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Carrying the Torch Forward: Indigenous Academics Building Capacity through an International Collaborative Model

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This article describes an ongoing international collaboration regarding Indigenous language and culture education that engages post-secondary institutions in Hawai'i, Arizona, Alaska, New Zealand, and Canada. Formed in 2005 under the leadership of the late William Demmert, Jr., this community presently brings a critical mass of prominent Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars together with emerging Indigenous faculty and students using hybrid delivery—virtual and face-to-face interaction—for internationally conducted coursework. Topics on Indigenous epistemology, language, culture, knowledge, traditions, and identity are the focus of two rotating Indigenous education course themes: Indigenous culture-based education and Indigenous well-being through education. Through networking and collaboration, the seminar has created “free spaces for authentic voices” (Gilmore, 2010), and mentorship of emerging Indigenous faculty and scholars to step into the role of leadership in academic arenas, a process we refer to as “carrying the torch forward.” Through a reflective review that included input from site instructors and student voices, the co-authors, who are Indigenous faculty, scholars, as well as former students, discuss the impacts of engaging the academy with Indigenous knowledges, peoples, and communities in meaningful ways. In this paper, we reflect on and highlight the potential that such collaborations provide, to access academic power while supporting the responsibility that Indigenous students assume in navigating the pathway of higher education toward Indigenous self-determination, broadly. More importantly, the international seminar space allows for advancement of this endeavour, grounded in the Indigenous values of responsibility, respect, relevance, reciprocity, relationships, and resiliency.

Introduction

We found Indigenous scholars with similar experiences, criticisms, and agendas that allowed us to move beyond our sense of isolation and marginalization while connecting to a broader, growing, Indigenous intellectual movement.... We believe the ideas expressed here will resonate with others with like minds and agendas, and eventually this will coalesce into a critical mass of Indigenous intellectuals and non-Indigenous allies. (Miheesuah & Wilson, 2004, p. 2)

Over the past 20 years, free spaces in higher education institutions have been created for the advancement of Indigenous education toward the purpose of improving the quality of life for Indigenous people and communities. At the heart of this Indigenous intellectual movement is a (re)focus on traditional knowledge systems: to provide a critical foundation for contemporary application of Indigenous approaches to self-determination through a culturally appropriate education for Indigenous peoples. The envisioning process called for an Indigenous approach to conceptualize and develop an “ideological and implementational” space (Hornberger & Johnson, 2007). This article highlights an international space for Indigenous collaboration comprised of post-secondary institutions in Hawai'i, Arizona, Alaska, New Zealand, and Canada (Figure 1). Critical players in this envisioning include: Professors William “Pila” Wilson (University of Hawai'i, Hilo (UHH)), William “Bill” Demmert, Jr., Oglala Sioux/Tlingit (Western Washington University (WWU)), Oscar Kawagley, Yupiaq (University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF)), Ray Barnhardt (UAF), Gerry Mohatt (UAF), Perry Gilmore (University of Arizona (UA)), and Keiki Kawai'ae'a, Native Hawaiian (UHH) and director at the time of the Kahuawaiola Indigenous Teacher Education Program (KITEP).

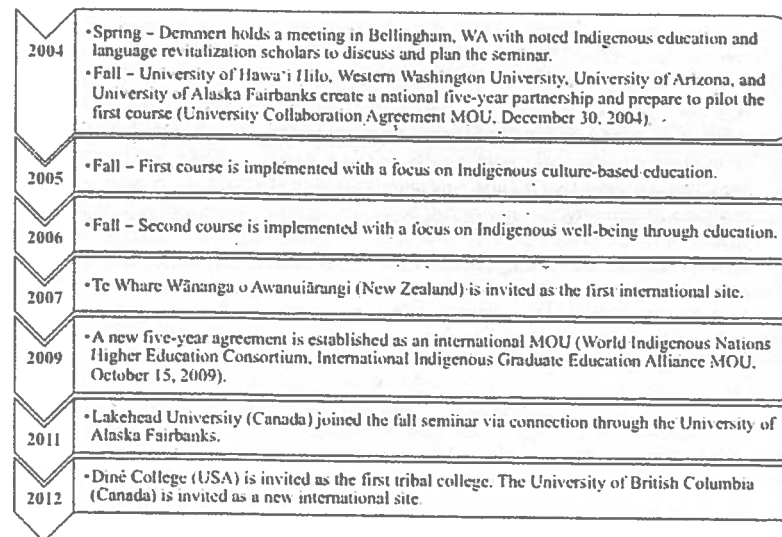


Figure 1. Invitational Timeline of Post-Secondary Institutions

As co-authors, Indigenous faculty, and site instructors at our respective institutions, each of us has been mentored toward assuming the responsibility of our current roles by one or more of the senior professors of the seminar directly and/or influenced through their work. Keiki Kawai'ae'a assisted in the envisioning and development process of the international seminar while a doctoral student at Union Institute and University. She is the current director of Ka Haka 'Ula O Ke'elikōlani College of Hawaiian Language (KH'UOK) at the UHH. Candace K. Galla, a Native Hawaiian, started as a seminar student and technology aide in the fall of 2006 at the UA, which led to her instructor status in 2012 at the University of British Columbia (UBC). Sheilah Nicholas, a member of the Hopi tribe and faculty at the UA, was mentored toward this role while a graduate student and, subsequently, as a new faculty hire in 2008. The critical mass of Indigenous scholar-educators continues to increase in this seminar space (Figure 2). We undertake a reflective look at the evolution of the seminar from our experiences and perspectives as three scholar-educators to whom the torch—the legacy and vision—has been passed. Thus, we contribute to this article “from places rooted in our own positionality as Indigenous peoples and as academics working with Indigenous communities and peoples” (Brayboy, Lomawaima, & Villegas, 2007, p. 231). Our purpose is threefold: (1) to pay tribute to the senior scholars who created this ideological and implementational space as “something significant” (Nicholas, 2008, p. 185); (2) to continue to align our work with the guiding principles of the six Rs—*relationality* (Carjuzza & Fenimore-Smith, 2010), *respect*, *responsibility*, *relevance*, *reciprocity* (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2001), and our added principle of *resiliency*; and (3) to ensure that we extend the legacy and vision of these individuals to new areas of research and praxis.

