional subsistence lifestyle, social relationships, and saw increased
alcohol, drug abuse, domestic violence and decreased physical health (Palinkas et al., 1993; Palinkas, Downs, Peterson, & Russell, 1993). These environmental disasters and threats are widespread and ongoing, impacting Indigenous homelands and sacred spaces. However, their impacts can be countered through social, cultural, and political processes by which IAP are reclaiming their traditional lands and ways of life (Big-Canoe & Richmond, 2013).

**Research on Sacred Spaces**

In this section, we describe qualitative research conducted with IAP focusing on testimonies of sacred spaces, including Mauna a Wākea and Nuvatukyaʻovi. Data was collected between July 2015 to January 2016 in Hawai‘i and Arizona through in-depth interviews. Participants included eight well-regarded IAP cultural experts from different Indigenous nations and between the ages of 31 and 65. Participants were selected based on extensive knowledge regarding sacred spaces in their respective homelands, and as this article focuses more specifically on Mauna a Wākea and Nuvatukyaʻovi, the Kanaka Maoli and Hopi participant testimonies are highlighted in this article. In addition to sharing their knowledge of sacred sites, participants were asked to provide insight on the nature of observed problems and to give recommendations for solutions. Twenty-eight questions comprised the interview protocol, and audio recordings were transcribed verbatim.

A qualitative thematic analysis of sacred spaces in relation to IAP’s health was conducted in order to inform the interview process and to allow the researcher to listen for the following themes: sacred spaces (descriptions of), cultural identity (sacred spaces linked with notions of Indigenous identity), and health and well-being (related to sacred spaces).

*What are sacred spaces, and how are they desecrated?*

When asked, “What do you think makes a space sacred,” participants responded using six characteristics. They explained that sacred spaces are, 1) places that have power (i.e. mana in the Hawaiian language) and where energy is embedded;
2) the home to “deities,” “gods and goddesses,” and “ancestors,” as well as places where people can connect spiritually, mentally, emotionally, and physically with them;
3) places of worship, ceremony, and prayer, (similar to how other religions might view their churches, temples, or mosques); where ceremonies such as sweat ceremonies and vision quests take place, and link to ceremonies completed from afar. These places are where “shrines” and heiau [Kanaka Maoli for temple] are located;
4) places of origin, genealogy, and ancestors; participants expressed sacred sites as “there before them,” and existing since “time immemorial.” For Hopi, where women place “mother’s wombs” [placenta or umbilical cord] connecting newborn children to these places, and place offerings such as “prayer feathers.”
5) living places; participants called them, “living organisms,” “natural,” and used IAP’s languages to describe them. All of the “land”, the ‘Āina [Kanaka Maoli], is sacred. Water is also considered sacred with particular importance given to “rivers” and “springs.” Along with “mountains,” and “mountain tops” as important sacred spaces;
6) part of healing and ceremonies; sacred spaces are places of healing, and where people “harvest medicine” such as “plants,” or “water.”

Participants provided specific examples of the desecration of sacred spaces—through natural resource extraction and storing of toxins, including nuclear waste, as well as through extractive industry, including harvesting of timber, and “mining of uranium, copper, lead, molybdenite, and coal.” Other examples of desecration include “non-Indigenous commercial and recreational activities,” specifically the ski resort on Nuvatukya‘ovi and where the tourist/ski industry produces massive human waste, debris, and general disrespectful encroachment from visitors. In the case of Mauna Kea, Kanaka Maoli participants discussed harm transpiring through what they referred to as the ambitions of Western science, exemplified through telescopes on top of the mountain. Destruction of features of sites, such as an ahu [Kanaka Maoli for shrine] and temples were also noted as ways sites are desecrated.


Cultural Identity

Participants’ connections to sacred spaces was conveyed through usage of language like stewardship, covenant, and kuleana [Kanaka Maoli for responsibility]. Participants communicated that their stewardship, covenant, and kuleana were dedicated to deities/spirits, the Earth/world/land, ancestors/people/future generations, and humanity/community. Cultural practices maintained connections to sacred spaces. For example, regarding stewardship to deities/spirits, one Hopi mentions relationship to spirits at Nuvatukyaʻovi:

very simply that’s where we believe the Kachinas spirits live, and our prayers are offered to the peaks and to the Kachina people there, to the cloud priest. And that’s been part of our culture for thousands and thousands of years. You know the time the first clans began to arrive here in this part of country and the world, the San Francisco Peaks was experienced. Certain things happened a long time ago, and today thousands and thousands of years later, the Hopi People still I believe carry that relationship to the San Francisco Peaks or to Nuvatukyaʻovi, which is interpreted to mean, the “Peaks with the Snow,” that’s what it means, Nuvatukyaʻovi. So it becomes very special to you, and then as you grow up into the culture into adulthood and then later into levels of some cultural responsibility, it’s daily for us. When you sit down in the kiva and you smoke and pray. And we look at all of the four cardinal directions, we think about it, we visualize it. And then towards the west then you visualize the peaks... *It’s always a part of you* [emphasis added].

For the Hopi, Nuvatukya‘ovi is their cultural responsibility, and their relationship with the sacred spaces makes Nuvatukyaʻovi a part of who they are.

Stewardship to the earth, world, and land also represented connections participants carried with them to sacred spaces. The same participant explains,

the San Francisco Peaks, Nuvatukyaʻovi. You know the significance of the place to the Hopi People. And see so I just want to talk about
that background on how I look at space and really the environment and the special qualities of what we have naturally here that that gives us a feeling of being Hopi. You know because every clan has a stewardship responsibility. Ceremonies have an Earth stewardship responsibility. So for some of us who have now gone through time and have learned, we take that responsibility pretty seriously…it’s not just at big events, it’s daily for me.

Participants also expressed a sense of responsibility to both their ancestors and future generations:

for Native Hawaiians, our connection to land goes back to our genealogy, our moʻo kūʻauhau, our genealogy. And in our genealogy we hear the stories of Wākea the Sky Father mating with Papahānaumoku our Earth Mother. And from their mating comes forth all of our islands... and so these islands are like our ancestors. In our genealogy we’re directly connected to them. And so when people desecrate our lands, I try to tell my student this, “Imagine somebody punching your grandmother in the face. How does that make you feel?” That is how a Hawaiian feels when somebody desecrates land. It is as if somebody punched my grandma in the face, now I have a sense of anger, a sense of resentment, but also a sense to protect and to care for my tutu. And if my land is in my genealogy my tutu, or grandparent, I respect the land in that same way. Because the land has provided for my family for generations, and generations, and generations...If we know our genealogy, if we know who we are and where we’re from, we will know where we’re going. And I know that we come from these lands. That we come from this place. I know that the Kalo is our older sibling. I know that the islands and the stars are our older siblings. And if people begin to desecrate that, it is as if they are desecrating and fighting with my own family.

This participant shares how Kanaka Maoli are connected to the land through their genealogy—thus, desecrating the land is the same as harm to a respected relative. The person adds,

But once we start to educate on some of these issues and once you know, then you have a kuleana or responsibility to act. But a kuleana
also means a privilege too, cause now you’re privileged to know, now you’re privileged to act. It’s very dual in that sense where it’s a responsibility but it’s also a privilege to have these kuleana. What we’re training the kids here and in the community it becomes their kuleana, not only their rights, not only their responsibility, but also their privilege to uphold and to help pass on to the next generations and generations.

Kanaka Maoli state that they have a kuleana to take action once they know about issues. Kuleana is a privilege for Kanaka Maoli to uphold and to pass on to the next generation to ensure that future generations also carry on the responsibilities.

Lastly, participants described cultural identity in relation to sacred spaces as tied to humanity, including their communities and other people. Sacred spaces and the ceremonies connected to them are not only done for individual purpose or even the specific IAP group to which they are meaningful. They are for the benefit of all humanity. As one Hopi participant states,

it’s never an individual thing, when you go to these locations. It’s always for a purpose. There’s always a reason for these places that we go to for different offerings...I feel that with these places that are identified as sacred spaces, that those things be maintained so that we can continue to offer our prayers as Hopi People to that one location, and our prayers in turn are going to help in the well-being of everybody as whole, not just Hopi, but everybody in general.

For IAP, like the Hopi, sacred spaces help maintain cultural practices that include everyone. As one Pawnee participant states, “most of these ceremonies that are conducted by Indian people are for the good of humanity as a whole. To “preserve the continuity of the of the universe.”

Cultural Practices

In this section, cultural practices are the ways IAP connect to sacred spaces and point to how IAP maintain their responsibilities and connect their cultural identities to these places. Completing cultural practices reinforces the covenant they undertake to protect and care for the Earth.
Cultural practices in direct relation to sacred spaces were defined by participants as ceremonies and rituals, offerings and prayers, seeking healing, and speaking their Indigenous languages. Speaking Indigenous languages is the mechanism for maintaining oral traditions and sharing traditional knowledge. In addition to ceremonies carried out at sacred sites, participants described making pilgrimages and special spiritual journeys to their sacred sites “since time immemorial.” One Kanaka Maoli person explains,

If we’re going to the island of Kahoʻolawe for example, we’re gonna go next week to honor our Makahiki ceremonies. It’s the closing of our Makahiki season, which is like our our winter harvest season or our the birthing of the new year. The Makahiki ceremonies are specific to our Akua or our god Lono. And so when we go, we go and we bring offerings of growth in many different forms...What will bring these physical things along with our spiritual prayers in hopes that when we go to that space and do these ceremonies, Lono will bless us with rain, and not the heavy rains, but the nice soft rains that can help green our lands and green our spaces. So when we go to these lands, when we go to these sacred places, we will do different things according to the place. And so Kahoʻolawe is a very special place in that we will go to to ask the Akua for guidance, to ask the Akua who are gods, for blessings to continue throughout the year. And so to engage in that, we engage in it through chant, through prayer, through observation, through giving of physical offerings, through through sweating on the land and sharing that space with the land and getting dirty in that land. Through eating from that land in that space, but again it all goes back to the the proper way of entering that space and coming into it.

Makahiki for Kanaka Maoli is a winter harvest and New Year ceremony for the Akua Lono (Kanaka Maoli for one of their Gods). Furthermore, oli (chant), and mele (songs) are done at sacred spaces for the space, as well as offerings and prayers such as hoʻokūpū (ceremonial gift) provided to sacred spaces. Participants offer “prayer feathers,” poi wrapped in ti leaf, and Hawaiian salt as offerings to sacred sites. Just as the place is honored, sacred sites are also sites considered in IAP’s healing, and participants
discussed traditional medicines gathered, which may include elements like water. While we do not delve into the details of these ceremonial activities in this article, our emphasis here is on cultural practice connections that are maintained, even from afar, reinforcing IAP’s cultural connection to sacred spaces.

_The living and essential link to Indigenous/Aboriginal health and well-being_

While cultural practices are maintained in many Indigenous communities, our focus is on impacts to IAP’s health. Participants were asked to describe this relationship, and they asserted first that the health of sacred spaces is interconnected with IAP’s health. As IAP have physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual relationships with sacred spaces, desecration causes harm to people on all these levels. Harm is caused in many ways, including when IAP are obstructed from access to being able to fulfill their stewardship through cultural practices. Additionally, participants described desecration as disruptive, making it difficult (if not impossible) to connect to the spiritual power of places, deities, and their ancestors, all of which they perceived as having negative health effects, including the rise of social problems.

It’s pretty simple: it’s harm forever. You know, for me personally, because I was in the thick of the legal fight, the political fight, and then being a practitioner, it’s there forever, that experience. To know that the proponents and the Coconino National Forest got their way...the Hopis pray to nature. The Kachinas are a part of nature. So to substitute the natural with technology just doesn’t fit in our way of looking at these spaces and landscapes. It just never existed...that kind of substitution never never existed in Hopi ways of thinking...what one of our elders testified that is that if the if snow-making came in, and now it’s there because we legally lost. Then our generation who were in the thick of this fight today, it’s harm directly. We feel it, we see the mountains there, but what our elders said, “What about over time?” See but the immediate harm for our generation, living generation today is forever. You know and then, in our principles of life, then when we live out our lives in this world
right, the physical world, then we become spiritual people. So the harm in a secular and physical sense is up to my last day here. But you know what, when I say forever, it’s also into my spiritual life. See that’s what people really don’t understand on this whole business of emotional harm for in this case the Hopi People [emphasis added]. (Hopi participant)

This participant was involved in the legal battle to protect their sacred space and described experienced harm on various levels—the physical and emotional harm of fighting, losing politically and legally in court, and by seeing and feeling the impact of desecration on their mountain. The Hopis carry the harm forever spiritually because they become “spiritual people” once they live out their physical life in this world. Thus, direct injury does not end on an emotional and physical health level in this world but goes on to the spirit world.

Participants importantly described social issues like drinking, drugs, suicide, and domestic violence resulting from desecration. A Kanaka Maoli participant explains,

there’s sort of a disconnection. You see sort of a break down in society. Erosion of cultural values, because you no longer have the places that you made ceremony or worship. You lose that that knowledge of the place is lost. And then so then the cultural practice discontinues. And then you have following generations wondering why they have pain inside them, you know, it’s an unarticulated pain. And it has to do with cultural loss. And it can manifest as maybe criminal behavior, domestic violence, crimes, health problems. It’s really just being untethered to something that is, what was the foundational things within your culture. It’s being just loosened and untethered from that root.

This participant described “unarticulated pain” when a sacred site is destroyed, because of the connection with the place being disrupted. This disconnection is linked with erosion of cultural values, due to loss of the place where the people made worship or ceremony. Without the sacred spaces and culture practices, IAP feel what participants referred to as “pain inside them” that can impact the future generations due to what is more broadly understood as cultural loss. The same person went on to explain,
after a while it’s like a thousand paper cuts, it’s like if the things that are important to your culture are destroyed, then you start to think then, “I’m expendable. I don’t matter.” And you have you have modern society reflecting that you don’t really matter. And then so then when you realize that you’re just a throw away person, then your health suffers. Because then you believe that you’re worthless, you know, that you lack any kind of value. And so what does that mean, what does that translate, in terms of your health? You get stressed, if you’re a person that’s trying so desperately to hold onto what’s left of your culture, and every day you see an onslaught against it, you know from the dominant society, then there’s this strain, this it’s like you can never relax in that struggle. Sometimes you find meaning because at least you fighting for something, but if you constantly struggling, then that becomes like major stress, and then the diseases that are associated with stress, that’s what manifests, you know for you physically, whether you realize it or not, so it’s just sort of this compounding thing, a burden or a pain that you become accustomed to.

Indeed, research with IAP has shown that acculturation and racism physically affect health among Native Hawaiians, with higher levels of hypertension due to the stress of not being exposed to their culture, being disconnected from the Kanaka Maoli community, and perceived daily racism (Kaholokula, Iwane, & Nacapoy, 2010).

**Discussion: IAP and Human Rights Frameworks**

Through the testimonies shared, desecration of sacred spaces is seen as related to struggles for cultural continuity that are linked to IAP’s health. We are reminded of what one participant from Acoma Pueblo stated with regards to desecration and rights: that desecration of these spaces constitutes “human rights violations to our traditional cultural worldview.” This is an important reality for us to consider. Moreover, acknowledging their settler colonial contexts, participants described dealing with feelings of worthlessness and the “daily onslaught” against dominant society, which caused them significant stress manifesting as physical pain. These
perceptions and realities of health impacts are critical areas for further research. With more public health research that takes on an IAP’s sacred spaces lens, we believe that prevention and healing methods can be initiated for and by IAP and in relation to their sacred spaces.

Other forms of intervention include policy, and with the recognition of the distinct rights of IAP, laws and acts have been proposed as one approach to protecting IAP’s rights. We assert that Indigenous access to and protection of sacred spaces are human rights, and IAP have been actively pursuing ways to protect them under this framework for decades. Indigenous Peoples strive for “place-based justice,” which is based on their “responsibility to protect places important for survival” (Lorenzo, 2017, p. 2). More recently, the UN Declaration explicitly addresses Indigenous rights and can offer justifications for protecting sacred spaces. Laws in the United States that relate to IAP and sacred spaces are the American Indian Religious Freedom Act of 1978 (AIRFA), the National Environmental Policy Act of 1970 (NEPA), the National Historic Preservation Act, and the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act 1990 (NAGPRA) (Lorenzo, 2017). However, although these are in place, they do not always assist and typically require concrete (Western scientific) evidence, which can diminish the firsthand testimonies of IAP’s views on sacred spaces and health. For example, under the U.S. National Register of Historic Places certain areas can be designated as a Traditional Cultural Property (TCP), but do not include “intangible resources” (U.S. Department of the Interior, 2012, p. 1), which would include reliance on IAP’s cultural practices as not necessarily justifiable for TCP designation. Generally speaking, the issue is much deeper here in that western views of land are focused on ideas of property and do not include discourse on the sacredness of land, water, and air. When land is seen solely as property, as Sumida Huaman states, this is “only for human gain, this is a parasitic relationship and not a reciprocal one” (Sumida Huaman, 2017, p. 8).

As Indigenous researchers, we are concerned about how to put into practice protections that consider the relationship between IAP, sacred spaces, and health, and we see human rights education (HRE) as one mechanism. For example, drawing from long-term and emerging United Nations frameworks, Bajaj (2011) writes that HRE is,
education, training, and information aiming at building a universal
culture of human rights through the sharing of knowledge,
impacting of skills and moulding of attitudes directed to: (a) The
strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental
freedoms; (b) The full development of the human personality and
the sense of its dignity; (c) The promotion of understanding,
tolerance, gender equality and friendship among all nations,
indigenous peoples and racial, national, ethnic, religious and
linguistic groups; (d) The enabling of all persons to participate
effectively in a free and democratic society governed by the rule of
law; (e) The building and maintenance of peace; (f) The promotion
of people-centered sustainable development and social justice. (p.
484)

For us, this includes all people understanding that desecration has negative
effects on humanity and Earth. As our participants have described, there is
a ripple effect, with damage done to all living beings in this world and the
spirit world. Using human rights education that is founded in our
Indigenous knowledges, we hope that students and their families will gain
respect for IAP’s ways of life and the sacred spaces that we share. As IAP, we
also have a right to care for and learn from sacred spaces, constituting what
we believe is IAP’s human rights education.

Conclusion

In this article, we emphasize that the desecration of sacred spaces
points towards impacts on IAP’s health in multiple ways. Our research
considered IAP’s definitions of sacred spaces, connections to sacred spaces,
understandings of desecration, and perceptions of Indigenous health
impacts. We listened to participants who asserted their kuleana to
deities/spirits, world/Earth/land, ancestors/people/future generations, and
humanity/community, and we understand that in order to fulfill
stewardship roles, IAP maintain their relationship to sacred spaces.

IAP are involved in cultural practices associated specifically with
their sacred spaces, which are living manifestations of their cultural
identities. These include their origins, ancestors, and the future generations
all at once. Participants shared that sacred spaces are our identities, part of them forever—from birth to when we enter the spirit world. We, along with our participants, know that we are our sacred spaces, they are always a part of us, and we are forever bonded to our Mother Earth. While desecration has a massive negative effect on IAP’s abilities to access and engage our cultural practices, making it difficult to fulfill our covenant, it does not curtail our love for our sacred spaces and Earth Mother.

Colonization is continual and the driving force behind desecration and remains unrelenting in myriad ways. Knowledge shared from our study may help researchers and Indigenous community members to build health measurements that continue to analyze the relationships between (the desecration of) IAP’s sacred spaces and Indigenous health. Possible interventions involve input from IAP, research support, and wide public health efforts rooted in IAP’s human rights education. Furthermore, activism and social organizing leading to upholding laws and policies, while creating new ones is another approach key to protecting sacred sites.

As a final word, as Indigenous women, we see our responsibilities as ensuring the health of our people, all living beings, and Mother Earth. Our motivation to partake in this research was to assist our people who struggle daily with protecting our sacred spaces and to share their stories and experiences. Enduring injuries and traumas across time—from our past ancestors, to our present people, and to future generations—it is our collective energy and that of the people who shared their stories, as well as our communities, our ancestors, and our sacred spaces connecting to create what we have presented. This is our daily life—to know, feel, and experience desecration but to also follow our responsibility in protecting and healing our sacred spaces, as well as our commitment to preventing future harms to our people and Earth Mother. We hope you will join us in this responsibility.
Acknowledgements

From first author Danelle: Askwali, Mvto, Ku’dawaha, Ahéhee’ (thank you) in the languages of my people the Hopi, Mvskoke, Tewa (Hopi/Santa Clara Pueblo), and Diné, and even though I am not Kanaka Maoli, Mahalo to the Creator, Mother Earth, sacred spaces, and all the people who have helped, supported, and taught me on this journey. Askwali to Nuvatukya’ovi and to my Great-Grandpa Elmer Jenkins and Grandpa Louis Jenkins for your love, strength, guidance, and inspiration. Askwali to Dr. Treena Delormier and Dr. Maile Tauali’i for your help with this work. To my ancestors, family, and friends askwali for all of your support and love. Mahalo to Mauna a Wākea and to the Kia’i of Mauna a Wākea, for your aloha, taking care of me, sharing your knowledge, and letting me be in your presence to share space with you all. To Dr. Kelly Gonzales, askwali for your assistance. Askwali to Dr. Elizabeth Sumida Huaman and Dr. Tessie Naranjo for editing the paper and for all of your help and hard work. Special heartfelt askwali/mahalo to the participants who shared their stories and wisdom. This work would not have been possible without you taking the time to talk story with me, and I am forever grateful to you for your continued help and guidance. It was an honor to learn from you all. You all contributed to this work, and it is a collection of your wisdom, knowledge, and love. Kū Kia’i Mauna!
References


Gendered Impacts of Jackpile Uranium Mining on Laguna Pueblo

June Lorenzo (Laguna Pueblo/Navajo [Diné])*

Abstract

Building on a human rights framework and culturally-based notions of gender and earth, this article examines the Jackpile uranium mining experiences at Laguna Pueblo with a specific view toward impacts on women at the Pueblo. Community members have raised concerns about the environment and human health for years but employing the language of human rights is only very recent. Thirty years after closure of the mine, we have begun to use a human rights lens to analyze what has happened in our community. As an Indigenous woman, attorney, researcher, and scholar from Laguna, I contend

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that strategies for the community moving forward can be enhanced with human rights considerations, beginning with self-determination. I assert that any such conversation is incomplete without further consideration of the impacts of mining on Indigenous women and the feminine that exists in the lives of Laguna people.

**Keywords:** Laguna Pueblo; uranium mining; Jackpile mine; Indigenous women and mining

**Introduction: My Location and the Importance of the Feminine**

From the 1950’s to the early 1980’s, the Pueblo of Laguna¹, a Native nation in New Mexico, experienced major disruption to the Laguna way of life from a massive uranium extraction project. The disruption manifested in many ways; some were apparent, while others would come to light decades later. Physically, a major mining company created the largest open pit uranium mine in the world; economically, the Pueblo received royalty payments that allowed it to grow its government and provided tribal members – only men at first – a way to earn decent living wages closer to home; and socially, the relative roles of men and women, within the home and community and externally, began to shift. Externally, men were given access to more economic power in the world outside Laguna as the wage earners. This affected gender roles internally, within homes and the community, as many Laguna men were convinced to shift from an agricultural lifestyle to a wage-earning lifestyle at the uranium mine. Blasting from mining also caused damage to traditional homes, which were traditionally the domain of women. More recently, the environmental

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¹ Pueblo of Laguna, also referred to throughout this article as Laguna Pueblo or Laguna, is one of the 20 Pueblo Indian nations in the state of New Mexico in the southwestern United States. Laguna is comprised of six villages, including Laguna, Paguate, Mesita, Encinal, Seama, and Paraje. The author is from the village of Paguate, and her research focuses largely on Paguate. For more information, see: [https://www.lagunapueblo-nsn.gov](https://www.lagunapueblo-nsn.gov).
impacts to the land, and health impacts to Laguna Pueblo members, and especially to Paguate Village residents, is the subject of critical health research. While recent literature has focused more on weighing benefits against the costs of uranium mining at Laguna Pueblo, less scholarship has examined the impacts on Laguna people in a human rights context. At a time when human rights standards are increasingly articulated in settings of extractive activity on Indigenous lands, I have set out to amplify voices within the Pueblo that raise concerns about the impacts of extractive activity on residents of Laguna Pueblo.

This article first provides a brief historical background on the Jackpile uranium mine before framing the uranium mining experience of Laguna Pueblo within a human rights setting and with a specific view toward impacts on women at Laguna Pueblo. This is significant because community members have raised concerns about the environment and human health for years but had not employed the language of human rights. As the Pueblo now addresses remediation of the mine as a Superfund site, environment and health are front and center, and thirty years after closure of the mine, there are now those of us in the community who have begun to use a human rights lens to analyze these issues. As an Indigenous woman, attorney, researcher, and scholar from Laguna, I contend that strategies for moving forward can be enhanced with human rights considerations, beginning with self-determination. However, I also argue that any such conversation will not be complete without further

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3 The term “superfund” refers to its designation by the US Environmental Protection Agency as land that has been contaminated by hazardous waste and identified by EPA as a candidate for cleanup because it poses a risk to human health and/or the environment. Under the Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation and Liability Act of 1980 (CERCLA), EPA cleans up contaminated sites. The Act also requires the parties responsible for the contamination to either perform cleanups or reimburse the government for EPA-led cleanup work.
considering the impacts of mining on Indigenous women and the feminine that exists in the lives of Laguna people.

Methodology and my location

The topic of this article is linked with my prior research on traditional building structures in Paguate Village (Lorenzo, 2017a). In the course of analyzing quantitative data, I realized there was a quantitative dimension that warranted additional attention, specifically the story of the impact of mining on the feminine at Laguna. This article in particular is based on ethnographic research, including autobiographical data, much of which has been collected and analyzed since 2013. For the last sixteen years, this work has also included my advocacy role to address uranium mining legacy issues with the Laguna Acoma Coalition for a Safe Environment (LACSE⁴), the Mt. Taylor Traditional Cultural Property designation (2008 - 2014), and most recently, leading a community project on the use of the Keres language linked with our environment.⁵ Additionally, for nearly two decades I engaged in the negotiations leading to the adoption of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UN Declaration) in 2007 and the adoption of the Organization of American States (OAS) American Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2016, with numerous other Indigenous advocates.

Paguate Village is my home, where I was raised as a Laguna and Diné female in the household of a Laguna father who worked for decades at the

⁴ LACSE is a community organization focused on uranium legacy issues and community education on related environmental and health issues.

⁵ Legal, environmental, and human rights advocacy supplement my research on issues of the impacts of uranium mining on Laguna. In the early 2000s, my work as in-house attorney for the Pueblo of Laguna involved a project led by five area tribes to protect the sacred Mt. Taylor ("Tsibiina" to Laguna people) from proposed uranium mining. Since 2003, I have worked with other members of LACSE, and I have taken these issues to the international human rights arena in advocacy for Indigenous peoples, including protection of sacred areas.
uranium mine. My father worked as a diesel mechanic from the 1960s until the mine closed. Mining began before I was born and ended when I was away from home in law school. Growing up, I grew accustomed to the daily blasting and saw the dust that lingered over parts of Paguate Village. I saw many of my high school classmates go to work at the mine after graduation as if it was the only option. Not until 2004 when I was asked to write an article on the Jackpile mine (Lorenzo, 2006), after I had returned to Paguate to live and work, did I ever consider the hazards associated with the mining activity. The research process for that article included archival research, review of historical and public documents, and interviews of community members, which grew my consciousness about the environmental and health issues related to the mine and set me off on a course of probing the many injustices hidden beneath the surface in the entire mining project and into the present efforts to reclaim the land. Since then, I have watched former mine workers in the community suffer from different illnesses, including cancer. Further, with a greater understanding of the connections to the mine, I have listened to debates about the costs and benefits of the uranium mine in our Pueblo, and I have participated in debates about future mining as a political candidate. These issues shape my research as an Indigenous activist scholar.

**Gendered analysis and the feminine**

This article raises concerns of and about women at Laguna Pueblo who experienced the uranium mine as residents of the Pueblo, both as members of households of miners and as employees of the mine. This includes non-Laguna women. Conversations with community members have revealed that people perceive positive and harmful impacts from the mine. Framed in a greater rights context, some impacts could be considered specifically as forms of violence against women. Because almost no literature is devoted to long-term uranium mining impacts on women, what we learn regarding women’s experiences thus also contributes to discussions on future strategies for addressing violence against women at the Pueblo.
Clearly this work calls for intersectional analysis, which is generally viewed as race and gender interconnecting in shaping structural, political and representational aspects of violence against women. In the case of violence against Indigenous women, Indigenous scholars and commentators would add self-determination. Kuokkanen (2012) proposes a specific human rights framework that simultaneously accounts for Indigenous self-determination and human rights violations of Indigenous women. She contends that Indigenous self-determination cannot be achieved without taking into account Indigenous women’s social, economic, and political rights (p. 226). She also argues that developing successful strategies for addressing violence against women can only happen if gender is privileged in this process and furthermore, that we must distinguish between gendered forms of violence against Indigenous women and gendered effects of violence impacting Indigenous communities (Kuokkanen, 2012, p. 250).

However, the process of examining impacts of the uranium mining project on women at Laguna Pueblo challenges the utility of distinguishing between the two and demonstrates the need to understand how gendered forms of violence work in concert with gendered effects of violence where our scope of concern is the entire community. This in no way implies that women’s rights must be sacrificed for the sake of self-determination; rather, I argue that any conversation regarding the impacts or mining projects on women is not complete without understanding the notion of the feminine that exists in the lives of Laguna people. The feminine signifies that as embodied in human beings and the feminine as embodied in Mother Earth, “Our Mother” in Laguna Keres language, undergirding Laguna epistemology that honors and holds sacred the feminine. Women embody some aspects of the feminine but because of the sacredness of the feminine, so can other genders. For reasons of “ethnographic refusal,” I am intentionally avoiding a rigid definition of the feminine.  

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6 The notion of the feminine that emerges from Laguna Pueblo and Keres-speaking people is a place-based knowledge process, and while I argue for the inclusion of considerations of
Jackpile Uranium Mine and Human Rights

The Jackpile uranium mine, located on Laguna Pueblo lands, is the easternmost area of a region known as the Grants Mineral Belt, an area of vast uranium mining and milling from the 1950s to the 1980s. The federal government, through the Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), was the sole purchaser of uranium until 1966, when commercial sales of uranium began. The AEC continued to purchase ore until 1970. Major players in the uranium belt were Anaconda Mining Company, Kerr-McGee, United Nuclear and Sohio. Homestake, now a subsidiary of Barrick Gold, and United Nuclear operated uranium processing mills west of Grants, New Mexico.

Jackpile uranium mine was in operation from approximately 1953 to 1982, when Anaconda’s successor Atlantic Richfield, unilaterally decided it was not generating enough profit to continue the mine operations. After nearly 30 years of mining, the company announced closure; to many at Laguna it felt like an overnight withdrawal after being the major source of employment. It is common knowledge that the Pueblo and the surrounding area experienced an unemployment rate of nearly 80%. With unemployment came many economic and social problems for Laguna People. Women and children often bore the brunt of the social ills that followed the mine closure. Domestic violence was common, although not openly discussed. Some men, who had no other employment skills, moved to other locations of Anaconda operations, such as Nevada, or other mines still in operation in New Mexico.

In 1983 the Pueblo began a 6-year process of negotiation to remediate 2700 acres of disturbed land. A Draft Environmental Impact

the feminine, which can be applicable to other communities as a reminder to consider their own epistemologies, I do not believe it is necessary to offer my version of Laguna epistemology to confirm the importance of the feminine.

7 For a more complete account of the experience of the Laguna people with the Jackpile mine, see Lorenzo (2006).
Statement (DEIS) was prepared in 1985 (Bureau of Indian Affairs, Bureau of Land Management, 1985). In community meetings, members raised issues of psychological harm once they realized Anaconda had no intentions of restoring nearly 8,000 acres of damaged lands to their original state (Lorenzo, 2006). This was rejected as “not within the scope” of the EIS.

When the mine closed in 1982, Laguna and neighboring communities believed this was the end of uranium mining. However, in the early 2000s, several mining companies that had held onto leases in the area proposed new mining ventures. They decided that the market price for uranium was worth their investment once again. The Laguna Pueblo Council has since passed a moratorium on new uranium mining on Laguna lands, but surrounding communities have been amenable to renewed mining. Currently, the Pueblo is in litigation with Atlantic Richfield, now owned by British Petroleum, over responsibility for remediation of the mine. Given this history, obvious questions of human rights considerations come to mind. Rather than second-guess decisions made by Pueblo leadership, I believe it would be helpful to place this story of Jackpile within a human rights framework, especially the rights of Indigenous women, to help in future strategies for addressing remediation and the health of the people and the land.


Several key rights set the foundation to establish a human rights context for Indigenous peoples and extractives. First and fundamental is the overarching right to self-determination for Indigenous peoples as set forth in Article 3 of the UN Declaration and Article III of the OAS Declaration. The language is identical in the two instruments: “Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development.”

Second, for Indigenous peoples, lands and territories – presently-held and traditionally-held – are integrally connected to the exercise of self-determination. Article 25 of the UN Declaration recognizes the right of
Indigenous peoples to “maintain and strengthen their distinctive spiritual relationship” with their lands and territories. Article 28 (1) of the UN Declaration sets forth the related right of Indigenous peoples to redress for their “lands, territories and resources which they have traditionally owned or otherwise occupied or used, and which have been confiscated, taken, occupied, used or damaged without their free, prior and informed consent.”

Third is the right to free, prior and informed consent, found in Articles 10, 11, 19, 28 and 29 of the UN Declaration, as well as Articles VIII, XVIII, XXIII, and XXVIII in the American Declaration. In present human rights discourse on extractive activities, Indigenous peoples are demanding their right to free, prior, and informed consent before any extractive or mining projects are allowed to go forward, and each of these three components is critical to the consent of Indigenous peoples. There is also a rapidly growing body of literature on Indigenous lands and self-determination, expanding to fit the numerous human rights contexts around the globe. Indigenous peoples are asserting that consent must be free and not coerced; consent must be sought before any mining activity is authorized; and sufficient information must be provided to Indigenous peoples so that they may make informed decisions.

Further, while it is crucial that collectively-held rights be recognized, in the context of mining, related individual rights are at stake as well. The preamble to the UN Declaration expressly recognizes that Indigenous individuals are “entitled without discrimination to all human rights recognized under international law.” Indigenous human rights defenders

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8 See, e.g., Consolidated report on extractive industries and their impact on indigenous peoples, E/C.19/2013/16, a report of the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues.

have been targeted as they defend Indigenous traditional territories and resources, and many of these defenders are women.\textsuperscript{10} Additionally, the international community has recognized the vulnerability of Indigenous women and children where extractive activity occurs on or near Indigenous territory.\textsuperscript{11}

Both the UN and the OAS declarations, which involved decades of engagement by Indigenous peoples in the drafting process, recognize the vulnerability of Indigenous women and children, as well as disproportionate impacts on this population as a general matter. Article 17 of the UN Declaration highlights the need to take special measures to protect Indigenous women and children: “States shall take measures, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, to ensure that indigenous women and children enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination.” Article VII of the OAS Declaration contains a broader statement on the rights of Indigenous women: “Indigenous women have the right to the recognition, protection, and enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms provided for in international law, free from discrimination of any kind.” Indigenous women are therefore entitled to rights guaranteed to individuals under international human rights law, as well as collectively held rights articulated in the UN and OAS declarations.

\textit{Gender-specific rights}

Discrimination against women, under the Convention on the

\textsuperscript{10} For more information, see: \url{https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/SRHRDefenders/Pages/Featurestories.aspx}.

Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)\(^\text{12}\) is defined as “any distinction, exclusion or restriction made on the basis of sex which has the effect or purpose of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise by women, irrespective of their marital status, on a basis of equality of men and women, of human rights and fundamental freedoms in the political, economic, social, cultural, civil or any other field.” The United States is one of the few nations that have not ratified this convention.

The generally accepted definition of violence against women in human rights parlance is from the 1993 UN Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women:

any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life.\(^\text{13}\)

Indigenous scholars and activists insist that the promotion of self-determination and addressing the rights of Indigenous women are inseparable; thus violations of Indigenous women’s rights should be regarded as both violations of Indigenous peoples’ rights and women’s rights. However, I want to be clear that I do not believe all the impacts of the uranium mining project on Laguna and other Indigenous women in the region constituted violence against women per se. I do believe it is important to name the violence against women where it did occur and to identify gendered impacts of the mining project, even as they are still surfacing and being recognized today.


A multitude of new questions emerge when viewing Jackpile through a human rights lens: Was Laguna’s right to free, prior, and informed consent respected? Was the Pueblo’s benefit from the revenues an equitable amount? During the mining process, were sacred sites respected and protected? Did meaningful consultation with the Pueblo occur when the initial leases were proposed, and later, did Anaconda interpret their lease to allow them to make unilateral decisions about destruction of certain sacred areas without Pueblo consent? Was the Pueblo accorded a role in the decision to close mining operations? After the mine was closed, was the Pueblo granted a fair remedy for damage to the Pueblo lands destroyed and contaminated by mining activity? Today, the latter questions are likely most relevant to the Pueblo, since the mine is now a Superfund site. The Pueblo will benefit if the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) is successful in cleaning up the contaminated site, and more so if the successor company Atlantic Richfield is made to pay for complete remediation. These are important questions, but this is not the subject of this article; rather, I am interested in related human rights inquiries that bring forward less explored experiences of Indigenous women at Laguna Pueblo.

Little if any published and accessible data exists on the number of women who were employed at the mine, labor issues, and impacts on their health. For work-related issues, it is difficult to say whether there was pay equity for women employed in similar situations as men at the mine. Equally frustrating is the lack of accessible data on the health of women at Laguna Pueblo. The main health provider during the years of the mine operation was the federal government’s Indian Health Service (IHS). If health care providers had concerns about risks of exposure to uranium, very little is documented. During the scoping process leading up to the preparation of the Draft EIS, the Indian Health Service provided only a one-page report. Today we know that it is possible to gather data on health issues of people who had exposure to uranium, as evidenced by research
performed by local organizations on former miners and health related research on the Navajo Nation. Studies on Navajo Nation on reproductive health issues are an indication of what might be found at Laguna if similar studies were undertaken. Rates of birth defects in babies born to Navajo women living in uranium mining areas in New Mexico and Arizona between 1964 and 1981 were 2 to 8 times the national averages, depending on the type of defect (Shuey, 2008). No data on family or mental health appears to exist that addresses a rise in domestic violence or other forms of violence against women with mining activity at Jackpile. As a resident of Paguate Village and as a researcher, I have had access to firsthand knowledge of impacts on women at Laguna. Hence, much of the analysis of impacts on Indigenous women at Laguna Pueblo is a combination of firsthand knowledge and anecdotal data about women at Laguna, many of whom wish to remain anonymous.

Discussion and analysis of impacts from the Jackpile mining project on women and the feminine at Laguna must begin with a word about the traditional historical roles of women and men at Laguna Pueblo. First, Laguna like other nearby Pueblos is historically matriarchal and matrilineal. Laguna women shared decision-making in some community decisions and generally the home was considered her property and her domain. Traditionally women inherit homes and are the mother or keeper of the family home. While many traces of this status are present today, Lagunas cannot ignore the influence of Spanish patriarchy that came with Spaniards and the Catholic Church in the 1600’s (Lorenzo, 2017b). Compounding 300

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14 *See, e.g.,* the Navajo Birth Cohort Study, a response to concerns expressed by Navajo women about health impacts of living near abandoned uranium mines. Information at: [http://www.sric.org/nbcs/index.php](http://www.sric.org/nbcs/index.php) *See also,* “Post ’71 Uranium Exposure, a Survey of Former Uranium Workers,” Evers, et al., (2009) a power point presentation which contains some information on reproductive health disorders of women who worked at uranium mines.

years of Spanish colonialism were periods of Mexican and American colonialism. Thus, when the uranium mining project began at Laguna, Laguna people had already experienced imposition of patriarchal institutions that were at odds with a matrilineal and matriarchal people.

Most importantly, Laguna people have an epistemology that holds the feminine as sacred. The Laguna Keres language, for instance, uses female pronouns for some deities, as well as other words to describe sacred places (Lorenzo, 2017a). One reference most familiar to the non-Indigenous world might be the term Mother Earth. This part, this heart of Laguna life, was one area least expressed during the mining project and probably the most harmed. Knowledge and appreciation of this aspect of Laguna Pueblo is helpful to understanding the very important cultural and spiritual relationship that Indigenous peoples have with their lands and territories.

Laguna, like other Pueblos in New Mexico, has a Spanish-imposed form of government, with a Governor as leader, together with a Pueblo Council. In the 1950's the Governor and Council were all men, and women had little voice and no vote in the decision on whether to allow uranium mining on Laguna lands. At the village level, only men served as officials, and only men attended the village meetings at that time in history. Today, women do attend village meetings in all but one of the six Laguna villages, and do serve in some village level officer positions, and a few women have served as council members, although women are not currently considered as eligible for staff officer positions such as Governor and Lt. Governor.

Given the context of outside influences and development projects at Laguna, an obvious question is whether the mining project supported women’s matriarchal status. Did the mining project support the cultural status of women, or did it promote interests to the detriment of women in the Pueblo? Inquiries like these have provoked the use of a human rights lens in other Indigenous peoples’ contexts, such as the Bakken oil fields in North Dakota, the Keystone XL pipelines, and most recently Dakota Access Pipeline (Harvard, 2015). Employing the human rights norms articulated in human rights instruments can help identify how women at Laguna were impacted due to their status as women, as Indigenous, as rural, and as poor, compared to other New Mexico populations. Given this range of factors, as
well as the epistemology and cultural values that I have outlined, it is not useful to distinguish between gender specific forms of violence on women and gendered impacts to the whole Indigenous population at Laguna.

**Gender specific or gendered impact?**

The following areas of impact on women at Laguna provide insight regarding the link between gender specific and gendered impact: shift from an agricultural to a wage-earning economy, lack of voice in governance, potential employment discrimination, domestic violence related to abuse of alcohol, and reproductive health issues. Today, a growing body of research recognizes that Indigenous women are especially vulnerable in areas where extractive projects take place. For example, in Peru, observations were made by researchers and policymakers that extractive industry in the Amazon had significantly influenced gender relations where family/household and community economies had shifted as men left behind traditional economy activities like hunting and fishing for wage labor—a process that had some critical social impacts like the rise of alcohol abuse linked with domestic violence (Amancio, 2015). Similar observations have been made in other regions of the world: Lower Mekong (Dhaatri Resource Centre for Women and Children, 2013), the Philippines, Kenya, and Mexico (Barcia, 2017).

Before the uranium mine at Laguna, many community members led an agricultural lifestyle. Some combined this with jobs in local areas. Many farmed and/or raised livestock. Some had moved away from Laguna to work with the railroad, and some commuted between Laguna and Albuquerque (the largest nearby city) or Grants and other nearby towns. Over the years, Lagunas were convinced by Anaconda to work at the mine. In Paguate, the elders say that fields and orchards dried up as farmers turned to jobs at the mine. Many acres of farmland were reduced to rubble as part of the area leased for mining. Alvino Waconda, a Laguna man and Paguate resident who worked for 11 years as a heavy equipment operator, testified at the World Uranium Hearing in Salzburg in 1992, on the effects of the mine on life at Paguate Village:
When the uranium mine became part of our lives I feel that, as a family, we lost a lot. The family values, culture and tribal traditions changed. My father became employed at the mine and we never farmed on a large-scale basis again. My father sold his livestock because he could no longer tend to his livestock and all the work involved at the mine. As I look back on my early teenage years, it angers me now to see how quickly money can change your whole life. By this, I mean that during the time my siblings and I began to have a different attitude about money and what it could provide. Those things which were a vital part of our childhood no longer seemed important. (Waconda, 1992)

As has been the case elsewhere, the partnerships that many husbands and wives shared in agriculture were disrupted with extractive industry wage-earning jobs. Manny Pino, a researcher from Laguna’s neighboring Pueblo, Acoma, observed at the World Uranium Conference, the people “went from being agriculturalists and livestock raisers to wage earners, and that impacted our traditional culture, our traditional language, participation in our ceremonies. During the height of uranium mining, people prioritized their eight-to-five-job, their eight-hour-a-day-job over participating in the ceremonies” (Brown, pp. 146-148). True partnership between men and women had been required in farming and livestock growing and in traditional ceremonies. Since only men were hired at the mines initially, they had more social and economic status outside of Laguna, where they wielded influence in a monetized economy. This affected the social and economic standing of women who were previously recognized as partners in making a living for the household.

