



Indigenous Voices in Academia and Society

Speakers' Abstracts

Kaj Besman: *The Ohlone Tribe and a Genocide Economy*

The purpose of this paper is to demonstrate how the Ohlone Tribe Economy converged to a genocide economy, resulting in the loss of the majority of their community. The Ohlone tribe had an estimated population of roughly 15,000 people, and they were located in the surrounding bay area starting in the north bay extending to Big Sur. The Ohlone tribe included 8 different communities, they are as follows: Awaswas, Chalon, Chochenyo, Karkin, Mutsun, Ramaytush, Rumsen, and Tamyen. All 8 communities which spoke similar but distinct Utian languages, practiced the same religion *kuksu*. The Ohlone economy was based on hunting and gathering, which was heavily dependent on acorns used for bread flour, fish, and small game like deer and rabbits which were dried and preserved for winter. The Ohlone economy was characterized as a labor-abundant economy, i.e. it depended heavily on unskilled labor. Diseases and the catholic missions were the main engine in causing the loss of labor from the economy. This transformed the Ohlone economy into a genocide economy (Samarah, 2026) which later led to their effective extinction.

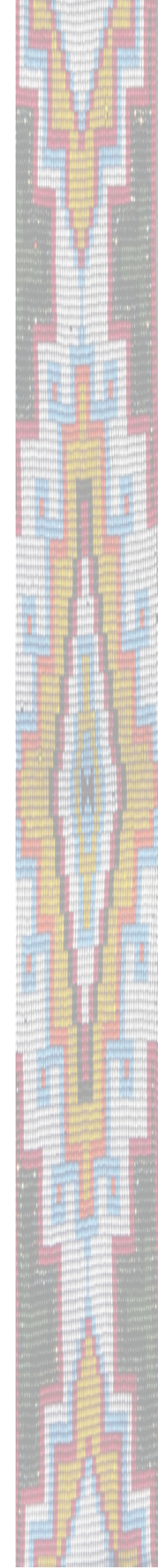
George Bisharat: *Is Genocide Back?*

Genocide was a routine instrument of settler colonial projects for centuries, wielded against Indigenous populations across the Americas, Africa, Australia, and beyond. Yet the post-WWII international legal order — the Genocide Convention, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the edifice of international humanitarian law built upon them — arose not in response to those crimes, but to the Nazi Holocaust, history's first genocide targeting a European people. Nevertheless, these frameworks cast a broader protective umbrella, establishing genocide as the “crime of all crimes” and extending, however imperfectly, to Indigenous Peoples worldwide. That norm, never fully honored in practice, held rough sway for roughly seven decades. Israel's genocide against Palestinians in Gaza — prosecuted in the 21st century with broad Western complicity — now poses a fundamental challenge: has the post-war prohibition on genocide eroded? Are we witnessing the re-normalization of genocide as an acceptable tool for settler colonial states confronting Indigenous resistance? Is Gaza an exception, or proof of concept for states witnessing what the world will tolerate in their treatment of Indigenous Peoples?

Gregory Campbell:

Sense of Place: Toponyms and the Evocation of Cultural Landscape Heritage

There exists an intimate relationship between landscape and toponyms. There is growing academic consensus that place names are valuable linkages between a society's conceptions and interactions with the physical environment. Toponyms ground communities often to tangible locales with intangible cultural expressions and practices. Attachment to place reflects a human-nature relationship, composed of interrelated places, imbued with meaning that through continuous interaction or recognition retains significance through time. Place names, as a tangible and intangible resource, can evoke power relations, identity, sense of place, and a community's heritage. This presentation, using a case study, explores some conceptual and methodological issues pertinent to place as a resource toward comprehending culture landscape heritage.