Using a historical narrative of the evolving development of the seminar, we draw on existing documents as well as site instructor and student reflections to set the context. We next discuss our conceptual framework of the six Rs that informs our practice, teaching, research, and interpretation of the seminar experiences across institutions. These Rs complement and provide the tenets for implementing the course “strategies” of *counter-stories* and *scholarly community identity* that are critical to advancing the research agenda by and for Indigenous peoples and communities (Gilmore, 2010). Our personal trajectories in carrying out this responsibility to whom the torch—the legacy and vision—has been passed are shared next. Central to the paper is the discussion of the critical impacts of the seminar across institutions. We conclude by recognizing the continuing challenges and reveal the implications for further pursuit of sustainability and capacity building in these institutional spaces.



Figure 2. Cross-Institutional Site Instructors and Invited Presenters

Historical Context of the Indigenous International Collaboration

Figure 1 shows the timeline and post-secondary institutions that were brought into the fold of this international community from 2005 to 2012. The timeline begins by noting that in the spring of 2004, Demmert formally convened a small group of noted scholars in the fields of Indigenous education and language revitalization to conceptualize the development of a cross-institution seminar. The impetus was to develop Indigenous-based

graduate courses for a new degree within the teacher education pathway at the UHH and, particularly, to “expand the experiences of post graduate candidates who had completed more culturally insular and locally based Hawaiian degree programs” (Gilmore, 2010, p. 3). The need centred on a broader exposure to the work and scholarship of other Indigenous scholars. It is important to note that informal discussions were ongoing among these scholars, leading to a significant commonality that “we were all isolated in each of our uniquely challenging academic settings” (Gilmore, 2010, p. 4); cross-institutional interactions would be enriching and beneficial for each institution. The first of the two seminar courses was piloted in the fall of 2005 for the university sites in Hawai’i, Arizona, Alaska, and Washington (Demmert, 2006a).

Presently, this community brings together a growing group of prominent scholars, in the field of Indigenous language and culture education, with emerging Indigenous faculty and students during the fall/winter academic semester. In Figure 2, we provide a visual representation of the university sites, professors, and seminar instructors who have been involved with the international collaboration (2005 to 2013). The overall organizational approach is that each site establishes the course at their respective institutions and provides the instructor. The seminar is offered as two rotating and separate courses under the themes of Indigenous culture-based education and Indigenous well-being through education. In addition to maintaining and monitoring student enrollment and progress, all instructors contribute to the lectures and online resources, facilitate discussions, develop guidelines for student projects and papers, and collaboratively maintain oversight of coordination. Technology is the primary mechanism for cross-institutional delivery of the seminar. Technologies currently used are Polycom, a video conferencing platform; Moodle, a learning management system; VoiceThread (VT), a cloud application that allows users to create, share, and comment on presentations; and Google Hangouts (GH), which provides virtual video connections. Site-level pre- or post-Polycom discussions allow for introduction, expansion, and followup among instructors and students.

Conceptual Framework: Six Rs of Indigenous Ways of Knowing, Being, and Doing

Scholars in the field of Indigenous education continue to pursue spaces within academic institutions to realize “successful and creative ways to use programmatic and academic strategies” (Gilmore, 2010, p. 2) that advance the goals of Indigenous well-being, continuance, and self-determination. To further expand on and forward this movement, we draw on the princi-

ples and the Indigenous conceptual ideas put forth by Kirkness and Barnhardt (2001) with their 4 Rs—respect, responsibility, relevance, and reciprocity—and by Carjuzza and Fenimore-Smith (2010) who add relationality. In this paper, we include resiliency as an additional core principle of collaboration, and explain our reasons for doing so.

Relationality

Indigenous cultural protocols of introduction and connection are embraced within the seminar spaces as the mentoring strategy, scholarly community identity (Gilmore, 2010), and defined as “seeing oneself as a legitimate and fully participating member of a scholarly community” (Gilmore, 2010, p. 3). Such connections and relationships among Indigenous and non-Indigenous academics across institutions have brought together those who are involved with and who share a commitment to Indigenous language and culture. Critical to fostering such connections and relationships is the ability to create opportunities for recurrent social, oral, and written dialogic interaction around issues of concern to Indigenous peoples and communities. These cross-institutional relationships come in various forms (e.g., mentor-mentee, peer-peer, teacher-student, supervisor-supervisee) and are representative of inter-generational learning. This process entrusts members of our network with the responsibility of carrying the torch forward to continue the vision of our predecessors.

Respect

Historically, higher education institutions have engaged in superficial relationships with Indigenous peoples that constitute *-isms* of oppression in language and culture education, denoting a lack of respect. This lack of respect permeates the academy, creating hostile environments that are detrimental to the cultural integrity of students, and to Indigenous peoples and communities overall. The seminar exemplifies a shift in ideologies and practices that counters this oppressive legacy and instead seeks to integrate Indigenous perspectives that represent a diversity of alternative worldviews and understandings. Deyhle and McCarty (2007) describe this as a “place of philosophical difference” where “coherence, reliability, beauty, validity, accuracy, wisdom, and power” (p. 237) embedded in Indigenous epistemologies, philosophies, and cosmologies are illuminated. Examples of this shifting include Indigenous paradigms in research design and methodology, course and programmatic expansion, and higher education certification and degree programs. Kirkness (2013) asserts that creating Indigenous spaces that are integrated within academia rather than as separate spaces, establishes respectful and hospitable conditions. These

conditions provide opportunities for students to engage with the concepts of the six Rs through Indigenous lenses to address issues of importance to them on behalf of Indigenous peoples and communities.