Until the 1970s, only men were hired to work at Jackpile, with the exception of a few women hired to do clerical work. Several decades went by without women at Laguna able to secure good paying jobs at the mine. More questions remain than we have answers regarding the treatment of women in an area dominated by men at the mine. What factors were
considered in setting wages for women and men? Did women experience harassment on the job? In a survey of post-1971 miners done by the Post 71 Group, which did not distinguish between Indigenous and non-Indigenous women, some women indicated that they had experienced miscarriages or loss of babies in their infancy. They were never told to take precautions even though their employer knew they were pregnant (Evers, et al. 2009). Although the survey did not disaggregate data on Laguna women, this scenario is likely to have occurred elsewhere, including at Laguna.

Many women who did not work at the mine were also impacted, including Laguna women and spouses from other tribes. It is now common knowledge across uranium mining communities that women washed their husband’s contaminated clothing with the rest of the family’s clothes. It is also common knowledge that a typical practice for curing food was drying meat and fruit in the sun. Frequent blasting meant that much of the village was covered with uranium dust. Today we know that radon likely traveled beyond the mine in these ways. So even those women who did not work at the mine experienced exposure to radon. This too could have been related to reproductive health issues. Although other women worked in Albuquerque, 60 miles away, and other towns, they came home to Paguate and other villages where they could have been exposed.

Furthermore, a non-Indigenous enterprise that grew during the mining years was the sale of alcohol. Just beyond Laguna Pueblo borders, a number of bars prospered, in Bibo to the north of Paguate, and then on the west end of Laguna lands from Cubero to San Fidel. It became common practice for men to cash their paychecks at the bars and partake of alcohol before going home. Many Laguna men and women recount an increase in alcohol abuse and domestic violence (Waconda, 1992; Brown, 1992), and women were victims of domestic violence more so than men. At that time in Laguna history, domestic violence was often considered a private family

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16 The Post 71 Group is one of five core groups of the Multicultural Alliance for a Safe Environment (MASE). For more information, see the MASE website at: https://swuraniumimpacts.org/
matter, and calls for help often went without arrests or police reports being filed. This of course contributed to women’s silence.

Additionally, non-Indigenous men with likely different socialization regarding women came to work at the Jackpile mine and also frequented the bars. These included Hispanic men from the nearby Spanish land grants, as well as Anglo men who traveled long distances for work. They often found temporary housing in nearby communities like Bibo, Seboyeta, and Cubero. They often brought values from patriarchal cultures that did not view the feminine as sacred and did not view women as equal partners. They spent a lot of time with Laguna men at the mine and at the bars after work over the years, and likely influenced Laguna ways of thinking about the role and status of women. As discussed earlier, this is a documented impact of mining in Indigenous communities. Although little is documented by criminal complaints, I have been told stories of sexual assault around the bars, and Laguna women being kidnapped by non-Native men. Collectively, the latter are accounts of gender specific impacts and forms of violence to women at Laguna. However, not all impacts on Laguna women from the mine can be classified as violence explicitly aimed at women—discrimination perhaps, damaging and harmful, nonetheless. This is why it is important to move the discussion beyond women and consider the violence to the feminine.

Violence to the feminine

What the experience of Laguna further reveals is that we must deepen the use of “gender” to include the feminine, which extends beyond the experience of Laguna Pueblo women only. In the case of Laguna and other matrilineal and matriarchal Indigenous peoples, the feminine is fundamental.

The feminine is expressed in many ways for Laguna people. Some deities have feminine names, and some sacred places have feminine names and are spoken of as having feminine qualities. Importantly, this is believed, expressed, and lived by Laguna men and women who speak the language
and practice our cultural lifeways. Thus, inquiry regarding impacts of uranium mining must explicitly include the feminine at Laguna.

An agricultural lifestyle went hand in hand with the Laguna belief system, which is a whole complex religion where land is central. In Laguna epistemology, Our Mother is sacred and to be respected. Like other Pueblos in New Mexico, the agricultural lifestyle is mindful of seasons of the year and cycles of life for human and plants. Ceremonies that include prayer are focused on our responsibilities for care of Our Mother and other living beings. Speaking of the feminine as sacred is natural, and when one understands this dynamic, it is not difficult to comprehend the kind of spiritual violence that a major mining project could have on Laguna people.

The Jackpile uranium project unquestionably perpetrated major violence on Our Mother. Thousands of acres of land were disturbed, and significant landmarks, along with their stories, were blown up with dynamite. Areas formerly covered with fruit trees and used for farming fields and livestock grazing disappeared. Mildred Chino, a lifelong resident of Paguate Village described her feelings about the loss:

Gone are the beautiful valleys, which at the time provided farming spaces to the villagers as a means of subsistence. Fruit trees and cornfields are but a memory to my generation. The majestic plateaus, the sandstone rock formations of unending blends of off-white, beiges, tans, and reds are now mingled with the grays and black of the disrupted Earth. It’s a shame that my five grandchildren will never walk in those same places. Mesas and unique rock formations are found, as settings, in stories and myths as told for many generations in Paguate. Some of those formations were blasted into eternity. How can a person who has grown up with these stories begin to understand the destruction, not only to the land, but to the stories that have sustained us over the centuries? (Jacobs, p. 45)

Dorothy Purley, a former miner, also described this loss in her testimony at the New Mexico Conference on the Environment in 1994, “Yesterday I sat at the edge of the mine to gather my thoughts for today. I could not stop the tears that flowed. There in front of me is a vast waste of land. The violation was too much for my eyes. I asked my Great Spirit for forgiveness” (p. 16).
This spiritual violence reflected not only physical hurt of Our Mother, but also exemplified through disruption to the cycle of ceremonies that Laguna peoples follow. Rather than following the ancestral solar or lunar cycles, Lagunas began to schedule some ceremonies to accommodate their work schedule. At some points in the mining operations, mining took place 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and ceremonial obligations often were adjusted, which also disrupted relationships between men and women. In addition, mining operations were so close to Paguate Village that blasting shook and damaged many traditional adobe and rock homes, often leaving dust on people’s homes and traditional foods. Dorothy Purley recalled how “the blast would shake the homes so severely that dishes rattled, and glassware would fall off the cabinets. You could feel the land under your feet move...What was even worse was the smell of sulfur. We were told that it was only blasting powder, nothing to be afraid of. The smell would linger in our homes for hours” (Purley, 1995, p. 17). This is problematic as the core or center part of the village and surrounding homes are part of an ancestral architecture that represent an intimate connection between the sacred and the people, as expressed in Laguna teachings about the home (Lorenzo, 2017a).

I recall the people discussing one landmark to be eliminated so that Anaconda could get to the ore underneath. This was a place where certain beings were believed to live. As a child I wondered why the adults would let his happen. I remember that the road to Paguate had to be re-routed once this mesa was eliminated. For those who understood the significance of this place, it must have been traumatic. And this was not the only place or landmark that was damaged; there were others. I believe Laguna men who worked at the mine made efforts to protect some places. The draft Environmental Impact Statement (1985, pp. 77-78) blithely states that the mine lease area had been archaeologically inventoried and had 217 archaeological sites:

Of this total 205 remain. Seven of the sites were excavated, and five were formally determined to be insignificant prior to their destruction by mining. These sites demonstrate that the mine area
has been intermittently utilized since the Archaic period (approximately 5,000 B.C.).

Today the entire Jackpile area is accessible only with a permit given at the discretion of the Pueblo Natural Resources Department and is still considered contaminated.

In my view, spiritual violence that hurts and disrupts the feminine leads to intergenerational trauma. Few people at Laguna have explicitly expressed this, and many believed it was better to remain silent about these sacred places. It is painful to discuss, although some individuals shared their feelings during the public hearings that led to the EIS. Conrad Lucero, now a Laguna elder, expressed the sadness that many others probably felt when he reflected on the extent of damage to the land, Our Mother:

You have opened a wound. ... That’s exactly what you have done. You have wounded my mother, because, as an Indian, I have different values of land than you, the white man, do. Your value is dollars. My value is far deeper. It comes from the heart. Use your mother as an example, because tradition and custom that I have been taught by my elders have told me, that is your mother. Take into consideration if a wound was opened on your mother somewhere, face disfigured, dismembered, by an act of man. Again, you, the Anglo people, have a different perspective of how to repair it. All you ask is: What is it going to cost me? You don’t, a lot of times, think: Is she ever going to be of sound mind, of sound body? It angers me to sit here and listen to the technical data. Whether it’s to impress me, whether it’s to overwhelm me, whether it’s considerably stupid, because I can’t understand it, that’s for you to figure out. But I think my people have common sense enough to realize what they want and what they need. (1985)

Testimonies like Lucero’s reveal a shared sense of betrayal by Anaconda when community people learned that the land would not be restored, and it was likely that the large open pits would be left. One also senses that there is a feeling of failure on the part of humanity to fulfill our collective responsibility to take care of Our Mother.
We can link cumulative impact of violence to the feminine through the uranium mining in Laguna to historical and intergenerational trauma. More research is needed in this area, but using Braveheart’s definition of historical trauma as “cumulative emotional and psychological wounding over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive group trauma” (Heart & DeBruyn, 1998), we can add the dimension of spiritual wounding. The mining project in all phases led to major violations against the feminine as embodied in human beings, Our Mother (including traditional structures), and Laguna epistemology.

Do the human rights standards articulated earlier capture this kind of violence? What is distinct about violence to Indigenous lands and territories, and is a human rights lens helpful when it comes to talking about violence to the feminine in this case? If so, how do we construct a violation of an Indigenous human rights argument in the case of Jackpile mine? Do we need to construct a human rights violation in order to benefit from the gendered impact analysis? After all, human rights, as the name suggests, are about humans. The violence in Laguna goes beyond humans and yet speaks to the very heart of who Laguna people are and aspire to be.

Human rights instruments name “rights” connected to many of the areas affected in the case of Jackpile mine, for instance the right to culture in the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR Art. 27); rights of access to sacred sites (UN Declaration Art. 12); rights to redress when lands are damaged without free, prior and informed consent (UN Declaration Art. 28); right to health care connected to exposure to hazardous materials (UN Declaration Art. 29); and special attention to the rights of Indigenous women (UN Declaration Art.22 and ADRIP Art. VII). However, the reality for Indigenous peoples is that this discourse is limited to rights of human beings and may not sufficiently capture Indigenous self-determination and the dimension of harm to the feminine described here. Laguna elders speak more to a sense of responsibility when it comes to Our Mother, and this responsibility is linked with our language and cultural practices. There is a clearly expressed responsibility to care for these gifts given to us by our Creator and to transmit them to future generations of Laguna people.
Conclusion

In this article, I challenge the notion of “either/or” in exploring gendered forms of violence against Indigenous women and gendered effects of violence impacting Indigenous communities by using the case of the Jackpile uranium mine at Laguna. I outline broader global human rights frameworks that begin with self-determination and extend into consideration of Indigenous lands and territories. I also narrow human rights discourse in relation to gender, and more specifically Indigenous women. I argue that in the case of a matrilineal, matriarchal people like the Pueblo of Laguna, doing a gendered impact analysis is vital. However, in doing so, we learn that the notion of gender must be expanded to include *the feminine*, and that furthermore, because men and women at Laguna ascribe to a Laguna epistemology, which holds *the feminine* as sacred, both women and men are impacted. While not all impacts from the mining project on women would be classified as violence by community members, impacts on *the feminine* as embodied by human beings and Our Mother, and a central part of the identity of a matriarchal, matrilineal people, constitutes spiritual violence that has resulted in multiple forms of trauma.

How might this analysis be useful for Laguna’s future? First, space for continued discussions about the Jackpile mine and its impacts upon a matrilineal, matriarchal people must be made. These discussions can inform our leadership on the need for amplified voices of historically underrepresented figures in research and public decision-making, including women, and we must also cultivate representation of *the feminine* in these conversations by all Lagunas. While in Laguna a gender specific versus gendered impact approach is not useful in looking at the historical impacts of the Jackpile mine, the contemporary reality is that long-term issues do require attentiveness to underserved populations and silenced voices, and this is evident in a need to support violence against women programs and further exploring historical causes of violence against women at the Pueblo. For years, Indigenous women have been raising the need for disaggregated data on Indigenous women. This could be the beginning of data gathering at the Pueblo with this in mind.
It is also critical that Indigenous peoples challenge what a human rights framework can offer us in the future. As Laguna works to remediate contaminated lands in a Superfund site, it could be useful to use a human rights lens to view the mining chapter in Laguna Pueblo history within a larger context of colonial dispossession of Indigenous lands and misuse of Indigenous resources to service the larger state without the full and informed consent of the people involved. How does the Pueblo ensure that all future development projects involve the free, prior, and informed consent of the Pueblo, in a manner inclusive of all Pueblo citizens and residents? Along these lines it is useful to look at governance issues within the larger context of colonial imposition of structures and ask whether these structures should continue in a time when Laguna is no longer under the thumb of Spain.

Last, if we fully understand the trauma that occurred with violence to the feminine on various levels—physical/environmental, health, social, cultural, and spiritual, our knowledge can have major implications for our people going forward. If we say we are a matrilineal and matriarchal people, then working to name the violence on the feminine and working to heal the wounds that are likely still open, on all those levels, will be important for how we shape our future. Asking questions, challenging, learning, and continuing to explore help us to understand how we can work collectively to support the feminine heart of our being. We, like other Indigenous peoples, have shown tremendous resilience in holding onto our strengths despite centuries of colonial oppression and suppression of our lifestyles and belief systems. It is time that we return to the strength of the feminine that has given us life since the beginning.
References


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Overcoming Silence and Sorrow: Sami Language Revitalization in Sweden

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Abstract

Our paper focuses on new ways to address silence and feelings of sadness surrounding language and cultural loss in Indigenous contexts, sometimes resulting in deep inter-generational trauma. As a consequence of two Council of Europe conventions ratified by Sweden, Indigenous and minority language maintenance and revitalization was included in the Human Rights commitments of the Swedish state in 2000. Work in these fields led in 2010 to the establishment of the Sami Language Center with the assignment to find new ways to ascertain that all the Sami languages spoken in Sweden would survive and develop as part of the Swedish national heritage. We discuss methods used at the Center to tackle large-scale community language loss, mixed feelings, and emotional blocks resulting from a history of stigmatization and forced assimilation. We provide examples of how these methods have affected local communities and individual people, leading to deeper reflection on the revitalization process and what is needed to strengthen it. We also discuss new kinds of efforts needed to deal with emotions surrounding revitalization, and conclude that revitalization should be seen as a holistic task involving body and mind. Furthermore, the consequences of the fact that language revitalization is considered by some a “women’s issue” (while there is a great need of including more men in revitalization efforts) are also discussed in this article.

Keywords: Sami languages; Indigenous language revitalization; Sami rights in Sweden; Master Apprentice Program; Language Block Method; Language Circus Method

Introduction

When I left the place I started to cry, to cry because there are so few mother tongue speakers left and because the language is so indescribably beautiful. And then I saw the similarity. The similarity between the torn land, how torn it is by exploitation, and also how our languages have been pressed to the corners of
it, to a handful of people. They are like little lighthouses, little lighthouses in the margins, still standing there and shining, and we can see them every now and then when we steer our ships forward. (Patricia Fjellgren, 2016)

The languages of the Indigenous Sami have been, and still are, spoken in four countries—Norway, Sweden, Finland and Russia. In all these countries, Sami languages have endured a long history of stigmatization and forced assimilation policies on the part of the majority, non-Sami society. In Sweden, a period of Social Darwinist ideologies—at its strongest around the turn of the century 1900—labeled the Sami as an inferior race bound to disappear sooner or later from the face of the earth. Later, a long period of overt assimilation policies lasting until the 1970s would affect subsequent generations of Sami. Many Sami felt compelled to abandon everything connected to Sami identity in order to find their place in society. Many were hurt in the process, and the scars still remain, causing what we have observed as pain and sorrow among the Sami in Sweden.

In this article, we tackle the issue of emotions in Sami revitalization in Sweden from our two perspectives. We, the authors of this article, have been cooperating with each other for a long time; we have written joint articles, given joint talks, and done research together. Our mutual interest is promoting cultural and linguistic revitalization in society. Patricia Fjellgren is both South and North Sami, with a Master of Arts in Sami Language. She also belongs to the growing number of Sami who have

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1 This quote is from “Clearcuts, languages and banana trees: A mail conversation about the heritage from the Nomad school” (Huss & Fjellgren, 2016)
2 According to the Swedish Sami Parliament (www.sametinget.se), there are approximately 80,000-100,000 Sami in the world, and 20,000-35,000 of them live in Sweden. Traditionally, three Sami languages have been recognized in Sweden: North, Lule and South Sami. A couple of years ago, another Sami variety called Ume Sami got an orthography of its own and it is now officially treated as the fourth Sami language in Sweden. The orthography of a fifth variety, Pite Sami, is being created at present (2019). It is uncertain how many people with Sami ancestry identify themselves as Sami because there are no ethnicity or language censuses in Sweden.
reclaimed their Sami languages as adults, in her case two of the Sami languages. Patricia has had a long career in freelancing in Sami language and film, and she is the initiator of the Language Circus revitalization method described in this article. Leena Huss belongs to the Finnish national minority in Sweden. She is Professor Emerita at Uppsala University and specializes in language loss and revitalization. During the past decade, Leena has been researching in South Sami revitalization. She has also been involved in the monitoring of the Council of Europe Charter for Regional or Minority Languages in Europe.

Our discussion is divided into two distinct parts. The first part, written by Leena, presents a background to the issues we are addressing. The second part, written by Patricia, is a description of results of conversations she has had with other Sami involved in language reclamation. She also describes a new form of language reclamation for children called the Language Circus. The conclusions are written by both of us, emphasizing the need to include several perspectives into our work to support endangered languages and their speakers.

Conflicting beliefs, thoughts and emotions in language reclamation and revitalization

Linguist Aneta Pavlenko (2005) writes in her monograph about emotions and multilingualism:

As linguistic human beings, we get emotional about what languages we should and should not be using, when and how particular languages should be used, what values should be assigned to them, and what constitutes proper usage and linguistic purity. (Pavlenko 2005, p. 195)

In Indigenous contexts, with many people still suffering from very negative past experiences, primarily stemming from colonization, emotions are bound to play an even stronger role. We know that language revitalization is perceived by many as part of a decolonization process, something needed in ethnic revival and a way of Indigenous empowerment
and emancipation. Revalorizing a language that was previously heavily stigmatized is a way of dealing with a long history of identity stigmatization in general.

But while the solution, a revalorization of language and identity, may seem obvious at first glance, it is not easy. An article by Brandi Morin in CBC News Feb 10, 2019, titled Emotional journey, tells the story of 28 year old Sandra Warriors who is trying to take back the nxa'amčin language of her father and the nselxcin (Okanagan) language of her mother's family. She says, "I never imagined how much of an emotional process it is. I have moments I feel overwhelmingly happy. Other times I break down crying, doubting myself, getting angry. It still is a struggle."

In Indigenous communities, both the young and old find themselves between conflicting language ideologies represented by the majority society but also the Indigenous community where it is not always easy to reach consensus on sensitive issues pertaining to language. Kroskrity (2009) emphasizes the need to come to an ideological clarification about such issues:

Language ideological clarification is the process of identifying issues of language ideological contestation within a heritage language community, including both beliefs and feelings that are Indigenous to that community and those introduced by outsiders (such as linguists and government officials), that can negatively impact community efforts to successfully engage in language maintenance and renewal. (p. 73)

Kroskrity writes that identifying and raising awareness about linguistic issues could ideally lead to helpful discussions between community members, or between community members and outsiders, with differing opinions, so that these discussions would lead to clarification or “foster a tolerable level of disagreement that would not inhibit language renewal activities” (Kroskrity 2009, 73). We build on Kroskrity’s work while also adding our own perspectives, gained from research and practice, that transform his ideas into ways that tackle issues of disagreement without inhibiting potential speakers. In our language reclamation and revitalization efforts, we therefore accept the fact that conflicting emotions
and feelings, sorrow and an inherited silence, are factors to be counted on, and to respect, and try to address in new and innovative ways if we want our efforts to be successful in the long run.

Language reclamation as part of universal human rights work

Official human rights work consciously aiming at the strengthening of Sami languages and identities in Sweden started in the year 2000, when an official national minority policy entered into force. Before then, there were individuals, families, organizations, and others who worked hard to promote the use of Sami in various domains, but it was an arduous task, and the weakening of these languages continued at an alarming rate. Sweden’s image as a country with high human rights standards, supporting oppressed Indigenous peoples and minoritized peoples in other parts of the world, did not in actuality include support for its own Indigenous people, the Sami, and for decades, it was more or less a non-issue.

Sweden, as did all Nordic countries, signed and ratified a number of conventions securing the human rights of all its citizens. Some of them, as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child, include paragraphs on linguistic rights of minorities. Sweden has also voted for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) that states that Indigenous Peoples have the right to revitalize their languages as well as to use, develop and transmit them to coming generations. However, most of these human rights documents merely made open language discrimination and assimilation problematic, but they were not particularly successful in terms of the practical work of language reclamation and revitalization. Historical minorities including the Indigenous Sami repeatedly voiced their concern about the continuing language shift towards the majority and dominant Swedish language.

When Sweden joined the European Unions in 1995, however, pressure on the part of the Council of Europe, various minority rights advocates, and minority organizations grew, and in the year 2000, Sweden finally ratified two Council of Europe conventions, the Charter for Regional
or Minority Languages and the European Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. In those conventions, linguistic and cultural rights are central, and the Swedish government adopted the idea that the languages and cultures of national minorities are part of what is considered common Swedish cultural heritage.

After relatively passive initial years, the Swedish government again received severe criticism on the part of the Council of Europe, human rights organizations, minorities, and others concerning the weak implementation of the new national minority policy, and this criticism compelled the state to do more. A minority policy reform was launched in 2010, making possible, among other things, a new and promising development in Sami language reclamation—the establishment of the Sami Language Center that same year. Here, government funding reached beyond declarations and short time projects, starting resolute, locally-based, strong and efficient work to strengthen all Sami languages in Sweden. Without the national minority and minority language policy as well as the Council of Europe minority conventions, this development would not have been possible, but neither would the Center have succeeded without the work of the dedicated, locally-anchored Sami staff and the communities involved.

**The Sami Language Center**

When the Sami Language Center (SLC) was established as a result of a minority policy reform in Sweden (Government Bill 2008/09:158), it addressed strong criticism on the part of the Council of Europe to the effect that the most endangered Sami language in Sweden - South Sami - risked extinction:

South Sami is in a very precarious situation and needs resolute support and innovative solutions (---) where appropriate, in collaboration with the authorities in Norway, if it is to survive as a living language in Sweden. (CoE Charter Report on Sweden 2006, 58)

By then, many minor revitalization projects had been initiated by Swedish authorities, as well as by the Sami themselves, often without
leading to more than temporary results. The establishment of the SLC was the first effort to create a permanent space for continuing revitalization work, with staff whose main task was to enable people to regain and use their Sami languages. This was to be done by developing, applying, and spreading efficient language revitalization methods, and by adopting successful methods used in other parts of the world, an important part of many revitalization efforts (Leena Huss 2017, 15-16).

The SLC was a government initiative, with state funding, but the responsibility of the implementation was given to the Swedish Sami Parliament. The staff members were recruited among speakers of different Sami languages, with different professional backgrounds. Patricia, who was among the first staff members recruited, has emphasized the importance of the SLC as a safe space for discussion:

The first thing that comes to my mind is that the mere establishment of the Sami Language Center has created a space to gather people together, around what language is, what language loss is, and that makes people less lonely. Because one of our problems with the language situation we have been living in is that people have had to carry their sorrow and their language loss alone. That is something that we have absolutely not talked about. In that way I think the Language Center has been an invaluable hub, a meeting place with status and power. (Huss, 2017, p. 54, our emphasis)

The overarching aim of the SLC was to "strengthen people’s possibilities to use and to reclaim the Sami language” and to "promote and stimulate the use of Sami in society” (Huss, 2017, p. 6). Patricia mentions this broad mission – language revitalization – as an asset as it allowed for the freedom the staff needed to choose how to proceed and determine the most important problems to tackle. Nobody dictated in detail how the work was to be done, and the staff were given free hands so to speak, which of course also demanded a lot of them.

The staff began their work by trying to chart the linguistic needs of a heterogenous population, including different Sami languages, different
cultural traditions and livelihoods, different ages, and living in various parts of the vast Sami territory of Sweden (see Image 1).

Image 1. Sápmi, the Land of the Sami. Map drawn by Anders Suneson. Source: [www.samer.se](http://www.samer.se)

The Sami Language center had two offices, one situated in Staare/Östersund and the other in Dearna/Tärnaby, both in the traditional South Sami area in Sweden. The staff had to develop activities carefully tailored to promote revitalization in an innovative and comprehensive way. They were to work in close contact with the local Sami communities and create something that had never existed before in Sweden. At the same time, the staff studied international research on revitalization and started designing their first projects.

The staff made an inventory of well-known problems in Sami language reclamation and tried to address the most serious ones, initially

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3 Permission granted to the authors for usage and printing of the map from the maker of the map.
concentrating on two. The first was the scarcity of mother tongue speakers who could pass on their language to others, a critical problem among the very endangered South and Lule Sami communities. Another problem was the psychological block, or barrier, preventing potential speakers from using the Sami language.

Two revitalization projects applied and developed at the SLC

Among the first methods applied by the SLC was Bihkedääjja, a mentor program similar to the Master-Apprentice program created in California (Hinton, 2013), and Language Block, based on Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and designed to help people overcome psychological blocks in language use (Juuso, 2013). In the process of planning the Master-Apprentice program Bihkedääjja, several international contacts were made. Patricia, the project leader, contacted Annika Pasanen, who had been part of developing the very successful Master-Apprentice Program for the Aanaar Sami language in Finland (see Olthuis et al, 2013; Pasanen, 2015). They had telephone meetings, and Patricia gained access to the documentation from the Aanaar project. She also had contact with Tracey Herbert, head of First People Language and Culture Council in Brentwood Bay, Canada. A field trip to visit FPLCC was made and there Patricia learned more closely how the FPLCC was working with their own Master-Apprentice program. Later on, professor Leanne Hinton together with Karuk speaker Nancy Steele, were invited to Sápmi to hold a workshop for the participants of the Ubmeje Sami Master-Apprentice program, dedicated to the Ume Sami language.

The pilot project of Bihkedääjja proved very difficult to realize at the outset because of the very few remaining South Sami mother tongue speakers. Most of them were in their 70s or 80s when they were recruited as mentors to students enrolled in an elementary course of South Sami at Umeå University, in the northern part of Sweden. The mentor-student pairs were to be in close contact with each other, meet regularly, and use South Sami in everyday communication. The students could also sit and listen, without being expected to talk before they felt ready for it. The mentor-
student pairs were encouraged to do something practical together while they used Sami, for instance cook dinner together. At those times, the whole body is active and one learns the language while using all senses. South Sami cultural practices in the form of duodji, or Sami handicraft, traditional work with the reindeer, and other Sami activities were also important parts of the project. During the pilot project, five group gatherings for mentors and students were also arranged. It was voluntary for the participants to join these meetings once a week.

The Language Block method addressed the fact that many Sami who had acquired Sami language in their childhood or who had participated in Sami language courses had great difficulties in actually starting to use the language, in spite of seemingly positive circumstances. Some of them had negative memories from the past or present ambivalent feelings, which hindered them from starting to speak. Language Block was developed by Jane Juuso, at the Unjárga/Nesseby Sami language center in northern Norway, to encourage the participants to overcome such blocks, with the help of study circles developed according to the principles of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy (Juuso, 2009). The aim of these circles was to help participants overcome the psychological blocks they experienced by training them to gradually use more and more Sami in their everyday lives. In the pilot Language Block Program there were nine participants attending and ten group gatherings were arranged, mostly in the area of Staare/Östersund. The groups met approximately once a month. The group gatherings covered various kinds of group and language exercises, and the participants also had homework to do between the gatherings.

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4 Before the program was launched by the SLC it was adapted to the situation in the South Sami area in Sweden, where the remaining speakers are scattered over large areas, and where there are also other differences from the conditions for the Sami in Unjárga. Sylvia Sparrock from the SLC was the project leader and together with Jane Juuso she planned the program. The pilot project lasted a year and ended in the fall of 2012.

5 A Swedish version was published in South Sami and Swedish in 2013

The Bihkedäjja and Language Block methods have, since the first years, been applied in several Sami communities in Sweden, and they have resulted in a number of new speakers who have continued to use their newly gained Sami competence as teachers, journalists, and in other professional capacities. Both methods address negative beliefs and emotions inherited from the days of overt oppression and assimilation, the greatest obstacles to Sami revitalization in Sweden. It has been important to break the silence surrounding the problem of language loss and evoke a desire to use the language. Through an open letter to the South Sami community, the Sami Elders in the first mentor program reminded us of the responsibility attached to Sami language competence. They wrote,

With this letter we request other Elders to start speaking our language. We have the knowledge and we can guide the coming generations precisely like our own Elders guided us. We miss the time when our language was stronger. Now we are the Elders. We can help others. Through the Mentor Program we have got to know the young. The young are longing for Elders who take their responsibility, who don’t say everything was better in the past. We, the Båarasâbpoeh, older Sami, can no longer stand beside and just watch. We who are the Mentors take our responsibility and we will no longer be silent. (From the “Appeal of the Elders in Östersund,” June 14, 2012, Sametinget)

Sami voices about language reclamation: What lessons have Bihkedäjja and Language Block taught us?

We have been able to reflect on the lessons learned through SLC programs, most recently through conversations held between Patricia and former participants in the Bihkedäjja and Language Block programs from March 2019 through April 2019. In this section, we offer the thoughts and emotions of participants, especially concerning supporting factors in language reclamation, which are presented thematically. We discuss the circumstances of the SLC programs in order to then foreground a new and innovative language revitalization method, the Language Circus, developed
by Patricia as a result of her long-time work with the endangered Sami languages.

The need to process the sorrow of the past

The year is 1950. I am with my mother and aunt. We are in a shop and we speak Sami. Suddenly the shop owner sharply tells us that in his shop he does not want to hear our ugly language. It has stuck to my mind. (Elder Male)

When the pilot Bihkedájja program was initiated, the mentors had their own gatherings where they could discuss with each other and receive instructions about the details of the method. A striking feature of these initial stages was the apparent need among the elderly mother tongue speakers to recount and discuss their negative experiences from the past and the shame and sorrow associated with the South Sami language in Swedish society. For example, the opening quote comes from a male Sami mentor born in 1943, and after decades of silence, mentors like him had an urgent need to process their memories and mixed emotions in order to be able to move on and tackle the new task of promoting the language and transmitting it to the next generation.

After the first gathering with the mentors it was collectively decided that the project would continue to arrange mentor gatherings since the need to process past experiences was so obvious. All of the mentors had attended schooling focused on assimilation of Sami and where they were forbidden to speak South Sami. These mentors now faced a totally new situation where they were encouraged to speak Sami, and their language

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7 These so-called Nomad schools were actually a segregated school system targeting children in reindeer herding families. The school year was much shorter than in other schools, and the number of subjects smaller according to what the children were supposed to need when living a reindeer herder's life. The aim was to "preserve" this part of the population "unspoiled" by modern comforts, to utilize the mountains where agriculture and other livelihoods were not possible. Sami children from non-reindeer herding families were put to local schools with non-Sami children and expected to become "proper Swedes". In both these school systems, however, Sami languages were forbidden, so also the Nomad school aimed at linguistic assimilation.
skills gave them status and money, since they were compensated for being a mentor. A shift had happened, and now their Indigenous language was seen as something positive – but such a shift takes time and patience to process. It is also important to remember that although the Elders were mother tongue speakers, some of them had not used the language actively during many years, and it takes time to get the language flowing again. So with this in mind, the original plan was necessarily modified in order to allow more time for common gatherings. As one mentor explained,

I have lost my childhood and because of the boarding school, I missed growing up with my relatives. It is a reason why the Sami community has been destroyed. It is lacerated. It is terrible how they have treated us, the Sami people. Many of us are hurt, and they are hiding their Sami identity. (Elder female)

After a couple of common gatherings, participants noticed that the need to process the history declined. The mentors were starting to get used to their role as mentors, their language was flowing, and they had gotten used to the new social and professional situation in which they found themselves at the SLC. For example, one of the female mentors commented: “Of course we have met each other before on different occasions in the Sami community but we never spoke Sami and there was no focus on our language, like during these gatherings.”

As this article goes to press, it is now a few years since Bihkedäjja was launched, and one of the female mentors notes her personal transformation:

I notice a difference, I dare to claim that my language is a beautiful language. I was told that my language is ugly, that I speak an ugly dialect, and that it is not real Sami. I have felt uncertain and been in imbalance. I think that it is my view of the language that has changed. I have gained the confidence to enjoy it, believe that I have a beautiful language, that my parents spoke a nice Sami dialect. The sorrows are coming now. I haven’t had so much grief before, because I have been able to speak my language. The grief has come now, and that is because I didn’t dare more and that I didn’t fight more. I should have fought more for my language.
Thus we observe that a key take-away from Bihkedäjja is the great need to address sorrow over a lost language and negative experiences that the mentors carried with them from their pasts. During a gathering, they could sit and share memories from their times in boarding school and discuss with each other since they shared common experiences. This was powerful for apprentices to understand as well, and one male apprentice of the Lule Sami mentor program offers,

During our first common gathering we shared why we wanted to take part in this program and what our dream for our language was. We all shared our sorrows. It became obvious that all of us had gotten to believe that we are not complete. Our people suffers from a colonial oppression and it became obvious that we believe that we are not complete human beings.

This process taught us that revitalization is not just about starting to use the language again; we need to focus on healing and deliberately create a space where there is room and time for grieving, sharing and remembering.

_The need to belong to something bigger_

Everyone in Sami society carries an experience of forced assimilation on one level or another. For some, the experience might be the sorrow of language loss, for someone else, it is the childhood you never had or the family that got shattered by state assimilation practices. The stories are so many and so personal. Through the SLC programs we have described, new discussions emerged where those experiences had to be addressed but also with focus on how to move forward. Suddenly, there was a public awareness that inability to utter Sami was not due to stupidity or individual flaw, but rather due to language block, and moreover, they were not alone in experiencing it. This block was shared by mother tongue speakers as well as upcoming learners.

Sharing in this realization was part of the dawning of a new kind of language community that was most awaited among the Sami. Now more and more people were included, and a focus was put on the process of
language revitalization both for mother tongue speakers and new learners. As one of the male apprentices recalls,

Suddenly, you are in a large context with others who speak Lule Sami, and it spreads like rings on the water that I am one of those learning Lule Sami. This means that everyone wants to help, even people outside the mentor program. And it is nice that there are many around you who understand that you want to learn. They understand that I am a beginner. I have a context. It is a cultural home that you are rooted in, and the people you are rooted in, as well. I learned a lot from other people, a lot that I wouldn’t otherwise be conscious of. I got to know geography and people and what families they came from. In Sami culture, knowledge about family kinship and the land is essential.

The interaction between the mentors and their young apprentices resembled the traditional Sami way of learning. In the Sami community, knowledge has been transmitted when children have joined their families, working together with common tasks, and in this way they have learnt what they were meant to learn. This is an important part of Sami culture. We are also deeply connected with the land and every Sami language is a result of the communication with the land. Without the land we would not be Sami people. In a recent article titled *Silent knowledge can save lives* the Norwegian police address the deep knowledge of the land that exists in the Sami language and how it can save lives:

The Sami language is descriptive and compared to Norwegian, it is very rich in description of nature, the weather and other natural phenomena. The language tells us about the dangers that can threaten, what to guard against, and preferably also how. The Sami place names are also descriptive, both in terms of form and possible degree of danger. It is therefore sad when these names are translated into something similar in Norwegian - without having the
description that the Sami place name has. In the original name, very
important information may be lost to the rescue service.\footnote{Source:https://www.politiforum.no/artikler/taus-kunnskap-kan-redde-liv-i-norske-fjell/464947?fbclid=IwAR3F11NfDISuderDrGt4hkKneJeMiRSPgr9ZRMovOAmmGvkbY1jWcLezTf8}

The importance of community became very obvious through
\textit{Bihkedäjja} and \textit{Language Block}. Taking back one's Indigenous language is
not a one-person show. Reclaiming Sami is done together with community,
and from there, the language community grows as more people become
willing to dialogue in Sami once they have dared to start speaking. A female
apprentice emphasized the importance of the support she received from the
Elders:

Participating in the mentor program gave me a direct connection
with the Elders who spoke South Sami. The Elders were incredibly
gentle with me. The reception I received from them and the
motivation they gave me made me believe that the Sami language
really was something for me. The language is loaded with meaning
and valuable. Language is very important both for communication
and identity. Now having the Sami languages, it’s like I have filled up
something in my heart that I didn’t know was missing. All words and
formulations have opened up to my own culture and to other people.

\textit{“Just keep on talking, at the end I’ll understand what you say”}

The programs launched through the SLC have shown possible ways
forward for revitalization of Sami languages. The arenas encompassing the
programs gave participants the opportunity to not only share their stories,
but also to hear and speak the language, to talk about their dialects and
sayings, or just relax and listen to the language flowing. Starting to speak
Sami is a process that demands a lot of time, and learners felt vulnerable,
but in this space is also where the healing and \textit{fun} is. Our languages are our
medicine, and they reconnect us with our ancestors and the earth.
The first leap out into speaking is the most challenging for learners, and frightening, but only learners can take the leap, no one else. Mentors and apprentices alike needed to understand that time and patience is required when our Indigenous languages return into our being and physical body to truly become ours. In Bihkedäijja, apprentices were chosen among students studying South Sami at the university. They knew basic grammar, but many had not yet started speaking the language, nor had they heard it used in everyday life.

One of the male apprentices shared his first experience of sessions with his female mentor. They were together driving to their ancestral village. The apprentice was trying to speak Lule Sami, and the mentor encouraged him by saying: “Just keep on talking, at the end I’ll understand what you say.” This statement shows that while deep and meaningful conversations may not constitute initial exchanges, through the mentor’s encouragement, there would eventually be. Furthermore, the transformation from being a passive language user (having limited exposure and usage of the language) to becoming an active one (using the language daily and to convey more complex thoughts) was a challenge that Bihkedäijja participants in particular had to face. The positive outcome in Sami communities today is that there are more role models, those who have taken the leap and the mother tongue speakers encouraging and guiding in the process.

However, there also does exist a phenomenon of language policing, whereby a mother tongue speaker harshly corrects a learner or other speaker's language usage. The language police have silenced speakers who stopped using the language after these tough encounters. The SLC actively initiated discussion about different methods of correcting learners, so it seems that the power of the language police has faded. We conclude that language purism is a contentious language ideology issue that can impact revitalization negatively, and therefore should be addressed so that a “tolerable level of disagreement” can be fostered (Kroskrity 2009, p. 73). Of course there are still issues, but now there also is awareness about different methods of correcting language learners, and since there are traumas connected to the history of Sami language, we must be aware of how to
correct someone’s language in a delicate way. One mentor-apprentice pair offered their own method: “I talked, and then my mentor repeated what I said. We had an on-going conversation.” Regardless, reclaiming Indigenous languages is hard work, but the process is rewarding. As one of the female apprentices expresses, “It is a continuous process, to learn the language. I think about it everyday. But I know that what I have learned is greater than the struggle.”

Based on participant reflections, we observe that the transformation from passive listener to active speaker was a big and difficult step for many learners. But it was also a challenge for the Elders to take the step and become somebody’s language mentor and start using their language more actively. Together with their apprentices, they started to search in their memory for words and sayings, and they started remembering the language together. Remembering their mother tongue. In the mentor program, the Elders seemed aware of the difficulties of the learners. While working and chatting together, they gently guided their apprentices, who still were in the very early stages of language acquisition. The Elders could also keep talking and let the apprentices relax and just listen. While doing practical things together they used their bodies and all their senses to learn the language. In that way the focus was much wider and more varied than in a language class.

What am I allowed to be?

Is there space in community for all of our stories and identities? That is an important question to ask in revitalization. We are all human beings spending a short amount of time on this earth together. Hopefully there is room for all our different identities in the process of decolonization and revitalization. Hopefully there is room for many different ways of being a Sami. However, sometimes the idea of what a Sami person is and what Sami culture is can get very narrow.

During the era of forced assimilation, the Sami people found their own identities restricted, and they were forced to assimilate, to essentially become someone else. That is why in the process of language revitalization,
we sought to create arenas where we could become *who we really are* and where there is room for all our identities, even those coloured by the Swedish language. For example, we had to remember that many of those Sami wanting to reclaim their Sami language had Swedish as their first language. The Swedish accent is detectable when those speakers speak Sami. This colouring is a part of our mutual history as Sami in Sweden, and we shall not be ashamed of that. One of the male apprentices expressed this sentiment:

I must be allowed to have a Swedish accent. I'm not a worse Sami person because of that. I shouldn't be afraid of colouring my Sami with my Swedish thoughts. It can actually be quite humorous. *I'm not a half, and I am not becoming more Sami as I gradually learn more Sami. I'm trying to take something back that was lost,* but I don't feel that I am more or less Sami now when I’m taking back my Sami language. (our emphasis)

This is key in Sami ideology—we have not lost our Sami-ness. We are and always have been Sami, and our languages are still ours. We must have this ideology and related attitude in mind when creating language revitalization projects, and we have to be conscious of our scars and our history, not as inhibitors but perhaps even as assets no matter how hurtful to admit.

*Women and men*

We note that the majority of the people working with Sami language revitalization and as teachers of Sami are women. Of course, there are also men working with the language, but they have not been so active as teachers. As stated by a female mentor,

It is the women who have been responsible for transmitting the Sami culture to the children. The men have been working with the reindeer herding and have spent a lot of time away from home. That is why there are more women working with language and transmitting the core values of the Sami culture, called *saemie vuekie* in South Sami which translated could be ‘the Sami way’.
In Bihkedäija, it was relatively easy to find female mentors but more of a challenge to find male mentors. Of the apprentice applications volunteered, the majority were women. We speculate that one reason is the men have not been as active in the public forum of the Sami language community from the outset. Most of the female mentors were already well-known in language revitalization and with a history of having worked professionally as teachers or in language planning. Thus, in order to reach potential male mentors, we had to map local communities to locate them and then encourage them to participate. The focus for us was recruiting remaining mother tongue speakers, and speaker gender was not prioritised.

The SLC did observe the lack of men participating in language revitalization activities, and in order to reach more men, an event was arranged hosted by a man and with hunting terms in Sami language as the topic. Unfortunately, not so many men showed up on that occasion. Based on our reflection, we speculate that in order to reach men in language revitalization it might be a good idea to co-arrange events in connection with events that men usually attend, for example the annual SSR\(^9\) meeting or the local Sami village meetings. During the last couple of years Sáminuorra, the national Sami youth association, have together with the gender equality project Mannen myten\(^10\) been arranging meetings where young Sami men gather together and discuss the male role of the Sami man. Collaborating with projects like this could be an excellent way to engage more men in language revitalization. We noticed that men find it more difficult to talk about their sorrows and other emotions than women, and it is possible that this is one explanation as to why there are so few men engaged in language revitalization as the process is heavily emotional, and processing emotions and traumas from the past is the core of healing and revitalization.

