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# Linguistic Anthropology

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### Toward an Anti-Racist Linguistic Anthropology: An Indigenous Response to White Supremacy

Drawing from my lived experiences as an Indigenous linguist, this article exposes and responds to epistemological racism (Kubota 2020) in the discipline of Linguistic Anthropology, which I argue institutionalizes and reproduces white supremacy. I extend Rosa and Flores's (2017) raciolinguistic perspective, which examines the co-naturalization of race and language, to the co-naturalization of race and language scholars. Through a critical analysis of the hegemony of the "white linguistic anthropologist," I demonstrate how BIPOC linguistic anthropologists are expected to assimilate to a white normative culture of producing, disseminating, and evaluating anthropological knowledge. Employing ideas from Indigenous research methodologies such as the notion of relational accountability and related "R's" such as respect, responsibility, reciprocity, and rights; the framework of Radical Indigenism (Garroutte 2003), which argues for research praxis based on Indigenous philosophies of knowledge; and Felt Theory (Million 2009), which asserts the validity of knowledge emerging from experiences that are felt; I offer alternatives that are grounded in Indigenous research principles and protocols. I conclude by outlining a reimagined discipline, a linguistic anthropology built from Indigenous epistemologies and norms of relational knowledge production, and discuss the anti-racist praxis that such a transformation could facilitate. [epistemological racism, disciplinary praxis, Indigenous research methodologies, raciolinguistics, white supremacy]

#### Introduction

Linguist. In more general terms, it could be stated like this: I am Indigenous; I am a scholar. I contrast this with a second pair: Linguistic Anthropology has adopted an anti-racist praxis; Linguistic Anthropology incorporates and reproduces racist logics and structures. Why do the statements provided above play out as they do? The first pair should not represent a contradiction and the second pair should. My basic answer is that both reveal how academia embeds logics of white supremacy, by which I refer to structures, processes, and ideologies that produce oppression along racial lines, specifically by bolstering and normalizing the needs, wants, norms, and bodies of white subjects in ways that subjugate racialized populations. The objective of this article is to demonstrate how the logics of white supremacy are embedded into

Linguistic Anthropology and to offer alternatives that draw upon Indigenous perspectives.

The focus of my argument is a set of intersecting structures of oppression that I subsume under the umbrella of *epistemological racism* (Kubota 2020) with respect to how white supremacy guides disciplinary praxis in Linguistic Anthropology. In her analysis of the related field of Applied Linguistics, Kubota adopts this term to describe how scholars of non-dominant positionalities become "compelled to become complicit with white Euro-American hegemonic knowledge" (2020, 712), and how academic norms simultaneously both exclude and assimilate these scholars into a praxis that centers this dominant knowledge along with its primary agents. Kubota argues that key areas of epistemological racism are revealed in citational practices—what work gets cited, by whom, and in what contexts—as well as by examining the psychological impact that dominant academic practices have on scholars of color.

I extend Kubota's observations into an examination of norms in the field of Linguistic Anthropology, which I argue disguises its structures of white supremacy in the production, legitimization, and dissemination of anthropological knowledge by framing its racialized approaches as scholarly rigor and as helping the Other. Stemming from my research experience and personal background, I focus primarily on this issue as it relates to Indigenous peoples in the present-day United States. In doing so, I emphasize that although I choose in several places in this paper to use the acronym BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Color) in recognition of the several shared experiences (despite key differences) and benefits of coalition-building among racialized groups, I write primarily from my own lived experiences. Although my positionality is also informed by my European and Japanese ancestry, along with many other traits, in the academy I am widely known as a Miami linguist and faculty member in Native American Studies, and I reflect primarily on the latter background for the current paper. Throughout this analysis, I adopt critical approaches to the study of language and incorporate insights from Indigenous research methodologies to reveal problems and offer solutions.

#### Centering a Raciolinguistic Perspective: It's not the BIPOC Scholars Who Need to Change

A core tenet of critical race theory is that white supremacy is embedded in social structures and institutions, including academic disciplines, and reproduced by their associated norms. A corollary is that dismantling white supremacy entails identifying and changing the underlying structures and practices that produce it. As I believe is self-evident to most if not all BIPOC scholars, incremental changes in disciplinary praxis, though potentially helpful on a local scale, do not produce the broader structural and epistemological shifts that are truly needed. A recurring example occurs with interventions that target the racialized subject, often through a process of enumerating racialized individuals within a given institution and attempting to increase the number of "diverse" people. Too often, these efforts fail even to address contemporary patterns of racism in academia, let alone the underlying history and power structures from which the concept of race and its categories emerge. Indeed, as race is constructed to be a tool of oppression, success for anti-racist initiatives entails engagement with the details of how and why racialization occurs.