Responsibility

Carrying, as well as passing on the torch of responsibility on behalf of Indigenous communities and people, requires a belief, focus, and commitment to reaffirming Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing to provide the models for empowerment, well-being, continuance, and self-determination. Our actions not only impact us personally, but have overall impacts at a local and global scale. Kirkness and Barnhardt's (2001) notion of “responsibility through participation” as one of “exercising responsibility” (p. 15) describes the process that has been modeled for us by our mentor-scholars and how we have engaged with them during the process.

Relevance

Students seeking an education on behalf of Indigenous communities and people have not always been provided a relevant education toward achieving their personal and academic goals, which is a reflection of the cultural hegemony in the academy (Delpit, 1988) and a “perennial issue” in higher education for Indigenous students (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2001, p. 2). Specifically, Kirkness and Barnhardt refer to the diverging perspectives of Indigenous students seeking higher education as *coming* (the institution's perspective) versus *going* (the student's perspective) to college. For Indigenous scholar-researchers, a similar barrier to accessing academic power toward Indigenous self-determination is a continuing restriction of the panoply of voices (Carjuzza & Fenimore-Smith, 2010) or denial of Indigenous identities and knowledges in academia. The Indigenous spaces that have been established at each seminar institution site can be viewed metaphorically as places of emerging Indigenous discourse (Warrior, 1995), where the dynamic nature of knowledge and culture are presented as “living” models and new choices of intellectual influence (Brayboy et al., 2007). Indigenous self-education is rooted in issues that maintain cohesiveness and unity, a moral existence, and spiritual fulfillment (Nicholas, 2008).

Reciprocity

In Western educational practice, students are passive recipients, perceived as “coming” to the institution “to partake of what it has to offer” (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2001, p. 2). This, however, is not characteristic of Indigenous education. Teaching and learning is a reciprocal experience that is shared between student and instructor, mentor and mentee. We use the Hawaiian

word, *a'o* (an exchange of expertise and wisdom as a shared cyclical experience) to illustrate the principle of reciprocity or teaching and learning as an exchange between the *kumu* (teacher) and *haumāna* (student). Through this shared responsibility of educating with lessons from past journeys (ancestral histories), this accumulation of learned experiences is applied to roadblocks (life experience/struggles) and, once overcome, are recognized as milestones of success (adaptation to new circumstances). Continuance and survival of Indigenous people and communities are at the core of this "human educational system" consciously and deliberately designed "to perpetuate peoplehood" (Brayboy et al., 2007, p. 233).

Resiliency

Indigenous peoples, by their very existence and presence today, demonstrate Indigenous resiliency and persistence. A critical understanding of the source(s) of this resiliency—Indigenous epistemologies—are essential to the ideological commitment that Indigenous scholar-educators, researchers, and mentors must assert in restoring and maintaining these cultural resources. Engaging in the process of collaborative analysis (privileging Indigenous epistemology) and inquiry (research to improve the quality of life for Indigenous peoples and communities) through appropriate and deliberately designed strategies (Indigenous stories/storytelling, scholarly communities of practice) within Indigenous spaces (re)grounds the pedagogy and research in Indigenous ideological ways of knowing, being, and doing which, thus, strengthens resiliency.

Telling Our Stories: Building Capacity and Ensuring Sustainability in Higher Education

Asserting Indigenous thought, presence, and visibility into the academy has come to fruition through the evolution of these courses that created the pathway for new faculty to carry the torch forward as site instructors. In assuming our role, we, the co-authors, recognize that our entrance into this international community followed differing trajectories. The following sections feature our personal narratives, highlighting our individual experiences as we carry out the vision and responsibility bestowed on us.

From Vision to Fruition: Keiki Kawai'ae'a

The light of a torch begins with a flicker of a flame—an idea or a concept—the beginning of a vision—that when ignited with the right conditions provides enough brilliance to guide the way forward and becomes the light of inspiration. It has been a privilege and an honour to be part of the development of these two courses from their conception to fruition. It

began with an idea to create an Indigenous teacher education pathway from a certificate to a graduate degree. The motive was to prepare students to teach in a Hawaiian medium setting, with a specific foundation in Hawaiian epistemologies and pedagogy, and that moved toward a comprehensive P-20 Indigenous framework of education. It was at this juncture where the inspiration for the development of the courses began.

At the time, William "Bill" Demmert, Jr. (WWU), of Oglala Sioux and Tlingit heritage from Southwest Alaska, was already widely recognized for his "pioneering leadership, scholarship, vision and activism in Native Education" (Gilmore, 2013, p. 3), and I was director of the KITEP and the Hale Kuamo'o Hawaiian Language Center. I came to know Demmert over the course of several years through his involvement with the development of our Hawaiian immersion and Hawaiian medium schools; he went on to play a pivotal role in the development of the two rotating seminar courses. Demmert's experience with cross-university collaborative course offerings for teacher education, professional faculty development, and Indigenous educational research was not only invaluable but also highly appropriate to advancing our idea of privileging and creating access to Indigenous knowledge systems via an international seminar.

In 2002, Kahuawaiola received a national professional development grant under the Office of English Language Acquisition, Language Enhancement, and Academic Achievement for Limited English Proficient Students (OELA). The grant provided the seed money to develop a new Master of Arts degree in Indigenous Language and Culture Education (MA ILCE). It was the missing piece in the teacher education pathway between a graduate teaching certificate and the doctoral degree (PhD) in Hawaiian and Indigenous Language and Culture Revitalization (HILCR) already in place.

The MA ILCE program is twofold. First, it engages students, who are mostly classroom teachers, in a broader Indigenous scope of education from which action research projects, particular to critical issues affecting students, schools, families, and community in these Hawaiian educational settings, are addressed; and second, this trajectory raises the bar of expectation and excellence for its teachers in assuming the role of Indigenous educators as teachers and researchers.