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\(^9\) SSR = Svenska samernas riksförbund [The National Union of the Swedish Sami].

\(^10\) Arvsfondsprojektet Mannen myten [Inheritance Foundation project “The Man The Myth”], see https://mfj.se/bryt-normer/mannen-myten/.
We did ultimately find some male mentors and apprentices as participants. Nevertheless the commitment to gatherings was a challenge for active male reindeer herders—which is a Sami cultural and professional activity—since the reindeer are the first priority; herders follow nature’s schedule (the animals and their environment), and nature cannot be scheduled. One of the mentors was a man who was not active anymore as a reindeer herder. He was able to attend the meetings, and he was an important addition to the group with his rich language from a life of herding reindeer. Therefore, based on our desire for inclusion and the potential rich exchanges resulting from this type of expertise, we realize that there is a great need to adapt revitalization programs to suit circumstances that also impact gender imbalances in language revitalization representations.

Despite gender imbalances of less Sami men holding Sami language teacher roles, there is change taking place and during the last couple of years, more and more men are visible and active in using and working with the language in society. Today and through the work of the SLC, we have observed examples of young men choosing to transmit Sami language to their children. Young men are also using Sami in the social media, sharing with others their dedication to the language. One of the reasons why men have become more visible might be that there has been a status change regarding language skills. Sami languages are increasingly viewed as valuable and associated with positive values and status. The language is also regarded as one of the most important identity markers and something that gives people a context.

In the pairing of mentors and apprentices during Bïhkedäjja, the most important criterion was that the mentors were mother tongue speakers. It was also important that they were from the same area as the apprentice to ensure that they could share stories of the land and community. The apprentices could wish for a mentor whom we contacted, but in some cases the apprentice had no knowledge of existing mother tongue speakers in their area. In those cases we mapped the local community in search for a mentor, and the gender of the mentor was not an issue. We had three male mentors in Bïhkedäjja, and they were paired
with female apprentices. One of the apprentices had her own father as her mentor, and they had many of their sessions when working with the reindeer. Another of the male mentors had actually worked as a mother tongue teacher of Sami language for children in Stockholm, the capital of Sweden. He was also quite unique in having studied Sami language at the university.

An interesting aspect related to gender and the Sami language is that there does not exist a female or male language, the Sami language is in that sense gender neutral. In Sami communities, we have also been able to see signs of traditional boundaries between the sexes becoming increasingly blurred, for instance when Sami men engage in sewing Sami traditional clothing, or when South Sami women are active in reindeer herding on the same level as men. Snowmobiles and other modern equipment have helped to speed this process. Nevertheless, in Sami language revitalization, the imbalance between the sexes is still apparent.

When writing this article, we have also reflected on meaning related to our own gender, as well as ethnicity and identity in the revitalization context. Both are important aspects in the work. Patricia is both North and South Sami, which gives her a vast network and knowledge of the invisible social structures in North and South Sami areas. This helps her connect and relate with other women working with revitalization, particularly as the Sami culture is a family-oriented culture, and how we are related to each other is central to the Sami community. One of the first questions you get when you meet a new Sami acquaintance is about your family relations.

Patricia also points out that traditionally in the Sami community, the woman is a doer: someone who knows how to work and solve problems. She is strong and independent as one has to be in the Arctic region since the nature is harsh, and you need to learn to take care of yourself. And being a Sami woman is an asset when working with revitalization in Sami community since female values are distinct from Western society. The Sami woman is a strong woman with a strong and healthy body. She has a central role in the family and traditionally has been listened to and highly respected.
Leena in her role as a researcher in language loss and revitalization, has often felt that it is an asset to be a woman and have the experience of raising children in a bilingual family. Also, being a Sweden Finn with a mother tongue historically stigmatized and devalued in Sweden, she found it easy to identify herself with Sami mothers and their efforts to maintain the Sami language in the home. She also believes that the Sami women felt similarly, which made meetings and discussions deeper and more meaningful. In the sphere of language and culture transmission, there seemed to be many more similarities than differences between them. And despite Sweden’s official gender equality policy, childcare in the home still remains predominantly a women’s issue, and in preschool and school, female teachers dominate—facts that also facilitate the work of female researchers like Leena interested in language revitalization among children and the young.

_Gielečirkuš: a new way to involve body and joy in language reclamation_

Gielečirkuš/Language circus is a new method developed by Patricia, in cooperation with Giron Sámi Teáhter, the Sami theater in Kiruna, a city in northern Sweden. Through combining circus practices and language, a new way of working with revitalization has come into being. In the process of learning Indigenous languages, you may sometimes feel just like the clown in the circus—the one who says things in the wrong way, the one who seems to make a lot of mistakes all the time. On other occasions, everything seems to fall into place, and you are a tightrope dancer high up in the air, saying the right words, conjugating verbs correctly. Then again, you might step into the role of the juggler, juggling with words, dropping them, and then picking them up again, throwing them high up in the air, and still juggling.

Using the archetypes from the circus world, Gielečirkuš was developed in close collaboration with circus artists who had mother tongues other than Swedish. These artists had been working with Clowns without borders, an organisation that travels to conflict areas in the world with the mission to spread laughter, joy and hope to the children in these
areas\textsuperscript{11}. For a moment, they give children a chance to forget the everyday struggle and just have a good laugh.

In our Language Circus, we strive to add joy and laughter in the revitalization context. We visit one school after another and together with the children we play with languages and the body. We set up our silvery camping tent in the school gym and when the children enter our world, our languages start being heard. We mix Finnish, South Sami, North Sami, Spanish, German and Lule Sami. And although the children do not speak all these languages, they seem to understand everything. It is as if no block existed but we are in another world altogether. We should really be in this world much more often because there, languages do not separate us from another, they vibrate between us. Key words for the process are “play,” “body,” and “laughter,” and never using the dominant language. Instead, other languages including Sami languages, are used as means of communication. The idea is to show that language is so much more than grammar, writing and reading. We see the children and the Language Circus as being on an excursion together, searching for what language really is, in the world of languages. We make somersaults in Spanish, juggle in South Sami, and build pyramids with our bodies together in German. Even when non-Sami speaking school children join us, the language is not an obstacle. They start using the Sami words they hear and translate them into their mother tongue. We understand each other.

In other words, we want to make the children feel that the Sami language is a living language and not just a subject at school. We want the children to see that Sami is not only spoken in the classroom or at home with parents, but it is heard every now and then, here and there. It is important to show the children that Sami can be spoken in unexpected places, by unexpected people. We must encourage them to dare begin to speak, and we must tell them they should not be afraid of making mistakes. On the contrary, it is good to make mistakes. There simply must be mistakes! The language is meant to move into your body and to create a

\textsuperscript{11} For more information, see: http://www.cwb-international.org.
Sami nervous system, and a bloodstream pulsating of verbs, particles, love, and do or die. The shame and the sorrow are also there, but hopefully they will create an extra sound when you speak.

The Language Circus has shown that by combining play and language, and including the body in the process, everyone can be included. There are children who seem to have more energy than others, and for some children who are not that outgoing, the Language Circus may seem a bit frightening. However, they still participate by observing, and sometimes they join in after a while, sometimes they do not—and this is okay. Language Circus shows us that there are continuous and new innovations that can be considered in Indigenous language revitalization, and that multiple languages are also important to recognize in the world of language revitalization.

**Conclusion**

Language reclamation and revitalization can not be successful if not locally-anchored and steered by speakers or potential speakers. Nevertheless, favourable official policies can make it possible for language communities to get basic funds toward opportunities needed for robust and continuous efforts. In Sweden, the human rights commitments of the state since the year 2000 and 2010 have no doubt made it more legitimate in the public realm to work for language revitalization and to use the Sami language in public. We have heard informal commentary from Sami Language Center participants that the new policy and law makes speakers feel that they now have a right to speak Sami in the streets of their cities and not just in the home. Through the SLC, national language policy has enabled the Sami in Sweden to launch new, innovative ways of tackling language shift and loss. The work continues, and we now see former project participants choosing to use Sami despite not being mother tongue speakers. We also see these speakers inspiring new generations of Sami to take the leap and proudly reclaim their Sami languages.

In this article, we began with the power of emotions surrounding revitalization, especially those resulting from sufferings during forced assimilation policies and Sami identity stigmatization. We recognize that
colonization has not ended, neither has assimilation, and we now witness a race between dominant language assimilation and Indigenous language revitalization. We assert that it is high time to curb further assimilation and strengthen our efforts to speed up Sami language reclamation.

One of the lessons learned through the work of the SLC is that we have to create safe spaces for discussions that may be painful but are urgently needed for healing, and in order to process the past—which still influences the present. We have to break the silence of our people that has lasted all too long. We have seen strong initial emotional reactions and blocks in our Sami communities, and we have learned that language reclamation is not only about grammars and word lists—the process is so much more! We also acknowledge that revitalization of Sami languages is not only about lost languages that must be heard and used again, but also about creating new contexts where we can reword our languages and experiences and innovate new approaches that are inclusive like the Language Circus. We also accept that this all takes time.

In the mentor program, Elders were empowered by their new role in language and culture transmission. For some, this experience was the first time in their lives that they were appreciated and praised by their communities for being carriers of invaluable linguistic and cultural knowledge. The contact between Elders and their apprentices also gave the apprentices a new feeling of belonging to something bigger, the community of speakers and Sami cultural identity.

The reality today in Sapmi is a multitude of identities, some more accepted in the community than others. For many people, Sami identity seems to be intimately intertwined with the way one speaks Sami. Some learners felt inhibited that their Sami language was strongly influenced by Swedish. They were afraid of not speaking well enough and of being criticized by self-appointed language police who commented and corrected their language in insensitive ways. This linguistic purism is a threat to all language revitalization, and one of the tasks of the Sami Language Center has been to spread tolerance vis-à-vis different Sami varieties, including dialects, accents and learner errors. The same goes for the question who is accepted as a Sami person. One’s language ability should not influence the
right to claim Sami identity, and we assert that the Sami community should accept Sami identity irrespective of Sami language loss, and to what degree the Sami person is in the process of reclaiming it. With the history of Indigenous oppression and assimilation, many Sami are struggling to reclaim their languages, and they are not any “less Sami.”

While language teaching and revitalization efforts have generally engaged more Sami women than men, it appears that more men are joining, especially young men. As the status of Sami has become more publicly visible, the number of men engaged in language work at the SLC seems to be rising as well. Their participation has been long and urgently needed.

Together, men, women, children, and participants of all ages can take part in language revitalization, as demonstrated by the establishment of the Language Circus, which looks at language learning from a holistic perspective. As Patricia reminds us, language learning should engage body and mind in the process. While the SLC programs have demonstrated much success in adult language acquisition, we also point out that it is essential for children to acquire Sami. For them, learning the language should ideally involve joy and laughter, just like a real circus. Sami children should feel that in learning Sami, there is ample room for play, creativity, and growth that includes all their identities, and our desire is that they and Sami community members see our many identities as gifts to the Sami community.
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ECMRL= European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages.


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Cherokee Perspectives on Indigenous Rights Education (IRE) and Indigenous Participatory Action Research (IPAR) as Decolonizing Praxis

Tiffanie Hardbarger (Cherokee Nation)*

Abstract

In response to the long and harmful legacy of extractive research done on Indigenous peoples and the erasure and devaluation of Indigenous knowledge, pedagogy, and lifeways within Western educational settings, many educators and scholars are seeking to implement decolonizing methodologies into research and educational strategies. Utilizing research conducted alongside

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Cherokee students during an undergraduate/graduate course (2016-2018), this paper explores how the use of Indigenous Rights Education (IRE) in tandem with Indigenous Participatory Action Research (IPAR) provide pathways to navigate the difficult work of engaging with the underlying epistemological tensions that undergird U.S. settler society. In this article, a female Cherokee/EuroAmerican scholar perspective speaks to thematic narratives from student reflections that illustrate the how such approaches provide spaces for raising critical consciousness and decolonizing praxis.

**Keywords:** decolonizing methodologies; Indigenous Participatory Action Research; Indigenous Rights Education; community sustainability; Indigenous knowledge systems

**Introduction**

As a Cherokee/EuroAmerican educator and researcher, the question I continually wrestle with is, "How do I (and can I) conduct research and teach in a way that honors the intent of decolonizing methodologies?"

In response to the long and harmful legacy of extractive research done on Indigenous peoples and the erasure and devaluation of Indigenous knowledges, pedagogies, and lifeways within and due to Western educational settings, educators and scholars are seeking to implement decolonizing methodologies (Aikman & King, 2012; Battiste, 1998; Denzin, Lincoln & Smith, 2008; Gaudry, 2011; Kovach, 2010; Smith, 2012; Tuck, McKenzie & McCoy, 2014; Wilson, 2008; Zavala, 2013). Mainstream Western research and educational paradigms and approaches dominate what is labeled as “good” research, leading to “valid” or “real” knowledge, and as Smith argued (2012). Those following such paradigms (historically positivist), are considered...

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There are multiple theories on how the term Cherokee (or Tsalagi in the Cherokee language) came into being, as it was not crafted by the people themselves. Cherokee people have historically called themselves aniywiyá, meaning Real People, or aniigaduwagi, meaning people of Kituwah (or Keetoowah).
knowledge “experts.” In response, teaching and research methodologies based on an Indigenous paradigm—or lens—can be decolonizing practice. These make explicit the responsibility of researchers to honor Indigenous worldviews throughout their work, with Indigenous communities as the most important stakeholders and owners of their own knowledges and resulting data, the ultimate goal being knowledge that leads to action valued by the community (Barnhardt, 2005; Barnhardt & Kawagley, 2005; Gaudry, 2011).

In other writing (see Corntassel & Hardbarger, 2019), the growing interest in utilizing modified Participatory Action Research (PAR) as decolonizing methodology and what I term Indigenous PAR (IPAR) was explored. In addition to PAR, Indigenous researchers have noted a need to develop theory, practice, and methods that are unique and do not seek comparison to mainstream research (Foley, 2003; Wilson, 2008), including PAR approaches. As noted by Gaudry (2011),

this new movement to Indigenize research has been busy articulating anticolonial worldviews that are grounded in Indigenous knowledges and producing overtly political research, challenging colonial domination and occupation of Indigenous homelands. In many ways, this form of research is quickly becoming the ideological grounding for grassroots action in Indigenous communities (pp. 16-17).

Aligned with Gaudry’s call, IPAR, and building upon Transformative Human Rights Education (THRED), Indigenous Rights Education (IRE) engages with tenets of human rights-based education and the underlying tensions surrounding Indigenous knowledge systems and differing epistemologies in order to “transcend the crisis narrative” and to inspire new generations of “resistors, negotiators, and actors” (Sumida Huaman, 2017).

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2 A paradigm is the “set of assumptions, ideas, understanding and values (usually unstated) that sets the rules of what counts as relevant or irrelevant; what questions should be asked and should not be asked; what knowledge is seen as legitimate; and what practices are acceptable.” (Ife, 2013, p. 47)
Utilizing research conducted during a mixed undergraduate/graduate course titled “Community & Cultural Sustainability” at a regional university in northeastern Oklahoma (2016-2018), and building upon decolonizing teaching and research methodologies, this article engages the following questions: How does the use of Indigenous Rights Education (IRE) alongside Indigenous Participatory Action Research (IPAR), particularly through photovoice, provide pathways of awareness for Indigenous youth to navigate the difficult work of confronting the underlying epistemological tensions that undergird U.S. settler society? Moreover, how do such teaching and research approaches assist in perpetuating Indigenous knowledge systems and lifeways for increased individual and community well-being?

The significance of IRE/IPAR approaches is outlined and then linked with personal and student reflections on the operationalization of these approaches. The potential implications, challenges, and opportunities of such approaches are interwoven with thematic narratives regarding impacts on student viewpoints and actions toward personal and community transformations. As the stories of Indigenous students told in their own voices are often excluded in the realm of development policy and practice, this article seeks to bring forward those experiences through highlighting photovoice method. Blending (auto)ethnography and Indigenous research methodologies (Alexander, 1999; McIvor, 2010; Whitinui, 2014), this article also offers my reflections as a female Cherokee/EuroAmerican educator and scholar attempting to embody decolonizing methodologies through my teaching and research approaches. As such, in this introduction, I share my positionality as a junior scholar utilizing decolonizing approaches in my research and as a collaborator alongside Cherokee students.

3 “Epistemology deals with questions of what knowledges are and how they are acquired—in other words, the nature, scope, and sources of knowledges” (Breidlid, 2013, p. 2).
Positionality

“Every step I take forward is on a path paved by strong Indian women before me.” (Wilma Mankiller, first female Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation)

As a researcher, I am explicit regarding my positionality in relation to my students and research participants (Brayboy & Deyhle, 2000). According to Opaskwayak Cree scholar Shawn Wilson (2008), scholars must ask how and why they have decided to research a particular topic, where the research fits into their lives, and what factors have influenced their worldviews (p. 22). I see myself as both Insider and an Outsider to my community, and the words of Herr and Anderson (2015) ring true for me—“Each of us as researchers occupies multiple positions that intersect...we may occupy positions where we are included as insiders while simultaneously, in some dimensions, we identify as outsiders” (p. 55). On the days I need encouragement, I wear my Water Spider earrings given to me by a friend to draw courage from grandmother spider’s strength in the face of obstacles. Even though I may sometimes feel inadequate, she reminds me that we all offer unique characteristics that can result in positive benefits for our community.

My Cherokee ancestors traveled by foot and wagon in 1838 to a region in the U.S. known as Indian Territory during their forced migration by the U.S. government. This migration was referred to as the “Trail of Tears”. Their detachment ended only miles away from where both my maternal and

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4 From our oral story, “The First Fire”. Grandmother Spider is also central to other stories, such as teaching us how to make our first clay pot.

5 For more information on the Trail of Tears, see: https://www.britannica.com/event/Trail-of-Tears

6 After being held in detention camps, my family traveled with the Benge Detachment from Fort Payne, AL to Indian Territory (near present day Stilwell, OK) arriving in 1838. There were 17 detachments (i.e. groups) total that left from various locations in the SE on the forced removal from our homelands by the Indian Removal Act of 1830.
paternal family has resided ever since. My grandpa Albert (Galugi) spoke the Cherokee language, like all of his ancestors before him. However, his children and grandchildren were not allowed to be taught anything “Cherokee,” including the language. This was a deliberate choice by my EuroAmerican (English/Irish) paternal grandmother. I will not attempt to speak for her, as she has passed on, and I cannot inquire as to her exact reasoning. After speaking with family members, it appears that the systemic racism prevalent at the time, as well as conflicting religious beliefs, guided the choice to sever children and grandchildren from our Cherokee language and the lifeways of our ancestors. While I had only women of Cherokee ancestry proceeding my grandpa Albert, this legacy ended with my paternal grandmother Peggy. Although I am deeply grateful for my amazing grandmothers and great-grandmothers, I am also saddened that I never had the opportunity to learn from the Cherokee women in my family.

I have spent the majority of my life living in and visiting Adair and Cherokee counties. I grew up in the local area, and now as an adult, I have returned to my undergraduate alma mater as a faculty member. It is in this context that I teach and conduct research - in the halls of my old high school and university classrooms of my young adulthood. As a citizen of the Cherokee Nation with a familiarity of the social, political, and geographic terrain and as someone who grew up in the area and plans to remain connected, I must remain accountable for my actions and the way I go about building and maintaining relationships. This attention to integrity and

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7 It seems that this was not an uncommon practice as a number of my students, ranging in age across three decades, have similar stories. Some students noted their grandparents wanted to protect them from the oppression, marginalization, and prevalent racism that resulted in their experiences as children being punished at school for speaking Cherokee and limited job opportunities in an already economically disadvantaged time and geographic area.

8 As noted by Carroll (2015), “in a particular five-county area of the Cherokee Nation due to the rural, tight-knit Cherokee settlements that have maintained degrees of historical and cultural continuity since arrival in the area after Removal...where the cultural, linguistic, and religious aspects of Oklahoma Cherokee peoplehood are lived and grounded” (p. 30).
accountability is not only for myself, but also for my family, my community, and my students (Kovach, 2010; Rowe, 2014).

When I was growing up on a farm a few miles outside of Stilwell, Oklahoma, my family fished and hunted deer, turkey, pheasant, rabbit, and squirrel. We foraged for wild onions in the spring (to be cooked with eggs), hickory nuts and mushrooms in the fall. Despite such activities, that are considered “cultural” activities that many Cherokee families engaged in, ceremonies and language were not practiced or even acknowledged. My Cherokee ancestry does not appear on my physical body. My hair is red like my grandparents with Irish and English ancestry. Therefore, I am not what some term “identifiable” Cherokee; I am “white passing”9. It is for these reasons that I physically appear (and even often feel) like an Outsider, and I do not speak the Cherokee language (I am a very new learner), and I was not taught much as a young person about cultural practices. As an adult, I have been seeking out these connections and knowledge, not only for myself and my family, but also for the many others like me cut off from our Indigenous languages and cultural practices. The more that I seek to connect, the more I am reminded of my Insider/Outsider status. The questions I am now traversing and deconstructing surround the feelings of being removed from Cherokee language, relationships, and knowledge, thus making me often feel ashamed that I do not have more knowledge to guide me in these efforts.

My Cherokee ancestors spoke the Cherokee language and participated in cultural values, relationships with each other and our environment, and our ceremonies. They endured violence, dislocation, oppression, racism, grinding poverty, and developed resilience. Their resilience is why I am here, regardless of my appearance and in spite of being cut off from the language and knowledge they carried. Even though I have Cherokee ancestry, there are

9 I understand my white-presenting/passing appearance provides particular privilege that is not afforded to others who are identifiably Indigenous/Cherokee. The blatant everyday racism, police brutality, grossly disproportionate incarceration rates, and missing and murdered indigenous girls and women (MMIGW) all speak to the danger of being “other than white” in settler colonial nations (e.g. Canada, Australia, U.S.). These realities cannot, and should not, be ignored.
times when I feel deeply connected to my heritage and other times that I do not, such as when a Cherokee speaker tries to talk to me in the language and I feel loss and shame. As an aware adult, I do my best to reconnect and to offer what I am able. I find balance in thinking of myself as lifelong learner and teacher, and as a bridge-builder. In a personal conversation with American Indian historian Donald Fixico (Shawnee/Sac and Fox/Muscogee Creek/Seminole), he mentioned Indigenous scholars and some allies as being “cultural bridge-builders” between Indigenous communities and mainstream society. I believe there is a reason why I have the viewpoints I do, why I feel compelled to do community-based PAR research with Indigenous communities, and why the dominant research paradigms espoused in graduate school felt “off” and unsettling.

**Historical Context and Setting**

*EuroAmerican hegemony*  

The course that is the subject of this article serves as one point of entry for discussion of IRE/IPAR focused on Cherokee community and cultural sustainability. In the development of the course I considered the cycle of praxis, as well as the ontological, epistemological, and axiological perspectives of Cherokee young people* in the tribal jurisdiction of the Cherokee Nation and United Keetoowah Band of Cherokee Indians (UKB)*

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10 *EuroAmerican/Western epistemology:* term meant to “identify the hegemonic Eurocentric knowledge system, which originated in 16th-century Europe and together with industrial capitalism produced a specific kind of knowledge that is embodied in modern science...with its mechanistic view of the world [it] is founded on the Cartesian-Newtonian version of science as something universal and objective.” (Breidlid, 2013, p. 1)

9 Although more students participated in the projects, only twelve Cherokee students provided qualitative data, six males and six females, the majority ranging in age from approximately 20-26. From a Cherokee perspective, this age range still falls under the term “youth” or “young people”.

12 The UKB claims this same area as their jurisdictional territory. There were students involved that are enrolled members of the UKB. Therefore, when the 14-county tribal
in northeastern Oklahoma.

The Cherokee, like other Indigenous peoples around the world, have had their communities intentionally dismantled through Western/EuroAmerican hegemony enforced through ongoing settler colonization and, more recently, through neoliberal ideology enacted through corporatized capitalism, development at all costs, and the inequities produced by neocolonialism as a form of globalization. Central to any discussion of Cherokee community and cultural sustainability is acknowledgement of these factors, which continue to guide policies and practices that impact Indigenous communities in the U.S., including political discourse that defines “truth,” “progress,” and “modernization” associated with normative Western approaches to education, religion, economic development, environmental/land management, language, social behaviors, appropriate parenting, and gender roles. I am aware that it is within this broader context that Cherokee communities function, and my role as an academic also fits within this context. Educators, researchers, and those working in multiple fields (e.g. social work, community development, health and well-being) with peoples and communities that have a past or ongoing relationship with racism, marginalization, oppression, and colonization/settler colonialism must be aware, reflective, and reflexive of the historical context in which they work as well as the role of internalized oppression and violence.

Educational Setting

Though many non-Native Americans have learned very little about us, over time we have had to learn everything about them. We watch their films, read their literature, worship in their churches, and attend their schools. Every third-grade student in the United States is presented with the concept of Europeans discovering America as a jurisdiction is referenced it’s done so to denote the shared, if contentious, claim between the Cherokee Nation and UKB.
"New World" with fertile soil, abundant gifts of nature, and glorious mountains and rivers. Only the most enlightened teachers will explain that this world certainly wasn't new to the millions of indigenous people who already lived here when Columbus arrived. (Wilma Mankiller, 2004, p. 43)

My classes take place in the building that was formerly the Cherokee National Female Seminary, the first of its kind west of the Mississippi. This institution, along with the many other Cherokee Nation-run schools in the area, was taken over when the Cherokee Nation was, once again, dissolved and its assets “sold” when Indian Territory became the state of Oklahoma in 1907. I occupy this space where many Cherokee women, past and present, obtained their formal schooling, taught, and advocated for the Cherokee people. I now utilize the office that Wilma Mankiller occupied in her role as the first Sequoyah Fellow of the university in 2009. When I was offered this office, I remember feeling grateful to share the same space occupied by former Chief Mankiller, so I have tried over the years to learn more about her life and especially her aspirations for the Cherokee people.

Decolonizing Indigenous Research Methodologies: Research as Relevant to Self-determination and Raising Critical Consciousness

Participatory Action Research (PAR)

PAR, an orientation within the scope of qualitative and critical research, stems from the broader legacy of activist scholarship and can thus be traced to historic anti-colonial movements particularly in Latin America and other regions in (what is considered) the ‘global South’ (Hall & Tandon, 2017; Zavala, 2013). At its core, PAR seeks to “improve the quality of life of the people being studied by involving them in the research process and by using their knowledge in the search for relevant solutions to relevant problems” (Davis & Reid, 1999, p. 757). PAR and its many resulting iterations, including
CBPR$^{13}$ (community based participatory research) (Castleden & Garvin, 2008), have been utilized across the globe to address the needs of marginalized populations for democratic participation, civic engagement, wealth and power inequality, combating prejudice and discrimination, and anti-colonial resistance (Glassman & Erdem, 2014). PAR strives to value and respect the lived experiences (vivencia) of the community by not only reimagining the way knowledge is gathered, but also how it is presented and shared with and for the community.

PAR has been utilized with different populations, and what has interested me has been Youth PAR$^{14}$ (YPAR) (Childers-McKee, 2014) and drawing from a variety of participatory methodologies and creative techniques (e.g. photography, collage-making, digital storytelling) depending upon the specific group involved (McIntyre, 2000). Whether participants are youth or adults, guiding elements often include the following: the process of collective investigation (action and reflection) builds the capacity of the people involved; participants rely on their perspectives and knowledge as their conceptual framework to understand and “answer” the issue/research questions, they have decision-making roles in the process; and the process leads to the desire to take individual and/or collective action (Childers-McKee, 2014; Driskell, 2002; McIntyre, 2000; Stanton, 2014). Aligned with praxis, many PAR studies embed community engagement in the research by creating interactive websites, hosting public

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$^{13}$ Community Based Participatory Research (CBPR) is also used as an umbrella term to describe research that has very similar/if not the same goals as PAR such as intentionally focusing on the co-creation of knowledge, maintaining good long-term relationships, an iterative process, examining power dynamics and desired action or social change (Gill, Yan, & Francis 2018).

$^{14}$ YPAR has been increasingly utilized with youth as a critical and collaborative framework to raise “critical consciousness of social justice issues that confront their school and community...that foster[s] positive interethnic relations” (Childers-McKee, 2014, p. 48), to explore *theories of change* embedded in the process of Indigenous youth resistance (Tuck 2009, 2013), and to “develop culturally relevant theories, which are typically determined by working closely with research participants to identify the most effective ways to answer particular research questions” (Castleden & Garvin, 2008).
community presentations or events, and exhibiting work at art shows, to name a few (Childers-McKee 2014).

*Indigenous Participatory Action Research (IPAR) and Indigenous Rights Education (IRE)*

The impacts of mainstream Western research on Indigenous peoples is well-documented. Historically, researchers from outside Indigenous communities and ignorant of Indigenous epistemologies have been extractors and purveyors of knowledge gleaned from people involved in their studies, thus filtering relevance, validity, and significance of “knowledge” through their own lenses and based on Western determinations of what constitutes “good” research. Most often, knowledge is disseminated for an academic audience only, with little regard to community impact, reciprocity (of returning the results/data/materials), or the long-term relationship with the community itself. Additionally, researchers often operate with a normative ethnocentrism that places Western/EuroAmerican science and research methods as superior, therefore not allowing other ways of knowing, learning, or interacting to take place when working in Native communities (Davis & Reid, 1999). As a result, Indigenous scholars have worked to develop conceptualizations of research that are distinctively Indigenous while not seeking validation from the “hierarchical structure of male-dominated EuroAmerican ethnocentricity that is prevalent in most social science theory” (Wilson, 2008, p. 16).

In contrast to extractive research done on Indigenous peoples for the behalf of others, research with Indigenous communities must be guided by relevant epistemologies and ontologies, as well as respect, a deep intent to honor sacred knowledge, reciprocity, responsibility, relationships, and *relationality* (e.g. *relational accountability* and *relational validity*) (Datta, 2015; Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2001; Rowe, 2014; Tuck & McKenzie, 2015). Over the past twenty years there have been a number of influential works on decolonizing and Indigenous research methodologies (Chilisa, 2011; Denzin, Lincoln, & Smith, 2008; Kovach 2005, 2010; Smith, 1999; Wilson, 2008). Such methodologies seek to encourage hybridity instead of dualism or
dichotomies, expose hidden colonist assumptions that undermine local-based practices, critically examine and deconstruct of dominant EuroAmerican Western paradigm, examine hierarchical (capitalist/anthropocentric) relationships, highlight assumptions embedded in Western scientific knowledge, operate from a standpoint of traditional ecological knowledge’s (TEK) value and validity, and construct meaningful action (including research and teaching) (Bhabha, 1985; Detta, 2015; Gaudry, 2011; Said, 1993). As noted by Smith (2012), decolonizing methodologies operate “between the indigenous agenda of self-determination, indigenous rights and sovereignty, on one hand, and, on the other, a complementary indigenous research agenda that was about building capacity and working towards healing, reconciliation and development. Paulo Freire referred to this as praxis (theory, action and reflection), and Graham Hingangaroa Smith has called it indigenous transform[ational] praxis” (pg. xiii).

Using PAR with youth in Indigenous communities is seen as a “promising” methodology especially when built upon a foundation that is appropriate for the community and cultural context (Johnston-Goodstar, 2013, p. 317). As I utilize PAR within Indigenous community contexts and strive to adhere to an Indigenous research paradigm linked with decolonizing methodologies, I propose IPAR.

There are a number of overlapping goals in Indigenous research methodologies and PAR including the decolonization of knowledge, hierarchy, and power relations. I conceive of IPAR as working within these tenets:

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5 Recognizing differences in epistemologies does not mean that one has to overtake another (as in the case of Eurocentric colonization), rather it is through multiple epistemologies where understanding, appreciation, and respect can take place (Goldbard 2006, Carm 2014, Bang & Medin 2010). It cannot be assumed that all members of any community will see the world in the same way, assuming such perpetuates “unhelpful binaries” between ‘assimilated/Westernized/modern’ and ‘authentic/traditional’ ways of thinking and being.

6 Smith (2005) envisions indigenous transformative praxis as an overlapping continuous cycle of conscientization [critical consciousness], resistance, and transformative action.

7 Although I use the term IPAR to denote Indigenous PAR, DPAR “decolonial PAR” has also been utilized (Tuck & Guishard, 2013).
• Participatory research approaches (PAR, CBPR, Action Research) intentionally encompassing ontological and epistemological underpinnings salient to participants’ worldview (specific to the context);
• Anti-colonial/decolonizing (situated) framework and theories that include Indigenous ways of knowing;
• Well-defined and co-developed guidelines and protocols that clearly state modifications between mainstream PAR (and other participatory) and Indigenous/local-serving elements, explicitly identified assumptions, and collaborative protocols in line with the cultural and/or community context honoring both the process as well as outcomes.

While my proposal for IPAR is focused on shifting dominant research paradigms and acknowledging Indigenous research methodologies that are richly locally-based, there is a need to acknowledge the role that rights discourse can play in research. This is where I see similarities between Indigenous Rights Education18 (IRE) and IPAR approaches as they seek to build upon Indigenous values, principals, and intentions toward honoring and perpetuating Indigenous knowledges, approaches, epistemologies, protocols, and languages in education and research, respectively. For example, the co-creation of knowledge, including power relations and relationship between researcher/teacher and participant/student, is key to IPAR and IRE. While IRE takes up the call of Transformative HRE (THRED) to rethink both definitions and practices of human rights education, the framework “indigenizes” it by centering Indigenous peoples and their families, their particular histories and geographies, cultural and environmental contexts, and daily renewals of cultural practices as their own.

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18 Drawing upon Sumida Huaman (2017), I understand IRE as bringing the aforementioned perspectives into human rights education practices (i.e. THRED), being that IRE goes further to intentionally center on the epistemological positionings, knowledge systems, relationality, educational considerations, local priorities, and discourses on place rights of a specific Indigenous peoples.
human rights and in accordance with community-based efforts grounded in everyday sustained actions of resurgence.

**Pedagogy and Research**

_Course conceptualization_

My discussion of IPAR and IRE as frameworks for teaching and research is centered on recent university course development and resulting data collection. The course content drew from an Indigenous and Cherokee paradigmatic orientation, including the core value of _responsibility_ (especially related to communal values, the stewardship of land, water, other-than humans, and knowledge), as well as from transdisciplinary literature, and relied upon narratives that would emerge from the participating students\(^9\). Attempting to honor an Indigenous/Cherokee\(^20\)-centered paradigm requires outlining the interwoven relationship between colonization and Indigenous knowledges and self-determination in regard to individual and community well-being. As noted by Wilson (2008), “students should have the choice of studying ‘Native’ issues that are researched and presented from an Indigenous paradigm” (p. 19). I would add that Indigenous and non-Indigenous students have a right to such courses, materials, and spaces for such educational and research opportunities to engage in the cycle of praxis (education/theory, action, and reflection). Additionally, rather than reinforcing modes of deficit-thinking or becoming stuck in a problem-focused dialogue, we walked through the hard emotions and realities surrounding the long-term and continued harm being done to

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\(^9\) Rather than term “participant”, I intentionally use “student” to reiterate the fact that these individuals were operating from the perspective of a student in a graded course in a university classroom setting and institution.

\(^20\) It is for this reason that I utilize “Cherokee/Indigenous” to demarcate the perspective of coming from a particular worldview that may have various elements of influence. All narratives presented are from Cherokee students, and many were involved in our Cherokee Cultural Studies degree; therefore, this understanding was utilized as the core basis and framework.
our peoples and environment. Once voiced and discussed, I then provided discussion prompts to look at potential solutions (Chilisa, 2012; Wilson 2008). This focus on the process of decolonization to voice issues for awareness and healing, along with remaining focused on potential, is an especially important aspect when working in communities with ongoing racism, oppression, and legacies of colonization/settler colonialism.

With this belief, I framed a course built upon interrelated and universally-understood concepts such as environmental justice and community and sociocultural sustainability. However, I noted in the course description in the syllabus and discussed at-length with students, that the intent for the course was to introduce complex real-world challenges and opportunities currently facing Cherokee and Indigenous populations whereby students were able to engage their personal agency within the cycle of praxis. As a result, major course topics included the following, and drawing upon a comparative approach, exploring dominant (Western/EuroAmerican) and Indigenous Knowledges, epistemologies, and approaches:

- deconstructing commonly accepted terms like, “community”, “progress,” “development”, “sustainability”, “sustainable communities”, and “well-being”;
- defining and understanding the importance and impacts of, and honoring multiple knowledges, epistemologies, and learning and research paradigms, including differing ways of viewing relationships (to land, natural resources and one another);
- considering resurgence and sustainable self-determination, Indigenous Planning/Indigenous Led Community Development (governance, economic systems, etc.), perspectives on sustainable development, sustainability, and community characteristics and well-being (i.e. history of sustainable development, dominant rhetoric and practice and Indigenous and alternative conceptualizations; sustainable land, water, and food systems including food sovereignty, Traditional Ecological Knowledges, and land management practices.)
- exploring historical and modern impacts of colonialism and neoliberalism on Indigenous peoples, including globalization, settler
colonialism, dominant approaches to economic development, environmental development practices on Indigenous communities, climate change and Indigenous community/nation responses;

As a class, my students and I did not intend to provide answers to complex issues, but rather to engage tough questions regarding sustainable self-determination and resurgence (Corntassel & Bryce, 2011) at internal community and personal levels, as well as more broadly in the U.S. and globally. We examined cases primarily from the Americas (U.S., Canada, Central and South Americas), but I encouraged students to keep their own course visions and research projects “Cherokee-centered”\textsuperscript{21}, in order to privilege their local Indigenous knowledges, relationships, experiences, values, and attitudes. To accomplish this, we utilized Clint Carroll’s \textit{Roots of Our Renewal: Cherokee Environmental Governance}\textsuperscript{22} (2017), a book by a Cherokee author written about Cherokee Nation environmental governance policy.

\textit{Research Approaches: IPAR and Photovoice}

In addition to my approach to Indigenous critical pedagogy, which I understand in relation to IRE, my students and I also engaged in research. My conceptualization of the research process focused on the cycle of decolonizing praxis, relying heavily on Laenui’s Process of Decolonization (2000) through five phases: 1) \textit{Rediscovery and Recovery}, which is the exploration of “identity through the reclamation of...history, culture and language” (p. 3), and possibility of resistance manifested through the process of \textit{conscientization} (Freire, 1970); 2) After the realization of the

\textsuperscript{21}This is intended to be grounded in a Cherokee epistemology, not an academic endeavor, yet some literature that was utilized included (Hardbarger, 2016; Stremalu, 2011; Lefler 2009; Altman & Belt 2008, 2009)

\textsuperscript{22}Cherokee environmental governance, is defined as "the process by which Cherokees make decisions with regard to the human relationship to the non-human world" (pg. 33); noting that “Cherokees have much work ahead of them in this regard due to colonial acts that disrupted Cherokee relationships to the land and led to significant environmental change” (pg. 35). Much of the additional literature for this course can be found at Hardbarger, 2016.
situation fully infiltrates a person or community’s psyche, phase two manifests as *Mourning*, which is an “essential phase in healing” (p. 4) which leads to considering how change could manifest; 3) the most crucial phase, or *Dreaming* (imagining a decolonized future), leads to 4) *Commitment* (to a direction or action); and 5) *Action*, or active strategy based on consensus of the people. Critical to note is Laenui’s observation that colonization, and by extension decolonization, is a messy process with dynamic phases, sometimes out of order, occurring simultaneously, and even ‘jumping’ from one phase to another over time. The “messiness” of the decolonization process was clearly played out and embodied during the research process.

The course utilized IPAR, and based on my experience with photovoice, my students and I modified this method in consideration of a Cherokee worldview, including community mapping and conceptual mapping. The community mapping activity took place early in the semester to provide some grounding for students to locate themselves and our communities, and we utilized conceptual mapping as a culminating project to illustrate their understandings of Cherokee community cultural sustainability. While these elements were integrated into the pedagogy, this article focuses on the photovoice research component due to its centrality in the process, as well as my belief that this particular method allows for honoring the intent of IPAR in a unique way. Photovoice enabled participatory and culturally appropriate elements, such as consensus building/governing by consensus, which fits well with a Cherokee consensus-driven governance practice. Photovoice is an effective research approach with youth when discussing sensitive and difficult topics (Haque, et al 2018) and has been utilized with Indigenous peoples elsewhere.

Developed by Wang & Burris (1997), the method draws from Freire’s (1970) critical consciousness, as well as feminist methodologies, community-based documentary photography, and is founded upon health promotion

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23 Castleden & Garvin (2008) utilized modified photovoice with the Huu-ay-aht First Nation and found that, “photovoice was an effective method for sharing power, fostering trust, developing a sense of ownership, creating community change and building capacity” (p. 1401).
principles (Wang, Cash & Powers, 2000). Photovoice uses photography and participant interpretations of the photos to enable recordings and reflections of community strengths and concerns; promotes critical dialogue and knowledge about important community issues through large and small group discussion of photographs. The goal of the culminating action plan of such projects are often to reach policymakers (Wang & Burris, 1997). I view IPAR-modified photovoice as adhering to these elements noted above, however the audience and action plan can be modified to fit the specific needs of the group/community. For example, the goal of IPAR Cherokee projects have been directed at an individual, local and “everyday” level, with the Cherokee people and local families/communities as the intended beneficiaries.

**Process & What We Learned**

My students were given the following overarching research project instructions: “Draw upon the instructional materials, lectures and class discussions, your own knowledge and experiences, along with conversations with your friends, families and communities to reflect on the meaning of community and cultural sustainability (i.e. “Indigenous-led community development”) from your perspective.” We crafted photovoice toward praxis while navigating the realities of a typical university semester and class scheduling and taking advantage of the space for student-led presentations at the university Symposium held annually in April. Students exercised agency in what was photographed and how the narratives and photographs were shared with the class and the wider university and Cherokee community.

The student-led nature of the research process meant that photographs could be people, landscapes and the environment, animals, natural resources, foods—really any element could be brought into the discussion (as long as consent was garnered from human participants and the photo and accompanying narrative was vetted for potential violation of sacred spaces, items, or topics. I continually encouraged them to reach out to their families and social networks to learn, share, and think though the
concepts we were discussing in class. The research encouraged dialogue with elders and knowledge holders, which brings together crucial people (the knowledge keepers and a coming generation of Cherokee leaders) to (re)imagine the regeneration of land, culture and community in a community-based Cherokee context. Students explored their understandings and visions of Cherokee beliefs, values, and lifeways, as well as the relationship between cultural continuance and sustainable communities, cultural knowledge, and experiences (Barnhardt & Kawagley 2005; Breidlid, 2013). We drew on the idea that “community is defined or imagined in multiple ways as physical, political, social, psychological, historical, linguistic, economic, cultural and spiritual spaces...[understanding that] the community itself makes its own definitions” (Smith, 2012, p. 128-129).

Three autonomous research projects were developed through the courses (2016, 2017, 2018) as models regarding explorations of salient Cherokee cultural lifeways that reveal what we need to perpetuate as Cherokee people to maintain strong and sustainable communities, according to student perspectives. My role as a co-collaborator across the course years remained consistently to be a guide: First, we discussed photovoice methods, consent, ethics, and knowledge-sharing throughout the course and leading up to the inception of projects²⁴. Second, using consensus decision-making, students selected guiding research question(s). Third, each student took photographs in the local area based on the guiding research question(s). Fourth, students each selected three to five photographs to present. Using a storytelling method, they presented the photos by “telling the story” behind each photograph and its relation to the guiding research question(s). Next, the group identified recurring themes from the presentations using a consensus decision making process. Finally,

²⁴ There was a clear process in place for consent at multiple junctures (e.g. informed written consent for subjects of photographs giving permission for photographs to be used for public exhibition, student consent for their photos and quotes to be used on slides, etc.). A university IRB was also obtained to access the written student assignments.
using consensus decision-making, the group co-created a presentation for the university's public *Symposium on the American Indian*.