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Joseph Scott Gladstone: *Reclaiming Theory: Native Epistemology and the Future of First-Order Explanation*

Native American studies produces rich conceptual frameworks—sovereignty theory, recognition critique, relational ethics—yet it rarely asks what theories must do: explain why phenomena behave as they do, specify the conditions producing that behavior, and generate warranted predictions. Critique, philosophy, and decolonial praxis dominate. First-order theorizing, the scientific work of explaining reality, remains largely absent. This presentation argues that absence is not inevitable. Native epistemology carries the generative capacity for genuine theorizing. I share Transplanar Wisdom (TPW) as a theory grounded in Native North American philosophical traditions to demonstrate this. TPW uses Native ontology, rather than Native people as contexts, to guide understanding in a phenomena called sensemaking, a first-order social theory explaining how human beings make sense of, interpret and act on their environment. The field need not choose between intellectual sovereignty and theoretical rigor. This presentation shows why—and what Native-grounded first-order theory looks like when Native thinkers claim theorizing as their own.

Sydney M. Greenfield &

Co-presenter Father Rino Bonvini: *Revitalizing the Culture of a Brazilian Indigenous People Using North American Lakota Sioux Spirituality*

In this presentation, an anthropologist collaborating with a missionary and two indigenous Brazilians, tells the unusual story of the revitalization of the Pitaguary and Anacé peoples in Northeast Brazil. After being decimated and missionized by authorities of the Brazilian state and colonial settlers to the point of losing their identities, some members of the groups attempted to revive their sense of being indigenous following optimistic pro-indigenous conversations around the constitution of 1988. Then, in the early 2000s Father Dr. Rino Bonvini, a Comboni missionary, began collaborating with the groups. While studying theology in Chicago, as a course assignment, Father Bonvini had gone to the Lakota Sioux reservation where he established friendships and was invited by Adam Little Elk to return and participate in tribal rituals where he came to understand Lakota spirituality. At one ceremonial, he was told that a Lakota would come to Brazil and help an indigenous people. Father Bonvini then shared this with several Pitaguary and Anacé leaders who are now attempting to revitalize their cultures by syncretizing what they can reconstruct of their own histories with aspects of the Lakota view of the world.

Neyooxet Greymorning: *Rejuvenating Indigenous Languages*

This talk examines elements of what some scholars have accurately and inaccurately attributed to how a language is revitalized. My talk will also discuss some of the attributes and impact ASLA has had on rejuvenating Indigenous languages.



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Howard Higgs: *Two-Eyed Seeing at the Cultural Interface: A phenomenological synthesis of Gumbaynggirr spatial learning and a type of Western 'Third Way'*

This Indigenous Knowledge research project uncovers and addresses a 'transcription gap' in contemporary Australian built-environment and spatial design practice. Notably and imperatively, the systemic failure to articulate the unmediated spiritual and communicative natures of Country and Place. This Indigenist research project, utilising a 'Two-Eyed-Seeing' approach, attempts to synthesise Gumbaynggirr spatial learning with 'Third Way' phenomenological description and interpretation to validate the communicative and pedagogical agency of Jiiginy Miindala, a Gumbaynggirr Place of Learning. The research focusses on an 'In-between space' artefact, Jiiginy Miindala (Country designed place of learning), which serves as a sovereign 'Cultural Interface', able to present Indigenous experiential ontologies sensorially in the hope they would not face reductive, written, academic transcription entirely. The PhD scope concludes with a blind evaluation study designed to establish the legitimacy of 'interface knowledge' by comparing the readings of Western professionals with Indigenous Knowledge Holders.

Kevin Inglesby: *A Constitution of a Global Community of Practice: Theory and Application*

The Providence Cultural Equity Initiative in Providence, RI is a nonprofit organization associated with the Federation of Aboriginal Nations of the Americas. In the summer of 2025, I became aware of geographically disparate yet interconnected initiatives that could form the base of an innovative approach to the development and concerted practice of cultural heritage initiatives. Accordingly, this talk explores mechanisms that can help to drive the constitution of a global community of practice grounded in the ethos of RIVAS; to raise Indigenous voices and heritage across both academia and society. From a theoretical base, this talk utilizes the Community of Practice Theory alongside the Symbolic Economy to assess organizational intelligences that can become effective when employed by strategic social actors. By drawing from the Providence Cultural Equity Initiative as a case in point, this talk scales local nonprofit developments that can become projected into a global community of practice given the requisite configurations of social, cultural, and symbolic capital. By doing so in an applied anthropological context, the Providence Cultural Equity Initiative serves as an exemplary model for how the foundations of a cultural heritage circuit may be established and approached from a range of perspectives when coupled with broad institutional interfaces like RIVAS and beyond.