Countless hours were spent in discussion on the broader educational issues of and solutions for the culture-based education that would be integrated into the coursework content and learning outcomes. Integral and underlying ideas included: the six Rs throughout the course development; broader exposure to Indigenous scholarship and community work; and greater access to Indigenous education issues in other higher education

programs where faculty were actively engaging with local and global Indigenous educational social justice concerns. The process involved identifying and inviting participation of particular higher education programs.

In December 2004, a five-year University Collaboration Agreement through a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the UHH, WWU, UA, and the UAF was established. Te Whare Wānanga o Awanuiārangi (TWWOA) was added in 2009 under an International Indigenous Graduate Education Alliance MOU wherein the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium (WINHEC) played a critical role in encouraging cross-university partnerships (Figure 1). These MOUs provided the venue for codifying the core principles that served as the foundation underlying these collaborations.

I liken the innumerable hours I spent in conversation with great leaders such as Bill Demmert, Pila Wilson (UHH), and Ray Barnhardt (UAF), listening, learning, and pondering new ideas during the early development of the courses, to a think-tank experience in action. On reflection, it was a place where I was surrounded by the bright light of innovation and *out of the box* thinking that was grounded in Indigenous ways of knowing and practice, reflected in the 6 Rs. It came at a critical time when I was mid-stream through my PhD and led me to my final dissertation topic on Hawaiian learning environments.

This process has been a personally enlightening experience as I, too, have been mentored along the way, broadening my own knowledge about Indigenous issues that are commonly experienced and, more importantly, the collaborative and innovative ways we act to solve them. I continue to work towards sustaining and promoting the seminar. For example, in 2010, along with Ray Barnhardt, Perry Gilmore (UA), and Graham Smith (TWWOA), we introduced publicly the creation of the cross-institutional collaboration in Denver, Colorado at an AERA session titled *Cross-institutional Collaborations in Indigenous Education*. In addition to my role as a presenter, I also had the honour of reading the dedication to Demmert who was scheduled to present with the group but who passed away before the event. It was at this point that I recognized the torch had been passed on to me by one of my dearest mentors, Bill Demmert. These two seminar courses began with a flicker of an idea, a hope that was realized—vision to fruition.

Transitioning from Student to Instructor: Candace Galla

In the fall of 2006, I began my second year as a doctoral student in the Department of Language, Reading and Culture (LRC) at the UA. That semester, I had the opportunity to enroll in the international seminar facil-

itated by Leisy Wyman (UA), William "Bill" Demmert (WWU), William "Pila" Wilson (UHH), and Ray Barnhardt (UAF). As each institution virtually connected for the first session, we at the UA site could hear chatter in English from the other participants at UAF and WWU. However, Hawaiian was the medium of communication, conversation, and expression for instructors and students alike at UHH. Despite my infrequent use of the language, I was compelled to introduce myself in the Hawaiian language with a basic greeting over the airwaves: *Aloha mai kīkōu. 'O Candace Kaleimamoowahinekapu Galla ko'u inoa. No Pāhala, Ka'i mai au*. I felt an immediate sense of comfort, excitement, and a bit of anxiety knowing that I was interacting with people from back *home*. This was a critical moment for me, in that I had finally entered a place where my trajectory expressed in the motto *Indigenous thinkers to Indigenous scholars* (from a student organization at UA) would be supported and nurtured in two significant ways.

First, there was direct access to Indigenous scholars at the forefront of American Indian, Native Alaskan, and Native Hawaiian education locally, nationally, and internationally. The possibility, as an Indigenous student and emerging scholar, to engage with this international network and to be exposed to Indigenous frameworks and perspectives became a reality. The work I chose to undertake is expressed by Wilson (2004): "We can best be of service to our nations by recovering the traditions that have been assaulted to near-extinction ... restoring health and dignity to our future generations" (p. 69) by specializing in Indigenous language revitalization.

Second, our UA site was comprised of students from communities across the United States, unlike our sister-sites that represented peoples from specifically local geographic regions. The diversity of languages, knowledge, and cultural practices were brought into a safe space, allowing us to discuss critical, difficult, and unique aspects of Indigenous education, identity, and well-being. A deep appreciation and respect developed within this cohort for our heterogeneity that was firmly rooted in our heritage, language, and culture. Hearing my heritage language and discussing Hawaiian medium education on a weekly basis contributed to this hospitality and also acknowledged my "funds of knowledge" (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzalez, 1992) as valid and relevant pedagogy and scholarship.

These experiences prepared me to give back to my community when I took my experience *home* in 2011 and joined the faculty in KH'UOK at the UHH under the guidance of Pila Wilson, a previous UHH site instructor. I worked alongside him and former classmates—Keiki Kawai'ae'a, Larry Kimura, Hiapo Perreira, and Iota Cabral—who were also doctoral students from 2006 and at varying stages of their degree completion. My entry into

UHH was one of immersion in Hawaiian culture and language, where the majority of my academic responsibilities were conducted through the Hawaiian language. This supportive cultural environment established by KH'UOK faculty, staff, and students made the transition of speaking Hawaiian as the *lingua franca* less challenging, although there were times when I would hide in my office—shared with Pila Wilson—because my oral language skills were not up to par with my comprehension. I overcame this trepidation, challenged myself to stay in the language as much as possible, and understood that my reclamation of Hawaiian language would be a lifelong journey and pathway.