**Qualitative data**

Utilizing teaching and research methodologies that adhere to the goals of IRE and IPAR, I illustrate how these combined approaches provided pathways of engagement and awareness for teaching and research with Indigenous students. This is critical as we navigate the difficult work of engaging with the epistemological tensions that undergird U.S. settler society. Alternative teaching and research approaches that focus on perpetuating Indigenous knowledge systems and lifeways increased individual and community well-being.

After the *Symposium* was completed, students were asked provide written personal reflections on their experiences, future action, and feedback to improve future photovoice projects. Students were also asked to write in-depth reflections to capture research and course learning reflexivity. Based on prompts, students were asked to consider their learning experiences, encounters with distinct viewpoints or unexpected knowledge gained, and pre-existing ideas that influenced how they approached notions of community and sustainability. A number of themes emerged, which link research and teaching approaches situated through IPAR and IRE with student reflections on their lives and communities.

*Decolonizing Praxis: Consensus Decision Making, Community Building, and a Spirit of Gadugi*

I plan to look at the world around me differently and realize that we can always overcome colonization by just the little things we do. Ceremonial dances, gathering food, land, family and community.  
(Student quote, 2017 course)

The intent of the course was to engage decolonizing pedagogies and research through explicit consideration of Indigenous knowledge systems
and Indigenous-led conceptualizations of rights (IRE) and IPAR. As one student from the 2018 course stated, the photovoice project “acted as a microcosm” of what was discussed in class. Based on student narratives and my role as a co-collaborator in these projects, I observed students embodying decolonizing praxis (Freire 1970, Smith, 2005) through these manifestations:

- **Embodiment of Cherokee cultural communal values** such as *gadugi* and the traditional Cherokee governance method of consensus decision-making, resulting in a sense of shared community and inclusion;
- **Raised critical consciousness** surrounding interconnected topics relevant to Indigenous communities (locally and globally) and their conceptions of salient aspects of Cherokee lifeways and decolonization;
- **Reflexive engagement** with personal and cultural identity;
- **Inspired thinking about pathways of action** to engage in their home communities and taking responsibility;
- **Increased agency** through visual and narrative expression and feeling heard.

**Embodiment of Cherokee values**

In a commentary made in 1993, when Wilma Mankiller was the Principal Chief of the Cherokee Nation, she said—apart from leading the charge to build health facilities, daycares, and services for women and girls—she wanted to,

work with my own people to trust their own thinking again, and to believe in themselves again, and to look to themselves for solutions to problems, to trust what we know and to try and preserve that in some

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25 My role in the research was one of a co-collaborator walking along side (Ife, 2013; Ledwith & Springett, 2010; Wilson, 2008) my students, to provide guidance, and to seek guidance from knowledge holders, elders, and fluent speakers, when needed.
...in our own little communities we still have a sense of interdependence\textsuperscript{26}.

Mankiller’s life work has been portrayed through films\textsuperscript{27} and writing. She left behind a lasting legacy that inspires \textit{gadugi}, the Cherokee term for collective self-sufficiency. One of the impacts of her leadership was the laying of a water line so that a Cherokee-serving school and community could have running water. The Bell water line project began with the recognition of an issue, consensus building and decision making, and realigning a community’s spirit to the power they possess to make a difference in their own community without the help of outside funding, political oversight, or a bureaucratic style approach. Mankiller believed in community resilience, empowerment, hard work, and creativity, and the ancient Cherokee communal value of \textit{gadugi}. This history has inspired my own notions of community development and sustainability and guided my intentions in my teaching to be community-based and focused on transformative praxis from a Cherokee cultural standpoint, where the cultural value and practice of \textit{gadugi} is foundational.

The course drew out similar student conceptualizations of \textit{gadugi}, which requires working together and making decisions by consensus (a process based on mutual respect with everyone, male and female, having the agency to speak and an equal chance to be heard) and is a traditional mode of Cherokee governance. A group working together to achieve one goal is the definition of \textit{gadugi}. As noted by a student in the 2016 course,

Throughout the photovoice project process I got to see visual, firsthand accounts of what my classmates value as Native American people. A lot of our values and views were the same in the...[overall] themes, but interestingly our views and takes on the individual themes were different. The great thing about this course and this project alike is that though some of our views differed, we learned from each other and no one got upset with anyone.

\textsuperscript{26} See Reference section for details on full commentary and how to access.
\textsuperscript{27} See \textit{The Cherokee Word for Water} film for one example of depictions of Mankiller’s work.
The ability to listen to peers share personal information, cultural knowledge and perspectives, along with the sense of community-building and camaraderie, was seen as one of the most positive aspects. Although the process was difficult, student reflections allude to feelings of connectivity and building community. As noted by a student in 2018 course, “the camaraderie and sense of community we had together as a class working as a small-scale representation of what the class was about was the best part for me.” The students noted they most enjoyed the part of the process where photographs were shared and discussed, and themes were decided upon by consensus of the entire group:

I was surprised at how organic and easy the whole project flowed together. At seemed as if there were no egos involved, which was pleasant to experience. It was true teamwork. Everyone talked, and everyone listened, a very rare experience nowadays... I don't think any one of us contributed more than the others in bringing it into being. It was truly OUR research question and OUR project. (Student quote, 2018 course)

During presentation of the photographs, students found commonality between themselves and other students. Notions of cultural identity and experience expanded from individualized, or even family-centric, to recognition of shared connection. Recognizing common ties related to Cherokee cultural lifeways and values raised student consciousness centered on inclusivity, part of a larger shared cultural worldview. As one student said (2017), “As a group we developed the theme by looking at the pictures from everybody and we noticed there was a reoccurring theme, family and community.”

**Raised Critical Consciousness**

Students demonstrated growing awareness of interconnected topics that impact Indigenous communities at local and global levels, as well as shifts in perception on these topics from prior to taking the course to finishing the course. As one student from the 2016 class stated:
This class has provided an interesting domain that has opened and revolutionized the way the students of the class, me included, think and act throughout our daily lives. The aspects that I drew in to the most were the cultural and environmental destruction and changes in the community we face as Indigenous people today...Prior to the course, I had a vague understanding of the word sustainable...I knew that the ways of lives of many indigenous people were changes and torn apart but I didn't understand the true meaning of it. In terms of the destruction of indigenous cultures, I thought in the past tense.

This student also reflected on a call to action, which is central to the praxis goals of the course:

One of the most important things I came to understand throughout this course is that each one of us, as individuals, hold specific knowledges. Each of us are to use our knowledges for the benefit of others. Also, each of us are not to try and be experts in all areas of knowledge because we need to depend on each other for certain things. Another very important thing that I have learned is the true meaning of responsibility. Responsibility, despite school teachings, is not a singular word with a cut and dry meaning. Responsibility is packed full of different aspects that we are to take care of and that are interconnected.

Students also used analogies with regards to the teaching and research impacting their ability to better “see”, “have new eyes”, or have increased “sight”, to “look at things differently,” and I found these descriptors especially interesting since we utilized photography. For example, students stated,

I looked more into what was being presented. I was able to see more than what was in front of me, I thought in a more in-depth way and tried to see more than what there was. There is so much more meaning to pictures whenever you look deep into them. (Student quote, 2016 course, my emphasis)

[The process] allow[ed] my eyes to be opened to new concepts that have always been right in front of me...I think that in itself speaks volumes to the project because everyone was awakened to these facts. After the guiding questions and overlying theme was developed the
rest of the project seemed to flow very easily. I believe this is because we, the class, became aware that these concepts and ideas were right in front of us, making photographing the images very simple. (Student quote, 2016 course, my emphasis)

Reflexive Engagement with Personal and Cultural Identity

There is a spectrum of consciousness and differing levels of personal, family, and community cultural engagement. I view having an opportunity to learn Cherokee language and lifeway in families and communities as a “privilege,” one that I was personally denied growing up, as were many others for reasons stemming from trauma, racism, lack of family ties, etc. This course brought out facets of Cherokee identity and, for some, articulation of complex factors and insecurity surrounding identity. Most of the students grew up in northeastern Oklahoma, or at least lived there for a number of years, yet there was a wide spectrum of experiences related to cultural knowledge and identity. Internal struggles and insecurities regarding belonging, cultural identity, depth of cultural engagement and knowledge (including language ability), as well as physical appearance were all mentioned. Even those heavily committed and engaged in Cherokee language learning expressed the personal challenges of the path of being a second language learner. Some students drew a level of insecurity from the assumption that their peers knew more about being Cherokee, were better

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28 When conceptualizing “identity”, both for myself as an individual as well as a scholar, I utilize Weaver’s (2001) work on cultural identity, “those who belong to the same culture share a broadly similar conceptual map...[although] people can identify themselves in many ways other than by their cultures...a composite of many things such as race, class, education, region, religion, and gender. The influence of these aspects...is likely to change over time. Identities are always fragmented, multiply constructed, and intersected in a constantly changing, sometimes conflicting array”. (p. 240). However, being considered Cherokee today is markedly different from demarcation based upon a matrilineal clan system (or being adopted into a clan), where having a clan was the sole defining factor. This differs greatly from the modern system of citizenship based upon blood quantum and proof of ancestry using roles (i.e. Dawes Role, Baker Role).
connected to family knowledge holders to obtain that needed guidance, had more refined language skills, and were therefore “more” Cherokee.

That was one of my biggest takeaways from the project, how many of my classmates had the same questions and feelings and ideas. I was surprised because I assumed... they knew more than me simply because of where they live and who they grew up around. (Student quote, 2018 course)

I have learned not to be so restricted in the way that I think, such as being afraid to ask questions about my culture because I'm afraid of being seen as an outsider, I would rather learn than [to] go on feeling like I don't belong to something. (Student quote, 2018 course)

These students speak to challenges of participation and action when young people are insecure in their Indigenous identity and how teaching and research can bring these realizations to the fore while providing a safe space for sharing.

**Inspired Thinking About Pathways and Action: Interaction and (Re)Connection with Land and Water, Traditions, Values, and Language**

Action most often mentioned by students referred to continuation of traditions, renewal, new interactions with community, and connections with land and water, traditions, values, and language. As noted by Wildcat et al. (2014), “settler-colonialism has functioned, in part, by deploying institutions of western education to undermine Indigenous intellectual development through cultural assimilation and the violent separation of Indigenous peoples from our sources of knowledge and strength – the land” (p. II). Student agency to engage the natural world reinforces Cherokee interconnection, kinship, and gratitude. Further, the ability for young people to interact and focus on a particular place provides an opportunity for a place-and-land-based focus during the research process (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015). For example, one student generally explained,

“I plan on being more involved in my culture and trying to be one of the people to help preserve and perpetuate my heritage” (Student quote, 2018 course).
Moreover, the course requirements, including research, encouraged spending time and being in presence with elders and family members to share knowledge, which in Cherokee culture allows for all involved to (re)connect with language, foods, ceremony, land, and water. This was one of the most impactful elements of IPAR, provoking renewed and continued interaction with Cherokee lifeways (i.e. cultural knowledge, practices, traditions, values, relationships, language, connection to community). As one student mentioned,

“I think the biggest unexpected experience I had...was how much I actually cared about what happened in my community and that it made me sad that I was doing so little to participate in it” (Student quote, 2018 course).

At the same time, as an educator, I see that expectations of immediate and individual or collective action need to be tempered if there is not enough time for students to go through a more extended process of education and reflection over an appropriate amount of time. I found inspiration that students expressed intended action, small everyday acts, or even new or renewed awareness for the need for action.

*Increase Agency: Self-Expression and Feeling Heard*

Student panel presentations at the *Symposium on the American Indian* allowed interaction with fellow students, faculty and staff members, scholars, and community members. Students shared insights about themselves, their families and communities, and their traditions. In this sense, the public outcome of photovoice serves many purposes—centering knowledge holders as experts in their own experiences, feelings, and agency to make social change. The audience, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, bears witness to these truths and becomes part of the educational and research process. The narratives can be uncomfortable, reaffirming, thought-provoking, educational, or a variation of all of these characteristics. Many

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Texto 29: The 2018 presentation was recorded and will be housed in the university Special Collections archive.
students noted the presentation experience as being integral to their development:

My favorite part about the photovoice experience was taking audience questions and listening to their comments. It gave us a chance to expand on our presentation and to demonstrate that we knew what we were talking about...I was so happy at the positive feedback we got from the people afterwards too. It let me know we succeeded in capturing their attention and getting our message through. (Student quote, 2018 course)

Another student added,

It was refreshing for us as student[s] and young people to be able to express and explain ourselves and have people actually listen to what/why we said it. (Student quote, 2018 course)

Key features of IPAR using photovoice are narratives and photography as testimonials of everyday lives and perspectives of Cherokee young people, and this process functions in direct rejection to dominant narratives and generalized stereotypes.

Conclusion

I think my future, my classmate's futures, our futures are promising and bright. I think a good crop of young indigenous leaders are developing and are going to change the way we live, for the better. One of the biggest and most important things that we have learned in reference to the future is awareness. We are now becoming aware of the problems we face, and the steps needed to fixing the problems. This to me is one of the most important things taken from the course, the fact that our generation can make a difference. (Student quote, 2016 course)

Themes of loss of connection to knowledge, language, and lifeways were expressed throughout each of the courses, and yet, there were resounding collective notes of hopefulness, awareness, and (re)connection as noted by the student whose words help me to conclude this article. I have
argued that teaching and research can be decolonizing practice and intervention, raising awareness of the linkages and broader context on issues relevant to Indigenous communities at a local and global level, inspiring young people to (re)connect on multiple levels. The power of research and teaching approaches like Indigenous Participatory Action Research (IPAR) and Indigenous Rights Education (IRE) is that their utilization across local contexts requires operating from specific epistemological orientations defined by the community or group, therefore addressing local realities, goals, and centering the pedagogies and methods on culturally relevant processes and outcomes.

After facilitating multiple projects with Cherokee high school, and now university students, I believe the use of IRE/IPAR can serve as underlying mechanisms for Laenui’s observations, allowing for healing and connection to manifest individually and collectively. The importance of healing in order to face today’s challenges is certain; it is intense and urgent. The difficult process of awareness and healing must take place, especially for Indigenous youth, as they are on the receiving end of the loss of our knowledge keepers, our languages, global environmental destruction, and the continued breakdown of the relationships, values, and responsibilities that guided the Cherokee people sustainably for millennia. I concur with Cajete (2015), a Tewa scholar who argued that there is a deep need to “unravel” internalized oppression, to “re-instill time-tested Indigenous values through the reassertion a pedagogy of Indigenous community” (my emphasis, p. 59).

There is a need to further develop these approaches in practical ways and to offer them as part of the array of options available to educators and researchers, as well as through other researcher and teacher training programs within Western educational institutions and Indigenous and decolonizing community-based contexts. The possibilities for student outcomes are replete, and I hope that by providing the example of my students’ and my work, that we encourage additional dialogue and open conversations regarding decolonizing praxis from local perspectives.
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References


Indigenous Women’s Approaches to Educational Leadership: Creating Space for Indigenous Women in Education

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Abstract

This article addresses the problematic deficiency in research and scholarship that centers Indigenous women’s voices in educational leadership. As Indigenous women scholars, we engaged a qualitative study that involved Indigenous women leaders from across the United States, and our discussion in this work focuses on the perspectives of Indigenous women working in education. We first provide a current snapshot of Indigenous women in postsecondary education and review preliminary theories on Indigenous leadership. We highlight cultural, social, and political factors that influence Indigenous women educational leaders, and we conclude with recommendations for the cultivation of future Indigenous women leaders.

Keywords: Indigenous women; Indigenous educational leadership; Indigenous women and higher education

Introduction

People do not have to assert, “Our women are powerful” any more than they need to argue “Our children are playful” ...in many societies where these characteristics are true, they are also obvious. (Klein & Ackerman, 1995, p. 4)

This statement from Klein & Ackerman rings true for many Indigenous people. We know that our women are powerful. We recognize and respect the important places they hold in our tribes and societies. We know our histories, and so the idea and practice of Indigenous women as leaders is nothing new to us. We write this research article as Indigenous women scholars and women who have served in various leadership positions where we have noticed the absence of Indigenous women’s stories and our exclusion from leadership scholarship that is dominated by Western narratives.

We begin our discussion by introducing ourselves and why we do this work: Robin “Zape-tah-hol-ah” Minthorn is a citizen of the Kiowa Tribe
of Oklahoma, descendant of the Apache/Nez Perce/Umatilla and Assiniboine Nations. She is Associate Professor in Education and a Director of the Doctoral Program in Educational Leadership at the University of Washington in Tacoma. Her research focuses broadly on Indigenous leadership, and more specifically on Indigenous leadership in higher education and Native American student experiences in higher education. She has worked with various Indigenous education organizations such as NIEA (National Indian Education Association), ASHE (Association for the Study of Higher Education) and activist founded organizations, such as the NIYC, Inc. (National Indian Youth Council). Heather J. Shotton is a citizen of the Wichita and Affiliated Tribes and is a descendant of the Kiowa and Cheyenne Tribes. She serves as Associate Professor in Native American Studies at the University of Oklahoma, and her scholarship focuses on Indigenous women, Indigenous student experiences, and Indigenous Higher Education. She has worked with and served in leadership roles for Indigenous education organizations at the state and national levels. We are both mothers, aunties, sisters, daughters, and granddaughters, and we underscore that the connection to our research is not solely based on our academic and professional lives, but rather is part of the heartwork we do to ensure Indigenous representation in historically oppressive settings for the betterment of our communities.

In traditional\textsuperscript{1} Indigenous societies women played central and varied roles, and historically it was not uncommon for Indigenous women to hold spiritual, political, and economic power (Lajimodiere, 2011). While excluded from much of the colonial scholarship, we only need to turn to our own traditional stories and histories to understand the critical role that women played in many Indigenous societies.\textsuperscript{2} Indigenous scholars have noted that traditionally Indigenous women had considerable influence on religious, political, and economic matters, noting the egalitarian nature of tribal

\textsuperscript{1} When using the term traditional, we mean during the timeframe of pre-colonization and pre-contact.

\textsuperscript{2} An example of this can be further explored in Lilikala Kame'ekiwi's (2001) Na'Wa'Hine Kapu: Divine Hawaiian Women.
societies (Denetdale, 2006; Lajimodiere, 2011; Mihesuah, 1996, 2003; Risling Baldy, 2017). Denetdale (2006) notes that “in traditional societies, gender roles were often egalitarian, meaning that both males and females were crucial to the survival and perpetuation of culture and society” (p. 10).

The invasion of what is now known as North America and the establishment of settler colonial nation-states not only disrupted, but also sought to strategically erase traditional understandings of gender and the power of Indigenous women. The imposition of heteropatriarchy and heteropaternalism through settler colonialism involved the “enforcement of ‘proper’ gender roles” (Arvin, Tuck, & Morrill, 2013), which did not recognize the power or influence of Indigenous women. As Arvin, Tuck, & Morrill further note, “as settler nations sought to disappear Indigenous peoples' complex structures of government and kinship, the management of Indigenous peoples' gender roles and sexuality was also key in remaking Indigenous peoples into settler state citizens” (2013, p. 15). Thus, the exclusion of the critical roles of Indigenous women from the scholarship on Indigenous people should be viewed as an intentional act of our erasure and an extension of the settler colonial project. As a result, a number of Indigenous scholars have been critical of the exclusion of Indigenous women’s voices from the scholarship on Indigenous people (Cook-Lynn, 1996; Mihesuah, 2003; Tippeconnic-Fox, 2008), including our experiences and perspectives as they relate to leadership.

Today, Indigenous women continue to have central roles in our tribes and communities, and many have taken on important roles that mediate the linkages between tribal nations and settler society. Indigenous women are activists, educators, and scholars and have emerged as critical leaders, particularly in the realm of education. However, our deeper understanding of their roles in educational leadership, their journeys to leadership, their nuanced involvement in specific organizations or movements, and their unique values is severely lacking. Indigenous leadership perspectives have previously been explored amongst Indigenous students (Minthorn, 2014; Minthorn, Wanger, & Shotton, 2013; Williams, 2012), tribal college leaders (Johnson, 1997), and tribal leaders (Harris & Wasilewski, 1992), but research has not fully addressed Indigenous women’s
educational leadership perspectives. This article challenges these deficits and aims to increase understanding of contemporary Indigenous women and educational leadership through a qualitative study involving 15 Indigenous women educational leaders from across the United States (U.S.).

Prior to presenting our research, we begin with a brief overview of two key considerations regarding Indigenous women and educational leadership—a current snapshot of Indigenous women in postsecondary education and preliminary theories on Indigenous leadership. We then discuss our study highlighting cultural, social, and political factors that influence Indigenous women educational leaders, and finally, we conclude with recommendations for the cultivation of future Indigenous women leaders. As Indigenous women scholars, we contribute to critical scholarship on Indigenous women and educational leadership, and through our research, we offer Indigenous women’s own voices regarding their leadership development and experiences.

**Indigenous Women in Postsecondary Education**

When considering Indigenous women in education, we first underscore the importance of understanding the numbers of women accessing higher education and obtaining college/university degrees. Today, more Indigenous women are present in the academy than ever before. The number of Indigenous women enrolled in higher education institutions from Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) to historically white, four-year institutions is roughly double the representation of Native men (Knapp & Kelly-Reid, 2010). For example, the number of American Indian/Alaska

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3 TCUs are historically Indigenous-serving 2-year institutions in the U.S. offering Associate’s degrees; however, a number of TCUs now offer 4-year degrees (Bachelor’s) and some advanced degrees (Master’s). For more information on TCUs, see the American Indian Higher Education Consortium: [http://www.aihec.org](http://www.aihec.org).
Native women enrolled in higher education in the U.S. in 2012 was 104,300, compared to 68,600 men (NCES, 2015)\(^4\).

For the past 30 years, tribal communities and Indigenous scholars have observed the growing presence of Indigenous women in higher education, with a four-fold increase over that time period in the number of Indigenous women earning master’s, doctorate, and professional degrees in the U.S. (DeVoe, Darling-Churchill, & Snyder, 2008). Among the faculty ranks, data show that in 2015, Indigenous women comprised 51 percent (1,806) of the total Indigenous faculty in postsecondary education, a steady increase from 2005 where Indigenous women represented 47 percent (1,534) of the Indigenous faculty (McFarland et al., 2017). Demographics of Indigenous women in higher education vary depending on life circumstances. The age range for Native women in higher education is between 18 and 60 years old; some Native women will start their journey to college immediately after high school, while others wait until after they have raised their own families to pursue higher education (Institute for Higher Education Policy, 2007).

Compared to research on other populations in the U.S., the literature on Indigenous women in postsecondary education is sparse, but there are a few key pieces of scholarship that address Indigenous women specifically. White Shield (2009) conducted a qualitative study with eight Indigenous women in higher education who discussed their own educational journeys, and four clustered themes were identified regarding what contributed to the success of these women in higher education. White Shield identified: 1) spirituality, 2) journey perceived through traditional cultural stories, 3) traditional roles as identity and cultural strength, and 4) family loyalty as key components of Indigenous women’s educational journeys. The overarching finding from White Shield’s study was that the higher education journey for Indigenous women was grounded in love—love for

\(^4\) This article does not focus on Indigenous men in higher education/post-secondary opportunities, though there are significant concerns among Indigenous educational researchers and others regarding the participation of AI/AN males in the U.S. The authors have chosen to focus on the Indigenous women as our narratives are still not well-represented in the literature.
their communities and families. Commitment to community and the central role of traditional Indigenous cultural factors have also been identified in other research on Indigenous women in postsecondary education programs. Shotton (2008, 2018) explored the experiences of eight Indigenous women in doctoral education programs in the U.S. and found that reliance on spirituality, grounding and connection to their Indigenous cultures, and desires to give back were integral to their success, which we understand as their persistence and completion of their doctoral studies.

That element of commitment to community for Indigenous women is consistently a major motivator for postsecondary education, which is linked with Indigenous women’s desires to utilize their doctoral degrees to “give back” to their own and other Indigenous communities. Waterman and Lindley (2013), analyzed findings from two separate qualitative studies that investigated the journeys of 37 Haudenosaunee and 16 Northern Arapaho women college graduates. Through a familial cultural capital lens, they found that valuing community was a core yet unique strength for Indigenous women. They explain,

Familial cultural capital, as demonstrated by family and community support, is a part of community cultural wealth, the culture and traditions of Native communities—the glue—that binds a community. The women wanted to give back to their communities; they did not pursue education as a means to escape the reservation, but as a vehicle to strengthen their nations. The women valued their Native communities, cultures, and traditions as a distinct form of social capital, Native capital, which they relied on as they negotiated sometimes-hostile higher education environments. The point is that the women viewed their culture and communities as capital and used them as such, and through concepts of Native capital and resiliency to nation building. (2013, p. 155, our emphasis)

Likewise, Shotton (2018) found that reciprocity played a key role in the motivation of Indigenous women in doctoral education. In her study, reciprocity was framed as an act of nation building, where Native women viewed doctoral degrees as a means to give back to and better their tribal communities. Scholars have further built on these notions regarding
Indigenous women’s commitment to community and building community for Indigenous people in academia. In their discussion of sisterhood practices in the academy, Shotton, Tachine, Nelson, Minthorn, and Waterman (2018) point to the responsibility Indigenous women have to future generations of scholars. They explain,

A part of our relationship as sister scholars and responsibility as Indigenous scholars is being mindful of future generations. This means being intentional in how we create space for others who are coming behind us. We have a responsibility to continue to widen our circle as Indigenous sister scholars to welcome more Indigenous women scholars at all levels (p. 9).

When we examine the literature on Indigenous women in postsecondary education, we note Indigenous cultural values, the strength of Indigenous women, and their commitment to community as central to their experiences. We can observe that as they navigate higher education, including graduate programs, Indigenous women carry forward the teachings and values of their tribal communities and utilize these as both resources and inspiration to guide their journeys through education.

**Indigenous Leadership**

A second key consideration we offer regarding Indigenous women and educational leadership is the need to explore current and historical understandings of Indigenous leadership, particularly in relation to dominant definitions and modes of leadership that have been determined by Western/European societies. The general literature on leadership, leadership development, and educational leadership is expansive; however, as with postsecondary education research, the broader conventional scholarship fails to incorporate or adequately address Indigenous perspectives. Minthorn (2014) asserts that understanding the constructs of Indigenous leadership, which she argues is culturally-based and informed, is important in examining the experiences and perspectives of Indigenous leaders today.


Based on existing Indigenous leadership research, we can glean some important insight into Indigenous leadership values. For example, scholars have identified three major factors that shape Indigenous perspectives of leadership in the U.S.: cultural identity, community engagement and social responsibility, and leadership values. At the same time, as there are clearly distinct Indigenous cultures, languages, and geographies in the U.S., Fitzgerald (2002) addresses the challenge of developing a universal definition of Indigenous leadership, explaining that Indigenous leadership “may be exercised in multiple ways in a variety of settings” (p. 17). What is thus suggested is that there are two layers of Indigenous leadership to consider when we understand what it means to be an Indigenous leader: (1) traditional or community leadership that derives from an Indigenous worldview is an essential part of how we act and live; and (2) leadership that serves as advocacy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Both of these layers are intricately intertwined and guide how we enact and live out our leadership as Indigenous people.

Moreover, the community engagement and social responsibility components of Indigenous leadership are integral to Native American communities (Johnson, Benham & Van Alstine, 2003). Portman and Garrett (2005) propose that a foundational value of leadership for Native Americans is the holding of a shared vision and responsibility. Wise-Erickson (2003) examines team-based leadership and the values of Native American leadership within tribal communities and finds congruence between values and the need to create a community-based leadership model that integrates roles and values and the holistic natures of Indigenous communities with concepts of leadership. Since leadership research and subsequent understandings and practices are dominated by Western conceptualizations, we also argue that exploring how to create

\[5\] There are over 570 tribal nations in the U.S., for more information see the National Congress of American Indians: http://www.ncai.org/about-tribes

\[6\] Holistic references to the complete person and being. Meaning not just the professional and personal but on a deeper level the many pieces that make us who we are in our emotional, physical, social and cultural parts.
understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations with regard to notions of community engagement and social responsibility is essential.

When we further examine the extant scholarship on educational leadership, the absence of Indigenous voices is even more glaring. Indigenous women’s voices are left out altogether (or at best marginalized) despite the considerable scholarship on other populations of women and educational leadership (Shakeshaft, 1987; Adler et al., 1993; Ozga, 1993; Chase, 1995; Court, 1995, 1998; Limerick & Lingard, 1995; Grogan, 1996; Blackmore, 1999; Strachan, 1999; Coleman, 2001). Scholarship that does not address race, ethnicity, and culture is problematic, and Fitzgerald (2002) notes,

Women as educational leaders have been theorized about as if they are a homogenous group and considerations of circumstances such as ethnicity/social class/location and beliefs have been discounted. Or, at the very least, distinctions between and among women have collapsed in the attempt to provide a meta-narrative that describes and defines women’s experiences and practices as educational leaders (p. 10)

The dangers of homogenizing women educational leaders are varied, but one concern we and other scholars raise is that homogenizing processes privilege white women, whereby whiteness is taken for granted as normative (Adler et al., 1993; Fitzgerald, 2003). Fitzgerald urges us to be critical, challenging discussions of gender and educational leadership to ensure that the position of white women is not placed at the center of our theorizing and forcing Indigenous women further into the margins.

More recent scholarship has started to explore contemporary Indigenous women and leadership. In a study of nine Indigenous women leaders Lajimodiere (2011) identified characteristics and experiences of Indigenous women leaders, including their support networks (e.g. family and mentors), the importance of tribal culture and spirituality, survival skills that contributed to success, and having off-reservation (non-tribal land based) educational and career experiences. These themes spoke to what women leaders considered strengths and what motivated them to
keep moving forward in their work. Additionally, Lajimodiere identified themes that spoke to the resiliency of Indigenous women leaders that allows them to grow stronger through and in spite of difficult or challenging life experiences. Common threads across women’s experiences included poverty early in life, experiencing male gender bias, and gendered sabotaging where women are pitted against each other. It is important to note that to us, resiliency as referenced in Lajimodiere’s work refers to thriving and leading despite experiences that are meant to harm us and finding beauty in our journeys as Indigenous women leaders. We assert that what is integral to who we are as Indigenous women and what connects us is that we are resilient, principles that our own research speaks to, thus constructing an Indigenous community narrative that we uphold.

Building on the emerging, yet limited, scholarship on Indigenous women leaders, we continue to advocate for more research that privileges our voices and perspectives and that also serves to unsettle the normative status of white men and white women and their versions and experiences of leadership. The research we present takes up the call from Indigenous and ally scholars to continue to conduct research that honors the abilities of Indigenous women to tell our own stories and the power to define our own realities (Fitzgerald, 2002; Mihesuah, 2003).

**Influences of Indigenous Women in Educational Leadership**

*Methods*

Our study employed a qualitative design using a narrative approach that was guided by the framework of an “Indigenous Research Paradigm” (Wilson, 2008). Because we sought to understand the experiences and perspectives of Indigenous women with leadership roles and experiences, it was imperative to approach the research in a way that was established and

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7 For more information about this scholarship, see Dr. Lajimodiere’s scholarship and profile: [https://www.ndsu.edu/pubweb/morningstar/index.html](https://www.ndsu.edu/pubweb/morningstar/index.html)
guided by Indigenous values and the privileging of Indigenous women’s voices. Indigenous Research Paradigm is not only aligned with these approaches, but also requires them and posits that Indigenous knowledges, values, and lived experiences strengthen the research rather than function as what conventional researchers might consider bias. More importantly, according to Cree scholar Shawn Wilson, an Indigenous Research Paradigm approach is based in the supposition that the research is not being conducted on people or participants but with participants (Wilson, 2008). Such participatory and relational approaches to research speak back to positivist, extractive, and exploitative research practices.

The personal narratives of 15 Indigenous women leaders served as the data source for the aspects of the study we present here, and we were guided by a broad and open-ended inquiry to learn about the experiences of Indigenous women leaders. We were interested in the following questions:

1. How do Indigenous women approach leadership?
2. How do Indigenous women view themselves as leaders?
3. How do leadership roles impact Indigenous women?
4. In what context do Indigenous women serve in leadership?

Data was collected through one-to-one, in-depth interviews with Indigenous women leaders from across the United States, and interviews were conducted in a personal space chosen by the women where they felt comfortable (e.g. their homes or private offices). Another tenet of Indigenous Research Paradigms is the relationship built between researchers and participants, which effectively takes place through face-to-face in person contact; thus, we traveled to spend time with the women leaders and conducted interviews in a manner that allowed for their comfort as a mechanism of relationality. As Indigenous researchers, familiar with many of the women in this study, spending time reestablishing our connections and caring for our relationships with each woman was an important part of the research process.

The women represented in this study identify as Indigenous and represent various tribal nations from within the United States. They range
in age from their 30s to their 70s and serve in diverse leadership roles—from tribal government, education administration, and non-profit arenas, and are recognized in the broader local and national Native communities as leaders. In this particular article, we have pulled from findings focusing on Indigenous women leaders in educational settings specifically. These women include Tribal College and University presidents, university administrators, leaders of education organizations, and state Indian education leaders.

**Major themes: Cultural, political, and social factors**

Three major themes emerged from the findings of our study regarding the experiences of Indigenous women in educational leadership and factors that guided the development and practice of their leadership values, and we discuss them here. The themes are, (1) cultural factors; (2) political factors; and (3) social factors.

*Cultural Factors: Tribal communities, service, and humility*

The cultural factors that we identified were largely influenced by tribal identity and Indigenous women’s connections to their tribal communities. These factors were also strongly tied to their own interpretations of Indigenous values of service and humility.

Throughout the narratives, each woman identified connection to their tribal communities through identification of their clans, tribal names, and the relationships they practice within and through these affiliations. The women talked intimately about their clanship, connection to community, the values that were taught to them by their elders, and how they carry those teachings with them. One participant who serves as a Vice President at the university level said, “Don't compromise who you are. Remember—so that's why going back to my childhood, having been raised by my grandmother to have some of those teachings, it's almost like I was that little child again.” This woman starts off with stories of her childhood and the cultural ways of raising a child and how she also gave her oldest
child that same experience of being closely raised and guided by grandparents and around the tribal language and ways of being.

Furthermore, when recounting their professional backgrounds, each woman had worked with their own tribal communities to some degree or had found ways of working with other tribal communities. We do note that none of the educational women leaders worked within their own tribal communities at the time of this study, but each worked directly or indirectly with Native American students and communities. For example, serving in roles such as tribal liaisons for universities or executive directors of non-profit organizations that promote Indigenous education are ways these women are still advocating for tribal sovereignty, nation building, and Indigenous peoples’ access to culturally relevant education. Despite not working professionally in their own communities, these women spoke explicitly about their own tribal identities, which relates to seminal literature proposed by Indigenous scholars who argued that Indigenous women define themselves primarily by their tribal identities (Gunn Allen, 1992). So, we were not surprised that for the women in this study, those connections to their tribal communities, no matter where they found themselves, was an important part of the ways in which they understood their own leadership development.

Service was also viewed as central to the current leadership roles for the women participants. More than merely service, which in popular literature and scholarship predominantly refers to volunteerism, the life work of these women embodied culturally-based values of service to their people, for their tribal nations. Participants viewed their life work professionally as serving Indigenous peoples and all of Indian country\(^8\). One woman working in a Tribal College linked service to her leadership role as such:

\[^8\] Indian Country refers to tribal nations and urban Indigenous communities in the United States. It refers to the relational power and connections we find amongst Indigenous peoples within and across the United States.
I feel like this school is owed to our people. It is a sovereign right. It is a treaty right. If we let it fail, we fail our people. That's how strongly I feel, I feel that we owe it to our Indian people to work hard, work as hard as we can mind, body, and soul to get this school to a place where our Indian people will be proud of.

She is referencing the broader rights and responsibilities of this specific Tribal College to participate in its own commitment to fulfilling a treaty right to Indian education that was promised to many tribal nations in the United States that have binding political agreements with the United States government⁹. Her own leadership role is linked with her motivation in that she understands the work she is doing and the purpose the college is fulfilling is one that serves as a pathway to honoring those treaties and to build a sense of community through the students attending the Tribal College.

Other women discussed service in reference to cultural ceremonies, such as the Sun Dance, which is a religious ceremony of the Lakota peoples, and how that is sacred and a part of tribal traditions and teachings from elders. As one Lakota tribal affiliation and a CEO of a non-profit education organization participant stated, “He [Lakota linguist and activist] taught me that people do the best they can. You're on a path. You do the best you can.” What we take away from these participants is that service, as a culturally-defined term, is a value embedded in how and why Indigenous women educators engage professional roles in leadership.

We must note that initially, at the start of interviews, we observed that it was hard for some women to identify themselves as “leaders,” even though their positions and roles were specifically labeled as leadership. When asking them about their journeys through education and into

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leadership, each woman was willing to share, but they were very humble in discussing their specific contributions and roles. For instance, one of the women who worked as a statewide Indian education Director said, “In terms of leadership, I don’t know if it was something that I sought—that I cannot stand to sit by and see mediocrity, and when there’s work to do, you just roll your sleeves up and you just pitch in, you just do what needs to be done.” For her, leadership was not about the status of gaining a leadership role and the external recognition that comes with these roles; rather, she was concerned with doing the work for the sake of the organization and its mission for students, communities, schools, and so forth, without worrying about receiving credit for her contributions. This concern for the work paired with what we interpreted as humility emerged from multiple narratives whereby Indigenous women acknowledged that leadership was not defined by the individual but rather the group or team. As was explained by the same Indian education Director, “I could not have done anything that I’ve done without a team... the collective wisdom of a group was just phenomenal... I think that speaks to the heart of leadership. You’re not a leader unless you’ve got people working with you. It’s not all about one person.”

Furthermore, part of thinking about what constitutes the team, the group, communities, and others is considering future generations, and cultural factors that influence Indigenous women educational leaders speak to their sense of responsibility to not only their families, communities, their professional affiliations, but also most importantly, future generations of women leaders. As one woman working as a Director of a Native American student center states, “We have responsibilities to young girls, who whether we like it or not, we are role modeling some things for them. You got to think about what messages you are sending to them because they are very impressionable.”

*Political Factors: Leadership potential*

Indigenous women’s experiences in educational leadership also implied intersections with political factors. While Lajimodiere's work
identified political factors (i.e. sabotage from other Indigenous leaders or tribal politics, men and women) as a negative factor for Indigenous women leaders (2011), the political factors described by our participants presented a departure from this finding and in their current roles. Political factors were actually discussed in generally positive terms and centered on interactions with influential individuals and validation received from those individuals that recognized Indigenous women’s potential as leaders.

This recognition of their potential as leaders often came from key individuals in administrative positions, from mentors, or from community members and community leaders. Many of the participants in our study did not initially or actively seek out leadership positions; rather, they were often asked to step into leadership roles by others who recognized their potential. One of the women serving as a university administrator explained that she did not apply for her current leadership role, but instead, she was appointed by the president of her institution and based on the recommendations of key university and community members. The recognition by others was often the result of their demonstrated work ethic, previous work, and personal qualities of these Indigenous women. Another university administrator participant added that part of her development was due to other people in influential positions who had helped to mentor her: “I’ve been very fortunate to be mentored by individuals at the university. For whatever reason, [they] took me under their wing, and I don’t know if it was because they saw something in me, but folks who were fairly influential, VPs [Vice Presidents] and associate VPs, who sort of took me under their wing.”

Thus, recognition of Indigenous women’s leadership potential by others and their subsequent mentorship by influential individuals holding institutional political power (and not necessarily always other Indigenous peoples in those roles) was key in the pathways to leadership for these women. What we deem as this political factor was also tied to what the women described as opportunities presented to them throughout their educational, professional, and leadership journeys. The opportunities came in the form of the ability to pursue graduate education, interact with
influential individuals, and take on additional learning roles and positions that would lead to their current leadership roles.

**Social Factors: Family and the power of encouragement**

Social factors in this study refer to interactions and roles within family structures, as well as the network of Indigenous women's relationships that serve to support and encourage Indigenous women in leadership.

The role of family in Indigenous communities is important in shaping individuals (e.g. socialization) and keeping strong ties to family members—immediate and extended—was held as sacred by the women. Indigenous women leaders spoke candidly about their parents, brothers, sisters, children, and grandchildren. The women discussed the special places that their family members had in their lives, sometimes mentioning one side of the family explicitly (e.g. father's or mother's side of the family). Of the educational leaders we worked with, there were single mothers and those who had attended college while raising their child(ren). The notion of family was held intimately by these women as they talked about their own evolving family structures. For example, in addition to being single mothers, some were the oldest child in their families—which meant leading the care for siblings or relatives—and some had needed to assume leadership roles within their own families after the passing of their parents.

Familial bonds and responsibilities were often discussed in depth and observed during interviews. For example, one of the women serving as a Tribal College President was taking care of her grandchild while her niece attended class on campus. She stated, “Value family and...giving them the time...it’s okay if you need to take care of your mom, your dad; within reason, we will understand.” Our participants were conscientious of balancing familial roles in combination with their leadership roles. The Indigenous women leaders often spoke of the influence their own family members had on them in their early years and then spoke of the influence they had in their current leadership role. This included their connection to their grandparents, parents, brothers or sisters as influencing who they are.
They also spoke to how they navigated being parents or grandparents by either including their children in the various roles or that their children were their motivation. They also spoke of a futurity consciousness in understanding what they are building will have an impact on future generations.

Encouragement was another recurrent theme that emerged from the narratives. Encouragement was received from family, supervisors, administrators, and community members. Participants also explained that they were initially encouraged to pursue graduate education, to apply for key positions that would lead to their leadership roles, and received general encouragement throughout their lives. This was particularly salient in their educational journeys. For many of the women, the decision to pursue graduate education was the result of encouragement from key individuals. For example, for one woman working as a Vice President at a university the decision to begin a graduate program was the result of her boss encouraging her to do so, despite her initial hesitation and fear that graduate work might be too difficult. Therefore, we found that encouragement speaks critically to the role of mentors/potential mentors who not only recognize Indigenous women’s potential, but also actively find ways to support these women.

Another woman added, “That whole experience of working on my doctorate opened up a lot for me. At that time working on my doctorate, I was really blessed because there were people around me who really believed in me.” Receiving strong encouragement from family and community members was especially meaningful. Another Indigenous woman leader shared that her family’s encouragement was critical when she was in college: “I have a large extended family that have been to college, so I sort of had people tell me, ‘This is what you want to do,’” and encourage me along the way.” She was speaking to the fact that she was a second-generation college student, so the expectation was that she was going to college because many in her extended family had gone so she had the modeling and insights on the path to get there. Perhaps most importantly overall, the encouragement that Indigenous women leaders in education received from family, mentors, and community members throughout their experiences
helped to not only initiate their pathways and to sustain them through their journeys, but also to give them the necessary confidence to take on inevitable and new challenges.

**Recommendations for Future Indigenous Women Educational Leaders**

*What Indigenous women leaders teach us*

We have argued that the experiences and perspectives of Indigenous women in leadership positions has not been fully extrapolated—whether at local or at broader levels that seek to understand common themes across different Indigenous nations and Indigenous women’s experiences. Over the last few decades, however, Indigenous women have increasingly emerged as prominent leaders in education, serving as TCU presidents, administrative leaders at both Indigenous-serving and non-Indigenous higher education institutions, as state and national government education leaders, and leaders of local, regional, national, and international educational organizations. However, the role of tribal cultures in their development and how we can inform broader understandings of leadership and women’s roles remains incomplete in the research. This study provides insight into these questions, and what we present may help us to better understand Indigenous women in educational leadership with implications for future research and current practices to support and guide more Indigenous women in leadership roles.