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Stanislav Saas Ksenofontov: *On good terms: pathways to decolonizing science-appropriated Indigenous terminologies in Arctic research*

Many western scientific disciplines adopted Indigenous Knowledge and terminology without deference to or understanding of the original meanings and values attached to Indigenous terms and concepts. This form of scientific appropriation has become a serious barrier to efforts of decolonizing Arctic research. The notion of Alaas is an example of such appropriation by the western science-based system of Indigenous knowledge about human–nature relations. This presentation aims to discuss the term Alaas as it is conceptualized in both western science and Indigenous knowledge. The presentation will explore the development of “alas” as an international permafrost science term and Alaas as an economic, traditional, cultural, and spiritual space of the Sakha People in Northeastern Siberia. Through an analysis of these histories and meanings, the authors suggest pathways to decolonizing western science-appropriated Indigenous terminology.

Mizuki Miyashita: *Sing It to Learn It: Blackfoot Lullabies Documentation and Language Revitalization*

Lullabies and children's songs may teach us about a culture through their lyrics. They may inform us about the rhythm and melody of the language in which they are sung. Songs such as lullabies tend to have rhythms and melodies that are similar to those of the language of the community the lullabies belong to. These shared features may contribute to a community's language revitalization efforts for language teaching and learning with respect to the pronunciation of the language, especially its prosody (e.g., intonation). In this presentation, I will share my experience with Blackfoot lullaby documentation, conducted in 2007, including the documentation process and outcomes, potential usage of the songs that may impact learners and children, and some thoughts on the prosodic differences between traditional and translated Western tunes.

Annapurna Devi Pandey: *Hills are our Life, Soul, and Spirit: Tribal Women's Protest Against Bauxite Mining in the Sijimali Hills of Odisha*

This paper examines the collective resistance of Adivasi women against proposed bauxite mining at Sijimali Hill, a forested border region spanning Kalahandi and Rayagada districts of Odisha. The hill is not only an ecological lifeline but also a cultural and spiritual space for local communities. Women have emerged as the frontline defenders of this landscape, organizing sustained grassroots resistance against mining activities proposed by the Vedanta and Maitri Group. Drawing on my qualitative fieldwork and participant observation in activism, I argue that the people of Sijimali view the land as "an intertwined matrix of sensations and perceptions, a collective field of experience lived through from many different angles" and how individual phenomenal fields weave into "a single, ever-shifting fabric, a single phenomenal world or 'reality'" (Abram, 1996). It is a phenomenological argument for the co-constitution of experience across beings, how communities in Odisha understand their entanglements with forests, land, and non-human presences. Their narratives reveal how women navigate structural barriers to gender justice while asserting political agency. To sustain the movement, women engage in wage labor and collectively pool resources to fund protests and legal resistance. This case study highlights women's struggle for access to social justice, their leadership in environmental governance, and the urgent need for inclusive legal systems that protect—not criminalize—human rights defenders.



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Alicja Boruta-Sadkowski: *The Indigenous Peoples of Russia in Soviet Cinema: "Curing Backwardness by White Saviors"*

Throughout the centuries the Indigenous Peoples of Russia have suffered greatly; their lands were taken away; their children were forced to attend boarding schools, yet the Russians presented themselves as "Saviors," who saved the lives of the Indigenous People from further destruction. And how was it done? What kind of "tools" did the Soviets use? Why was Shamanism looked at as primitive medicine? Was force necessary? The aim of this paper is to present the types of "backwardness" the Soviet Government ("White Saviors") forced upon the Russian Indigenous People to make them look and be "civilized." My main data are two videos, the 1928 silent documentary "The Forest People" (the original version and the edited one), and the 1941 comedy/drama "Romantics." To support my arguments, I use numerous visual from both movies.