A year later, I accepted a position in the Department of Language and Literacy Education at UBC. Relocating to Canada grounded me as a Hawaiian academic scholar, promoting and advocating for Hawaiian and Indigenous language education and cultural values. A full circle opportunity materialized when I was invited to participate as a site instructor at UBC. The mentorship and guidance I received from Leisy Wyman, Pila Wilson, and Perry Gilmore (UA) helped me prepare specifically for this seminar; I was ready to take on this *kuleana* (responsibility). In the fall of 2012, I joined the international collaboration as a site facilitator but I did not have a class of students until the fall of 2013. The seminar at UBC engaged eight linguistically- and culturally-diverse graduate students in a hybrid environment. Every week, students connected from far distances (i.e., Squamish, Duncan, and Abbotsford in British Columbia; Fox Lake in Alberta). Despite their locales, my students were united together in one space, made possible through technology, interest, and sheer motivation shared among our community of practice. Depending on the student's location, Internet connectivity, and the technology that worked best that week—GH or Skype—they each bridged the space and time to participate with the Vancouver site. Once connected to my students, I would dial the host site (UHH), which joined my UBC class with the other international sites.

During the fall 2013 seminar at the American Anthropology Association (AAA) in Chicago, Illinois, colleagues Beth Leonard (UAF), Sheilah Nicholas, Perry Gilmore, and I were roundtable presenters for the session titled *Knowledge Production in Indigenous Scholarship: Fostering Relationships, Reciprocity, Responsibility and Respect Through Cross-Institutional Collaborations*. As part of our presentation, we also demonstrated the power of multimedia using the very technology we used in the seminar—VT and GH—to bring me virtually into the presentation from Vancouver, BC and into the conference room to join the discussion on the impacts of the cross-collaborative model.

Providing post-secondary students with this unique opportunity to engage with academic scholars internationally across varied venues has allowed me to reciprocate my knowledge and expertise with a critical mass of Indigenous and non-Indigenous scholars in the academy, while developing and sustaining relationships that celebrate achievement of our milestones collectively. The seminar has been instrumental in establishing the spaces for us to seize opportunities for academic power, privilege our marginal positions, and legitimize our cultural knowledge (Leonard, Nicholas, Gilmore, & Galla, 2013).

Invitation to Join the International Community: Sheilah Nicholas

The Hopi perspective of responsibility is best understood in the expression, *Hak so'on naala hiita ang mongvasiwangwu*, meaning *no one accomplishes something worthwhile or of benefit alone*. The concepts of relationship, respect, reciprocity, and resiliency are inherent in this understanding, and the expression also signifies the many mentors, including those mentor-scholars we cite, who have encouraged and supported me in my academic journey.

Perry Gilmore (UA) played a pivotal role in paving the pathway for my entry into this international community while I was still a graduate student. In 2004, as incoming president of the Council on Anthropology and Education (CAE), a section of the American Anthropological Association (AAA), she initiated a new Indigenous Education Committee in the existing CAE organizational structure. To celebrate this new beginning, Perry played a key role in organizing two events held at the National Museum of the American Indian in Washington, DC as part of the 2005 annual meeting of the AAA. A poster session featured invited representatives of institutions who were engaged in Indigenous language research and revitalization. I was an invited panelist for the panel session titled *Promoting Indigenous Scholarship and Thought in the Academy: A Critical Research Agenda* that introduced emerging Indigenous scholars in the field. She maintained a watchful eye on my progress toward the completion of my doctoral degree and was instrumental in my departmental hire in the fall of 2008. With the seminar as my first teaching assignment, I was brought into the fold of this international community as a co-instructor alongside Perry. At her invitation, I was also a panelist at the 2008 AAA/CAE Presidential Session titled *Advancing Indigenous Scholars and Scholarship in Anthropology through Language and Culture Revitalization Research and Community Engagement: Creating a Better Kind of Anthropology*, which was held in San Francisco, California. This mentoring trajectory is one that Perry describes as a *strategy* to increase the critical mass of Indigenous scholars in the acad-

emy. Such strategic efforts that are undertaken in the institution and on the part of mentor-scholars characterize the "serious commitment" critical to finding pathways for access to academic power, authority, and opportunity while creating "a more hospitable climate" for those within these institutions and organizations (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2001, p. 15).

For those of us who are newly engaging in this work, such strategies opened up opportunities for us to meet face-to-face and initiated subsequent collaboration among those of us who joined this community at our respective academic institutions. Beth Leonard (UAF) and I have bridged our courses on Indigenous oral traditions with technology, and Candace Galla has been a Skype presenter in my course. Moreover, Beth and I have collaboratively extended the tradition of asserting the visibility of Indigenous and non-Indigenous allied-instructors and colleagues at AAA annual meetings (2013 and 2014). An upcoming collaborative venture with a non-Indigenous colleague, Vanessa Anthony-Stevens, involves working with Indigenous educators from Mexico in a departmental program, and will further expand on this tradition by featuring emerging Indigenous scholars from the international seminar and Mexico at the 2014 AAA annual meeting.

Nevertheless, such successful outcomes do not escape the behind-the-scenes tensions that arise, and that reveal and call attention to emerging needs. At the UA site, a collective tension surfaced around the perception of diversity as being problematic in contrast to an ostensibly "singular", strong, and unified movement among the Hawai'i, Māori, and Alaska sites when addressing Indigenous issues. At first, this tension was intimidating as the students compared their seemingly small individual efforts when developing student projects for their respective communities. As we worked to deconstruct this intimidation in our post-Polycom discussions, we recognized that (1) our diversity, in itself, was a unique and important contribution to the international discussion—student comments via Moodle interactions expressed appreciation and curiosity about similar issues in the American context, a perspective that was unfamiliar to them; and (2) in reciprocal appreciation, we were able to apply well-established Indigenous models—culture-based models and centring well-being—to our own work with success. In addition, while multimodal technology allowed for extending the dialogic process across distance and time, maximizing dynamic interaction among the students and instructors across all sites during the Polycom session required a response. I was introduced to the VoiceThread (VT) technology through a student in another course. VT offered a potential solution to provide access to scheduled presentations prior to, rather than during, the Poly-

com session. Site presenters created and shared their presentations, both visually and orally, ideally within a week's timeframe and, in turn, the site audiences accessed the presentations individually at their convenience, with the opportunity to post comments or questions through audio or written text. The presenter could then return to VT to preview all posted comments and questions, and address these at the Polycom session. Buy-in was rapid, the intended outcome was achieved, and, as the semester progressed, familiarity with VT further maximized the interaction level during the Polycom session. The VT technology not only allowed us to engage in live international dialogue but also provided a venue for students and instructors to accurately (re)tell and present contemporary Indigenous knowledge, worldviews, and epistemologies of Indigenous peoples and communities.