Our findings clearly indicate that leadership is uniquely conceptualized from Indigenous women’s perspectives. These findings are relatively consistent with other research that indicates that leadership practices and underlying values are perceived differently from western norms when viewed through an Indigenous lens (Minthorn, 2014; Williams, 2012). Moreover, we have demonstrated that leadership is altogether not approached from an individual perspective by our participants; rather, leadership is distinctly tied to community, family, and service.
The narratives of the Indigenous women in this study expand our understanding of culturally-based references to service and commitment to community and indicate connections between these and mentorship, encouragement, and support for Indigenous women. The women in this study pointed towards mentorship as key in their development as leaders and acknowledged that they had benefited from their mentors, and as a result, felt a responsibility to mentor others. Mentoring was an intentional act, and although Indigenous women did not seek out leadership roles, they actively sought to mentor other Indigenous people, especially other Indigenous women. This desire goes beyond giving back and is related to the responsibility of creating paths that will contribute to the greater and future good of tribal communities, and we believe this philosophy has important implications for future research and practice.

Future research should further explore mentoring relationships—their dynamics, practices, visions, and outcomes—for Indigenous women. The women in this study indicated that their mentors were men and women, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. Further examination is needed to understand how these mentoring relationships as they relate to leadership development and experiences are built and nurtured and the specific roles they play for Indigenous women. Memorable mentoring for Indigenous women occurs in higher education settings, so understanding how we as educators develop intentional mentoring opportunities for Indigenous women is critical.

We believe our work also has implications for how we support and develop Indigenous women leaders in higher education, which includes addressing the need for increased representation of Indigenous role models in institutions of higher education and establishing and maintaining connections between higher education and Indigenous leaders outside of colleges and universities. Finally, we must deconstruct Western notions of pathways to leadership and definitions of leadership. Our findings demonstrate that leadership extends beyond the individual in ways closely tied to Indigenous values, and we believe that there is a place for these values in multiple Indigenous and non-Indigenous settings. The women in this study humbly spoke of leadership as “choosing” them. While we did not
pursue further explanation regarding why women did not view themselves as leaders, and it is likely that this is related to values of humility that are consistent with many tribal values and that in tribal communities, individuals are often chosen to be leaders because of qualities that they possess—ultimately decided by the broader community. Further exploration of these concept is necessary to better understand leadership and its development over time.

*Human rights education and Indigenous women leaders*

We see a strong fit between our research on Indigenous women in leadership and education and human rights education (including human rights principles). Indigenous women leaders like the women in our study have dedicated their lives to improving conditions for their people and often more broadly to the Indigenous/Native American communities their institutions or organizations serve.

Access to quality education is a basic human right for Indigenous peoples as referenced in Article 14 of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP)\(^{10}\), stating,

1. Indigenous peoples have the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning.
2. Indigenous individuals, particularly children, have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State without discrimination.
3. States shall, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, take effective measures, in order for indigenous individuals, particularly children, including those living outside their communities, to have access, when possible, to an education in their own culture and provided in their own language.

\(^{10}\) See:
We take these articles a step further and believe that the underlying requirement within UNDRIP points to education that is culturally relevant and accessible for all Indigenous peoples, including adult learners. This is the work that each of these Indigenous women educational leaders engage on a daily basis. In the U.S., federal Indian law based on treaties with tribal nations should ideally provide the legal context that includes how we view human rights within the United States. However, the federal government-tribal nation relationship remains complex and tenuous for several reasons, including political and judicial administrative leadership processes. This is true in other Indigenous contexts worldwide. Thus, instruments that are based on Indigenous consultation, like the UN Declaration, provide the international landscape to help us better understand how rights have been constructed, violated, and supports the local and global need for addressing Indigenous rights in relation to our nation states, especially with regards to education. Most importantly, from an epistemological standpoint, we must recognize the impact that Indigenous women educational leaders have made within the global landscape of Indigenous education, which speaks to the roles that Indigenous women have held since time immemorial; Indigenous women remain the backbone of Indigenous communities.

Conclusion

The voices of contemporary Indigenous women have long been excluded from education and leadership research and scholarship. However, in a time when Indigenous women comprise approximately 60% of the college student population (at both the undergraduate and graduate levels), it is safe to assume that Indigenous women will continue to play important roles in the leadership of Indigenous people. It is imperative that we gain a better understanding of the experiences of Indigenous women in their leadership journeys so that we can work to better serve this overlooked population and prepare future generations of Indigenous educational leaders. We assert that studies like ours provide important insight into how we understand leadership from Indigenous women’s perspectives and across tribal nations, and we encourage other researchers
to take critical first steps in addressing how we honor the experiences of Indigenous women while supporting the development of future Indigenous women leaders in education.
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Tuki Walmikuna¹: Quechua Women, Domestic Labor, and Life Hopes in Peru

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Abstract

This article discusses Quechua women, labor, and educational opportunity in Peru and explores the relationship between coloniality and violence, Quechua racialized labor and Spanish exploitation, and unequal access to formal schooling, which have impacted generations of Quechua women. Drawing from a larger narrative project with three generations of Quechua grandmothers, daughters, and granddaughters from the Andean highlands of Peru, the article revisits the Agrarian Reform Law era, foundational and

¹ The title of this article utilizes the Wanka Quechua variety found in Junín. Walmikuna (warmikuna in Quechua Collao) refers to women, and tuki is beautiful. The Cusco variety of Quechua is also used in this article as the project I describe works with both Quechua language varieties.

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gendered research gaining prominence through the 1970s, and offers insights regarding life hopes gained through newly emerging testimonies.

Keywords: Quechua women; Indigenous women and domestic labor; Quechua life stories

Introduction

I do not tell my story so people tell me, “you poor thing, look at everything that has happened to you,” but because the story of my childhood and youth is the story of many Indigenous women of my land. Many women, upon reading my story, will say, “That happened to me as well.” That is the reality of Indigenous women in Peru. (Supa Huamán, 2008, p. 21)

At the age of 14, my mother traveled from her Wanka Quechua agrarian community in the Andean highlands of Peru to work in the coastal capital of Lima as a domestica, domestic servant, which in the 1950s was the civil term for Indigenous girl children working for generally well-to-do families. Employers called the girls cholas, a derogatory term referring to highland indios (Indians, also derogatory) and la muchacha (the girl) or mi muchacha (my girl), reflecting their race and class and the subjects they became upon entry into employment. Living in the homes of their employers, if they were paid, room and board were deducted from a miniscule salary, and any remaining money was perhaps divided between savings and remittances sent home to their families in rural Indigenous communities. Formal schooling was not an option as they worked long hours, and Indigenous girls came to the city for servitude, not to enjoy the privilege of an education. In addition, out-of-school socialization as Quechua females in their communities was curtailed as they could rarely afford to travel home to the highlands. Thus, participation in Andean cultural practices like religious ceremonies and daily interactions with loved ones became limited. In the cities, they faced discrimination as markers of their Indigeneity, from their physiological features to clothing to Quechua language, popularly symbolized the ‘uncivilized’ and
‘underdeveloped.’ Furthermore, despite living in the city, they were expected to remain silent and hidden, to maintain their social status well beneath that of their employers who were members of the dominant Peruvian classes of Spanish descendants and new generations of other European immigrants.

I begin this article with former Peruvian Congresswoman Hilaria Supa Huamán’s opening lines from her autobiography, Threads of My Life, because she, like my mother is a member of the grandmother generation who left her community for a major city—in her case, Arequipa—in order to work as a servant where she also experienced racism and multiple forms of abuse that were internalized and that continue to require physical and emotional healing. Today, as a daughter and an educational researcher, I find myself asking how these things transpired and why the systematic oppression of rural Quechua women is ongoing. I ask not disparagingly but with intent of understanding with Quechua women of different generations, how coloniality functions in relation to our labor and our dreams and what have been our responses over time as a collective. I also engage these questions in order to resist apathy and defeat because testimonies of relentless exploitation of Indigenous women are significant to social change; Indigenous women’s economic, social, and cultural contributions and losses in relation to family, community, and the state are rooted in stories that matter.

More specifically, this article examines the relationship between coloniality and violence against women, Quechua racialized labor\(^3\) and

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\(^2\) Supa Huamán describes being brought to Arequipa by a relative to work in the homes of extended family members under the guise of formal schooling provisioned in exchange for household duties. This practice continues today, it is uncertain in the words of this class of employers if this is class status oriented or due to need for labor or both. Quechua girls can be forced to work such long hours under harsh conditions, they are left vulnerable, and the promise of schooling is not fulfilled.

\(^3\) I do not explore the experiences of Afro-Peruvians who were brought as slaves by the Spanish. However, it is critical that their histories in Peru in relation to any of the appropriate themes raised in this article must also be recognized and brought to the fore by Afro-Peruvian researchers, and there is archival research and historical memory that
Spanish urban oligarchic exploitation, and unequal access to formal schooling, which have collectively impacted generations of Quechua women. I discuss research focusing on the Peruvian colonial era, revolutionary government ideological shifts in the 1960s, and foundational and gendered research on Indigenous women that remains impactful today4 (Ames, 2013; Deere, 1977, 1981, 1990; Deere & Leon, 2001; Silverblatt, 1980, 1987, 1988, 2004, 2006; Bourque & Warren, 1976, 1981). I draw from a larger Quechua community-based participatory narrative project in development with three generations of grandmothers, daughters, and granddaughters from the Andean regions of Junín and Cusco Peru. In particular, I highlight the grandmother generation who encountered limited life trajectories—being sent to work on the hacienda, working as servants in cities, or remaining in their agrarian communities to help their families. None of these options provisioned formal education; at best, girls who remained in their communities were offered some primary schooling opportunities. While the larger project explores all three trajectories and the ways in which Quechua women have navigated life possibilities, this article focuses on Quechua domesticas and offers insights regarding life hopes gained through emerging testimonies.

**Historical trajectories of gendered colonial violence**

When they arrived in the town of Pampacona, the Spaniards tried to force themselves on my aunt. But she did not want to submit and defended herself bravely; she even rubbed her body with foul and demeaning substances so that those who might want to go to her would be disgusted. She defended herself in this way many times along the road to the town of Tambo. That is where the Spaniards—

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4 In this particular article I do not comprehensively describe other scholarship but wish to acknowledge the works of Aikman (1999, 2002), Aikman & Rao (2012), and Nash (1983, 1986, 1993, 2005), which continue to inform my thinking about the issues I outline.
who were very angry with her, partly because she would not consent to what they wanted to do and partly because she was my father’s sister—roasted her alive. She paid dearly for her chastity. She said these words when they roasted her: “So you take your anger out on a woman? What more could a woman like me do? Hurry up and finish me off. The deed expresses your nature in every way.” (Cusi Yupanqui, 2006, p. 135)

The experiences of modern Quechua women must be understood in relation to major watersheds in Peruvian history, including the Law of Agrarian Reform of the late 1960s, as well as attempts since then to address racial inequities in Peru. However, Quechua women’s stories more deeply speak to the ongoing process of European coloniality marked by violence against Indigenous women, as described above by Titu Cusi Yupanqui’s recollection in 1570 of the attempted rape and subsequent murder of his aunt, Cura Ocllo, during the first decades of Spanish colonization.

The Spanish colonial project in Peru was focused on land—theft of accessible tracts of Indigenous territories, extraction of natural resources like gold and silver, and exploitation of Indigenous labor to work the land. Quechua people were “systemically pauperized” (Escobar, 1995); meaning, the creation of the idea and reality of what Quechua people lack materially (i.e. Quechua poverty3) is an invention of colonialism and the modern pathways that its processes created, including the global development agenda beginning post-World War II. Since the establishment of Spanish

3 I am cautious with the term poverty as the term is a Spanish invention that refers primarily to lack of financial resources. However, Quechua language offers insight regarding the meaning of “poor,” which contains both philosophies languaged in Quechua and contemporary Quechua understandings of the term; meaning, to be poor in Quechua language, or waqcha, can refer to the emotional condition of an individual, which requires an emotional response such as sympathy and compassion from others. However, Quechua people are well aware that poverty can refer to lack of material possessions. Thus, I utilize the terms poverty and wealth carefully in order to expand their use beyond Western and dominant notions of capital. For example, Anthony Bebbington’s work (1999) offers a framework for considering the notion of “assets” or what people have (or should/could have access to), including human capital, social capital, produced capital, natural capital, and cultural capital.
coloniality in Peru in the 1530s, Indigenous peoples have faced numerous environmental, economic, political, social, and epistemic challenges, all of which have impacted the ways in which women have been shaped through the colonial imagination. Thus, understanding the pervasive trajectories of coloniality across its multiple spheres—control of economy, authority, gender and sexuality, knowledge and subjectivity (Tlostanova & Mignolo, 2012)—provides an opportunity to interrogate its characteristics, patterns, and repercussions. As an explanatory theoretical framework, coloniality reveals how Quechua women’s labor, rights, bodies, and intellects have been controlled and restricted for the purposes of maintaining colonial and state power.

At the same time, recognizing the conditions of coloniality urge Quechua people to recognize alternatives and create spaces where Quechua women’s responses can be articulated and nurtured. The work of Irene Silverblatt is crucial in this regard, and for over three decades, she has argued that racialization and bureaucratic rule shaped the violent Peruvian state from the Viceroyalty through today, and moreover that essential colonialism and what Hannah Arendt observed as the ambitions of a so-called master race have made the modern world (Silverblatt, 2004). Through archival research, Silverblatt has traced Andean cosmology and women’s roles in Quechua philosophies of the universe and cultural practices, described how the Spanish shaped problematic ideas of Quechua women that became laws and societal norms, and she has proposed how and where Quechua women occupied spaces of resistance. While this article does not focus on Quechua cultural practices or worldviews, nor do I

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Silverblatt offers a vital discussion of Quechua women’s resistances by outlining the thesis that the puna (remote highland regions largely historically considered empty and undesirable by the Spanish) has been maintained as a space of women’s freedom and sanctuary. Her work examines the transference of Spanish Inquisition ideologies and enactments in Peru and the Spanish fears of what they viewed as evil in the so-called New World where Quechua women who were integral in ancestral pre-columbian religious practices were conveniently labeled as witches by the Spanish. However, rather than reproduce a narrative of Quechua women as victims, she offers that they reclaimed and held their own power through maintenance of Quechua cultural practices in places the Spanish would not venture, such as the puna.
delve into colonial period narratives by (all male) Quechua chroniclers, Silverblatt’s description of Spanish economy is central to contemporary understanding the construction of Quechua labor. She wrote that under the new economic system, goods were produced for their exchange value on the European market and that no mechanisms existed to regulate labor or the exploitation of natural resources—’Both existed only as a means to accumulate wealth for the Spanish authorities, merchants, clerics, and the coffers of Spain. A Spaniard noted in the seventeenth century that ‘what is carried to Spain from Peru is not silver but blood and sweat of Indians’ (Silverblatt, 1980, p. 165).

However, while coloniality and its strategies for dealing with Quechua women and men provide a framework for examining Indigenous oppression and responses, as Quechua women researchers, we cannot reasonably perpetuate a binary of colonality as “bad” and Quechua people as “victims.” The homelands of Quechua people stretch across six diverse countries (Colombia, Ecuador, Peru, Bolivia, Chile, and Argentina) and their landscapes. We know from historical records that bands of Quechua peoples warred with each other—my own heritage is divided between Cusco Quechua, Huancavelica Chanka, and Junín Wanka people, for example. We also know that the Tawantinsuyu (“four quarters” of the Inka collective) was political and hierarchical with factions who allied themselves with the Spanish, until they too were eventually betrayed. Women’s roles across these moments and geographic spaces and political, cultural, religious, and social domains are multifaceted. In order to understand who we were, who we are, and who we are becoming, as well as what has been institutionalized through colonality such that we cannot tell the difference constitutes a line of critical questioning that Indigenous scholars must consider. June Lorenzo (2017) is doing just that through her

7 For example, in Titu Cusi Yupanqui’s narrative, he recalls his own father, Manco Inca, bargaining with the Spanish by using women and in order to secure his own freedom in exchange for giving the Spanish an Inka woman of high rank. The Spanish political practice was to force marriage with a high-ranking Inka woman in order to secure strategic alliances. Note that the term Inka was designated for the nobility and ruling individuals of Quechua people in the Tawantinsuyu.
research, which examines New Mexico Pueblo Indian women in chthonic law and Spanish common law—and she challenges us to ask what, really, is ours, reminding Indigenous women researchers that we need historical, archival, narrative, ethnographic, and statistical methods in order to find answers.

Survivors\(^8\): Hacienda and urban servitude

This article discusses domesticas in urban settings, but the experiences of the grandmother generation in haciendas is part of our larger project and worth mentioning here, particularly as the hacienda system is bookended by Spanish colonization in the 1530s and Agrarian Reform in the 1960s and symbolizes the continuity of European coloniality in Peru. Haciendas are rooted in the colonial Spanish institution of the encomienda, decreed by Phillip II, which parcelized Indigenous and unused lands\(^9\) and everything on those lands to Spanish colonizers. Quechua people were forced to work the land and pay tribute to the Spanish landowners, producing the legacy of landless peasants\(^10\) (Faron, 1966), not to mention

\(^8\) I utilize the term survivors here because in initial conversation and planning stages with women collaborating in this project, they have described their experiences using wording like, “I survived that time,” and their relatives will also relate that there are still “surviving women” from those decades (e.g. pre-Agrarian Reform).

\(^9\) The notion of unused or under-utilized lands and resources is persistent in Peruvian national political discourse today—these terms have come to essentially mean (in my interpretation), lands that are not exploited for national economic gain (e.g. extractive industry). Spanish colonial officials could justify taking lands then as much as Peruvian government officials can justify this today by claiming that Indigenous peoples are wasting potential resources because they are not used towards the greater national and global development agenda. For more information on this see Sumida Huaman, 2018.

\(^10\) I put this term in quotes because although “peasant” is used widely by anthropologists and historians who can trace its origins as a class constructed through Spanish colonization (and in relation to and mimicking the European peasant classes), I find the term cringe-worthy. Latin Americanists may disagree with my cringing, especially as the Spanish word campesino (for one who works the land) has come to be translated as peasant. I do not deny that there is a significant history to the term in Spanish, which has been claimed, utilized, and reformulated as one of empowerment in different Latin
separating Indigenous peoples from their identities through land-based cultural connections (Stavig, 2000). Starting in the 17th century, these lands and others subjected to Spanish policy (e.g. repartimiento and reducciones) largely transitioned to haciendas maintained by Spanish ownership. Driven by economic gain, haciendas were characterized by production—from crops of sugar cane, corn, and potato to livestock. Labor conditions were harsh, but for landless Quechua, there was no choice but to work for the hacendado, hacienda owners, in order to eat. This system continued until the short-lived revolutionary Velasco government from the 1960s to the 1970s, which saw the dissolution of the hacienda system and the return of land “for those who work it” (Cant, 2012) through the Law of Agrarian Reform (Decree Law No. 17716). Agrarian reform represented transition from hacienda land ownership to state acknowledgement of exploitation of Indigenous labor, marginalization, and disenfranchisement. However, the hacienda era still holds painful memories for Quechua people. As Román Vizcarra explained, “The landlord ceased to possess all the land; but he continued to live in our subconscious mind. The fear also remained: fear of walking, fear of thinking, fear of deciding, fear of living, fear of divine punishment, fear of dreaming, fear of fear itself” (2008, p. 17).

Román is co-founder of a small school serving Quechua children in the Cusco region. Together with his family and the school association comprised of additional local families, they have worked to address traumas endured by surviving members of the grandmother generation now in their 60s, 70s, and 80s, many of whom worked as children in the haciendas. In an American contexts. However, my concern is with the term as an English translation, which connotes an image of a poor farmer. Peasant is not something people strive to be, in other words. The persistence of these terms and insistence of their usage impacts Indigenous peoples’ abilities to call themselves how they see themselves or how they wish to be seen. For example, Quechua people were ancestrally known as many things we might label today in English as farmers, weavers, healers, leaders, lawmakers, and engineers. Working the land, aylpapana, which has tremendous cultural, emotional, and spiritual significance for Quechua people was not considered an act of the poor or uneducated. Thus this term, like others that have been assigned to Quechua and Indigenous peoples could be reconceptualized along Indigenous terms.
conversation with Román during a visit to work with their school, he reminded me of the atrocities committed by the hacendados who would ritualistically sexually assault Quechua girls. In response to what they were hearing, families like Román’s had been devising strategies of healing, including educational development through schooling—building spaces where new generations, such as the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of these women, could thrive as Quechua people. I am moved by their work, and part of this project is motivated by the question of what else Quechua women and their children and grandchildren are doing to (re)build their lives. As asserted in other writing, if the colonial agenda represents the death project (Suárez-Krabbe, 2012), where and how do Indigenous community-based initiatives like renewed visions of education constitute the life project (Tom, Sumida Huaman, & McCarty, 2019).

There is a good history of Indigenous counternarratives in Peru. From the 1920s to the 1930s, Peru saw the rise of indigenismo, a social and literary movement by intellectuals to bring attention to the marginalization of Indigenous peoples. Writers like José María Arguedas, an Andean raised by Quechua people, argued that recognizing the cultural, spiritual, linguistic, and intellectual contributions of Indigenous communities was essential to the formulation of Peruvian nationhood. His writing described the confluence and tension of Quechua and Spanish societies and values coming together by force. He wrote of violence, subjugation, despair, and isolation, and came to the conclusion that Quechua people would never see justice under colonizers. We would have to find our own sanctuaries and build justice ourselves.

One of Arguedas’s most acclaimed works, Agua, published in 1935, was a collection of short stories, including “Warma Kuyay,” featuring characters surrounding the hacienda. Arguedas tells the story of a boy who falls in love with Justina, a Quechua girl working on the hacienda. In the

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*I use the word strategies here deliberately in that if we acknowledge the strategies of coloniality (e.g. genocide, slavery, rape) then we must also acknowledge the strategic responses to coloniality that constitute decolonizing efforts of addressing the fears that Román mentions (i.e. fear of living) and creating distance between the colonizer and those colonized for purposes of healing in Indigenous communities.*
story, Justina is raped by the *hacendado*. Although “Warma Kuyay” explicitly names sexual violence enacted upon Quechua girls and women in these spaces, there is less literature and scholarly research produced during that time by Quechua and other Indigenous women writing about their own lives and histories. In other words, no matter how eloquently told, violence against Quechua women was narrated by men. At the same time, Arguedas’s work is significant as he described Indigenous experiences during the colonial transition to modern governance in Peru; as a man, he spoke against Spanish landholding male power across Peruvian society, from the rural community to the city, leaving behind a legacy for us as Indigenous researchers to cross regional and disciplinary boundaries in order to understand the impacts of that power.

There is important groundwork. As an institution, historian Alberto Fores Galindo wrote that servitude in Lima is a mechanism of the reproduction of colonialism: “Domestic servant and cholo were synonymous, but even worse, cholo was a disparaging term, at times equivalent to a dog, always a person of low social condition, the offspring of a defeated and inferior race condemned to subjection. At least, that’s what their masters believed” (2010, p. 151). He pointed out that conflation of Indigenous peoples’ identities as their labor remained embedded in Peruvian society—cholo/chola are defined by service to the dominant classes. These perceptions suppress Quechua people’s articulations of what they desire for themselves, which must include women’s conceptualizations of a good life, good work, and educational hopes and how these interface with family, community, and the state.

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12 Flores Galindo’s delineation of servants as specialized/skilled or unspecialized (e.g. manual labor) is helpful. The wealthiest families tended to have specialized servants, but middle-class and even lower class families would take on servants as a marker of social status. However, his analysis of gender in domestic servitude was limited, mainly noting the prevalence of Indigenous boys who would frequently run away. Ostensibly, domestic servitude in Lima would be marked by Peru’s major 1960s revolutionary political shift. How this impacted gender in multiple places is an important question as hard *hacienda* labor and mining would continue to preference male physical labor, and household domestic labor could be fulfilled by children.
Carmen Diana Deere (1977, 1981, 1990) and Kay Warren and Susan Bourque (1976, 1981) have provided critical responses through explorations of women’s roles in economic development linked with haciendas, extractive industry, and household labor. Deere’s essential extensive work in the Cajamarca region explored men’s and women’s economic and household relationships and theorized that the hacienda created an especially exploitative division of labor for women as owners had specific duties for men in the fields while women’s work was undefined and vast—from household services to gardening and caring for livestock (1977). She argued that hacienda policies ultimately devalued women’s work in order to maintain and increase exploitation of entire families. While her later work has demonstrated that conditions could shift, especially due to new economic opportunities for women, she maintained that economic parity alone was not capable of correcting injustices of the past or making rectifications to reverse the course of systematic and unequal gender relations impacting Indigenous peoples. Taking up Deere’s work, Bourque and Warren (1976, 1981) explored class, ethnicity, and gender in shaping Andean women’s and men’s lives. Furthermore, their mention of education in their broader study of women’s subordination and economic development focused on poor schooling opportunities that resulted in Andean women’s migration from rural to urban areas.

While I examine seminal literature, I do not utilize the term feminist in order to label this project, its research development, project collaborators, or the narratives that emerge. While feminist research methodologies are instrumental in women’s movements worldwide, Indigenous collaborators in this project need the opportunity to determine for themselves which ideologies they will embrace and how they will refer to themselves. For example, in preliminary conversations, I have not heard the term feminist in Spanish or alluded to in Quechua. As an Indigenous CBPR project, we collectively explore these issues and the range of intellectual options available to us, and a key step is identifying how Quechua women will utilize Quechua language, worldviews, stories, and values in this process. Thus, this approach of openness regarding gendered constructions of ideologies allows for the possibilities in heteroglossic considerations of central themes of exploration in research (Hatala, Desjardins, & Bombay, 2016).

It is important to recognize that education in Quechua terms is not solely formal schooling but also refers to the learning of (cultural) values and out-of-school learning
Peruvian scholar Patricia Ames’s research is seminal in this regard (2013). Through a longitudinal study involving Quechua students and their mothers, she examined gender and educational inequities that she concluded as resulting in three major paradoxes—motherhood, ethnicity, and rurality. She argued that advancing schooling opportunities for new generations of Quechua girls required deeper understanding of the generational shifts between them and their mothers and the ways in which girls were navigating their life possibilities. For example, new generations of Quechua girls were rejecting conventional norms of marriage, pregnancy, and motherhood while also negotiating ways to continue reciprocity in families; girls were also rejecting gender and ethnic stereotypes while also selectively renouncing or disguising their ethnic identities; and girls were recognizing the limitations of the poor quality of rural schooling and actively seeking other opportunities that would lead to advancing their schooling on to university. Perhaps most alarming for rural communities, Quechua girls and their families were concluding that reliance on an agricultural life was fast becoming insufficient to support a family. Today, this is made ever more apparent by environmental challenges in the Andes like glacier recession, environmental contamination and pollution, and climate change.

Real and perceived limitations of schooling for Quechua girls and women are critical to canvass especially with regard to the state’s ability to provision education as a right for its people. At the same time, the limitations of this right, notwithstanding access, are abundant, which complicate the discourse of rights for Indigenous peoples: Borque and Warren (1981) concluded that educational opportunity and achievement could not guarantee equity, and that the ideological content of education, experiences. Additionally, there are good efforts to expand our general understanding of education as encompassing multiple central processes for individual, national, and global development. Broadly speaking, McGrath (2018) has outlined that education serves to contribute to the psychological, social, and cultural development of individuals and societies—education is investment in the future; fundamental right; a means of building peace and recovering from conflict; building (national and other forms of) identity and resistances thereto; building criticality and resistance to injustice (pp. 2-4).
assumptions and stereotypes that become a part of the curriculum, and the societal values that give education meaning have dominant impact on the influence of education (p. 194). Over three decades later, these issues remain pressing in the Andes.

**Quechua women and Indigenous community-based participatory research**

Indigenous community-based participatory research promotes methods that privilege Quechua women’s epistemologies while addressing visions and limitations in Indigenous formal and out-of-school education. Working with Andean women in Cusco and Junín where I have close family, we are developing a project that collaboratively examines women’s labor and educational trajectories over generations, with special attention to Quechua grandmother survivors.

As haciendas remained explicitly connected to Spanish colonialism and oppressive policies enacted upon Indigenous communities, they represent spaces of “difficult memory” (Jamieson, 2014). I propose that there are multiple spaces of “difficult memory” like urban cities where my mother and Hilaria worked that signified Quechua women’s exploitation and opportunity. These constitute our project sites—(former) haciendas, cities, and rural communities in Cusco and Junín. Within my own extended family, different women of the grandparent generation recall being sent to haciendas or to Lima to serve as domesticas, or remaining within our communities to help with subsistence farming. Denied opportunities for schooling, we center Quechua women’s life stories of labor and hopes, and

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15 As a project in development, I do not focus on explaining methods here. At this stage, I am also careful to not reveal women’s names as we are still in the stages of determining what is ethically ideal for them. There is still fear around telling their stories. For researchers curious about numbers, I can share that a core advisory of four members of the grandmother generation and I aim for 2 women matriarchs and their daughters and granddaughters per space (hacienda, city, and community) per region for a total of 4 families and a minimum of 12 Indigenous CBPR co-researchers.
we acknowledge that educational processes necessarily include cultural, linguistic, and environmental knowledge.

Who am I in this work?

As a child, I remember being delighted with my mother’s stories about her upbringing in our community of Chongos Bajo. Until she was sent to work in Lima, she ran through the community with her favorite cousin, the fearless Rica—when Rica was home from working on the hacienda. Together, they played with insects, animals, and mini clay pots made as toys for children, which my grandmother would bring home from her market exchanges. My mother learned about plants, flowers, trees, and how to tell time by the position of the sun’s shadows cast on the ground. She still lovingly recalls Rica’s mother, Lucia, my grandfather’s sister, who was a beautiful woman deaf since childhood when she had been too close to a mine explosion in Huancavelica. Auntie Lucia spoke to my mother in sign language that she invented, she constantly affirmed my mother’s self-esteem, and she was there to shelter her from my grandfather’s alcoholic binges.

From the women in her life, my mother learned stories of our homelands, deities, monsters, and spirits. Her childhood was rich and full. When she left the community, her life took a different pathway, and the stories take on a more somber tone. Today, I reconcile that I am a product of both her beautiful complex childhood and the fears, isolation, and traumas of her youth in domestic servitude. As a result, my own journey as a comparative Indigenous education researcher has been to reclaim our knowledges, to identify places where we find Arguedas’s sanctuary and

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16 The Quechua original name for the community is often debated, and in my work, I refer to the community as Hatun Shunko (brave heart), but I would like to also acknowledge that there are other origin explanations put forward by community historians.

17 This complexity is honored in the stories of women told in their own voices and through the research of critical scholars like Mary Romero’s The Maid’s Daughter, which offers powerful and thoughtful testimony of what it means to be a/part of something, to be someone who does not quite belong.
Silverblatt’s freedom, and in the course of this work to learn what can be
done to prevent other Indigenous children from experiencing hurt.

I also attribute why I am an educational researcher to my mother’s
love for our Andean people, her frank and passionate observations of
injustices, as well as to the practical connections she secured—that we
remain linked to our ancestral lands through her inheritance of land in the
community; that my Japanese father supported her beliefs and immersed
himself in family and community life; and that my commitment to my
people is the result of ties to mother’s sisters, cousins, and extended family
who trained me as an Andean female and to whom I owe gratitude for
sharing their knowledge of the Andean universe, including Quechua
language, values, and cultural practices, as well as painful histories. I have
carried these with me in our work with Indigenous peoples elsewhere.

Quechua women’s narratives: Precious life stories

I have alluded to this project as Indigenous community based
participatory research. I offer only a brief word on methodology as this is
not solely a research endeavor—asking questions that Quechua women
want to know—but is also one of women coming together to tell their
stories as we have done culturally for generations, to be heard by others
where appropriate and desired, and considering strategies to heal from the
grief of dreams denied and stolen. This work is intimate and tender, and in
handling the stories, we treat what is shared as precious.

Community-based participatory research (CBPR) is used widely, and
as a result, the term community is broadly interpreted—from geographically
spatialized places that are autonomous to borderless and mobile constructs.
Early CBPR literature offers key principles whereby researchers build on
strengths and resources of the community and facilitate collaborative
partnerships across all phases of the research (Israel, 1998). Central to CBPR
is recognition of the role of power in research and the practice of equitable
distribution of power and resources. Moreover, LaVeaux and Christopher
(2009) identified specific approaches towards building CBPR with
Indigenous peoples, which include acknowledging our historical
experiences with research and the particular issues being explored (e.g. they focused on Indigenous health) while actively working to overcome research as a negative experience; recognition of tribal sovereignty; differentiating notions of community membership and understanding Indigenous diversity; interpreting data with the cultural context; and utilizing Indigenous ways of knowing (p. 11). To these, I add Māori scholar Linda T. Smith’s “Indigenous research agenda,” a framework that outlines four major points for research involving Indigenous peoples that is driven by Indigenous peoples—decolonization, healing, transformation, and mobilization (Smith, 2012). Together, Smith’s framework and LaVeaux and Christopher’s observations of CBPR in Indigenous communities inform how I understand Indigenous CBPR. Moreover, what these researchers offer is intentionally generalized as broad considerations intended to be taken up, transformed, and evolved in ways that are culturally and linguistically specific and appropriate for whatever group is utilizing them. As principles, they also offer us the opportunity to ask what we need and want as outcomes and benefits of our work together, as well as vigilance in ethics or how we take care of each other as we move forward.

Specifically, this project utilizes the life story method (Atkinson, 1998, 2002), which is shaped according to Quechua cultural and linguistic protocols. This means that stories are holistically considered across space and time and include not only the dynamics of the storyteller and the listener (in the immediate and long-term relationship), but also require exploring historical, political, geographic, cultural, and social elements across time where the storyteller is the narrator of their own experience moving through multiple spaces. Clearly, there is much that can be gained from understanding how social science researchers collect and analyze narratives as data. However, in this project, we do not think of or refer to

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For example, Ollerenshaw & Creswell offer excellent social science delineation of how to analyze narratives. They first outline characteristics of narratives, which can include chronological sequences of events, elements like time, place, plot, and scene, or a predicament or struggle involved and then resolved whereby data analysis aims to understand descriptions of the story and its emerging themes. They then differentiate between two forms of data analysis, including the problem-solution and dimensional space
stories as “field texts,” nor do we refer to their collection as data. Stories are willakuy, and the Quechua term refers to the required interrelationship between the story and a listener, which also make the story.

When I listen to the stories of the grandmother generation with whom I am building this project, I feel different waves of emotions. As a daughter, niece, cousin, neighbor, and Andean woman, I have asked different women in Cusco and in Junín—“Should we do this project?” Every woman I speak with has a story, and she would like to tell it. In Quechua daily contexts, women’s life stories are used to relay experiences that can serve as lessons to other women, including younger generations. Stories told among women are tragic and painful, but also humorous and triumphant, and always richly descriptive, evoking emotion. Since I can remember as a child, I have sat and listened, and as I grew older, I have drawn in my breath at injustices described, I have cried, and I have laughed. I do not see myself as a skilled oral tradition storyteller, and even though I am a member of the daughter generation, I feel that I have limited life stories to offer—what I do have, I offer to my nieces. For now, I sit and listen.

Emerging insights

The life story approach allows listeners to work with storytellers to draw out recollections that can be chronological, thematic, and that also underscore particular tensions or challenges faced. While this article does not re-story narratives or engage in-depth analysis, I draw emerging insights from the Quechua grandmother generation, including my own close family members who tell their stories addressing stages of life, school experiences, and gendered violence. I highlight experiences from one narrative structure. Both of these approaches to analysis are important for researchers to capture, and in our case, to draw from in order to find ways that treat the stories and storytellers with care. In this case, the values offered by Indigenous scholars who engage Indigenous oral tradition research (community traditional stories), such as Jo-ann Archibald (2008), are helpful in providing some approaches to considering what she refers to as the “life-experience story.”
project collaborator, Mama Virtud (pseudonym), in an attempt to introduce the connections between lack of schooling with limited life pathways, translations of wealth and poverty, and the vulnerability of Quechua girls and women.

The teacher spoke with me one day and said, you have to have some things. She said, “What do you want to be?” She asked me. I said I wanted to be a doctor. But that was never going to happen. Because there were 7 of us, 8 with my cousin, and my aunt who lived with us. It was impossible to dream. When I finished elementary school, of course I wished to go to high school. But there was no high school then [in the community], and one had to go to Huancayo. (2019, my emphasis)

Mama Virtud outlines experiences that limited her schooling options—her family had no funds to be able to send her to school in Junín’s capital of Huancayo. Coming from a subsistence farming family with little monetary resources, she would not have been able to travel to the city and pay any associated school fees. Additionally, her 14-year old sister had given birth by one of the married male schoolteachers in the community. As she was finishing elementary school, she was also aggressively pursued by a boy completing high school. Based on the fear that she too would become pregnant, one of her uncles took her to Lima to find work as a domestica. She would hold this role for nearly two decades.

Upon arrival to Lima, she worked nonstop in the homes of her wealthy employers. Living in the city, she said she began to reflect on life in her community in relation to Lima:

I realized that we were poor when I arrived to Lima, when I saw the wealthy people who lived in San Ysidro, the people who lived here and there. And my sister lived in a very remote and poor place. There were little tiny houses that were uncomfortable and very poor. I noticed that when I was older, but when I was little [in the community], I would say we had so much. Because my mother... would harvest a lot of good things from the farms. We never lacked the habas [fava beans], the peas, the wheat, the barley, the squash. I felt like I was in opulence. I felt like I had everything. Because my
mother would sell the foods from the farm, and she would buy meat and sugar. We never lacked meat, heart, or liver. My mother would toast cereals, marvelous cereals that do not exist anywhere else in the world I would say. My mother would toast cereals with women who helped us who were poorer than us because they had no farms. They would come help us, and they lived near us. My mother would give them their share of corn, barley, wheat, habas, potatoes... My childhood was marvelous. My mother... had a milking cow. That little cow gave us milk almost all year, and my mother would make cheese out of that. We would drink that fresh delicious milk. With that machka—[cereal mixture like a porridge] of barley or wheat, mixed, she would toast for 3 days and take to the mill—we would go to school.

Mama Virtud observed difference in lifestyles and resources between her community and her employers. Along with her awareness and how she was treated as a “poor Indian,” these constituted her realizations about poverty. In reality, both spaces hold relative resources—her community was rich with farm fields and harvests (which also provided some monetary or exchange value in the local markets), animals, and adobe homes. The cities had concrete homes, material goods that she had never seen before, and Western style clothing that she had never worn. Although she came to understand poverties⁹¹ in relation to what she saw in Lima, especially comparing an older sister’s new urban life in the shantytowns, she maintains that her family was wealthy because of their land and food resources, along with their abilities to work the land and care for the animals, their families, and each other within the community. Then when asked to further describe poverty, she responded,

There was a time—because my parents lived from the harvest, from the farm—there was a time when the frost came, and we didn’t have even one grain of harvest that year. That made us suffer. There was barley, but it was like chaff. My mother tried to make that into a

⁹¹ I use this term deliberately as plural. If people hold multiple forms of capital, they also experience multiple manifestations and constructions of poverty.
soup. And there was no kancha [corn for roasting]. We lived off of kancha, *habas*—my mother would make soup from *habas* and peas. But there was nothing. I remember that one day, one of the neighbors from our farm field... came to play with me on a tree trunk, eucalyptus... I didn’t have kancha. But she brought kancha in her pocket, and she arrived eating kancha. I just looked at her and looked at her. I couldn’t have kancha. That I could say is poverty—the hunger. I longed for the kancha, and she gave me one pinch. That was like a prize for me. That is poverty. I don’t know how my mother raised us through that.

The loss of harvests due to drastic weather shifts in Junín and across the Andean regions of Peru is an issue of increasing concern, especially due to climate change leading to the severity of impacts by Super El Niño. When subsistence farmers rely on their crops for their survival and to take to local markets for selling and trading or purchasing of goods they do not harvest (e.g. fruit and coffee), monetary resources, which are also used for their children’s school fees, become even more limited. Mama Virtud’s consideration of poverty adds to research that challenges us to take up more robust ways of thinking about wealth and poverty in relation to assets, strengths, and capital (Bebbington, 1999). We need to understand these notions in relation to cultural contexts, class considerations, policy construction, and across geographic spaces, especially those influenced by severe challenges like environmental pollution and climate change.

In her life story, Mama Virtud traced the different homes she worked across Lima, revealing her dependency upon her employers and glimpses into her own agency. For example, she started employment working in homes where her family members had recommended her for work. She would begin work in one home and then be passed to the home of a relative of her employer to care for a newborn baby or some other employer family request. In one case, after working for an employer’s family for a few years, she was falsely accused of stealing an item from the household and immediately asked to leave. She had no place to go and began knocking on doors wherever there was a “servants wanted” sign. During this time, she worked in several homes for only a few days to a couple weeks, explaining
that she would leave for some reason or another—maybe the employer was too harsh or abusive. Some abuses were tolerable—such as being spoken to in a degrading way, while others were not. She recounted,

One day, a man wanted to rape me. But there was a woman [tenant] who lived there in another room—this was a big house. The man had two children, and one night, he got up and entered my room. The woman who lived there, began knocking the door when the man closed the door to my room. The man went out, and the woman said, “You know that you do not need that girl. You should go upstairs to the woman with whom you have your son. You should go upstairs, you have no right to be there.” But I was ready to scream. Even before I screamed, that woman left her room and came over. You know, I believe in angels. Even though my mother was not in agreement with me, when I returned home, she told me that she would kneel in the pampas [deep hills] so that I would be okay.

Statistically speaking, we do not know what percentage of Quechua women in the three project settings we explore have experienced sexual violence. But among our grandmother generation, we are hearing recurring stories regarding physical, sexual, and psychological abuses that include perpetrators who span all three geographic spaces, and Indigenous communities are not exempt. In this case, Mama Virtud refers to the activity of men of the household of employment—husbands and fathers, sons and brothers, and extended male relatives. We hear these reports across Junín and Cusco where another grandmother project collaborator in Cusco shared that she had heard upper class women proudly declaring that they let their sons “practice” on the Quechua girls from Cusco’s surrounding rural villages who were brought to work in their homes. What reports like these tell us is that there is a glaring need for the kind of work we have engaged together as Quechua women. There is a strong legacy of Quechua women and other Indigenous women worldwide who have been working for the safety and rights of Indigenous women for decades, and we seek to add to these efforts.
Conclusion: Honoring the stories

In this article, I have outlined the some of the ways in which Quechua women have been shaped by the limitations created under conditions of coloniality and how women have sought opportunities for survival in ways that reveal both the nature of the colonizer (in the words of Mama Cura Ocllo) and their own agency. What our project seeks to understand is not only the ways in which Quechua women have navigated places of difficult memory, but also how they have hoped and dreamed and worked to realize those dreams—some for themselves and most for their children and grandchildren. Moreover, this work extends the ongoing conversation on Indigenous rights and its necessary considerations of all beings, gender, space, and time—for example, how do conversations on Indigenous rights acknowledge spaces of profound inequalities that reflect damaging constructions of Quechua women over time, and how does the idea of the right to education today rectify past injustices that reveal structural violence that has limited the life possibilities of Quechua women in the grandmother generation? Clearly, the work is before us in this regard. There are many stories that remain to be told, and it is our collective hope that we all keep listening.

Acknowledgements: To my grandmother, Jesusa Antonieta Carhuamaca Alvarado de Huaman who worked hard her whole life and whose story did not get to be told through this project but whose words live on through her children and grandchildren. This small piece of writing is also dedicated to those who have not been heard and for those who have fought to be. Kawsachun.
References


Notes From The Field

Learning to Think in the Language of Strangers: Indigenous Education in a Colonized and Globalized Pacific

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Abstract

This notes from the field article is about my personal, educational, and professional journeys as an Indigenous woman living and working in the small island states of Oceania. My own story describes the struggles that continue today among many young Indigenous students, be they in school or in higher education institutions with structures and processes that do not take their cultural backgrounds or identities into consideration. The results are often damaging both to the students, as well as to the institutions themselves. However, in this work, I advocate for the inclusion of Indigenous knowledges in education, as I have for decades, and I interweave my sentiments with poetry that reflects my feelings and memories.