Wisam A. Samara:

The Convergence of the Palestinian Economy into a Genocide Economy

This paper examines the transformation of the Palestinian economy from a semi-independent economy structurally dependent on Israel into what can be characterized as a war economy and, increasingly, a genocide economy. The paper begins with an overview of the historical and structural features of the Palestinian economy under prolonged occupation, limited sovereignty, and external control over borders, resources, and trade. It then analyzes how recurring military operations, movement restrictions, land confiscation, and economic fragmentation have produced conditions consistent with a war economy, where economic activity is shaped primarily by conflict dynamics and survival mechanisms rather than sustainable development. Building on this framework, the paper introduces the concept of a genocide economy—an economic structure shaped by policies and practices that systematically undermine the viability, stability, and continuity of an indigenous population. The paper argues that the ongoing war in Gaza, large-scale destruction of infrastructure, and the expansion of settler colonialism in the West Bank act as catalysts accelerating this transition. By examining economic devastation, displacement, and structural dependency, the paper highlights how economic mechanisms can become instruments within broader processes of dispossession, demographic pressure, and long-term economic erasure.



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Shay Sullivan: From Theory to Practice: *Theories of Language Development as Reflected in Accelerated Second Language Acquisition (ASLA) Principles & Practices*

Researchers have developed numerous theories to understand the heuristics employed by infants learning their first language(s) (L1). Despite empirical evidence supporting such developed theories in practice, the theories remain theories to the field of linguistics and language development, couched in numerously ominous “debates” about which theory is right and which is wrong, ultimately reflecting individual researchers’ perspectives on language and language acquisition, and a greater illness amongst academia at large, such that academics believe they can find a “right” or “wrong” answer to these questions. For example, it has been argued that infants use a basic word-learning heuristic called Mutual Exclusivity. Regarded as a word-learning constraint, it stipulates that each object has only one label (Markmen 2003). Instead of arguing for a particular theory based on experimental evidence. In this presentation I review the most commonly debated theories of language development against an immersive teaching practice, Accelerated Second Language Acquisition (ASLA). ASLA was developed by Dr. Neyooxet Greymorning as a method of teaching language. I argue that the widely debated “theories” of language development are inherent principles of ASLA methodologies. In this way, ASLA re-creates an experience of L1 acquisition for adults learning a second language (L2), where L2 acquisition is argued as a separate process from L1 acquisition in the language development literature. Further research within ASLA settings seeks to understand how these two processes (L1 and L2 acquisition) might not be so different but are likely guided by these same principles of acquisition.

Pei-Lin Yu: *Revitalization of Indigenous body sovereignty: tattoo cultures in Taiwan*

In this paper Yu will explore the revitalization of Indigenous body sovereignty through the cultural history of tattoo imagery in Taiwan, situating this within a frame of reference drawn from the Pacific Northwest. As I am not an Indigenous person, this will be an etic approach to the subject.

Dr Ekaterina Zibrova: *Colonial Legacies of “Culture” in (Post-) Soviet Ethnographic Expertise: Shaping Indigenous Peoples in Russia*

research examines the (post) colonial legacies of “culture” in shaping the position of Indigenous peoples in Russia. The point of departure is the Soviet project of modernising the peoples of the North and Siberia through anthropology and ethnography, which recorded and interpreted difference while naturalising state interventions. I ask how culture, as a category of governance, operates in the (post-)Soviet ‘ethno-apparatus’ and why this matters for Indigenous Peoples today. Using close reading of Soviet and post-Soviet ethnological expertise (Danilova), I analyse how it constructs and stabilises particular images of Indigenous culture. The study shows that Indigenous Peoples remain positioned as “objects of development,” with the state acting as architect of identity, while the violence of Soviet colonial interventions into culture is silenced. I also propose souvenir identity as a concept to describe how culture continues to function as a tool of exclusion in post-Soviet Russia.