The journey from instructor-mentee to instructor-facilitator at the UA site has been empowering in the development of my own Indigenous academic identity, enriching for the broadening of perspectives I have gained, and fulfilling in assuming a responsibility that has the potential for far-reaching impact.

Panoply of Voices: Advancing Indigenous Self-Determination

As Indigenous scholar-educators, we are directly impacted by the overall experiences in this community and inspired by the growing number of Indigenous scholars. These demonstrate Indigenous perseverance, an aspect of survival that we view as driving the desire and motivation for all of us to move forward and toward continuity—to prepare the way for the next generations (Brayboy et al., 2007). This movement is dependent on understanding the source(s) of our strength and that we are heeding the calls of our predecessors.

In this section, we discuss the reflections of site instructors, including our own, which were collected as email responses to the items below. We also include relevant information gleaned from course evaluation reports (Demmert, 2006a, 2006b), as well as existing documents and anonymous student comments. However, our primary data are the instructor responses to the following:

1. Please highlight one or more significant impact(s) the cross-university collaboration has effected for your students, your course and/or institution.
2. What Indigenous topics/issues have emerged as the central foci of interest/concern among the students who have enrolled in your course? Highlight student projects that have been designed in response to these.

3. In what ways has the diversity across sites contributed to and shaped individual (student and/or faculty) and our collective-collaborative experiences: of well-being (in terms of responsibility, relations, reciprocity, and respect as Indigenous and non-Indigenous educators-scholars, or scholar-educators); with knowledges (knowledge systems, bodies of knowledge-readings); on academic trajectories (bridging university to community); on academic trajectories (bridging university to community)?
4. In what ways has the course provided opportunities for privileging, theorizing, and substantiating Indigenous epistemologies, practices, and research methodologies? What further opportunities could be developed?

Impacts

Overall, the instructor responses pointed out significant impacts along four themes: (1) institutionalization; (2) an international community of practice; (3) privileging Indigenous thought, scholarship, and concerns in the academy; and (4) advancing language and culture initiatives.

Institutionalization

The international seminar is a core master's-level or doctoral-level course at UHH, and in the UAFs' Cross-Cultural Studies master's program and the Indigenous Studies doctoral program. At the UA, the seminar has been offered every fall semester for seven years as part of the Indigenous education strand of the Language, Reading and Culture (LRC) graduate program. Currently offered as a special topics course, it is slated to become a permanent course in the overall graduate LRC program. At UBC, although the seminar has been offered once as a special topics course, it has also been used for faculty professional development for two years. Similarly, TWWOA invites their faculty and staff to participate in the seminar for professional development, and also invites students for ongoing learning opportunities. At Lakehead University (LU), the seminar has inspired master's thesis topics in Indigenous language revitalization and knowledge systems, drawing upon the literature afforded through participation. At Diné College (DC), the seminar was an invaluable resource for supporting the *tribal* side of *tribal college*. Participation of DC students has been an influential factor in the development of strategic goals to perpetuate and expand Diné principles and values toward a framework that reorganizes how academic institutions envision planning and evaluation.

International Community of Practice

Gilmore (2010) describes the seminar as a "mentoring project" which focuses on scholarly community identity and counter-narrative studies as deliberate strategies to "affirm subaltern knowledge, create 'free spaces' for identity affirmation and reconstruction, and provide access to academic power in higher education" (p. 2). In these spaces, site instructors noted that the research topics students brought to the seminar (Figure 3) and shared through weekly discussions across university sites not only established a sense of identity, community, global unity, and local commitment (Gilmore, 2010), but also established an understanding of core issues important to Indigenous communities and peoples. The reasons students cited for their enrollment included: cultural and linguistic backgrounds, experiences, scholarly interest in issues and concerns regarding Indigenous education, peoples, worldviews, and the motivation to explore personal cultural and linguistic identities.

Students saw how their work was connected to a larger discourse in relation to the work of others in different contexts (Demmert, 2006a, 2006b). The LU instructor encouraged students to participate in conferences and community gatherings as a means to value the work being done in their own communities. Such practices cultivate an Indigenous orientation that bridges global Indigenous movements to local practices. Thus, according to one site instructor, collaboration among scholars committed to Indigenous issues within their institutions strengthens their positions and identifies them as national and international programs rather than as

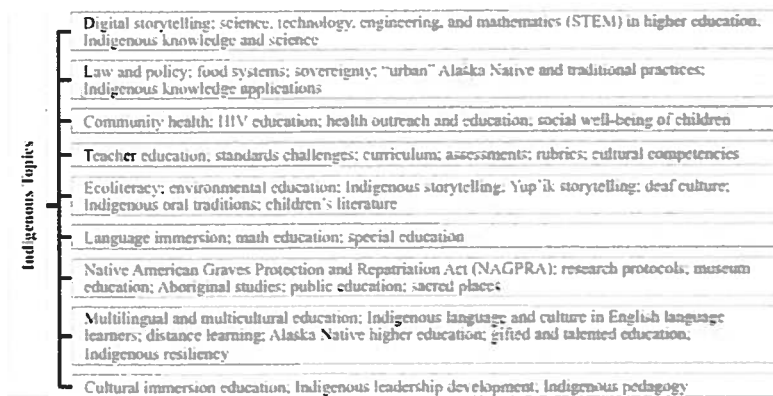


Figure 3. Range of Topics and Issues of Concern Discussed by Seminar Students in 2013

a number of small, local programs. This broader status strengthens the ability to serve local Indigenous communities more effectively. Site instructors also noted that these cross-collaborative conversations have contributed to students' self-confidence in the process of developing research grounded in Indigenous knowledge systems and research methodologies and, for others, motivation toward developing new approaches for serving local communities (Barnhardt, Kawai'ae'a, Gilmore, Archibald, & Pidgeon, 2010).