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My ancestral culture¹ is Tongan, and I continue to identify with Tongan culture even though I do not currently live in Tonga. Although Tonga was never directly colonized by Europeans, it has a longer history of schooling (early 19th century) compared to many other small Pacific Island Countries (PICs). This longer exposure to Western knowledge and value systems has had positive and negative effects, depending on one’s vantage point. Tonga today is a country full of contradictions. It has more PhDs per head of population compared to many other countries, a fairly stable political structure (although this is now being questioned by a few), and increasing social and economic problems, manifested through drug-related offences, violence towards women and children, unemployment, and landlessness, to name a few. In this notes from the field article, I take the opportunity to share my personal and professional educational journeys. My experiences have provided the foundation and rationale for what I do today and what I have done as a teacher, writer, and researcher for more than four decades in the hope that learning and research might be more meaningful for my students, as well as empower them to acknowledge and value their cultural heritages, especially their knowledge and value systems, and most importantly, their languages. Throughout this article, I interweave my own poetry, which conveys my sentiments about the issues I describe while demonstrating my life as a scholar and artist.

Indigenous Educational Reflections

I received the education of a Tongan woman, not that of an American or Australian. My early education, almost exclusively through the medium of the Tongan language, was that of a member of a large extended family in a small Pacific Island kingdom. I later entered the

¹ In the context of this article, culture is defined as the way of life of a group of people, which includes their knowledge and value systems expressed in a shared language. The term Indigenous people refers to the people of the land who may constitute a minority population in their own countries (the UN definition) or majority population (my definition).
foreign cultures of New Zealand and the United States through their educational institutions and later through marriage. However, these new cultural systems and the insights they provided were very different from those of my own. I am therefore a product of what Horton (1976) calls a “closed and open predicament” because I operate sometimes in one system, and sometimes in the other. The results are often painful.

Your way
Objective
Analytic
Always doubting
The truth
Until proof comes
Slowly
Quietly
And it hurts

My way
Subjective
Gut-feeling like
Always sure
Of the truth
The proof
Is there
Waiting
And it hurts

And it hurts
(Thaman, 1987, p. 40)

A Report on Education for the 21st century, entitled *Learning: The Treasure Within*, commissioned by United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and authored by the Frenchman Jacques Delors, identified four pillars of learning deemed necessary for living successfully in this century—learning to know; learning to do; learning to live together; and learning to be. I had the privilege of speaking on the last pillar at a UNESCO conference in Melbourne, Australia in 1998, where we concluded that in order for people to live successfully in this century, we would need to exercise independence and judgement combined with a stronger sense of personal responsibility for the attainment of common goals. Furthermore, we were reminded of the tensions that we need to overcome in relation to all four pillars, including
learning to be. Two tensions are of particular interest to this paper: the tension between the group and the individual, and the tension between traditions and modernity.

The four pillars of learning, including these tensions mentioned, reflect the compartmentalization of knowledge and understanding that characterize many Western European cultures and knowledge systems, making it difficult for those of us who identify with non-Western Indigenous cultures to fully comprehend, since our knowledge and value systems are more holistic, interconnected, experiential, and context-specific. The Delors Report, like most things that emanate from the Anglo-American world, makes certain assumptions about people and their cultures that are often problematic or simply wrong in the contexts of the Indigenous people of Oceania, most of whom have suffered immeasurable destruction and genocide and are now minorities in their own lands.

Elsewhere in Oceania, Indigenous people although majority populations in their various island nations are bounded by laws, regulations, policies, and practices developed for other people in other places but deemed appropriate for all societies and cultures. Most of these policies and plans including those related to education, have not taken into consideration Indigenous peoples’ worldviews, knowledge and value systems, including their languages. As many of those who continue to live under the impacts of colonial rule, the prioritizing of the colonial language above those of Indigenous people is akin to being forced to speak the language of uninvited strangers. Goldsmith probably put it more directly, “There is no better way to destroy a people than to undermine their education system” (Goldsmith, 2009, p. 3). Consequently, most Indigenous peoples in Oceania live and work in societies that have been greatly influenced by different destructive forces, not least of which are those tied to colonialism and now globalization. These have brought about changes manifested in most aspects of their lives, particularly in relation to their education, religious beliefs, values, political orientations, sexual orientations, views of development, and indeed their views of themselves—meaning, who or what they are, or think they ought to be.

The high school that I attended in my own home country did not allow students to speak in their mother language, and all the teachers were foreigners. We were told that the reason for this was because the
school needed to prepare students for university study overseas. I was fortunate to be given a scholarship to continue my studies in New Zealand, where I was further alienated from the traditional education I received at home. Before schools were introduced to Pacific Island communities in the early part of the 19th century, (Indigenous) education was the joint responsibility of extended family members and the community. Through our education, we learn about our origins, history, our customs, traditions and languages, all of which were underpinned by shared values derived from our cultures. In Tonga, for example, these values included ‘ofa, (compassion), faka’apa’apa, (respect), relationships (vaa), humility (loto to), mamahi’ me’a, (loyalty), and spirituality (fakalaumalie),

The content of our Indigenous education was sourced from life itself and from a vibrant and dynamic epistemology that had existed for thousands of years. The learning process was mainly through observation, imitation, and participation in practical activities. Elders who had accumulated knowledge, skills, and values of our cultures were the main teachers using a shared language and in real life situations. Our teachers were expected to model the desired behavior or activity that was being taught and successful learning was judged through learners’ appropriate behavior and performances. One can say that Indigenous education occurred in an eco-cultural environment where learning was facilitated by those who themselves had already learned to know, to do, to live together and to be.

My own cultural identity has evolved over the years as a result of growing up in Tonga, as well as living in other countries such as New Zealand, the U.S., and now Fiji. However, like many Indigenous persons, my ancestral culture continues to influence my worldview and my understanding of who I am together with what with my understanding of learning to know, to do, to live with others, and to be.

*Story within a story*

My personal identity journey has involved local, regional, and global maps. This journey is about identities imposed by colonialism and social science, internal and external negotiations, personal and collective histories, memories of different times and places, and of creating new
spaces and places as a response to changing times and issues in selected contexts. These have helped me to provide an experience-based backdrop to some of the conceptual maps that I frequently share with my students and colleagues, and that I hope may assist other Indigenous scholars and researchers in our various journeys towards seeking solutions to problems that we face in our modernized, and increasingly culturally neutralized situations.

For example, my story is a story within a story, like a basket within a basket: A story within the bigger basket that is Oceania in general, and Tongan culture in particular. A story that acknowledges the descent to earth of the Tongan deity, Tangaloa Atulongolongo, thousands of years ago, in the form of a kiu (plover), who, after finding a worm hiding inside the root of a vine on the island of ‘Ata, in the Tongan group, pecked it into three pieces and thus created the first humans who he named, ko hai, ko au, ko momo. Later, Maui brought them wives from Pulotu (the spirit world), and together they created the ancestors of the Tongan people.

Less than two hundred years ago, foreign missionaries arrived and established schools in various Pacific island communities. When they arrived, no one asked how Pacific people conceptualised their worlds, especially their notions of wisdom, learning, teaching, or knowledge or what values they emphasised. These foreigners introduced schools complete with European conceptual frameworks, sets of practices and values that were supposed to offer Indigenous people opportunities for enlightenment, civilisation, and later cash employment. The main aim of schools and the newly established religious bodies that introduced them was conversion of learners to a new religion and a new, supposedly better way of life, transforming Pacific peoples, their cultures and communities. The content of schooling was in the form of subjects, sourced from books, which contained what was considered worthwhile based on different (European) epistemologies and worldviews. Christian values provided the rationale for teaching and learning, and the teachers were foreign missionaries who had learned and transcribed the languages of the people. Learning was mainly through rote, as much of it did not relate to the real life experiences of learners’ and was assessed through mainly written tests. Those who failed dropped out of school and did not proceed to the next level of learning. The assumption then, as it is now, was/is that whatever was deemed worthwhile to learn and to teach in Europe (or
more recently in the U.S., Australia, and New Zealand) was important for the livelihoods of Pacific people as well.

However, during the past three decades or so, and encouraged by the UN World Decade for Cultural Development (1987-1997), and more recently, the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD), an increasing number of Pacific Indigenous scholars and researchers have been asking questions of their education systems, and some are trying to put their cultures back into the formal education process as a way of addressing the underperformance of Indigenous students together with the quality of school education in most parts of our region (Taufe’ulungaki, Pene & Benson, 2002;). The implications of this trend for all of us are quite serious because in some places, much of our cultural knowledge and values are no longer being transmitted to our young people; this is especially so in urbanized and/or foreign environments.

In most Pacific island contexts, the extended family, the church and the school remain important sites of identity formation for most Pacific Island people. These continue to influence the way they see the world as well as the way they see ourselves. For me, learning the values of my culture was important because they were crucial for maintaining peace and harmony among extended family members as well as the wider community. Furthermore, many of these core values are also emphasized in church, as well as the schools that religious bodies operate today and described by Tamihere (2014) in her doctoral study learning from the Kaliloa, which continue to be a way of re-claiming and ensuring the type of values education necessary for community cohesiveness and peace, in many troubled island contexts of Oceania today.

**Intersecting Journeys: Beyond Tonga and Higher Education**

When I left Tonga for New Zealand in the early 1960s, I knew who I was in relation to other people in my family, community and country. However, the all-girls’ high school that I attended was predominantly pakeha (white). Staff and students did not know and did not care about where I came from or who I was. For some, I was the new girl who lived in the hostel where those boys who played rugby for Auckland Boys Grammar also lived. Many of my classmates had never met anyone from
Tonga, and most did not know the difference between Tonga and Rarotonga (in the Cook Islands). As one of only three Tongan girls in the whole school, I became quite self-conscious about the fact that I was different, that I did not speak their language or understand their culture.

Epsom Girls Grammar gave me an opportunity to develop a personal identity. I remember an English assignment on the topic: ‘Who am I?’ Our English teacher advised us to ‘write about the person we wanted to be.’ When I got my marked assignment I was shocked at my grade, a C+. I had written about Tonga, where I grew up, my kainga (extended family) and how I fit into the wider kinship-based scheme of things. I said that I was in New Zealand on a government scholarship and wanted to do well at school so I could return home and be a useful person to my family and eventually my country as a high school teacher. That was who I wanted to be. At the end of my essay, my teacher wrote: “Konai, this is interesting but you should write down what YOU want to be rather than what the government or your parents want you to be. This is your chance to be whatever you want to be. It’s your chance to dream and decide who you want to become.” I did not understand what she meant but did not have the courage to ask her.

My best friend got an A+ on the same assignment. Some of the girls talked about her project—about how brave, honest, and creative she was. I felt confused, stupid, weak, and dishonest for writing about such boring, unoriginal stuff, about my desire to do well in school so that I could go home and be ‘aonga’ (useful) to my family and country. I also felt angry with the authorities in Tonga, for sending me to this country where I felt alone and alienated, with no one to advise me about how I should study or just how to be. I buried myself in my studies, determined to do well so I could go home as soon as possible. I also developed a way of talking to myself through writing down the things that bothered or saddened me. This seemed to work well especially in an environment such as the Tongan hostel (Atalanga) where, to have problems was seen as a sign of weakness and ignorance.

what was it you thought
when the moon swam out
of the sea
i thought i caught a glimpse of you
when was the first time
birds learned to fly
it was when i learned
to write
(Thaman, 1981:4, p. 4)

At university I felt lost, unable to relate to my lecturers, most of whom came to lecture and then disappeared, leaving the teaching to tutors and/or post-graduate students. I spent a lot of time in the university library, reading most of the recommended texts - something that was regarded negatively by some of my Tongan peers who thought that I was showing off and wanting to get ahead too much. At university, I felt conscious about being Tongan and after failing one subject in my first year, it was obvious to me that in order to succeed at university I needed to hang my cultural identity on the trees at Albert Park and forget who I was for a while. As for my aspirations of becoming a creative artist, the only art I learned at university was the art of forgetting.

a weekend in auckland
is good
for discovering again
old meeting places
in the park
hoping they have stories
to tell about the adventures
of a once youthful time

down under the magnolia trees
the bench which took the weight
of our first kiss
is still there
the fountain continues to beat
like an artificial heart
and the flowers continue to die
with each passing day

and there hovering high above
is the tower clock
now dwarfed by the reality
of its own time
its striking shadow a reminder
that the heart's best defence
at this time
is forgetting
(Thaman, 1999, p. 36)

At Teachers’ College, I learned to be a teacher of pakeha school children. I was told to use positive reinforcement to develop their self-esteem, to bring out the individuality of the child, and help develop their potential. I felt unable to do all of these things, and for the first time, I realised why I was having so many problems learning both at school and at university. My high school teachers/lecturers were making wrong assumptions about the beliefs and background of many of their students and had not contextualised their teaching in order to make learning more meaningful for them. This awareness of my role as a teacher was to become the driving force for my creative writing that began seriously when I returned to Tonga and where I was told by school principal to teach English to Form 5 (Year 11) repeaters. I wanted to write about things that the students could understand and relate to before teaching them about English literature and its contexts. I later realised that the English did not invent poetry – that poetry was around us, and in us, and students needed to understand that. Later during my feminist days, I also wanted to show my students that one did not have to be male, white and dead, in order to be a (successful) poet.

America taught me to tolerate difference. As a graduate student, I enjoyed going to class and learning about learning. Working at the Geography Remote Sensing Lab (now called GIS), I learned to appreciate the role of new technologies especially in improving our knowledge about our environments. However, I found life to be impersonal in America, where many people did not seem to worry about their cultural identities; in fact, some of my friends prided themselves in telling me they did not have any cultural identities. “We are all Americans here,” they said, “and you will be too eventually.” I was impressed with their inclusiveness although I did not really understand what being American meant, because it was difficult for me to feel American.

Yet America impressed my uncle Malakai. He was an over-stayer who became an American citizen through marriage. He told me that he left Tonga because he felt suffocated by ‘the culture;’ that the nobles and
the church were too demanding and the government did not do enough for the people. My uncle loved being in America. He had a nice apartment, owned a big car and managed a petrol/gas station. His five children were all doing well in school, and two were playing football for their high schools. He was making more money a month than his brother was making in a year, teaching in a Methodist school back home. “I’m not going back there any time soon,” he told me. “But when I die, I want to be buried there, next to my parents.” “Why?” I asked. “You seem to like it here so much.” “Yeah!” he said. “I like it here because the money is good. But people here care about you if you have money. Back home, people care about you because you are related to them; you are their blood.” I thought about what he said and came to better understand what a well-known Tongan chief is reported to have said about how money made the palangi (foreigner) selfish. “So you’re still a Tongan at heart then?” I asked. “Yeah,” he said, “I’m an American citizen and there is my American passport. But here (he points to his heart), I am Tongan until ‘sand cover my eyes.’” Tears streamed down his face, and for the first time, I understood what being Tongan was all about.

Indigenous Arts

Working at the regional University of the South Pacific (USP), that is owned by 12 small PICs, one of my self-assigned roles is to convince my students of the importance of understanding one’s own culture in the struggle to understand the cultures of others. As a lecturer, I particularly identify with those who come from backgrounds that are very different from the culture of the university, those who find it difficult to communicate in English or who have trouble adapting to new ways of behaving, including those that emphasize independence and competitiveness, or being in your face with opinions of themselves of others, or of thinking that silence is a sign of ignorance rather than respect. For those students who come from more rural and traditional non-European/Western backgrounds with strong cultural identities, university can be a site of struggle and for learning, what Alex Dixon once called, systematized selfishness.

I am still working at USP, where I began my university teaching career. After 40 years with the School of Education, I am now at the USP
Oceania Centre for Arts, Culture and Pacific Studies. I work with staff and students who are dancers, singers, and fine artists as well as academics—most of whom regularly reaffirm their cultural identities, share their cultural resources with one another and with others in innovative ways. I have benefitted from sharing, learning, and valuing my students’ cultural identities and knowledges. Through my teaching, research and creative writing, I share my stories with them as I do now, evidence of what the Rotuman artist and film maker Hereniko once wrote: “The Arts is important for Pacific peoples because they create a sense of identity” (1983, p. 7).

However, unlike the traditional artist of pre-contact times whose role was mainly ritualistic, and whose relationship to his society was essentially harmonious, modern artists are often in conflict with their societies. As modern people, we share common experiences arising out of our geography, colonial history, group orientation, religiousness, and the experience of formal education. Some of us are better known outside of our own countries mainly because we employ a foreign medium to express ourselves. For most of us, the conforming influence of modernity is already becoming apparent as many of us try to measure ourselves and our work against mainstream standards rather than the standards of our own cultures. But for me, it is difficult to be modern without giving in to mass culture and sameness, a culture that threatens to homogenize us in the name of globalization and a world economy that demands that the majority of the world’s people need to suffer because the lifestyle of a few is not negotiable.

today your words are empty
sucking dry the brown dust
left by earth and sky
patches politely parched
with no water flowing
from the mountain top
scars burn on my soft skin
you’ve cut a piece of me away
leaving my bandaged heart
to endure the pain
of your tying me
to yourself

(Thaman, 1993, p. 7)
For many Indigenous people, our identities have been impacted by the demands of national and global cultures where people and institutions are supposed to be 'managed', ostensibly so that goals are achieved and people produce the goods and services that society needs. This managerial culture that characterises many higher education institutions in our world, legitimizes the global marketplace and financial speculation and glorifies new communication technologies. Many of our universities together with those who work in them, are struggling to survive in a corporatist, managerial and hooked-on-technology environment. Today, globalisation and conformity are fashionable whether one is working in a university, in a government department, or private corporation. In my struggle to make sense of what is happening around me, I find comfort in my identity as a student of culture and an expressive artist. I am grateful for learning about different cultures and different art forms, and I am also aware that canons of taste arise out of cultural conditioning, and if I say that I understand and feel the same about other people's cultures as they do, I would be deluding myself, just as I do not expect foreigners to see and feel the same about my culture.

Like many of my students, I had to study English literature for important exams. However, as a Tongan, I know that my artistic roots lie in an oral tradition where the storyteller creates an audience in a way a writer can only imagine. My Western education had taught me that a poem was a thing that was seen as separate from its creator. In my writing therefore, I try to create a synthesis of Tongan and English literature in order to create my own writing space. So for me a poem has to sound good, because it is in the joining together of the silences of words that a poem comes alive, as this poem about women and literacy tries to depict.

I have been out  
On the reef  
Looking for cowrie shells  
But every rock has been turned  
By those who went before me  
I'm tired and disappointed  
But I will go on searching
In case I find one looking
For a place to hide
(Thaman, 1981, p. 17)

My creative works inform my teaching and research, and vice versa.

Co-producing Indigenous knowledges

In my professional life, I continue to advocate for the use of Indigenous pedagogies as well as developing Pacific research frameworks, including the Kakala Research Framework, for the use of my research students. The Kakala Research Framework utilises the processes involved in making a garland (kakala) in my culture. Three main steps are needed, toli (gathering of the materials), tui (actual making of the garland) and luva (gifting of the garland to someone else depicting the values of love and respect). Two more steps were added after colleagues critiqued the framework: a beginning stage or teu (preparation) and an end stage, malie/mafana (monitoring and evaluation). The Kakala Research Framework has been successfully used by several Pacific and non-Pacific scholars and researchers, especially in the last decade or so (Johanssen Fua, 2009; Thaman, 1997; Thaman, 2017). Other frameworks have been developed by scholars from around the Pacific – including the Samoan Fa’afaletui, the Cook Islands Tivaevae, The Fijian Vanua, The Samoan Fale Fono, the Tongan Manulua and Kaliloa, and Iluvatu, to name a few. These are appropriate frames for researching Pacific issues and problems especially if they are used by people who understand their origins, as well as their appropriate applications and implications (for more information about the Kakala and other research frameworks see Peters, 2016).

Co-producing Indigenous knowledges and creating synergies between traditional and scientific knowledge is an important task of Indigenous scholars and teachers. The process of finding synthesis between Indigenous and Western knowledge and values has become an important approach for many of us in Oceania during the last four decades. I remember in my anthropology classes at the University of Auckland, reading the famous anthropologist Malinowski (1918) and how he described the Trobriand Islanders’ environmental knowledge as primitive and inferior. Later another anthropologist described Indigenous knowledges as magical and pre-logical rather than based on systematic,
empirically based observation (Levy-Bruhl, 1985). Both of these statements reflected part of the many 19th and 20th century paradigms that theorized and supported the supposed intellectual superiority of Europeans over all other human societies. However, in the latter part of the 20th century this view of Indigenous knowledges changed when ethno-biological studies ‘discovered’ the encyclopedic depths of Indigenous people’s knowledges of their environments, from agriculture, medicine, fisheries, navigation, to climate and weather. For example, community-based studies of agricultural resources in Tonga 2 and marine resources in Fiji 3 have shown the incredible depth of traditional Indigenous knowledges that local rural women and men have for their culturally useful biodiversity and associated in-depth cultural knowledge (Thaman, 1976; Thaman, Fong & Balawa, 2008).

Indigenous knowledges are vital sources of our understanding of current issues in Oceania and the world, such as the movement to implement the 17 Sustainable Development Goals 4 as a global plan to secure the planet’s future by 2030. But Indigenous knowledge is important in and of itself, especially for Indigenous people, although comparison between Western and Indigenous knowledges sometimes diminishes the importance of Indigenous knowledges when the latter is seen as unique, qualitative, and context specific, while Western knowledge is seen as open, generalizable, and universal. There is also an oft made suggestion that Indigenous knowledge systems are just mental maps of knowledge and beliefs, passed on through generations about the relationships of

2 In Tonga, a 1971 in-depth community-based survey, during which over 100 agricultural bush allotment (averaging 7 acres in area) were mapped and all useful plants inventoried and identified, showed that Tongans had 12 staple root crops, 41 non-staple food and beverage crops, 40 fruit trees, 118 multi-purpose trees, and 124 multi-purpose non-tree plants (Thaman, 1976).

3 In Fiji, the results of a twelve-year community-based study of the marine resources of Vanua Navakavu (west of Suva), to assess the impact that the successful establishment and maintenance of a marine protected area have had on the local iqoliqoli (fishing ground), showed that the older men and women had 226 distinct names for 682 different species of finfish (which included 11 sharks, 7 rays and 21 eels), many of which were unknown to the younger generation. The same survey showed that they had names for 175 different gastropod shellfish, 56 bivalves, 175 crustaceans, and 42 echinoderms many of which had returned for the first time since the onset of overfishing some 40 years ago, and were not know to the current generation (Thaman, Fong & Balawa, 2008; Thaman, 2014).

4 For more information on the SDGs see: https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org
living things with one another and with their environments. This framing results in documenting knowledge about the natural world (most notably by non-Indigenous peoples) at the expense of other areas of knowledge such as educational ideas, politics, governance, arts and heritage, family and community leadership.

Indigenous and Western knowledges are important in their own right. Our culture connects us to the (Pacific) Ocean and to one another. We share our histories, our knowledges, imagination and our stories as we do in a variety of contexts, and it is our culture(s) that give us our identities. We express these in different ways—in our songs, dances, paintings, weaving, sculptures, stories, sports, and even in our silences. Some stories need a brush; others a pen and still others movement, gesture and intonation. Being a teacher who is also a creative artist has allowed me to share my knowledge and experiences with people outside of my own culture and national boundary, as I do now. As a teacher who is constantly learning, I also recognize the importance of education as the humanizing force and the value that drives the campaign for quality education that allows us to understand one another.

Come
Take this kakala
Symbol of our oneness
Tie it around you
Where it will grow
Nourished by the flow
Only the sky knows.

(Thaman, 1993, p. 23).
References


Notes From The Field

Decolonizing in Unexpected Places

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Abstract

Our “Notes from the Field” article focuses on our engagement with Hacer Escuela/Inventing School, a project of West Chester University that bridges critical theory and the Global South to re-think pedagogical practices and theoretical frameworks in education. By reviewing the discussions that occurred over the course of the conference and our contributions around teaching teachers about Indigenous issues in a settler colonial and anti-immigrant context, we analyze schools as settler institutions and sites of ongoing Indigenous dispossession. We critique rights discourses that often position multicultural education as an opportunity for inclusion without having to unpack that inclusion, which thereby functions at the expense of a decolonial praxis.

Keywords: Critical Indigenous Studies; Settler Colonialism; Multicultural Education

In March 2019, Flori and Sandy were invited to present at the Hacer Escuela/Inventing School: Rethinking the Pedagogy of Critical Theory II workshop at West Chester University in Pennsylvania. The workshop is a sub-project of an Andrew W. Mellon Foundation Grant: Critical Theory in the Global South. Hacer Escuela was the second gathering of scholars and practitioners from across the Americas, coming together to share their work from the field. Specifically, participants discussed how the impact of neoliberal policies on education movements across the U.S and Global South have, “given rise to new understandings of pedagogical relations, of what it means to be a subject of education, and how educational practice can refigure public space” (Hacer Escuela, 2019).

As invited guests and presenters, Sandy and Flori sought to consider what it means to teach about Indigenous issues in settler colonial and anti-immigrant contexts. Specifically, Flori teaches in Los Angeles, California, at a university that is predominately first generation Latinx and in a city that understands itself as a city of immigrants. Sandy teaches at Connecticut College in New London, Connecticut; a small liberal arts college where the
student body is predominantly white and from middle- and upper-class backgrounds. Across these geographic, race, and class-based differences however, we both teach about settler colonialism. As articulated through the foundational work of Patrick Wolfe (2006), settler colonialism¹ is different from other forms of colonialism in the following ways: (1) it is “first and foremost a territorial project” where land (as opposed to natural or human resources) is the precondition; (2) the priority is to eliminate and remove Indigenous peoples in order to expropriate their lands; and, (3) since “settlers come to stay,” strategies of elimination are not simply deployed at the time of invasion, but rather serve as a structuring logic. Stated differently, this means that beyond the initial event of invasion, the “logic of elimination” not only persists as a constitutive element of settler colonialism but also “persists as a determinative feature of national territoriality and identity” (Rifkin 2013, p. 324). This is perhaps most readily visible in the history of chattel slavery in the Americas, which not only served as a means of extracting Black labor, but also of eliminating Black life.

This notes from the field article builds upon our presentation at the Hacer Escuela/Inventing School workshop—specifically how our differing contexts inform the pedagogy and methods of our classrooms. Together, we think deeply and critically about how the geography of settler colonialism matters, particularly as it shapes the particular manifestations of racism, white supremacy, and racial capitalism.² We also think about our work in

¹As noted by Rachel Flowers, it is important to refer to “non-Indigenous” peoples as “settlers” since it serves to denaturalize and politicize “the presence of non-Indigenous people on Indigenous lands” (Flowers, 2015, p. 33).

²Racial capitalism as a theoretical framework was defined by Cedric Robinson in his classic text Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition (1983). In addition to charting a historical legacy of Black rebellion, Robinson considers that rather than a fundamental break away from feudalism, capitalism emerges as directly co-constitutive of race/racism in the Americas. His re-orientation has been foundational to thinking about the accumulation of wealth alongside the creation of racial categories. His work has continued to have resonance in thinking about the two as always fundamentally interlinked and in this text, we extend the analysis to also note that racial capitalism is distinct, but related to settler colonialism.
relation to the political project of teacher education, especially in this moment of global neoliberalism, school privatization and anti-immigrant vitriol. This article will review some of conversations that took place at the workshop, discuss some of our own approaches to engaging settler colonialism in teacher education, and conclude with a section that reconsiders the utility of the university in relations to human rights education.

**Education for Change, Education for Permanence**

The *Hacer Escuela/Inventing School II* workshop brought together a wide range of educators working in and outside of the academy. True to its expansive intention, workshop organizers intentionally paired scholars and practitioners as a means of cultivating conversations that diverged from typical academic formats where scholars primarily talk to each other without necessarily considering and working towards practical and applied implications of their research. In addition, project organizers allowed for extended presentation times of approximately two hours in order to include interactive aspects to each presentation. This format compelled presenters to put critical theory into practice as a way to share skills and possibilities with each other. The offerings included presentations on the Black Lives Matter in Schools Week: Organizing for Change; Lessons from Indigenous and Campesino Movements in Latin America, and “Urban Zapatismo.” If there was a common thread expressed throughout the two day experience, it would be that education is a site of struggle, wherein the erasure, marginalization, and exploitation of Indigenous, Black and Latinx communities occurs across the hemisphere. That said, the workshop also made it abundantly clear that in each context, there is a critical mass of educators, organizers, and students working together to (re)make schooling (*Hacer Escuela*) in a manner that abides by the needs and ethics of peoples and their relations and not the imperatives of the capitalist, settler state.

For example, Tamara Anderson and Angela Crawford from the WE Caucus and the Melanated Educators Collective in Philadelphia, discussed their work with parents and teachers from across the city who have been
organizing reading groups, events and curriculum development workshops around the 13 principles of Black Lives Matter. Among their top concerns was the criminalization of students, the use of metal detectors and police presence in their schools. While the needs and concerns are systemic, so too is their organizing which has helped to animate a national movement among teachers and students.

Similarly, David Morales an educator with Colectivo Zapatista (San Diego) and K. Wayne Yang (University of California, San Diego) discussed the criminalization of Black, Latinx and Indigenous youth in southern California. Specifically, they discussed the ways in which the hyper militarized U.S.-Mexico border erases the sovereignty of the Kumeyaay and Tohono O’odham peoples, conscripting into settler discourses of “immigrant” and “alien.” Such discourses and politics, seep into schools through border patrol recruitment programs that target working class youth of color. In both of these contexts, schools are oppressive institutions where youth are subjected to forms of violence and criminalization through the complicity of administrators, school boards, and education decision-makers. In response to dehumanization and disempowerment, David Morales discussed the ways that his organization uses the seven principles from the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) movement to inform their work: urban Zapatismo. Those seven principles are: (1) Obedecer y No Mandar (To Obey, Not Command); (2) Proponer y No Imponer (To Propose, Not Impose); (3) Representar y No Suplantar (To Represent, Not Supplant); (4) Convencer y No Vencer (To Convince, Not Conquer); (5) Construir y No Destruir (To Construct, Not Destroy); (6)

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3 Their work can be found here: https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/what-we-believe/

4 The Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional (EZLN) was a critical uprising of Indigenous people in the southern state of Chiapas, Mexico in 1994. The Maya communities of Chiapas rose up in armed rebellion to demand their autonomy from Mexico on the same date that the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) went into effect. Since the initial rebellion, they have developed schools, health centers, governance structures, and political analysis in their own vision. The EZLN deeply impacted the political consciousness of communities and movements across the world and this year they celebrate the 25th anniversary of ongoing rebellion.
Servir y No Servirse (To Serve Others, Not Serve Oneself); and (7) Bajar y No Subir (To Work From Below, Not Seek To Rise). With this foundation, youth are better able to resist dehumanization as well as strengthen their communities.

Also present in the workshop was Flavio Pereira Barbosa, an organizer from Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra (MST) in Brazil and Lia Pinheiro Barbosa, from the Universidade Estadual do Ceará, Brazil. MST, also known as the Landless Workers Movement, has occupied vast estates of land over the past decades, as a means of enacting agrarian reform; redistributing land to rural workers. MST is one of the largest social movements in the Global South, with thousands of families living in settlements across Brazil. As such, organizers necessarily had to think about the interconnected nature of movement building as pedagogy and schooling as movement building. While the resurgence of state sanctioned violence under President Jair Bolsonaro threatens continued state and municipal funding of MST’s schools, organizers are not deterred. Their central commitment remains to develop an educational experience by, for, and in rural communities with the goal of not only ending illiteracy but also contributes to, the transformation of capitalist society, the maintenance of sustainable agriculture, and protection of the environment. The aim is to ensure young people that they do not have to leave their communities to get an education; to define an education for permanence (Barbosa 2016).

The notion of an education for permanence as it was presented at this conference was defined as the right for rural people in Brazil to access education without having to leave their communities. However, MST also argues that beyond this, the schools should align with their realities, their epistemologies, and support the effort of social movement building. Barbosa (2016) asserts that an “education by the countryside” is, “an

5 Flavio Pereira Barbosa and Lia Pinheiro Barbosa attended the conference on behalf of MST or the Landless Workers Movement.

6 While we have cited Dr. Barbosa’s English language article, it is critical to note that she has published several articles about her engagement with MST which are available in Portuguese and Spanish.
education rooted in place, that is based on the culture, knowledge, wisdom and needs of rural people” (p. 2). At the crux of this conceptualization of education and pedagogy as critical sites from which to develop a political subject is the ability for education to be transformative. However, part of the issue we raise here is that it cannot be assumed that educational institutions created or accredited by settler nation states are automatically capable of engaging this type of praxis. Instead, in our work here, we document that educational institutions in the United States actually operate as sites of Indigenous dispossession where settler subjects are made.

Across the presentations, it was evident that the gathered educators and organizers shared a vision and urgency for social change that operate beyond the liberal, multicultural horizon of justice. That is, one predicated on modes of “diversity” and “inclusion” that presume the continuance of the settler state. Presenters, for example, were interested in stopping the militarization of youth and ending police violence, not fighting for a more diverse and inclusive military and police force. To achieve these aims, participants imagined themselves to be “in, but not of” their institutional contexts (Harney & Moten, 2013, p. 26). As articulated by Stefano Harney and Fred Moten in their landmark text, The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study (2013), the liminal space of being “in” but not “of,” is, “the path of the subversive intellectual” (p. 26).

Settler Education and Teacher Training

Rethinking “Rights”

Within this context of critical fellowship—gathering, sharing, and dialogue—we presented on teaching settler colonialism within universities that are themselves settler institutions. The tensions we centered arise from our work in teacher education programs and/or teacher professional development. The contradiction of “training” teachers to exist in settler institutions, but to do the work of refusing the normalization of eliminatory politics re-positions what we understand education to be. Conceptualized as a “right,” education, which is inextricable from educational achievement,
often becomes articulated through a framework of socioeconomic mobility. Education becomes an act of benevolence; it becomes the state’s resolution to systemic inequality produced by racial capitalism in service of settler colonialism. When education is conceptualized as an individual right within a liberal framework, achieving an education becomes the avenue through which immigrant and working class “bootstraps” logics are fulfilled. Within the contemporary and global neoliberal moment—where individualized rights have also become the apparatus through which state responsibility has shrunk in order to make way for private capital—the notion that an individual educational degree will allow you to be “successful” only reinscribes settler colonialism. Comanche scholar John Tippeconnic III (2015) writes,

Formal education within the enclosed walls of schools continues to be a forceful weapon used by dominant powers to create boundaries to control and mold the minds of youth and adults, to eradicate or weaken their Indigenous identity, and to assimilate them into mainstream society (p. 36).

As a result of these observations and critiques, for those of us invested in Indigenous sovereignty and Black freedom,8 we must learn to begin from a place of questioning the ground upon which “our” institutions are built. For example, educators and students must ask, how does defining our success through educational attainment actually uphold settler

7 Bootstraps refers to the vernacular reference of “pulling oneself up by the bootstraps” or self-reliance, which blinds other historical and contemporary colonial processes that (continue to) cause oppression.

8 Indigenous sovereignty and Black freedom are noted here as two distinct, but deeply inter-related political projects. The United States has been a direct product of Black and Indigenous genocide from its historical formation to its contemporary moment. As a result, thinking of these systems as interlinked also forces our analysis to consider how our visions for the future must also account for the multiplicity of violence enacted by the U.S. More recently, scholars have not only charted solidarities among these two projects, but also considered tensions that arise when we think of these together (Day 2015; Grande, 2018). The hope is that in thinking through these projects we may be able to envision and build a critical understanding that accounts for both Indigenous sovereignty and Black liberation, because both are necessary.
colonialism? How do we challenge these institutions when our livelihoods are still dependent on them? Is it possible to radically shift these institutions given their foundation and ongoing practice of dispossession and marginalization? Furthermore, making Kindergarten-12th grade a legal requirement for all children in the U.S. has not fulfilled frameworks that conceptualize education as potentially transformative: What we see is that dominant educational systems simply become new spaces to fold into economic systems already established to benefit the few.

Dominant discourses on education often occlude the reality that institutions of learning emerged through a colonial project that sought to “civilize” Indigenous and Black peoples. Simpson (2015) argues that the possibility of a transformative education is, “a far step for many who are engaged in the colonial present, as that present resides in a past that simply does not get transcended, or transcended evenly” (p. 80). In addition, scholars like Corntassel and Holder (2008) and Coulthard (2007; 2014) demonstrate the limits of recognition frameworks designed by the nation state and that strive to apologize for past wrongdoings and recognize the (cultural) rights of Indigenous people without actual material transformation. These so-called reconciliatory politics leave settler and extractivist states intact and simply attempt to ameliorate the condition Indigenous people are in without actually accounting for the fact that they and their institutions are dependent on Black and Indigenous dispossession. This means that since their inception, institutions of education have always furthered the imperative of the settler state: nation-building and expansion through chattel slavery and genocide (Grande 2004; 2018). As such, whether from a historical or contemporary vantage point, the field of Native American and Indigenous Studies, engages in analyses of education as primarily a settler colonial project. Scholars like Dolores Calderon (2014) and Sarah Shear (2017) have documented the ways in which Native history taught in U.S. schools often colludes with settler projects because as Calderon states, “gaps in knowledge are actively produced to protect settler futurity” (Calderon, 2014, p. 322). How then, as Indigenous educators deeply committed to Indigenous life and sovereignty do we enact a decolonial process in the very institutions that are utterly reliant on
settler colonialism?

_Flori and Sandy’s observations_

How we enact decolonial processes from within institutions that both establish and perpetuate settler colonialism is not a singular question but rather an ongoing project, and the responses of our students to this project varies. Flori addresses this in teacher professional development workshops in Los Angeles, California, where only 28.4% of those who live in the city are white. In such a dominantly non-white city, educators of color have led the way for critical interventions that span across academic disciplines, grade levels, and public/charter schooling divides. Flori notes that the most interesting teacher trainings have been in the Camino Nuevo Charter Academy school system where despite being a charter, teachers are unionized, and they have prioritized allocating material resources to training teachers in ethnic studies curriculum. For instance, as part of the workshop Flori conducts, educators receive a copy of _Colors of Guatemala_, a multilingual book created by the Maya diaspora of Los Angeles that includes a series of activities that range from interviewing elders to word searches, and so forth. Educators are given time to think about how they can incorporate activities into their curriculum whether it be the geography and math of migration, or the development of narrative texts in language arts. As a result of a collective of radical educator-organizers led by Ron Espiritu, an ethnic studies teacher, Flori has been invited to present about Indigenous migrant youth because this charter system has been seeing an

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9 Demographic data continues to have definitions that make it hard to measure Latinx communities, but only 28.4% identified as solely white and not of Hispanic or Latino origin. This is taken from the 2017 American Community Survey available at [https://www.census.gov](https://www.census.gov).

10 For more about the creation and significance of this text, see Boj Lopez (2017) and Grande (2018).

11 For more information on Ron Espiritu, see: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XvvMgujD4j8](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XvvMgujD4j8)
increase of Maya youth who are Indigenous language speakers or come from families where Indigenous languages remain the primary language. While many state that the majority of these young migrants are from El Salvador, Guatemala, and Honduras, it is necessary to point out that Guatemalan migrants tend to be Mayan because Mayans are the majority population, and they experience extreme forms of marginalization. In 2018 and 2019, we have seen several cases of young Mayan migrants killed at the U.S.-Mexico border either through direct violence or neglect.¹²

Within this context, the educators that attend the trainings often have a strong sense of how white supremacy functions, but they are being introduced to settler colonialism as a framework premised on terra nullius³ logics that encase seemingly radical projects like immigrant rights movements that claim that Los Angeles is a city of immigrants. In this context teaching educators about settler colonialism also does the necessary work of challenging teachers of color to think about the racial logics that exist within their communities. Their responses create the opportunity to reopen explicit conversation on intra-Latinx racism and the ongoing legacies of racism in Latin America. For example, often these teachers feel challenged to understand the ways in which a land and language-centered form of Indigeneity challenges pan-Indigeneity that was popularized during the Chicano movement in which all Chicanos were purportedly Indians.¹⁴

And while Chicanx claimed Indigeneity, they at best ignored and at worst


¹³ Terra nullius is defined as land that is empty and unoccupied and remains a central tenant of settler occupation but was especially used a legal right by the settler nation of Australia. The recent anthology Discovering Indigenous Lands: The Doctrine of Discovery in the English Colonies thoroughly reviews how terra nullius has been utilized in the service of land theft, Indigenous dispossession, and settler colonialism (Miller, Ruru, Behrendt, & Lindberg 2012).

¹⁴ Scholars like Saldana Portillo (2017), Alberto (2012), and Blackwell (2017) have all laid important groundwork in thinking about the duplicitous nature of these moves to claim and erase.
perpetuated racism against Indigenous Mexicans who have maintained their ancestral connections to their land, language, spirituality, and cultural practice.

Sandy works with students in a teacher education program at Connecticut College, a predominantly white, small liberal arts college in New London, Connecticut. Current tuition at the College is $54,820, and is expected to rise. This means that, beyond being predominantly white, the College draws students from the wealthy class. To place this in greater context, consider that the current median household income in the U.S. hovers around $61,000, and that the average wage in 2017 was $48,251.57. Also, according to a recent study conducted by the Watson Institute at Brown University, there are 38 colleges and universities that matriculate more students from the top wealthy 1% than from the bottom 60%; Connecticut College is one of those schools.

That said, there is something laudable about students who have multiple career opportunities and trajectories and choose to become a public school teacher, sometimes against the will of their families. While quite a few enter the Teacher Certification program because they “love children” and also flourished in school, they quickly learn that the teaching profession generally, and the demands of a liberatory curriculum more specifically, require much more from them than an uncomplicated “love” for children. To be sure, some students exit the program as a result, but most persist. And, even beyond persistence, through the certification programs, students increasingly begin to realize the ways in which they were taught to be compliant in an educational system that cultivates and demands “docile bodies” (Foucault, 1995). Despite or because of their privilege, the students come to college largely unaware of how their “opportunities” have also been conditioned by the imperatives of a capitalist, settler state.

When introducing students to settler colonialism, Sandy takes great care to underscore that its precondition and constitutive order is land theft and Indigenous genocide and removal. The underlying European logic of extraction and accumulation was also enacted upon Black bodies through the system of chattel slavery. While Indigenous genocide and slavery are
not new topics for Connecticut College students, learning about settler colonialism as an analytic that reframes them both, not as temporally bounded events, but rather as constitutive structures of the settler state is a new concept. Understood as a structure, students begin to see the relationship between settler colonialism and present day struggles such as police violence, gentrification, anti-immigrant border violence, and incarceration. As a logic, they start to question the ways in which their own schooling has “taught” them to consume, desire, compete, individuate, control, and comply. Their trajectory of understanding is a short, albeit complicated walk from that understanding to Albert Memmi’s (2003) notion that ultimately “colonization can only disfigure the colonizer” (p. 147).

Since such realizations can be un-settling for students from the dominant class, building strong relations in the classroom is imperative. We both employ a wide variety of relationship building strategies that differs with each new group of students. In the workshop, we shared one particular exercise that Sandy engages with her students with reliable success. At a chosen point in the semester, she assigns Robin D. G. Kelley’s (2016) article, “Black Study, Black Struggle,” which appeared in the Boston Review. The article was written amidst the string of campus protests that erupted nationwide in the aftermath of Michael Brown’s death in Ferguson, Missouri. Kelley characterizes his words as a “love letter” to student activists. He writes:

...I want to draw attention to...the tension between reform and revolution, between desiring to belong and rejecting the university as a cog in the neoliberal order. I want to think about what it means for black students to seek love from an institution incapable of loving them—of loving anyone, perhaps—and to manifest this yearning by framing their lives largely through a lens of trauma. And I want to think about what it means for black students to choose to... become subversives in the academy, exposing and resisting its labor exploitation, its gentrifying practices, its endowments built on misery, its class privilege often camouflaged in multicultural garb, and its commitments to war and security.
Typically, Kelley’s words hit hard. Black students and students of color, especially those who have engaged in campus activism, feel the sting of learning that their institutions were not built for them and, as such, will never “love” them. White students, especially those still compelled by the myth of the perfect democracy, grapple with the idea that anything is “beyond reform.” The class is always greatly animated through the group close reading, which is invariably punctuated with cries of, “Wait! What? Professor Grande, we need to unpack that!”

Together but disparately the students push back, against and beyond intellectual and psychological boundaries they were not quite sure existed, ultimately rising to Kelley’s initial entreaty: to love, study, struggle. Toward the end of the class, Sandy has students respond anonymously to the following three questions: (1) Where do you experience “love” in your life, what sustains you? (2) Where do you encounter struggle in your life, what are you struggling with right now? (3) What issues/questions are you interested in studying more deeply? Before they write, Sandy asks them to dig deep and to be as honest and vulnerable as they can manage. Their responses, which are written on Post-it’s, are collected and placed on three large sheets of paper labeled, “Love,” “Study,” and “Struggle” respectively.

The first time Sandy did the exercise, though she was not sure what to expect, she anticipated responses to the “struggle” question to reflect the students relative privilege: “I struggle with managing my time,” “I didn’t get all the classes I wanted.” Much to her surprise, the board is filled with responses like: “I am afraid I might be addicted to drugs,” “My aunt has cancer,” “I have body image problems,” “My mom takes care of her father and I’m afraid of the toll it’s taking on her,” “I struggle with anxiety from being sexually assaulted.” While we discussed the differential impact of struggle on students without means and resources, we also acknowledged that pain is a shared human experience.

The unanticipated outcome of the exercise was the immediate and significant effect it had on our learning community. It was not that the exercise leveled or worse, erased difference. Rather, it helped to peel back layers. It revealed students to each other. In short, we deepened relations and, in so doing, cultivated the grounds for learning through and with
community. These deep relationships with each other in the classroom also become the ground on which we can further engage difficult conversations about power, settler colonialism, and what it means to teach about/in U.S. society.

**Conclusion: Shaping Our Impacts**

The university was not created to save my life. The university is not about the preservation of a bright brown body. The university will use me alive and use me dead. The university does not intend to love me. The university does not know how to love me. The university in fact, does not love me. But the universe does. (Gumbs, 2012\(^5\))

The call for us to attend Hacer Escuela/Inventing School was welcomed in part because this project has sought to rethink the very foundation of education in Global South communities across the hemisphere. As Indigenous scholars we have both experienced and engaged Indigenous and anti-settler colonial epistemologies outside of the mainstream classroom. However, we also understand that engaging schools and teachers is a necessary step in unpacking the ways that settler colonialism has fashioned liberal multiculturalism as an ushering in to settler nationalism.

In working with teachers who are not Indigenous, we find that we must not only teach about Indigenous peoples, but also how settler colonialism is not just an event but an ongoing process and structure, one that implicates the university/school as a site of ongoing Indigenous dispossession. Our work as Indigenous studies faculty engaged in teacher professional development and teacher education has shaped the ways in which we approach education as a political practice rather than one encased within western liberal notions of individual rights, diversity, and multiculturalism. These individualized notions of rights often position

\(^5\) For the full text, see: [https://www.thefeministwire.com/2012/10/the-shape-of-my-impact/](https://www.thefeministwire.com/2012/10/the-shape-of-my-impact/).
(multicultural) education as an opportunity for inclusion, without necessarily having to unpack the reality that inclusion occurs at the expense of a decolonial praxis. Our role as Indigenous educators then has been to push ourselves and our students to reconceptualize education as a terrain of struggle in which we must actively choose to learn and teach about how structures of power function.
References


Community-Based Commentary

Indigenous Arts and Tribal Colleges and Universities: Expressions of Collective Native Identity

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Abstract

This commentary discusses the American Indian College Fund and Tribal College and Universities’ support of Indigenous arts as critical to cultural identity and place-based experiences for Native people. Indigenous arts are deeply rooted in connections to shared Indigenous values of kinship, relationship to all living and non-living things, language, and the land. In the United States, hundreds of Tribes have art forms that emerge from place, from interpretation of Tribal knowledge, and which meet the everyday, human needs of beauty, usefulness, and connectedness. Our right as humans to preserve and revitalize traditional and contemporary Native arts supporting our cultural identities and distinctiveness has existed since time immemorial. These rights honor the natural laws that existed prior to the creation of political or nation-state laws.

Keywords: Indigenous arts; Native arts; Indigenous identity; Tribal Colleges and Universities; American Indian College Fund

Introduction: Tribal colleges and universities, Indigenous arts, and the right to identity

Statements about values, imagery, and ceremonies are symbolic of the spirituality that is the foundation of TCUs’ (tribal colleges and universities) philosophical beliefs. TCUs usually have some version of their tribal value systems reflected in their missions, logos, statements of purpose, and other public documents. Buildings, landscapes, and art reflect living and non-living relations. (Crazy Bull & Lindquist, 2018, our emphasis)
Embedded in the traditional knowledge of Indigenous peoples and reflected in the arts taught throughout Tribal communities is the deeply held belief that our material (and spiritual) world is rooted in relationships. Indigenous people recognize that artistic expression is inseparable from cultural values and that practices that emerge from values are rooted in identity. Identity is a human right. Indigenous people everywhere describe themselves as people with distinctive characteristics. Their distinctions emerge from their origin and teaching stories, the way they organize their social structure including their governing structures and their rules of interaction (natural and human-made laws), their relationship to their homelands, their languages and their spiritual practices. All these characteristics describe identity and without that identity, these distinct groups would not exist as people. For Indigenous people, identity is inherent in our languages, place, and kinship, and therefore, in artistic expressions.

Tribal colleges and universities (TCUs) are post-secondary institutions founded by Tribal Nations in the United States (U.S) to promote tribal self-determination and identity. Thirty-five TCUs currently serve Tribal and rural U.S. citizens, primarily in the northern plains, woodlands, and southwest. The missions of these institutions are focused on revitalization of Tribal lifeways and on Tribal prosperity. In the context of Tribal individual and collective self-determination, art is one form of collective rights – Indigenous arts are not only cultural rights, they are social and economic rights. As a cultural right, Indigenous arts express values and identity; as a social right, arts express relationships and universal knowledge; as an economic right, Indigenous arts are a form of expression that can be tied to the economic support for individuals and their families. At TCUs, Indigenous arts are both inherent in the symbols and images of the institutions and are taught throughout their communities in diverse, intergenerational ways.

1 The authors capitalize “Tribes” in deference to the distinct political, social, and cultural status of Tribal nations in the United States.
This community-based commentary examines how TCUs preserve and educate about and with arts through the experiences of two Indigenous artists and educators and an educational leader within the tribal college movement. Bridget Skenadore, Diné, is the program officer for Native Arts and Culture at the American Indian College Fund (College Fund); Colleen (referred to as “Co” from here forward) Carew, Mescalero Apache-descentant is a faculty member at Salish Kootenai College (SKC); and Cheryl Crazy Bull, Sicangu Lakota, is the President of the American Indian College Fund2.

(Re)learning Native arts

Our commitment to restoring Native arts is grounded in our understanding that Native people do not separate art from their values, teachings, and practices. Art is part of our identity, culture and history. We learn about our people and our origins through the teachings embedded in artistic expression and through the skills needed to create the art. Art also reflects the different dimensions of our ways of knowing, that are inherent in Native philosophy. Art reflects a connection to place and in tribal societies connects individuals and families to social and economic structures.

Creating art in Native communities also has deep spiritual meaning and is usually done in a ceremonial space. Gatherers of material resources from nature will pray and offer tobacco when picking plants or stripping bark from trees. Hunters will offer prayers when an animal sacrifices itself for food and material use. Artists will often burn sage, cedar or sweetgrass to smudge their materials before and during creation. Art is also part of our celebrations, our regalia and adornment, and our social and cultural

2 The American Indian College Fund is non-profit organization whose mission focuses on Native students’ college access and success through scholarships and support services. The College Fund supports the 35 full member tribal colleges and universities of the American Indian Higher Education Consortium through programming and capacity building grants and activities. Its mission is to invest in Native students and tribal college education to transform lives and communities. Transformation includes revitalization of culture and language and of traditional knowledge and practices. Transformation also includes restoration of tribal ways of living, relationality, and wellness.
occasions. Gatherings of Native people for song and dance are filled with incredible expressions of art through beadwork, quillwork, and the creative use of fabric. Honoring ceremonies among the various tribes include gift-giving of items often made by family and friends such as shawls, quilts, and carved and woven items like masks and baskets.

We recognize that art in western society is often viewed as outside of the personal experiences or knowledge of the observer. We take field trips to art museums without a deep understanding of what art represents to the society in which it was created. Many people collect art in its various forms without knowledge of the history and meaning of that art. Western art is often a reporting of what is seen. We also acknowledge that this interpretation does not apply to all situations and are sharing it here to contrast western and Native views of art.

The Anishinaabe are a woodlands people whose artistic expression emerges from the natural resources and images of the places they live—floral patterns on regalia and birchbark baskets are examples. A non-Native person might see an Anishinaabe flower design and think of it as a pretty design, while an Anishinaabe person will see that there is reasoning behind the placement of lines, selection of color, and the number of flowers used. The creation of floral patterns is intended to interpret art in the natural world, affirm geometric and mathematical understanding of how the natural world is translated into art, and can serve as a signal to other Anishinaabe peoples regarding identity and status in those societies.

TCUs teach traditional and contemporary arts through certificate and degree programs and through community outreach. The two approaches discussed in this essay, restoration and preservation of lost or endangered art forms and connecting cultural arts to healing and wellness exemplify how Tribes ensure their arts remain known and vital. Native art, whether traditional or contemporary, is rooted in hundreds, if not thousands of years of experience and history, and is inherently telling

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3 Anishinaabe, also known as Ojibwe or Ojibway, mostly reside in the upper Midwest of the United States (Minnesota, Wisconsin, Michigan, eastern North Dakota) and in regions throughout parts of Canada.
stories of tribal origins, family knowledge, spiritual practices and beliefs, and identity. For Native societies, art is part of our well-being and strengthens our cultural identities. Because art can also be a restorative practice, there are many efforts across Indian country to teach Native arts and pass on the teachings that are embedded in the arts.

*Restoring and preserving Native Arts towards Tribal self-determination*

As we have noted, TCUs have created profound and innovative programming that positively impacts and preserve Tribal knowledge and identity, and the College Fund supports this work. We have two programs to restore and preserve traditional Native arts. First, the Restoration and Preservation of Traditional Native Arts and Knowledge Program was established in 2013 to serve TCUs located in the upper-Midwestern states of Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin. The purpose of the program is to expand knowledge and skills in the endangered art forms placing the TCUs in the Upper Midwest at the forefront of this effort and supporting opportunities to increase the intergenerational transfer of knowledge of art and culture at participating TCUs and among the tribal communities and artists they serve.

Second, since 1993 the College Fund has also administered a National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) fund. This fund supports cultural preservation and revitalization efforts at 24 of the 35 TCUs. TCUs use the funding for their college’s cultural preservation efforts. Past projects include community events, museum archival documentation, and establishment of cultural centers on campus.

From a human rights perspective, which is one of the major considerations of this special issue, there are characteristics of the cultural arts programs administered by the College Fund that are vital to the preservation and restoration of Tribal identity. Art forms among Tribes are both functional and creative. They make use of locally available resources

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4 See [https://collegefund.org/program-initiatives/programs.html#native-section](https://collegefund.org/program-initiatives/programs.html#native-section) to learn more about College Fund programs.
including resources acquired through trade, and the skills needed for arts are taught through intergenerational, experiential approaches. At the same time, the missions of TCUs arise out of a commitment to Tribal self-determination, and this must be at the forefront of our understanding of TCU efforts in terms of cultural preservation. We observe that preservation of identity, such as through the arts, is one manifestation of Tribal self-determination. Pedagogy at TCUs is thus ingrained with the restoration of tribal ways of teaching and learning. Furthermore, the most common forms of teaching and learning in Tribal societies allow learners to work directly with established practitioners and to give them the opportunity to practice the skills that are being taught. For the arts discussed in this essay, this pedagogy is apt, and intergenerational teaching and learning is the norm. These processes are pivotal to the passing of knowledge and skills from one generation to the next generation, while making connections to the teachings of our ancestors and ensuring that generations to come will also be able to make those connections.

Through intergenerational learning, TCUs are rebuilding artistic knowledge that was once lost in Tribal communities or to which there was limited access. Restoring Native Art Forms also helps preserve languages and cultural practices. Through Native Arts programming participants are being reintroduced to the history and culture of their people. Many Indigenous people across the country lost access to cultural knowledge due to the colonial policies of the U.S. government such as the establishment of reservations and the boarding school era. TCUs provide remedies to counter that loss by offering community education and academic programs that provide a place for tribal people to be introduced to or relearn cultural knowledge.

For example, Dakota people who reside in the borderlands between the woodlands of Minnesota and the eastern Dakotas and the Great Plains, were accustomed to using woven and parfleche (hide) containers and the

\footnote{The Dakota along with the Lakota and Nakota are part of a linguistic group commonly called the Sioux and reside mostly in Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, eastern Montana, and Canada.}
metal pots introduced when European settlers arrived. But one of the Tribal colleges, Sisseton Wahpeton College (SWC) located on the Lake Traverse Reservation in northeast South Dakota, discovered through community outreach and research of lost arts and traditional knowledge that their community also had a traditional practice of pottery making. SWC staff discovered that pottery had been a functional and artistic resource to their ancestors. Erin Griffin Director of Dakota Studies, explains, “Pottery was one of the first art forms to become endangered due to the fur trade. The fur trade impacted Dakota people before contact even occurred because surrounding tribes were engaged in trade and one of the earliest trade goods was metal pots. Knowing the extensive work it takes to create a pot out of clay and because of their fragile nature, it makes sense that pottery would be one of the first things to be replaced through trade” (personal communication, July 31, 2019).

**Testimonies of tradition and innovation**

In the fall of 2014, SWC began a Traditional Native Arts workshop series focused on incorporating Traditional Native Art forms back into their community. The first workshop taught participants about Dakota pottery and how their ancestors constructed pottery. Dakota pottery was chosen first because of seasonal harvesting and the need for seasonal weather to create the pots. Potters must go outside to harvest the materials and warm afternoon days help create the right conditions for gathering materials. Material used when creating Dakota pottery includes cattails whose buds must be harvested in the fall. This workshop emphasized the sense of place for participants strengthening their specific cultural identities as Dakota people.

In another example of the importance of place and art connected to identity, our co-author, Colleen “Co” Carew, through support for her dissertation completion from the College Fund’s faculty development program, conducted her dissertation research to illuminate perspectives and experiences of a sense of place through an Indigenous art making and storytelling experience. Co was inspired to conduct art-based research
because of the rich cultural stories and thoughtful interpretations that emerged from *Expression through the Arts*, an undergraduate course she taught for five years at Salish Kootenai College. In 2018, Co conducted Indigenous arts-based research at Salish Kootenai College with 11 students and alumni representing five federally recognized tribes. She gave instruction to the participants to construct a 3D moccasin using paper and asked them to embed colors, shapes, symbols, and designs that described their understanding of a sense of place. The Native American moccasin was used as the symbolic cultural catalyst to reflect on one’s Indigenous knowledge rooted within this symbol. Culturally based ancestral, family, and personal stories emerged from the colors, shapes, symbols and designs that were drawn, painted, or collaged onto the paper moccasin. The Indigenous ways of knowing that emerged from the study affirmed the participants’ rights to the following values and characteristics of Indigenous life: 1) unwavering support from one’s family and community; 2) interconnection of culture and land; 3) intergenerational knowledge transfer; 4) deepened cultural knowledge, balance; and 5) understanding of a felt sense of place.

Participants constructed multi-media images and replicas of moccasins and made connections between the images they used and their own ancestry, tribal origins, oral stories, cultural identity, family, community, and landscape (see Image 1). Also, images were incorporated that represented homes such as tipis, kinships such as pictures of family members, and natural connections such as trees, eagles, and feathers. Several participants created abstract images that represented emotions, relationships, and inspiration. One participant created an origami flower that symbolized her family coming alive and blossoming when they are together. Another provided a description of her moccasin rooted in the colors and symbolism of the land, which represented her ancestry and cultural identity.
The research findings, artwork, stories, and reflections were framed through Co’s lens as a Native researcher and were approached from a holistic, culturally based understanding of how a sense of place is developed with participants. During a final focus group, participants shared their overall impressions of the experience and discussed how art was healing, making statements such as, “Art heals my soul” and “I can finally rest when I’m here just doing art” (Carew, 2018). The overall sense of peace experienced by the participants in the study and shared in their own words

Image 1: Co-author Co Carew’s moccasin drawing symbolizing her in place
exemplifies the values and characteristics of Indigenous life that Co examined⁶.

As an educator, Co also offers abstract self-portraits in a class titled “Expression Through the Arts,” at Salish Kootenai College. She shares,

*I have lived and worked on the Salish and Kootenai reservation for over 35 years. During this time, I worked as a school-based social worker, mental health provider and as a department chair, developing an accredited social work program at the Salish Kootenai College. I have known many of my now adult students as children or adolescents, therefore I also have knowledge of their trauma stories. I noticed that images or words relating to the difficult times that they have had are side by side images of strength and hope.*

Self-portraits help the artists/creators connect images to emotions and feelings about themselves, their relationships and their experiences. Co uses the self-portrait experience as another strategy to engage student reflection and creativity. The self-portrait images are often whimsical in nature. Symbols or shapes relating to one’s Native American culture appear frequently. Also, sharp lines, jagged edged marks or tear drops representing difficult times can be seen on the portraits themselves. Student comments reflect the healing nature of both the experience of art-making and the art product: “I have had a rough road but I’m now living a clean and sober life. The artwork that I created reminds me of who I am now.” Another student stated that she was going to take her art piece to a treatment facility she was entering that week. She said that she wanted to put it over her bed and wake up every morning to the reminder of her “true sense of place.”

⁶Note that Co’s study also used a Native American advisory group to affirm the right of the community to participate in development and analysis of the research associated with her dissertation. The advisory group reviewed the artwork and outcomes and created artwork to understand the entire process. A few of the comments made by the advisory group are as follows: “Artwork and stories are a language of the heart” and, “this project brought the participants back to themselves.” The comments overall were poignant and reflective of the healing aspect of the research project.
Our co-author Bridget also shares how TCUs develop and implement programs that primarily use oral teaching to share intergenerational knowledge. This is reflected in the arts research and education that we do and support, which incorporates storytelling, music, poetry, and language preservation to enhance restoration and engage the arts in meaningful ways. Moreover, we note that the knowledge that is being taught is not written in textbooks or commonly documented by community members; rather, oral stories and personal narratives artistically depicted not only heal, but they are also helping Indigenous people teach and learn about the history of multiple Native art forms while developing the skills to produce this art.

We also assert that Native arts are integral to place, particularly through the practice of linking the gathering of material resources and the production of art to seasons and to ceremonial and social events. There are multiple examples throughout the TCUs, and one prominent example can be found at Fond du Lac Tribal and Community College in northern Minnesota. Restorative teachings are based on the Ojibwe uses of trees and tree bark during the summer season when the trees are at their strongest and offer the most plentiful materials. This TCU hosted three workshops that take into consideration place and the seasons associated with place—teaching and creating lodge structure, black ash basketry, and woven cedar mats all depend on having enough time, heat, and daylight hours to work outside to create pieces.

*Traditional knowledge considerations in the arts*

While we are most interested in the recovery and preservation of Native arts across TCUs and Indian Country that involve all Indigenous people in these places, we provide a word on a different considerations regarding traditional knowledge and arts practices, which include gender; ultimately, this topic requires more in depth discussion and a wide variety of local perspectives in order to do it better justice.

Traditional Indigenous knowledge recognizes that arts require specific considerations according to different variables. For example, some
arts are gender specific, and some TCU s design their workshops for those constituents. The College Fund has a place-based women’s leadership program, Indigenous Visionaries, that supports selected TCU students and their mentors to develop strategies together that engage traditional knowledge and activism with early childhood education, traditional arts, and/or environmental sustainability. One of the Indigenous Visionaries Native Arts Fellows uses her art to help people battle trauma. Though her ribbon skirt teaching she is helping women gain their confidence and building their self-esteem by allowing them to make their own ribbon skirts. Ribbon skirts (Image 2) were introduced after French traders brought the ribbons to Midwestern tribes, which eventually spread to other regions and tribes. Ribbon skirts play an important role to those women who wear them. A master artist said that the ribbon skirts are worn as a form of medicine and to have positive and lovely thoughts and prayers when creating them because those thoughts and feelings are transformed into the dress. So, when the person is wearing them the bottom of their skirts will touch Mother Earth, and Mother Earth will feel their prayers. Today ribbons skirts have become widely popular with the new generations of Native women. Ribbon skirts are being worn as everyday clothing, and also during swearings in of public office and on the frontlines of protests.

Additionally, blending women’s roles with protest, Indigenous people also use their art as part of their activism and have created powerful images that magnify current events. Art can influence social change and support healing. In 2017, when the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe and thousands of allies and supporters gathered along the Missouri River in southern North Dakota, these people, known as water protectors, used art for expression and protest. Sitting Bull College, located on these lands, hosted various ribbon skirt making workshops so female water protectors

had their contemporary clothing with traditional meaning for their work. The water protectors were wearing their skirts to honor the earth as they fought for her protection.

Image 2: College Fund Student Ambassador dressed in a ribbon skirt with applique
Image 3: Participant in Sitting Bull College ribbon skirt workshop
Age and thus age-related ability of young children also influences when Native peoples can be taught certain skills, and family plays a significant role in how arts education occurs. Commonplace in Native communities is the identification of families as having artistic knowledge and skills that are shared within the family, on behalf of the entire community. Community includes all ages and families that come together to learn. In her work, Bridget observes that family members learn from each other, affirming the kinship value of Native communities. She shares,

*It is especially heartwarming to see younger participants have the passion to learn about a Native art form because they are the next generation of knowledge holders. One of my favorite examples was when I visited the College of Menominee Nation in Keshena, Wisconsin, as they hosted a Menominee snowshoe workshop. I witnessed various families participate in this workshop, but what stood out to me was a grandpa and his young grandson learning together. They were helping each other prepare the materials, bending and shaping and stringing the snowshoes in a way that brought joy to my heart. It was powerful to see intergenerational learning and teaching being passed from one generation to the next.*

Another powerful example of how Indigenous art addresses social issues impacting all Native communities is Cannupa Hanska Luger’s sculptural installation titled *Every One*. Luger, a graduate of the Institute of American Indian Arts, a TCU located in Santa Fe, New Mexico, created a sculptural piece to highlight the growing number of missing and murdered Indigenous women, girls, queer and trans community members (MMIWGQT) across North America (and indeed, worldwide). This

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8 For more information, please see the artist’s website: [http://www.cannupahanska.com/mmiwqtbeadproject](http://www.cannupahanska.com/mmiwqtbeadproject).

9 For more information, please see the work of scholars like Sarah Deer: [http://www.niwrc.org/speaker/sarah-deer](http://www.niwrc.org/speaker/sarah-deer) and information on the MMIWG movement,
installation had a crowd-sourced component as Indigenous communities across the U.S. and Canada, at Cannupa’s invitation, created and sent two-inch clay beads to him. Lugar then prepared the bead to form a monumental sculptural installation of a Native woman’s face (See Image 3). Over 4,000 beads were created, and the installation has been shown throughout the U.S.

Image 4: “Every One”

Conclusion

Our co-author, Bridget, says,

*Native people intertwine art into their everyday life, we do not separate it. As an artist myself when I am learning about Native Art forms, I am honoring the people I am learning from because their teachings are helping me grow as a Native woman. I am taking the teachings behind the art forms and applying them to my everyday life.*

Native people are place-based people. We *are* our land, and we are the product of our environment. As we have shared, through work with TCUs, we have learned from participants that Native Arts workshops and academic courses are bringing positive change to their communities, including critical opportunities for self-healing. Instead of turning to activities that might not be socially or individually positive, they are participating in workshops that allow them to interact with other people in their community; they are learning about their culture; they are working with their hands; and they are leaving with change.

We uphold that Indigenous art heals, restores, strengthens, enlightens, connects us to where we come from and who we are. We gather our materials from the earth to create pieces of art. We incorporate the lessons of master artists and culture bearers as we gain knowledge from their teaching, their stories, and their experiences. We use the songs and language of our people to learn more about who we are as people, where we come from, and where we are going. We build relationships with those who want to learn alongside us as we send our knowledge out into our communities. We understand the need for learning through traditional Native arts and contemporary arts – and how these two areas inseparable areas are intertwined and complement each other.
References


Photo Credit:
Every One
Artist: Cannupa Hanska Luger, 2018
Over 4,000 ceramic clay beads created in collaboration with hundreds of communities across the US and Canada.
Lazy Stitch exhibition organized by Cannupa Hanska Luger at the Ent Center for Contemporary Art, UCCS Galleries of Contemporary Art, Colorado Springs, CO 2018
Image courtesy of UCCS Galleries of Contemporary Art
Community-Based Commentary

Ensuring the Well-Being of Pueblo and Indigenous Women Through Policy and Practice

Peggy Bird (Kewa)*

Abstract

What happens when Indigenous nations do not have written policy to ensure the well-being of their people, and more specifically, policy that ensures the safety of the most vulnerable, including women in the community? What are some considerations for establishment of such policy by Indigenous nations? Speaking from the standpoint of a Pueblo Indian woman from New Mexico, I explore considerations for policy development that draws from Indigenous and Pueblo core values that addresses the safety of Indigenous women affiliated with Indigenous nations and living on Indigenous lands. In this community-based commentary, I speak from my experiences as an advocate

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for Indigenous women's rights worldwide, from my epistemological roots as a Kewa woman, and as an attorney-scholar-researcher.

Keywords: Pueblo women; Indigenous women; Indigenous policy development

I am an Indigenous woman from Kewa, one of the nineteen Pueblos in New Mexico. While my intent is in this commentary is not to write about Kewa (nor do I speak for Kewa), I do believe it is important to highlight my own positionality in relation to the Pueblos.

The Contexts from Which I Write

Kewa is one of the remaining Pueblo Indian nations in the United States (U.S.) that has been able to survive and thrive despite the onslaught of colonialism that began when the Spaniards came to the lands where we live in the 16th century. Kewa is located about forty miles north of Albuquerque, and the main village is located close to the Rio Grande River. Of the 5,000 tribal members, there are approximately 3,500 people who live in the community. Kewa is my home community and is the place where I am connected to no matter where I may physically find myself.

I am a survivor of sexual assault and domestic violence, as well as an advocate who has been working to end violence against women for the last 25 years. I am also an attorney, a tribal court judge¹, a mother, aunt, cousin, daughter, and grandmother. Personal impetus for this commentary comes from my experience working for a number of Pueblo Indian nations, including those considered to be among the most “traditional” of the 19 Pueblo Indian nations in New Mexico. Note that I use the term “traditional” here as it is used in the 19 Pueblos, which tends to mean long-established,

¹ Most of the 573 federally recognized Indian tribes in the United States have tribal courts that were established and operate under a tribal code or custom of the Indian tribe. A tribal court judge presides over matters that are brought before the tribal court.
observing customary cultural, religious, and governance practices that are less changed over a long period of time. However, I am aware that what may be considered traditional and defined as such has been critiqued by other scholars—meaning, we need to be explicit and critical when we use terms like it in relation to our cultural practices and consider implications for Indigenous community adaptability and inclusivity (Huaman, 2015).

Using such a critical lens can also help Indigenous communities to consider bringing to the surface the need for written policies that help to ensure the safety and well-being (as defined by all community members and where the voices of women are heard) of Indigenous women within the larger context of local and Indigenous values of respect for women and for Mother Earth. The role of research in this regard necessarily includes taking a look at the relationship between respect for earth and women. For example, my own doctoral dissertation explored the histories and sociopolitical contexts of Pueblo women leaders in New Mexico through their narratives. My broader interests focused on attitude shifts towards women in our communities over time, and I wondered—What did and does respect for the earth mother look like? What did and does respect for Pueblo women look like in our communities today? Based on my research and professional experiences, I fear grave implications for Pueblo communities, for Indigenous peoples worldwide, and for the world if Indigenous communities do not make real connections between these two questions.

While I have written with the intention to share this commentary with Pueblo peoples and communities, it is my hope that there are pieces that will be useful to other Indigenous peoples. First, I acknowledge the voices of the Pueblo women I interviewed in my dissertation research who played a huge part in helping me to decide the focus of this commentary. Those women, from three different generations – grandmother, mother, and daughter ages – are involved in community-based work and activism that focuses on the protection of water, the environment, the lands, and the overall health and well-being of Indigenous and Pueblo women and Mother Earth. Other sources that inform this commentary are the written and oral, including my own life-long learning experiences.
Initially, when choosing how I would shape this commentary, I considered the major themes that run through my advocacy work with Pueblo and Indigenous communities. This reflection brought me to a few options where women are integral as organizers, leaders, and participants—community initiatives regarding food and healthy diets within Pueblo communities, new educational initiatives for Pueblo children, tribal membership and enrollment policies, and the safety of Pueblo women in our communities. I chose to write about the safety of Pueblo women in our communities from a well-being-in-policy perspective because our ability to do good work and to be productive members of our communities relies upon our safety and well-being. Furthermore, as a survivor and long-time advocate, this is personal for me and for many other Pueblo and Indigenous women. In my years of advocacy, I have seen much progress take place in raising awareness about domestic violence, and in recent years, awareness is being raised about sexual assault through wider public and Indigenous community discussions of human trafficking and Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWGs). I understand that actual change sometimes happens slowly, and I also believe that policy changes, whether written or unwritten, have the power to support the way that change happens.

**Description of the Issues and Initial steps**

"Well-being" and the Safety of Pueblo Women

Before I reflect on notions of well-being, how this relates to vulnerable community members, and the role of policy, it is vital to define what a formal written policy is in our Indigenous communities. Hypothetically speaking, I would begin this conversation by obtaining input from Pueblo community members in their own languages in order to discuss policy development. Use of a given Pueblo’s language is the correct,

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2 There are five Pueblo languages spoken throughout the 19 Pueblos of New Mexico: Zuni, Tiwa, Towa, Keres, and Tewa. For more information see the American Indian Language Policy Research and Teacher Training Center at the University of New Mexico:
respectful, most epistemologically rich approach. In moving forward in this way, I acknowledge that I am not a fluent Keres language speaker, so I am aware that such a presentation to people in Pueblo communities and ensuing discussion may take longer so that concepts are thoroughly discussed and explained in the language spoken in the particular Pueblo.

When I think of what a formal written well-being policy could be, especially focused on women, I believe that such a policy must contain a vision statement on well-being for the entire Pueblo. Despite being an English term, well-being can be explored as open-ended across multiple language communities. To me, well-being encompasses where a person is within the context of *all* life and how that person conducts oneself, behaving respectfully, acknowledging relatives, being grateful and being aware of how behavior and energies connect to all life in a positive way. In the work and movement to end violence against women and in the justice system, we need to take an overall view of our connections to all life in the universe, both physical and spiritual—when prayers are offered, songs are sung, dances take place within our Indigenous communities, in our own ways we strive to find our being well, our being to be good, positive and reflective of Indigenous values.

I call for Indigenous peoples to define for themselves what well-being is using their own languages and cultural values: What is well-being for this particular community? Is it a goal, a process, and upon what does it depend? Has it been defined in the past and by whom? Who gets to define it today? Whose voices are missing? How do we individually and collectively envision well-being, and for how long—meaning, where do we see the overall *goodness* of this Pueblo one year from now? What about five, ten, or 20 years from now? Does our definition of well-being take into consideration the safety of women in the Pueblo? Defining safety must also undergo a similar line of critical questioning.

I experience well-being in my Pueblo as a generally good feeling when connected with other people in the Pueblo, knowing that we share three major elements—safety, love, and caring for one another. When I think about well-being, I also think about the feelings of connectedness that come when I wake up in the morning, think about the dreams I just had, look outside the window to see whether it is sunny or overcast, and look around at the houses and where my mom lives at Kewa, and I see children going to school or outside playing while they are waiting for the bus. I also experience that connectedness when walking in the village and passing another person—both of us greet each other—or when driving, community members raise a finger or our hand up from the steering wheel to acknowledge the person in the other car as we pass each other. Well-being is also that feeling that happens when I am in the plaza watching a traditional dance, sitting there with others, greeting each other, and sharing snacks as the day goes on, hearing the songs, or participating in the dance, laughing, and talking with each other. That sense of well-being is recognizing that I belong to that place, that I am happy, at peace, and whole—that I have everything I need; my being is well.

In addition to defining well-being based on the good feelings that emerge from connectedness, I also define well-being in Pueblo communities from a woman’s perspective and as the absence of violence and a sense of balance and prevailing justice. According to that side of the definition, Pueblo women are safe to walk alone in their communities without fear of being sexually harassed or abused and are safe from fear of physical and sexual abuse in their homes. Pueblo women’s homes are the places where women’s knowledges are taught, shared, modeled, and passed on to children. Pueblo homes are places where Pueblo values are demonstrated on a daily basis throughout a Pueblo person’s life. Thus, Pueblo well-being from a Pueblo woman’s perspective means that our homes are safe places where we can be free from fear of harm, where we can be comfortable, where the food we cook becomes infused with the good thoughts and vibes that come from the feelings of security, love, respect, and that our homes are spaces demonstrating interconnections with the
rest of the community. In this vision of well-being, Pueblo homes and Pueblo communities are spaces where there is no violence against women.

**Written and oral policies**

In my professional work, I have had the opportunity to view the internal operations of tribal programs and governing systems. I have observed that there is not necessarily formal written tribal policy to ensure the well-being, and by extension the safety, of Pueblo women—whether in certain Pueblos or across the 19 Pueblo nations as a politically unified group. In some cases, there is no formal written tribal policy because the Pueblo might operate according to oral tradition, which is a critical part of the cultural history of Pueblo peoples, meaning that most policies, laws, and regulations are unwritten and delivered to the people in the community primarily through oral means.

Many contextual questions came to mind when I was thinking about the issues related to developing written policies that ensure the well-being and safety of Pueblo women, which include respect for women and Mother Earth. I asked myself,

- What is the current sociopolitical environment in Pueblo communities where Pueblo leadership is primarily composed of men? What are the core values reflected in those communities?
- Did attendance at Indian boarding schools\(^3\) and other traumatic historical events have any direct influence on the beliefs, values, and resulting behaviors of Pueblo people who attended boarding school and their descendants?
- From where do existing beliefs and practices, which might be viewed as patriarchal, come? If present, how do those patriarchal beliefs contrast with the matriarchal foundations of Pueblo society?

\(^3\) For more information on American Indian boarding school experiences in the U.S., see Lomawaima & McCarty’s *To remain an Indian* (2006).
• Do patriarchal beliefs, particularly those borrowed from the Spanish colonizers, have an influence on Pueblo people’s contemporary attitudes, beliefs, core values, and behaviors?
• Will the topic of this commentary have any type of impact on the safety of my family, my relatives, and people in my home community?

From my perspective, what appears to be a fairly innocuous title for this commentary, “Ensuring the Safety of Pueblo and Indigenous Women Through Policy and Practice,” may not be such a straightforward process. The more recent work of Laguna Pueblo scholar June Lorenzo (2017) demonstrates the complexities raised when exploring these issues, especially as she examines Pueblo law in relation to Spanish colonizing/common laws and their motives, which ultimately transformed the way Pueblo women enjoy rights (or not) today.

In conversation with many community members, we wonder whether Pueblo communities and particularly Pueblo leadership, have prioritized economic development, housing, and interacting with the various state and federal entities who are requesting consultations or participation in meetings on a daily basis. These are undeniably important concerns. At the same time, we can also be reflective—Are our communities focused on traditional, seasonal, and recurring community events in ways such that daily issues concerning the safety of women and children in the community are not being addressed adequately, except when tribal programs sponsor activities such as “Child abuse awareness month” or “Domestic violence awareness month?” Over the past decade, I have worked with tribal programs, and I have rarely seen grassroots community-sponsored (not tribal-government program sponsored) events that focus on the well-being and safety of Pueblo women. I have rarely witnessed events organized by Indigenous men in Pueblo communities that focus on the well-being and safety of Pueblo women. When they are held, events are organized by Indigenous and Pueblo women or advocacy organizations, and they are endorsed by a particular tribal program.
Currently in the world outside of Pueblo communities, women are coming forward to talk about sexual harassment and sexual abuse, they are naming those who have committed acts of violence towards them, and they are being heard. As this article goes to press, I ask why or why not this may be happening in Pueblo country. I am aware that these are loaded questions—historically, politically, and socially, yet I wonder if there are models or stories regarding how sexual harassment and sexual abuse is being navigated in other Indigenous communities that may share some of the same characteristics of Pueblo communities—tight knit, hierarchical, place-based, and so forth?

Culturally-based values

What I have outlined thus far lead us to revisit why there is a need for Pueblo Indian nations to adopt policy that addresses the historical and contemporary issues concerning the well-being and safety of Pueblo women. Is there a connection between my observation of the need and the lack of policy, and moreover, how can the relationship between Pueblo values of respect for Mother Earth and women address and rectify any gaps?

When Pueblo and Indigenous peoples talk about the earth as a mother, there is reverence expressed in words, songs, prayers, and behavior (protocols). Pueblo and Indigenous peoples often share common teachings in the enactment of core values of deep respect for the earth mother, the sun, the moon, the stars and all living beings, including Pueblo and Indigenous women (Aikman, 2002; Cook-Lynn, 2008; Mankiller & Steinem, 2011; Sanchez, 2017; Trask, 1996). The earth mother nurtures us, births and grows, and we women are reflections of earth as we have the ability to nurture, to bring life into the world, and grow and change. In my short time with earth mother, I have seen drastic changes that are caused primarily by men who are ravaging her, disrespecting her and attempting to control her. Her face and body are changing as her forests are decimated, her rivers, streams and oceans are being polluted, and greedy corporations are making money off of her. I see the same increase in disrespectful and violent behavior towards women and others who are being abused, raped,
trafficked, and murdered. I expressed those reflections in a poem that was part of my plenary presentation on the connections between Violence Against Women and Violence Against Mother Earth on November 11, 2017, at the Seventh Generation Fund’s gathering, “Keeping the Homefires Burning,”

Oh dear Mother
How sad you must be
They have desecrated your body, polluted your waters,
disrespected your
natural beauty
Yet you continue to provide
gasping at times for breath

You have endured rape and unspeakable abuse
Yet you are there for us,
reminding us to be strong
reminding us of our responsibilities to you and all life

We are one with you, as Indigenous women

We are strong with you

We are resilient with you

We deserve to be protected
You deserve to be protected and honored

Thank you Mother Earth for all that you do

At the same time, we might ask if there is corresponding respect or lack thereof for Pueblo and Indigenous women that is actively practiced through the behavior of people in our communities, and why this is not being discussed. Perhaps these are considered women’s issues or less prioritized
social issue, or is the connection between women and Mother Earth not being made?

In Pueblo stories that I have heard (and I will generalize for the sake of conversation here), Pueblo people were placed on the earth mother with explicit instructions on how to live in the Fourth world where they had journeyed from within the earth mother and past the First, Second and Third worlds. In preparation for their emergence into the Fourth world where we live today, Pueblo people were given the instructions and values to have respect for all life, for the earth mother, the father sun, the stars, the moon and everything in the universe. Those lessons are often repeated through songs, stories, and through daily reminders of our behavior as we go through our lives. Those lessons have led to the development of unwritten policies that have been carried down from generation to generation.

Even though we, Pueblo people, have these daily and regular reminders or in other words, unwritten policies (our “instructions”), our behaviors and actions are indisputably changing, and we can observe disrespect for women and likely due as well to influences and learned behaviors from the world outside our Pueblo communities. However, in the world we live in today where we necessarily interact with external national and other governments, there is a need for written policies in addition to our unwritten policies because some of those unwritten policies, rules, and lessons carried from generation to generation have also been transforming over time, and in some instances, are forgotten or maybe purposefully left aside for whatever reason. Our behaviors, actions, attitudes, and practices have shifted, and this shift impacts our well-being, and I see written policies as one possible intervention.

I also see how unwritten policies, rules and lessons are playing a huge part in the social change work taking place through organizations like Tewa Women United, Inc. (TWU), which was created out of the collective gathering of Pueblo women from the Tewa-speaking Pueblos of northern New Mexico who were concerned about the “traumatic effects of colonization, religious inquisition, and militarization leading to issues such as alcoholism, suicide, domestic/sexual violence and environmental
violence.” Through TWU, these women gathered to support each other, to reclaim and create safe spaces to share their experiences as a circle of grandmothers, to support projects that address sexual abuse, to reclaim birth wisdom, and to address environmental and health issues that are impacting the northern Pueblos and Mother Earth. An example of TWU’s restorative work is their annual “Gathering for Mother Earth” held each September to bring people together to teach and learn from one another and focus positive energies towards protecting Mother Earth. Another example of their restorative work is the practice of honoring the sacredness of birth through the doula program\(^4\), which is reclaiming unwritten policies and teachings that women, as life bearers, are to be protected, honored and respected.

**Approaches, Implications, Recommendations**

*Self-Determination and Customary Laws and Policies*

I assert that there is a need for Pueblo and Indigenous people to act according to their respective values, which are fundamentally concerned with all life and respect for Mother Earth, which includes women. I am concerned about future generations of Indigenous women and girls being safe in their homes and communities, and I am concerned about the future of the world we live in today and whether or not we will have a world where future generations of Pueblo and Indigenous peoples can live our well-being.

Based on my international advocacy work, I have observed that we have resources that place us in fellowship with other Indigenous peoples worldwide. The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) was adopted by the United States during President Barack Obama’s presidential term of office. The UNDRIP has since been

\(^4\) Doulas, in the definition from Tewa Women United’s perspective are “Mother’s Helpers” which is translated from the Tewa language and they assist with the birthwork, provide services for the whole family and honor the sacredness of birth.
adopted by all of the nation/States around the world and includes standards that those States are currently being challenged to uphold. In the U.S., while the UNDRIP is discussed in Indigenous scholarship, it is not being implemented. One avenue towards implementation is for American Indian and Alaska Native nations and communities to adopt the standards in the UNDRIP in developing policies and laws that respect the rights of Indigenous peoples in their communities. Regarding the safety of women and overall community well-being, Article 22.2 upholds,

States shall take measures, in conjunction with indigenous peoples, to ensure that indigenous women and children enjoy the full protection and guarantees against all forms of violence and discrimination. (my emphasis)

Although the Article is focused on political nation states, the Article provides guidance to Indigenous nations who could include this language in their own tribal policies and laws to ensure the safety of American Indian and Alaska Native women to be free from violence.

Another Article, Article 3, in the UNDRIP supports the self-determination of Indigenous peoples and states,

Indigenous peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development. (my emphasis)

Customary laws and practices may serve as the foundation for a given Pueblo’s policy that ensures the safety and well-being of Pueblo women and children. This may be done without revealing our customary laws and practices and may be accomplished from a Pueblo values perspective. As Pueblo peoples, if we take the approach through prayer and being mindful about where we are in this world, our positionalities, and if we are able to look again and again at the stories and songs that have been passed down through time immemorial, we can create written policy that reflects the values of the Pueblo and demonstrates respect for Pueblo women. We will undoubtedly experience challenges and obstacles as we balance our Indigenous values and other approaches, yet by incorporating respect, love,
and community connectivity, we can be strong together to demonstrate that we are self-determining Indigenous nations.

**Conclusion**

In 2018, I flew with my Pueblo doctoral cohort colleagues to Winnipeg, Canada, for a course focusing on the connections within Indigenous community ecologies where health and gender disparities have mobilized Indigenous community members, scholars, researchers, and allies to rethink the discourse and significance of human rights.