Privileging Indigenous Thought, Scholarship, and Concerns in the Academy

The seminar was seen to have established international spaces in the academy that linked with opportunities to:

- engage in rich dialogue about our comparative studies around shared themes/issues
- validate a broader range of method for study
- promote Indigenous research
- apply research to relevant and essential topics in their communities
- assist students in developing Indigenous academic identities grounded in Indigenous knowledge systems and research methodologies.

According to UHH site instructors, such opportunities provide their students with access to *two different streams of thought* in Indigenous education. The first access is to the foundational knowledge base in the Hawaiian context and history, cultivated in the more culturally-insular and locally-based approach. This knowledge base contrasts with the Indigenous education scholarship premised in the P-20 North American and international standards. The second access involves the Indigenous funds of knowledge of the students and faculty involved in the seminar. This amalgamation of cultural and linguistic resources highlights (1) the differences among Indigenous communities; and (2) the historical engagement of different groups with dominant group education. Nevertheless, as one instructor offers, the Hawaiian language and education context exemplifies an Indigenous model. Since Hawaiian seminar students tend to be situated within the classroom, they share and model "what they are doing as action-researcher educators" (personal communication, UHH instructor) in building curriculum around deep Indigenous concepts in a Hawaiian-focused P-20 system. In contrast, the reality for most students is that they work across very different contexts and levels of educational systems, in and out of public schools and universities, and, most likely, in individualized and marginalized spaces of opportunities. Such diverse experiences

impact how they view themselves while working on becoming Indigenous educator-activist scholars. Nonetheless, the notion of *differences* allows for a broadening of perspectives that benefits research undertaken beyond local borders.

Advancing Language and Culture Initiatives

It is important to note that the founding of the seminar at the Hawai'i and Alaska sites centred on the goal of advancing Indigenous language and culture through reclamation projects, and is particularly attractive to students who are motivated to engage in this topic. Student projects on Indigenous languages such as Chickasaw, Cherokee, Zuni, Kalinago (Dominican Republic), and Bribri (Costa Rica) have led to dissertation research topics. The DC instructor describes a broad impact at the local level, describing the seminar as having "galvanized efforts to revise and implement Navajo as second language course offerings" (personal communication, DC instructor), promoting Navajo language and culture activities across the college. Former and current students have pursued additional or higher degrees, returned to their home communities to assume various educational positions, and many play a role in academic institutions to expand opportunities for Indigenous students. The seminar has further inspired instructors' projects, many of whom are engaged in Indigenous language revitalization efforts.

Indigenous Topics and Issues: Student Interests Informing Research Development

Figure 3 illustrates the broad range of topics and issues of concern for Indigenous communities that students brought to the fall 2013 seminar. Grouping students around shared research interests allowed for the development of further in-depth, cross-collaborative dialogue; they were encouraged to use Google Hangouts (GH) technology to accommodate the different time schedules of group members. Students developed a variety of projects: innovative language programs, culture-based curricula, critical Indigenous pedagogies, Indigenous theoretical frameworks; explored language identity and ideologies; and produced compelling research, all of which have expanded the knowledge in Indigenous studies and education.

Diversity

Students represented Native Hawaiian, Alaska Native, Māori, and First Nations, as well as Indigenous communities across the lower 48 United States, which included urban Chicano/a communities and beyond (Brazil, Costa Rica, Dominican Republic, and Saudi Arabia). This diversity is a significant draw for students from diverse academic disciplines as well. The

course attracted students from American Indian studies; anthropology; museum education; language and literacy education; Native American linguistics; Indigenous knowledges and pedagogy; school psychology; and measurement, evaluation, and research methodology.

The opportunity to gain access to alternative worldviews, perspectives, and experiences with contemporary global circumstances through our cross-university sharing spaces was invaluable. Student projects expanded our awareness of local and global Indigenous issues, such as the struggles of Somalia/Bantu refugee populations in Tucson, Arizona; the impact of internationalization on Taiwanese Indigenous identity; and the impact of resource extraction on Indigenous communities in Mongolia.

Overall, the diversity inherent in the seminar space has contributed to our well-being through inspiring interactions, engagement, and collaboration in comparative studies around shared themes, and is viewed as sustaining and supporting the academic trajectories of emerging Indigenous scholars. Students used the words *meaningful*, *authentic*, *gratitude*, *enriched*, *honoured*, *inspired over and over*, *communal effort*, and *heartfelt* to describe the impact of the course (personal communications, international seminar students). One student was amazed that the seminar could make the levels of sharing—across space, geographies, distance, and interests—a “reality” (personal communication, international seminar student) while another expressed the experience as “mind/soul expanding” (personal communication, international seminar student). Further, it was found that diversity validates a broader range of culturally appropriate methodologies and ethics for graduate work in developing relevant research on issues directly impacting Indigenous communities, while generating valuable new knowledge.

Carrying the Torch Forward: Challenges, Implications, and Conclusions

Despite the near decade-long model of this collaboration, complexities continue to exist. Some of these are largely logistical and involve the challenges that technology and its reliance can present. Others are site-specific, such as the diversity that the UA site describes; most are shared commonalities, as described by students and instructors, which include the following pedagogical challenges: (1) cross-collaborative syllabus development; (2) continuing dialogue with technological tools; (3) dynamic access to student-generated projects and scholarship; and (4) course recruitment and enrollment, which are further elaborated on here. We view these pedagogical challenges as implications for the work with which we must continue to pursue.