I had a window seat. Flying over the earth provides a perspective to see where Indigenous ancestral lands have been taken into ownership whether it be tribal, state or federal. Ownership is clearly demarcated by the patterns created by fences, roads, and other man-made markers that may be seen as boxes and circles upon the lands. Those boxes and circles upon the lands and the rooted and persistent concepts of ownership, brought to my mind the types of confinements and controls that have dictated how Indigenous and Pueblo women are treated in the U.S., Canada, and elsewhere. On a daily basis in the current world, I am bombarded with stories about Indigenous women who are treated without respect—confined, controlled, assaulted, owned, kept within borders or within homes, and abused.

Yet, Pueblo and Indigenous peoples have the ability to do something to change the terms of ownership that have been forced upon us. We can plant the seeds for long-lasting and written policies that will underscore Pueblo and Indigenous respect for all life and respect for Pueblo and Indigenous women, and we can start with what we envision, like well-being, and according to Indigenous terms. Furthermore, we have the ability to cultivate those seeds through our behaviors.

Thank you for listening, for reading, and for being with me as I share these concerns, issues, and recommendations in the hopes that positive social change and transformation may occur in ways that reflect our Indigenous and Pueblo teachings and on our own terms.
References


Community-Based Commentary

Rongoā Māori is Not a Complementary and Alternative Medicine: Rongoā Māori Is A Way Of Life

Glenis Mark (Ngapuhi, Tainui, Ngai Tahu, Ngati Koata)∗

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Donna Kerridge (Ngati Tahinga, Ngati Maniapoto, Ngati Mahuta)***

∗ Dr. Glenis Mark (Ngapuhi, Tainui, Ngai Tahu, Ngati Koata) works as an independent researcher who has conducted research on Rongoā Māori (traditional Māori healing) for several years, which is driven by her belief that traditional healing practices can help to heal the people and the land. Currently working on the intersection between Rongoā and medical treatment, Glenis continues to pursue supporting research evidence of Māori cultural healing values and practices, such as further definition of the Rongoā space and benefits of healing. glennistabethamark@yahoo.co.nz

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∗∗∗ Donna Kerridge (Ngati Tahinga, Ngati Maniapoto, Ngati Mahuta) is a practicing Rongoā Māori clinician, tutor and advocate for upholding indigenous healing practices in Aotearoa, New Zealand. In addition to authoring popular media articles about
Abstract

Rongoā Māori (RM), traditional Māori healing, encompasses Māori values, customs and healing practices that have existed in Aotearoa/New Zealand for more than a thousand years. Increasing global interest in commercialization of Indigenous knowledge, has resulted in misuse, misrepresentation, and misunderstanding of this Indigenous knowledge. Amalgamation of RM practices under the umbrella of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) for ease of classification and categorization displaces RM from its place as a culturally appropriate healing treatment for Māori. This community-based commentary premises the right of Indigenous peoples to maintain the cultural integrity of their healing practices, separate from CAM, and that recognises Indigenous healing practices as integral to a culturally appropriate way of life.

Keywords: Rongoā Māori; Indigenous health and healing; Indigenous rights

Rongoā Māori (RM), traditional Māori healing, encompasses Māori values, customs and healing practices that have existed in Aotearoa/New Zealand for more than a thousand years, more than 800 years longer than the current western medical system (Jones, 2000). However, increasing global interest in commercialization of Indigenous knowledge, has resulted in gross misuse, misrepresentation, and misunderstanding of this form of Indigenous knowledge. Amalgamation of RM practices under the umbrella of Complementary and Alternative Medicine (CAM) for ease of classification and categorization displaces RM from its place as a culturally appropriate healing treatment for Māori. This community-based commentary premises the right of Indigenous peoples to maintain the cultural integrity of their healing practices, separate from CAM, and that recognises Indigenous healing practices as integral to a culturally appropriate way of life.
Medicine (CAM) for ease of classification and categorisation displaces RM from its right to be respected as a culturally appropriate healing treatment for Māori. This community-based commentary premises the right of Indigenous peoples to maintain the cultural integrity of our healing practices, which includes maintain an identity separate from CAM, and in a way that recognises Indigenous healing practices as integral to a culturally appropriate way of life, rather than a mere set of universally applicable healing techniques. We argue that all Indigenous peoples have the same right of access and opportunity to their own culturally appropriate healing practices in their respective nations, in addition to government supported and funded healing practices. Such a set of rights is unique to Indigenous traditions and must be viewed as distinctive from CAM therapies. Embedded in this commentary is a discussion of the state of RM within the Aotearoa/New Zealand community, which provides examples of the reasons why Rongoā is a cultural treasure (taonga), ultimately supporting the argument that this is one approach or model for how Indigenous healing practices should be treated in their respective contexts.

We write as three Indigenous Māori women, two researchers and one Rongoā practitioner, who feel that the need to stand up and speak for the rights of traditional healing is extremely important, now more than ever, given dominant threats to Indigenous ways of life, including the exploitation of Indigenous knowledges for commercial benefit. Combining academic practice and experience with Rongoā knowledge and wisdom, this article advocates for the recognition and acknowledgement of the true cultural meaning and value of traditional healing for Māori and all Indigenous cultures. We assert the rights of Indigenous peoples to their traditional healing practices in their countries of origin, to be practiced unimpeded by modern regulations or mainstream interference.

Indigenous healing practices grew from centuries of time-honoured adherence to traditional and cultural values, customs and protocols that have been proven over time to enhance individual, community, and environmental wellbeing. Unfortunately, in this modernized/modernizing world, those values, customs, and protocols are becoming increasingly invisible, as we participate willingly and unwillingly in globalisation,
modernization, and commercialization becomes more prominent (Janes, 1999).

**Rongoā Māori and Researcher Positionalities**

In our Māori context, use of the term “traditional healing,” rather than “medicine,” acknowledges that traditional healing is an ancient, intact, complex, holistic healthcare system. Definitions related to traditional healing practices often focus on a more holistic approach including physical, mental, emotional, spiritual and social factors of health and healing (Ahuriri-Driscoll et al, 2009; Durie, 2001; Mark & Lyons, 2010; Williams, Guenther and Arnott, 2011). Traditional healing worldwide is practiced by Indigenous peoples, infused by the traditions and beliefs of those particular people, who have always used their own approaches to healing (Struthers, Eschiti & Patchell, 2004). Thus, it is important that the cultural, ontological, cosmological, and epistemological perspectives of traditional healing should also be considered (Williams, Guenther and Arnott, 2011).

Increasingly, traditional healing systems are being treated as a form of CAM (Shaikh & Hatcher, 2005). However, Bodeker and Kronenberg (2002) indicate that the two are inherently different, in that traditional healing is based on Indigenous traditions while this is not necessarily the case with CAM. Despite these delineations, the World Health Organization (2013) combines the terms “traditional medicines” and “Complementary and Alternative medicine” into the one; yet Bodeker and Kronenberg (2002), state that traditional healing systems must be considered distinct from CAM due to their underlying foundation being based on Indigenous cultural values and beliefs, which again underscores Indigenous ontological and epistemological foundations of traditional healing—the Indigenous knowledge within which the practice is rooted.

RM, the traditional healing system of the Māori of Aotearoa/New Zealand is commonly represented as comprising of a number of components including, mirimiri and romiromi (bodywork/deep tissue massage); Rongoā rākau or wai rākau (plant medicines/herbal remedy); matakite (seer, gift of second sight, clairvoyance); and karakia and wairua
(prayer/spirituality). However, the most important and often overlooked aspect of RM is that it is also a way of understanding the natural world and how to heal it; a way of living that recognises the web of connections that exist between all things; and, a way to connect to the whenua (land) (Mark, Johnson & Boulton, 2018).

Our interconnections with Rongoā Māori highlight our passion for Rongoā Māori healing practice, cultural customs and values. Glenis Mark, Ngapuhi, Tainui, Ngai Tahu, Ngati Koata, is a Māori female researcher who has been involved in research on Māori health and healing for 14 years through postgraduate and postdoctoral research. She writes,

*I began my research journey in Māori healing because I believe in the power of Rongoā Māori to heal the people, their families and the land. As I conducted my research, I listened to the stories of healers as they talked about how much aroha (love), dedication and commitment they put into their healing of the people, above and beyond their call of duty. I realised how underrepresented they were in academia, how much they were not consulted about their own healing traditions in health policy and research and how much they were unrecognised by the health treatment system of Aotearoa/New Zealand. I witnessed, received and felt the power of Rongoā in my own health and the health of others, and wanted to work towards greater recognition of the contribution that Rongoā has always made to the health of the people since before colonisation, despite its marginalisation by the health treatment system.*

Amohia Boulton has tribal connections (whakapapa) to Ngāti Ranginui, Ngāti Te Rangi and Ngāti Pukenga on her mother's side and Ngāti Mutunga and Te Ati Awa ki te Tau Ihu on her father's side. She writes,

*I have the privilege of leading the only tribally-owned and mandated Iwi health research centre in Aotearoa, working for the people of Ngāti Hauiti in the Rangitikei. I have been a health services researcher for the past 18 years, completing both my doctoral and post-doctoral work on aspects of Māori health policy and service provision within mainstream settings. In 2008 I was made aware of the significant needs of the Rongoā Māori sector, which for me included*
sustainability of funding and the responsibilities of the Crown as a Treaty partner to protect Rongoā Māori as a taonga. I met, and began working with, a group of researchers who had as their aims, the desire to support and uphold Rongoā Māori as a viable healing tradition in a contemporary health care system. From my first tentative forays into conducting research with members of the Rongoā sector (practitioners, managers, administrators, thinkers, academics alike) until now, I have been on learning journey. And I continue to learn; mostly about how I can support efforts to ensure that, not only are our Rongoā traditions and knowledges a valued part of the health care system, but that these traditions and knowledges also become a valued part of how we live well as people on this land. My goal as a researcher in this field is to see Rongoā Māori appreciated and respected by all - not only for its intrinsic worth as a taonga, but for the teaching and healing it can bring to our lands, our waterways, how we care for our country and how we care for each other.

Donna Kerridge, Ngāti Tahinga, Ngāti Mahuta, Ngati Maniapoto, is a traditionally trained Rongoā Māori practitioner with an undergraduate degree in health science. She writes,

Over the years, I observed that many health practitioners did not share a common worldview or appreciation for Rongoā Māori’s relevance to promoting the wellbeing of our populations. Many Indigenous healing practices are the result of an intergenerational study of the world of connections and their endless ripples across the web of life. Indigenous concepts of living ancestral and spiritual connection combined with an inherently strong physical and spiritual bond within (mauri), form the basis of many Indigenous healing practices. My western health studies were more focussed on a detailed study of isolated physical components and how deliberate changes typically deliver benefit in controlled scenarios. Whatever your perspective, it goes without saying that nothing exists or heals in isolation. My work today realizes the need to build bridges between different worldviews and advance mutual respect for the gifts each bring to the healing table. Most of all, there needs to be a shared acknowledgement that no one perspective
has all the answers. Cultural health equity analysis in many westernised countries bears testament to this. It is equity of outcomes rather than equality of inputs that we must focus on. It is a constant battle to protect Indigenous healing perspectives from being reframed in a world in which western medicine is generally believed to be the standard of excellence against which all other practices should be judged. The world and the health of people and planet is richer for our different perspectives, and we must protect them.

**Rongoā Māori as a Taonga**

RM healing practice is entitled to protection by the New Zealand Government through the Treaty of Waitangi (ToW). The Treaty is an agreement, in both Māori and English languages, that was made between the British Crown and about 540 Māori Rangatira (chiefs) on 6 February 1840 (Ministry for Culture and Heritage, 2017). There are three main Articles in the ToW—which are directly relevant to RM. Article I established a partnership and the right for the Crown to govern. Article II guarantees Māori full rangatiratanga (self-determination) over their lands, villages and taonga (those things held precious) including Rongoā knowledge and practice. Article III guarantees Māori the same rights as non-Māori and at least equitable social outcomes. The Treaty principles inherent in these Articles have been described as partnership, participation and protection (Jones, 2000).

However, despite the Treaty’s promises, RM in contemporary Aotearoa/New Zealand is largely marginalised. Most Rongoā practitioners practice separately from what is regarded as the mainstream medical health treatment system. Whilst some clinics receive the limited State funding that is offered and are subsequently contracted to deliver RM (Ministry of Health, 2018), the contracts themselves are very prescriptive, limiting the modalities a practitioner can employ in their work. As a consequence, the majority of practitioners opt out of the formal funding system altogether. Rongoā rākau (herbal medicine) for example, is not currently funded by the Government for a range of reasons: the perceived “risk” inherent in this
form of healing, the perception that quality of healing cannot be guaranteed, and the fact that this form of healing cannot be standardised (Waitangi Tribunal, 2011).

Despite the lack of governmental recognition, commercialization of Rongoā has been ongoing for many years. Rongoā plants have been researched, trialled, developed into product and commercialised without Māori consultation (see Forest Herbs Research, 2015¹). This practice is not unique to New Zealand; commercialisation has become a worldwide phenomenon as Indigenous cultures are increasingly being researched for their healing knowledge (Cheikhyoussef, Shapi, Matengu, Ashekele, 2011; De-la-Cruz, Wilcapoma and Zevallos, 2007). Furthermore, research findings on traditional healing are commonly poorly understood, misinformed and exploited (Mark, Johnson, and Boulton, 2018). A study investigating CAM use in hospital Emergency Departments, for example, regarded the use of Rongoā Māori as simply one form of CAM therapy, amongst many others, with no recognition of the differences between the two (Nicholson, 2006). Such a lack of understanding contributes to the reframing and dilution of the cultural integrity of Indigenous knowledge that underpins those healing practices. The value, need, and contribution of this research to enhancing the wellbeing of the Indigenous people’s being researched continually fails to materialise. For example, although proponents of commercialization of Indigenous foods and medicinal plants in Africa advocate that “economic exploitation by commercialisation of African natural resources will promote and create wealth from Indigenous plants and ensure protection of this resource,” exactly who benefits from that wealth is not identified, and these types of actions remain sponsored under the guise of conservation (Okole & Odhav, 2004, p. 111).

As the interest in, and use of traditional medicines increases by non-Indigenous peoples and entities, threats of commercialisation based on economic return rather than community wellbeing continue to cause great

concern amongst Indigenous peoples. Indigenous peoples possess a fundamental right to maintain the cultural integrity of our healing practices. For example, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples outlines in Article 24 Section 1 that, Indigenous peoples have the right to their traditional medicines and to maintain their health practices, including the conservation of their vital medicinal plants, animals and minerals. Article 31 also contains language regarding the right of Indigenous peoples to control, maintain, protect, and develop our traditional medicines.

Such practices have their own system of checks and balances and these must be recognized by respective nation states as the means by which such healing practices are regulated. Further, such practices should enjoy the right to maintain an identity separate from CAM. In asserting this right, we must recognize that Indigenous healing practices are a culturally appropriate way of life for people and the land, and not just medicine or treatment in the Western sense—which holds emphasis on the individual and biophysical/biomedical components. RM is not a CAM; rather, it is an Indigenous healing practice of the first nations people of Aotearoa/New Zealand. Moreover, the right to perpetuate traditional practices is promised within the ToW, signed by the Crown and Māori. Although, full and comprehensive governmental recognition and acknowledgement has yet to be realised, the right to practice Rongoā was never surrendered and no other CAM therapy in New Zealand shares this right. The case for RM to be seen as a way of life, rather than a CAM, therefore focuses on the right for Rongoā legal protection and international representation, as well as cultural ways of life and contribution to the health and wellbeing, which we believe encompasses the hinengaro (mind), tinana (body), wairua (spirit) and whanau (family) of the people (Durie, 2001). Rongoā Māori is a taonga of intergenerational healing of the people, of cultural identity and connection to Māori customs and values, of conservation and protection of the whenua, of the power of the spiritual interconnection and mauri (life force) of all life. We premise the right of Rongoā Māori to be treated as it should always have been treated—with respect, with recognition, and with acknowledgement—as a taonga.
Rights-Based Discussions

Māori acknowledge that RM is a taonga, and as RM advocates, we also argue that RM itself as a system and form of Māori knowledge has the right to the following, a) to be unilaterally protected under contemporary New Zealand law; b) to be honoured as a system by respective international and domestic administrations and signatories to international treaties asserting the rights of Indigenous peoples to care, protect and maintain their healing practices; c) to be acknowledged as integral to a culturally appropriate Māori way of life; and d) to be acknowledged for its past and current contribution to Māori wellbeing. We premise each of these rights on acknowledgement of Māori and other Indigenous healing systems as taonga (treasures) that deserve to be preserved.

a) The right to be unilaterally protected under Aotearoa/New Zealand law.

Since colonization, subsequent New Zealand dominant governments have failed to acknowledge RM as a taonga (treasure), and in one period of our history actively sought to outlaw its use entirely in the passing of the Tohunga Suppression Act 1907. Recently, a case brought before the Waitangi Tribunal called for RM to be formally recognized as a cultural treasure (Waitangi Tribunal, 2011). The Waitangi Tribunal reported on the impact that the lack of protection has on Māori, where scientific research and commercialization of Indigenous plant species that are vital to iwi (tribe) or hapū (sub-tribe) identity can be conducted without input from Māori (Waitangi Tribunal, 2011). Eight years on, and still the New Zealand government has yet to respond to the recommendations outlined in the Tribunal report. Māori are becoming increasingly impatient with the lack of an official response and have recently called, once again, for the report recommendations to be addressed (Nga Taonga Tuku Iho Conference Organising Committee, 2019).

Despite protection under the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (2007) to which New Zealand is a signatory, several governmental initiatives continue to impact on the practice of RM. The Medicines Act, Health Practitioners Competency Assurance Act and
the Ministry of Health’s own, Tikanga-ā-Rongoā National Standards all, in some way or another, deny RM practitioners the right to maintain, control, protect and develop their traditional cultural expression of RM. The lack of bioprospecting legislation in New Zealand also denies RM practitioners associated intellectual property right. Commercialisation of Māori intellectual knowledge occurs wantonly without consultation with Māori. Rongoā plants are now grown on a large scale and sold to both domestic and local markets (Forest Herbs Research, 2015) RM healing and practitioners should have the right to appropriate representation and protection under Aotearoa/New Zealand law.

b) Rongoā has a right to be honoured in its own right by respective international and domestic administrations and signatories to international treaties asserting the rights of Indigenous peoples to care, protect and maintain their healing practices

Jones (2000) maintains that there is a need for a more equitable partnership between RM and Western scientific medicine, and traditional healing should be recognised as a legitimate form of health care, where Māori should be guaranteed access to this aspect of their cultural heritage (Jones, 2000). RM practitioners have the right to be equal partners in the negotiation of all government treaties that have the potential to affect the ongoing and future practice of RM as promised by the ToW principles of partnership, participation and protection (Jones, 2000).

c) The right for Rongoā to be acknowledged as integral to a culturally appropriate Māori way of life

Rather than a healing modality to “treat” patients, traditional healing is a way of life, part of the cultural fabric of what it means to be Māori. Cultural values and traditions permeate every aspect of life. For example, one Māori model of health, Te Whare Tapa Wha, was articulated to facilitate “mainsteam” health practitioners’ understanding of Māori conceptualisations of health and wellbeing. This model incorporates four “sides” of wellbeing: the physical, mental, spiritual, family, all of which are intrinsic aspects of everyday life for Māori (Durie, 2011). However, the use of Rongoā was not only for health and healing of people. Rongoā practice includes the sustainable use of the whenua (land) and moana (sea), the
care, protection and appropriate use of mātauranga Māori (ancestral knowledge) and te reo Māori (the Māori language) that is born of this landscape that is Aotearoa/New Zealand. RM is a treasure because it encompasses so much more than just a “set of modalities”, it is a source of many Māori cultural customs, the foundation upon which Māori view themselves and their responsibilities to the rest of the world. It is a conduit between Māori and their ukaipō (source of sustenance), that is, the very land upon which we live. The right to live in accordance with cultural values, and with the principles of traditional healing, should be a paramount right in Indigenous ways of life.

d) The right to acknowledge RM practice for its past, current and future contribution to Māori physical, spiritual and emotional health and wellbeing

RM is not only used to treat disease. Its primary goal is to restore and uplift the mauri of people and the land. Mauri, the bond between the physical and spiritual aspects of life is pivotal to a balanced, sustainable and healthy existence. Today, Māori continue to suffer disproportionately from poor health. Māori have higher rates than non-Māori for many health conditions and chronic diseases, including cancer, diabetes, cardiovascular disease and asthma. Māori also experience higher disability rates and die earlier than their non-Māori counterparts (Ministry of Health, 2015). Despite having a growing number of Māori medical professionals, culturally appropriate research methodologies to guide our researchers and an ever increasing culturally competent workforce, the shocking inequities in health outcomes for Māori persist (Kerridge, 2018; Ministry of Health, 2015; Robson & Harris, 2007).

The fact is that the incumbent health system in New Zealand is failing the Indigenous people of New Zealand. A wellbeing framework such as RM, deriving from a Māori world, is a valid addition to a “health” system which is failing to address Māori health, and continues instead, to perpetuate inequity. Both Treaty partners have a right to a health system that delivers culturally appropriate health care services that meet their respective needs. There is potential for RM to improve the health and
wellbeing of Māori citizens. All citizens of Aotearoa/New Zealand have a right to the best of both healing systems for holistic health and wellbeing.

Conclusion

In this community-based commentary, we have briefly reviewed Rongoa Māori and asserted that RM practice is a taonga that should be respected, protected, and treasured. In the past, Māori rights to land were based on whakapapa (genealogy). However, colonisation changed that traditional way of being, and Māori rights now tend to focus on the right of tangata whenua or the local people to tino rangatiratanga or sovereignty over the people, the land, the culture. RM is an aspect of the Māori culture that has the right to be preserved and maintained as its own entity, rather than sitting under a CAM umbrella that has neither a cultural basis nor the values or customs associated with an Indigenous worldview. Part of the preservation of the cultural integrity of RM includes the cultural transmission of indigenous healing knowledge to the next generations which is an important right for Māori, and integral to the survival of Māori healing traditions and wellbeing.

As Māori peoples who observe RM and view this as a holistic system of Indigenous healing that is rooted in Indigenous knowledge, we understand that RM is not in fact a “Complementary Medicine” nor an “Alternative” one (CAM). Rather Rongoa Māori is an ancient and traditional healing practice that has deeper and underlying ontological and epistemological connections that speak to not only Māori rights to traditional medicine and related practices, but also our abilities to access, protect, and maintain the lands and cultural practices within which RM operates. It is the right of RM healing as a system and Indigenous practitioners to have representation and protection under Aotearoa/New Zealand law as equal partners in all government treaties. Māori have the right to live according to cultural values, and while the benefits of RM could contribute to the health of all, RM must also be understood as deeply rooted in Māori communities. Based on our local Aotearoa/New Zealand community situation, we extend our argument that Indigenous healing in
all countries should be treated with respect, and should be protected and preserved.
References


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The paradigm of settler colonialism is built on heteropatriarchy and heteropaternalism and seeks to sever the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the lands they have traditionally stewarded for millennia. In We Are Dancing For You: Native Feminisms & The Revitalization of Women’s Coming-of-Age Ceremonies, Risling Baldy (Hupa) argues that women’s coming-of-age ceremonies and the larger role of women in tribal structures were targeted post-invasion as they challenged
“settler colonial claims to universality and legitimacy” and therefore to much-sought after land (Baldy, 2018, p. 9).

Settler colonialism is pervasive and appears many times over in anthropological records. Scholars like A.L. Kroeber are heralded for their contributions to the discipline, yet he and anthropologists like him studied California Indian peoples through a lens of “salvage ethnography.” In this way, tribal peoples are painted as static in time, and their pre-invasion culture is idealized, with academics more concerned with describing a “pristine” state rather than accurately depicting a living, breathing culture that changes over time and varies internally across adherents. As the discipline of Anthropology grew, it privileged the opinions of “experts” external to the culture they were studying over those of their Indigenous informants. Even in present day, as tribes work to reclaim their narratives, these external voices are still evaluated as more accurate sources on a given tribe’s culture.

According to Risling Baldy, menstruation and the coming-of-age ceremonies associated with these stages of life for young women provide a concentrated example through which to study Anthropology’s bias as academic considerations of the subject skew to the heteropatriarchal. A large portion of such literature characterizes menstruation and its accompanying cultural beliefs and practices as taboo and denigrated by tribal cultures, leaving little room for variation or even possible positive connotations for this biological process. In addition, in privileging the male gaze, Victorian ideals of femininity, and modern society’s emphasis on “sanitation” and efficiency, menstruation has been relegated to the periphery of anthropological considerations even for tribes that placed a highly positive value on it, such as the Hupa. By extension, Risling Baldy argues that this omission also denigrates the feminine contribution to the community, both historically and in the present day. In doing so, “Native feminisms” (Ramirez 2007; Goeman & Nez Denetdale 2009) are removed from the historical record. Native feminisms speak to the process by which tribal nations and individuals therein can uplift the feminine contribution to the community and restore the balance between genders that was prioritized pre-invasion.
Risling Baldy builds on the critique of fellow Native feminist scholars who assert “how ‘tradition’ can be used to justify continued heteropatriarchal policing of women in contemporary Native societies” (p. 17). She offers a decolonizing praxis to push back on these settler colonial expectations and to explain how “these spaces, these bodies, and this land were never as ‘settled’ as once believed” (p. 17). To do so, Risling Baldy employs methods outlined in Linda Tuhiwai Smith’s *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (1999) to “re-imagine” research as an activity carried out by tribal peoples, for tribal peoples. This line of inquiry holds up Indigenous knowledges to stand alongside Western conceptions that have historically been projected on to these communities, rather than built with them. In addition, Risling Baldy adopts the use of (re) in parentheses in the same vein as Seneca scholar Mishuana Goeman (2008) to indicate a reconceptualization of traditional practices in present day, rather than a return to some idealized past culture. In doing so, she demonstrates how Indigenous peoples are “participating in a (re)vivification that builds a future with the past, showing how these epistemological foundations speak to a lasting legacy that is both ancient and modern” (p. 8).

In structuring her argument, Risling Baldy centers her evidence, including oral narratives, historical texts, anthropological records, and a discussion of Indigenous menstrual practices around the revitalization of the Flower Dance in the 21st century. With her analysis, she asserts that the *Ch’ilwa:l* and the processes of (re)writing, (re)righting, and (re)riting the dance are “tools that we will use as contemporary Hupa people to build a decolonizing praxis that shows how ceremony is theory and knowledge embodied through song, dance, and movement” (p. 126). Such praxis is particularly compelling within the context of the near annihilation that California Indian tribes experienced—90% of the state's Indigenous population were killed in the years immediately following contact, a time more accurately referred to as “the invasion” by the author and other California Indian scholars (Norton, 1979; Lindsay, 2012).

The genocide of California Indians has been virtually left out of textbooks, formal schooling curricula, and from the public conscience. Such
omission does not mean that the genocide did not happen, and if anything, its denial re-victimizes the descendants of genocide survivors, such as Risling Baldy and me, a member of the Yurok Tribe neighboring the Hupa. In Hoopa Valley in particular, women, their bodies, and their coming-of-age ceremonies were specifically targeted for violence by settlers because the existence and practices of Native feminisms challenged settler colonial claims to land and legitimacy. In an effort to protect their female community members, these ceremonies were forced underground, but in doing so, so too were hidden the significant roles that Hupa women had traditionally served in pre-invasion society. This imbalance in gender roles has led to the rise in heteropatriarchy and heteropaternalism that exists in present-day Hoopa.

As a Hupa woman, such imbalance was of particular concern to Risling Baldy. She is a Hoopa Valley tribal member and is invested in the community through family and through her own participation in their cultural practices, including traditional dances. Growing up the daughter of a trained medicine woman and educator, she had known of the Flower Dance but came of age before its revitalization. The dance and its teachings would return to her in later years in times of duress, and as the dance was revitalized, Risling Baldy was motivated to use its revival as a lens to interpret the resurgence of Native feminisms within tribal cultures in modern era. In addition, she saw the dance as a direct response to the colonial, heteropatriarchal gaze that colors the problematic “salvage ethnography” on the ceremony and on the Hupa people more generally.

The book is a critical analysis of settler colonialism and heteropatriarchy from end-to-end, but several specific contributions are outstanding. In Chapter 3, *Wung-xowidilik/ Concerning It—What Has Been Told: Anthropology and Salvage Ethnography*, Risling Baldy uses a “critical historiography of salvage ethnography in California to intervene in the anthropological discourse and demonstrate how Native peoples negotiate ‘ethnographic refusal’” (p. 77). Ethnographic refusal is the process by which tribal peoples have managed the information made available to anthropologists from the beginning. Despite beliefs otherwise, they are and have always been active participants in the research process, both in the
sharing of information just as much as in their withholding of information from the outside researcher. Risling Baldy delves into the field notes of anthropologists like Kroeber (1925) and Goddard (1903) to critically engage their published works with their direct observations, this time interrogating the latter with a Hupa feminist analytic. In doing so, she makes a powerful case for her assertion that,

what at one time had been a community celebration, bringing young women to the forefront as important foundations of their communities, was now associated with shame. This disruption affected not only of young women but the entire community, which was taught to devalue women and their contributions to culture, ceremony and spirituality. (p. 71)

In Chapter 4, *Tim-na’me/ At the Lucky Spot She Bathes: Indigenous Menstrual Beliefs and the Politics of Taboo*, Risling Baldy argues that Western disdain for coming-of-age ceremonies is ironic given the prevalence of such descriptions written by Western male anthropologists. She sees their inclusion as an act of negotiating ethnographic refusal on the part of Indigenous informants to leave an additional record of the dance for future generations during a time when the ceremony had gone dormant for the sake of safety. Risling Baldy asks the question:

Why tell these stories? For me, it is because Native peoples are always thinking about future generations. They must have known there would be people who could remember these stories without Kroeber or Goddard or Sapir writing them down, but they also wanted to make sure somebody wrote them down. Maybe they wanted to show these white male ethnographers that they were not ashamed of their culture or beliefs. Maybe they hoped to leave a record that we could find one day. (p. 98)

By illuminating the different ways that the Flower Dance persisted through anthropological records and in oral narratives, Risling Baldy makes a powerful case for how the dance may have been set aside by previous generations, but was never lost nor denigrated as portrayed by anthropologists.
Through a piercing discussion of purported menstrual taboos, Risling Baldy further contends,

Native feminisms need to critically engage how patriarchy has been inscribed into Indigenous cultural practices. Native people must be diligent in their revitalization efforts and understand that heteropatriarchy is not traditional. Part of that can be achieved through the (re)writing, (re)righting, and (re)riting of Indigenous menstrual practices. (p. 122)

The final empirical chapter focuses on present day examples of the Flower Dance, using interviews with participants or *kinahldung*, to show the importance of the dance to the young women and to their larger social networks. Risling Baldy writes,

all of the *kinahldung* interviewed reflected on how watching Kayla [the first public kinahldung in generations] run made them excited about running, watching her sing made them excited about singing, seeing her smile after she finished her dance made them want to know what that feeling was like. (p. 132)

And with that “first” *kinahldung* and each *kinahldung* since, the ceremony is reborn for use in the 21st century. Risling Baldy points out that “this ceremonial revitalization was not treated as a static re-creation or an attempt to recapture a ‘traditional’ ceremony from the ‘old days.’ Instead the ceremony was being reclaimed as a dynamic and inventive building block of our culture” (p. 132). Overall, through her work, Risling Baldy presents a compelling argument for how the revitalization of Indigenous women’s coming-of-age ceremonies and their larger framework of Native feminisms serve as a vehicle through which these communities can reclaim their identities as “nations and sacred spaces.” In doing so, Risling Baldy upholds Native feminisms as a tool for understanding contemporary gender relations in Indian Country and for rejecting the patriarchy that now envelops far too many of our communities. As we make our way through this process, Risling Baldy reminds the reader that *Ch’ilwa:l* and its teachings are expansive, so much so that the “stories stretch into our future and [are] always reaching forward” (p. 152).
One potential area of improvement would be the addition of a map of the Hoopa Valley and adjacent areas, to orient the reader to the location of the Valley in respect to county and state landmarks, as well as in relation to nearby tribal nations. Beyond this, *We Are Dancing For You* serves as a stunning example of decolonizing praxis that elevates Indigenous knowledge to rectify the errors that exist in anthropological records to date. As Risling Baldy explains, such work is far from over, but in the meantime, *we are still dancing.*
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Book Review

Beyond Settler Time: Temporal Sovereignty and Indigenous Self-Determination
by Mark Rifkin
$26.95 (paperback)
ISBN# 082236297X

Review by Anna Reed (Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma)∗
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Indigenous peoples across the globe face ramifications of colonialism to the present day. For example, as was widely covered in 2016 at the Standing Rock Indian Reservation, reservation land is threatened by private interests and corporations1, and there are numerous cases of this occurring through extractive industry worldwide. These cases represent the physical ways in which Indigenous lands are disrupted, but one of the more

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1 In 2016 there was a months-long protest that took place on the Standing Rock Indian Reservation located in North Dakota. The protest at this site was in opposition to the Dakota Access Pipeline, which was a natural gas pipeline that would cross into reservation land. The protesters fought for their sovereignty and rights to the land, but ultimately the pipeline was constructed. For more information, visit: https://www.reuters.com/article/us-north-dakota-pipeline-pes-idUSKBNr7LoBJ. For information on issues elsewhere see, https://www.culturalsurvival.org.
insidious ways that colonialism plays out in societies across the globe is through the ownership of history—including both how history is represented (and by whom) and how that history is taught. The use of Western canonical history often inadvertently enforces the dominant settler colonial narrative, thus erasing Indigenous experiences, including that of time. Time, which Mark Rifkin tackles in his new book, is meant to convey the sense of movement through life and generations. In other words, an Indigenous experience of time may differ from the settler colonial time in that it is guided by stories that are told by community tribal elders or traditional practices that have existed for generations upon generations, rather than having a recorded date-based history that is today a Western construct. Therefore, “time” remains an ambiguous term that refers to how one group of individuals describes the passing and organization of their history.

In *Beyond Settler Time,* Rifkin argues “temporal sovereignty” based on this notion of time as relative, referring to how, depending on one’s cultural context, one thinks of the passage of time (whether correlated with history and dates or through stories and ritual). His is a refreshing view on how best to incorporate Indigenous perspectives without erasing their own juridical processes, but rather giving Indigenous peoples the opportunity to embrace *and* express their own dynamic sensations and references when it comes to their unique narrative of the passing of time.

Rifkin opens his argument with a brief background of Einstein’s Theory of Relativity, which posits that depending on the mass, acceleration, and energy in an object, that object can warp spacetime. This means that there is no one constant time that is universal because celestial bodies all have different masses and accelerations, and therefore, spacetime ranges. Using the theory of how time varies across the universe, Rifkin builds his argument that experiences of time here on Earth are also subjective and relative, given cultural context. In other words, Indigenous peoples have the right to express their own conception of time *outside* of the written histories and timeframes used by the settler colonial state. This is a particularly salient introductory point, as Rifkin argues that the inclusion of Indigenous peoples within the settler colonial histories erases the specificity
of Indigenous geopolitical claims and enforces the inactive violence of Indigenous peoples inaccurately portrayed within the “domestic” and “modern” construct of a nation.

Using Sara Ahmed’s *Queer Phenomenology* (2006), Rifkin argues orientation to time as the fundamental element of temporal sovereignty. To be oriented, according to Ahmed, is to find familiarity in the direction you choose in life, which is to say that if one is placed in a room, they would be familiar with every piece of furniture or object in that room and would be able to navigate themselves through with ease. This notion of familiarity can extend to a cultural situation or perhaps to living in a particular area. To be oriented in this situation is to understand at the deepest level how to exist in a given environment. Rifkin extends this idea by relating familiarity to continuity in time, stating that to be oriented is thus to “have a sense of place and self in relation to other places and selves as well as a feeling of where one is going, and the pace at which one is heading there” (Rifkin, 2017, p. 2). An example of orientation in Indigenous contexts could be an Indigenous person living in their ancestral homelands who has intrinsic knowledge of the land, plants, and animals of that place. (We would hope) That person also possesses knowledge derived from their cultural worldview, because they have always existed within that worldview in that particular place. Thus, understanding orientation is critical in beginning to understand Indigenous perspectives of time because of their subjective natures. For example, within many Indigenous groups, traditions and ancestors are important aspect of daily life, whether they be expressed through spiritual or cultural rituals. This concept of using and following stories told by ancestors exists outside of the settler colonial time, because it is not directed or enforced by any settler and or state being/time frame/modernity. In this sense, then, Indigenous peoples exist within their own orientation of time.

In order to illustrate the pervasive effects of settler colonial imposition of a colonial standard through the telling of history (i.e. lack of recognition for many tribal nations, loss of traditional lands, loss of native language), Rifkin discusses the film *Lincoln* (2010) and the novels *Sundown* (1988), *Indian Killer* (1996), and *Gardens in the Dunes* (1999). Rifkin recounts
watching the film *Lincoln* and noticing a silent Native looking man in the background of several scenes, who he quickly realized was meant to be Ely S. Parker, a Seneca who served as an aide to Ulysses S. Grant in the Civil War. Moving through this chapter, Rifkin uses Parker as an example for how he has found Indigenous representation in history. Specifically, Rifkin writes, “The silent figure of Ely S. Parker—the mute facticity and fleshliness of his visible Indianness, which has no other meaning within the sense of history—testifies to the colonial force that orients time” (Rifkin, 2017, p. 59). His argument in this chapter is that, with respect to Indigenous peoples, during the Civil War they (and formerly enslaved individuals) were nationalized members of the Union, but shortly after the war concluded, they (the Dakota and Seneca people in this instance) were forcibly removed from their lands and forced to obey legal and civil standards of the U.S. To make his point, Rifkin introduces a discussion of the Dakota War, which took place in 1862 after several unfair annuity payments were made to the Dakota people. The Dakota had become reliant on these payments as a result of a string of treaties, which left them with a 70-mile strip of land and virtually no hunting area. Despite being sovereign peoples recognized through treaties with the U.S., Rifkin points out the distortion exemplified by the Dakota resistance—that Indigenous peoples were expected to become part of the U.S., but they were categorized as in need of civilizing. For the Dakota, Rifkin argues that their perception of time and identity are tied to their land because there had been generations of people living on the land, but because that idea of belonging was incongruent with the expansive drive of the U.S. government, Dakota time was disrupted.

Similarly, in chapter three Rifkin analyzes *Sundown* by John Joseph Matthews. The main character, Chal, experiences mental turmoil because he is caught in the nexus of being a “modern” Osage man who is facing allotment and going to college, all the while experiencing discomfort with ‘not being Osage enough’ because he is not on his homeland. Here Rifkin makes explicit that Chal’s loss of connection to Osage territorial land is

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2 For more information on this policy, see the The Osage Allotment Act: https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/STATUTE-118/pdf/STATUTE-118-Pg2609.pdf
linked to identity loss as an Osage person. Moreover, in losing his connection to the “before,” which homelands represent, Chal finds himself unable to reconcile his position within a more modern state (specifically, Oklahoma). Rifkin argues, “Chal’s emotional orientations register the impact of settler temporal narratives given the proliferation and materialization of such narratives in government-initiated remapping of Osage space” (Rifkin, 2017, p. 103).

In chapter four, Rifkin transitions into the twentieth century with *Indian Killer* and *Gardens in the Dunes*. These novels model life after allotment, where the individuals in the stories have been so far removed from their cultural homelands that they no longer understand their identity as Indigenous people. In both novels, the main characters try to find knowledge about “Indians” through history books. What they encounter is a “white” version of the history. Indigenous perspectives are not told in the books or stories they come to know; rather, versions of the events that took place in the nineteenth century are explained from the settler point of view. However, a constant that links these characters to an Indigenous identity, Rifkin argues, is the Ghost Dance. His main argument here is that there is potential for regeneration of Indigenous identity through learning processes. Rifkin’s choice of these two novels illustrates that when Indigenous peoples are given temporal sovereignty to experience and feel connected to their Indigenous past without certain constraints, including “looking Indian,” then there is a real opportunity for growth.

While Rifkin makes an important argument for why temporal sovereignty should be recognized in academia, he fails to mention how

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3 The Ghost Dance is said to have originated in 1890 after a man named Wovoka (Jack Wilson) had a dream that he met God, and God told him that he could be reunited with the dead if he performed this dance. It was a prophecy that spread throughout Indian country and came to symbolize Indigenous unity.

4 Rifkin also mentions blood quantum as a constraint. For more information on blood quantum policies, there are a number of scholars who write about this, including Eva Marie Garroutte, Kim TallBear and others. For a brief explanation, see: https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2018/02/09/583987261/so-what-exactly-is-blood-quantum.
Indigenous knowledges and our profound temporal philosophies and realities persist today around the world. In some respects, Rifkin appears to aim to diversify the sources he draws from in the book, such as drawing from Ahmed and other womxn scholars and Queer theorists. Recognizing Queer perspectives is critical as the isolation that Queer individuals face can come from a sense of “modernity” or orientation to the world that is imposed by the settler colonial state. Because of their unique place as being different than the settler norm, Queer individuals are caught within a temporal limbo like Indigenous people. They exist in a space that, historically speaking, has not been a space of acceptance, and therefore their narratives are left out of the heteronormative settler history.

These are important connections; however, one area in the work that needs to be enriched is that it does not fully recognize the critical role of women in both reclaiming Indigenous identities and those connections which Rifkin highlights through his uses of novels and film. An examination of how gender intersects with temporal sovereignty as a theory would be beneficial. While Rifkin does select Garden in the Dunes in order to highlight a woman’s experience, the discussion could be improved by including a discussion on the role of women in generational movement. He finds that the transmission of blood and the way one identifies are of importance but seems only concerned with the “chronobiopolitics” of tribal identity and how the U.S. tried to normalize and categorize who could be Native, rather than the ways in which Indigenous identity moves through generations.

Indigenous women’s roles in daily Indigenous realities are explicit in many ways, including multiple forms of teaching younger generations Indigenous cultural practices and beliefs, as well as how Indigenous women and men view their relationships with time. Furthermore, there are very few Indigenous women in academia worldwide, and this is a gap I personally feel in my own training as a scholar where women’s voices in theory, representation as researchers, and presence in the classroom are consistently marginalized or, if present, seem to require constant justification for their presence. Therefore, having Indigenous women’s voices present in the literature across multiple fields is meaningful to me.
Indigenous women add an element of distinct perspectives to any research being done, but their voices are especially significant with respect to generational passing of knowledge and interpretation of time as felt in Indigenous communities. In the same way that Rifkin argues against a settler timeframe because it restricts and imposes a narrative on Indigenous time, having male dominated spaces as normative in academia excludes Indigenous women and their contributions.

What is not the focus of the book but is pertinent to mention, given the major themes of this special issue, is the relationship between temporal sovereignty, settler colonial control of history, education, and Indigenous identities. As an educational philosophy, I wonder how we are considering the teaching of history to young children today in ways that acknowledge the tensions in the relationships Rifkin outlines. As an Indigenous person and the product of schooling in the United States, I see how harmful the trajectory of settler colonial schooling can be to Indigenous students because we do not see our histories presented in the classroom. If we do, they are tellings of history trapped in settler colonial constructions of time and significant historical events, and these are told through Western lenses that isolate Indigenous peoples in our own subjugation. Rifkin’s work helps us to approach the very notion of time in a way that is conscientious, deliberately inclusive, and uplifting of Indigenous peoples and our histories. In my view, these arguments are central to Indigenous human rights, where we as Indigenous peoples are claiming the right to education but may not have “all the answers” all of the time regarding what constitutes culturally-specific content in education. Critical human rights education as a transformative framework requires different knowledge contributions, and great benefit can come from creating space in learning which highlights Indigenous peoples’ own interpretations of time itself.

I recommend Beyond Settler Time to individuals interested in Indigenous studies, history, and education and who wish to expand the way we understand knowledge generation through research. This book is also a thought-provoking read for educators who may want to consider Indigenous theories in development of their curricula and teaching practices.
References