Pedagogical Challenges and Implications

Cross-Collaborative Syllabus Development

In a course that views both instructors and students as vital contributors to the intellectual community of practice, a challenge exists with accommodating flexibility in the coordination of course delivery across academic institutions and time zones (Demmert, 2006a, 2006b). This highlights the fact that a conventional syllabus format may not adequately align with the current approach to delivering course content on a shared theme at each institution. The conventional syllabus generally requires a static and sequential listing of course readings, aligned with weekly topics for discussion. However, the seminar readings and presentations are dependent on active contributions from site participants that are germane to the overall course theme. This has presented challenges in student-anticipated access to the semester's specific schedule of topics and required readings. More important to consider is the benefit of a move away from the conventional in terms of complementing the dynamic and interactive dialogue on relevant topics across sites. This emerging pedagogical shift has yet to be shared with and discussed among site instructors. The essential implication is an early and concentrated attention to cross-collaborative planning that includes the following challenges and implications.

Continuing Dialogue with Technological Tools

Despite the rich discussions that take place in the limited time frame each week, the prevailing challenge is to continue the dialogue between students outside of the prescribed time considered essential to sustain the relationships cultivated in the seminar. Instructors have used GH to facilitate such interactions by assigning students to GH groups according to their research area and interests (Figure 3). The challenge remains with establishing protocol that will foster ongoing international academic networking with the goals of global unity and local commitment. Site instructors themselves are exploring the broader potential of technology toward this goal; for example, GH was used to hold a seminar planning meeting. The implication is that instructors and students will become familiar with the technological tools, and use the technology for collaboratively developing both inside and outside of class individual and group activities as course requirements at each site.

Dynamic Access to Student-Generated Projects and Scholarship

Moodle has been the primary repository for the body of student generated projects and knowledge produced around and in response to “community needs” particular to the Hawaiian contexts, according to one UHH site instructor (personal communication, UHH instructor). With the increase

of university sites joining this international community of practice, and the diversity of Indigenous topics and issues students bring to the conversation, the impacts of the work undertaken in these Indigenous spaces remains unknown. Moreover, whether students and instructors use this repository of knowledge beyond the VT presentations to inform their own work in addition to time-finite access are also unknown. The implication is that this body of knowledge will expand in its distribution and use in dynamic ways, such as through developing a collaborative seminar journal and encouraging collaborative co-authored publications and student submissions to established journals.

Course Recruitment and Enrollment

Collectively, student enrollment across participating sites is high; however, low enrollment is a reality at each academic institution, thus, problematizing and challenging the notion of Indigenizing the academy. There is an increasing and continuing top-down pressure for programs, departments, colleges, and faculties to *fill seats* with the expectant outcome that the course will at least break even or be financially profitable. Advocacy for institutionalization of such courses rests largely with faculty, requiring them to vigorously engage with the institutional power and demand inclusion (Marker, 2014). The implications this challenge proposes for faculty are (1) to continue pursuing alternative pathways for student participation in the seminar; and (2) to remain vigilant in calling for the academic community to assume responsibility in both advocacy as well as transformative efforts within institutions. This requires dismantling the existing academic silos that have isolated Indigenous peoples and knowledge systems from the mainstream academy. Further, so that such a transformative effort “rewrites and rerights” (Gilmore, 2010) the accurate history of Indigenous peoples around the world, scholar-educators must be called to “awaken existing university faculty and administrators to recognize and understand Native community priorities necessary for the development and well being of Native America” (Demmert, 2005, p. 197). The six principles of relationality, respect, responsibility, relevance, reciprocity, and resiliency underlie and guide such vigilance.

As Indigenous scholars, we are each fully vested in this work on behalf of communities locally and globally who benefit directly from the efforts being undertaken in higher education spaces. We call upon scholars “who want to listen and join us” (Deyhle & McCarty, 2007, p. 210) to shift how the institution understands our roles and responsibilities to students who “go to the university” (Kirkness & Barnhardt, 2001, p. 8) to achieve their goals.

Conclusions

Those of us seeking to follow the path paved by those before us acknowledge the constant vigilance required to maintain the ties to Indigenous knowledge, knowledge systems, and heritage. Our personal narratives and student and instructor reflections confirm for us that we are carrying the torch forward in addressing the research needs and advancing the knowledge of Indigenous peoples, in spite of the challenges outlined.

We also acknowledge that when we are challenged or discouraged in our efforts, we can (re)gain inspiration and encouragement by *turning to tradition*, such as practicing the teaching of *Hands Back, Hands Forward*, as taught by Elder Vincent Stogan of Musqueam First Nation. Metaphorically, in joining hands across the institutions, we hold our left palm up to acknowledge, honour, and grasp the teachings passed to us by our Elders, mentors, and those who have supported our journey. We hold our right palm down to pass on these teachings to the younger and future generations and leaders who may continue the path that we have been privileged to walk (Archibald, 2008).

We close by asserting that we are empowered with the responsibility and motivation to carry the torch forward alongside our colleagues, and in heeding the wisdom and advice embodied in the *'ōlelo no'eau* or Hawaiian proverb (Pukui, 1983) and Hopi teaching (Nicholas, 2008) respectively:

I ulu nō ka lālā i ke kumu. The branches grow because of the trunk.

Hak kyavtsit akningwu. One undertakes this work with respect.

Acknowledgements

A grateful *malalo* and *askwali* to site instructors and students for their willingness to share their reflections on their insights and experiences in this Indigenous cross-collaborative model, which were central to documenting the source of Indigenous resiliency today.

Notes

We made every attempt to provide an accurate history and depiction of the seminar, gleaned from existing but sparse documentation and that which was held in the memories of participants. Informed by our experience in co-authoring this paper, we encourage our site instructor colleagues and students to further document the potential for such collaborations that assist students and faculty in opening spaces and pathways in higher education toward Indigenous self-determination, broadly.

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