A raciolinguistic perspective (Flores and Rosa 2015; Alim et al. 2016; Rosa 2016, 2019; Rosa and Flores 2017) provides a useful lens for theorizing and responding to this issue by "reimagining and reconstituting not only racial and linguistic formations, but also the range of historical, political, economic, and sociocultural structures to which they are linked" (Rosa and Flores 2017, 642). From this point of view, as captured within the term *raciolinguistics* itself, race and language cannot be conceived of as separate from each other. Central to a raciolinguistic perspective is the observation that racialized subjects are imagined as speaking "bad" language

varieties or otherwise existing in "inappropriate" ways by virtue of their racialized positions, not because of traits that objectively have these characteristics. Flores and Rosa (2015) describe this as follows:

a raciolinguistic perspective seeks to understand how the white gaze is attached both to a speaking subject who engages in the idealized linguistic practices of whiteness and to a listening subject who hears and interprets the linguistic practices of language-minoritized populations as deviant based on their racial positioning in society as opposed to any objective characteristics of their language use. (150–151)

To become "appropriate," racialized subjects are then expected to assimilate to a white norm in contexts such as education, where this pattern is especially common. Indeed, educational institutions frequently promote assimilatory practices framed as ways of helping the Other to be "appropriate," and in so doing reproduce white supremacy. By shifting the lens to the deeper interrelated dynamics by which such ideas come forth, a raciolinguistic perspective refutes that the legitimacy of marginalized populations lies in their assimilation to a white norm (or by having their experiences, practices, and ways of knowing legitimized through white-normative approaches). Rather, it is the white supremacy that must be identified and dismantled, the responsibility for which lies primarily with the white subject.

Just as ideologies of "appropriateness" regarding the practices of minoritized language users are fundamentally racialized and deficit-based (Flores and Rosa 2015), so too, I argue, are academic ideologies of "appropriateness" with respect to the production and circulation of knowledge about language by minoritized scholars in fields such as Linguistic Anthropology. In this article, I extend the application of a raciolinguistic perspective by examining the co-naturalization of race and language scholars through a critical analysis of the hegemonic ideologies of the *white linguistic anthropologist*. By this term I refer not to individual linguistic anthropologists who are white—in reality a very diverse group—but rather to this intersection as a social construct emerging from the collective experiences of BIPOC scholars.

Underlying this construct is the history of Linguistic Anthropology as a field that has largely been created and demarcated by the white linguistic anthropologist, thus rendering dominant colonial and Eurocentric norms of knowledge production, dissemination, and evaluation, and by extension de-legitimizing their decolonial and non-white counterparts. Rosa (2016) observes that ideologies and processes of standardization as they apply to language varieties intersect with general racialized structures to render entire minoritized groups as "languageless," incompetent, and/or illegitimate while bolstering the hegemony of dominant groups. I argue that a similar pattern applies in Linguistic Anthropology, where several disciplinary practices, such as the norms of citation discussed in detail below, serve to exclude BIPOC scholars and to render us as "knowledgeless," incompetent, and/or illegitimate while bolstering the hegemony of the white linguistic anthropologist.

The tactic of fixing alleged deficiencies in minoritized populations by imposing white norms has a long tradition in Anthropology. The Boasian approach to studying Native American languages, for example, on the one hand addressed a social injustice—that the wider (white) public believed these languages to be "primitive" or otherwise inferior. However, the disciplinary response was to extract these languages from their original contexts and to legitimize them by re-manufacturing them as empirical scientific objects (Bauman and Briggs 2003, 272; Heller and McElhinny 2017, 78–87), not to privilege their Indigenous intellectual origins as valid theoretical orientations in their own right. A related strategy across language sciences of crafting appropriateness is exemplified by the widely adopted practice of highlighting how allegedly "ungrammatical" language varieties actually do have grammar and communicative potential (e.g., Labov 1969).

As argued throughout critical linguistics scholarship, the major shortcoming of such approaches—"error correction" through facts (Bucholtz 2018; Lewis 2018)—is

that they fail because they do not call out the underlying racism that motivates beliefs about linguistic deficiency to begin with (e.g., Hill 1999, 2008; Alim and Smitherman 2012, 167–197; Crump 2014; Zentella 2018). I observe that a parallel pattern applies toward the deficiencies that are assigned to BIPOC scholars through the gaze of the white linguistic anthropologist. Indeed, as discussed below, many interventions ostensibly aimed at addressing the racist and colonial legacies of Anthropology entail the white linguistic anthropologist finding deficiency in the perspectives and research practices of BIPOC scholars, and then attempting to fix this by socializing those scholars into normative academic practices. This creates a challenge among BIPOC scholars who aim to center their community ways of knowing and the associated responsibilities but are expected to adopt white norms in order to be "good" scholars, a paradox that Lakota anthropologist Beatrice Medicine described as "learning to be an anthropologist and remaining 'Native'" (Medicine and Jacobs 2001).

In response to this, I offer in the remainder of this paper an alternative approach of appropriateness by critiquing and reimagining the contemporary norms of Linguistic Anthropology through Indigenous research protocols, which provide tools that can not only counter white supremacy but that I believe can advance anthropological sciences in other beneficial ways. In recognition that academic fields reproduce themselves through the socialization of scholars into a particular culture, I direct much of my analysis to the epistemological racism that I observe in the socialization practices of the current discipline. I conclude with an outline of what I term an "Indigenous linguistic anthropology" to model how linguistic anthropology might productively be situated in Indigenous epistemologies.

#### Themes of Indigenous Approaches to Research

While a basic tenet of Indigeneity is that respecting different Indigenous knowledge systems, which emerge from specific geographies and are tied to specific peoples, is core to observing intellectual sovereignty (Tatsch 2004), there are nevertheless several common protocols across Indigenous nations regarding the production and circulation of knowledge. Collectively, these Indigenous research methodologies highlight the importance of knowing and building relationships, emphasize the responsibility that comes with producing and sharing knowledge, center community needs, and resist the colonial norms of knowledge production which have been leveraged in ways that bring harm to Indigenous communities (e.g., Weber-Pillwax 2001; Wilson 2008; Kovach 2009; Chilisa 2011; Gaudry 2011; Smith 2012; Lambert 2014; Peltier 2018). I draw especially from the following three named ideas in Indigenous research methods.

The first, while not a set framework, is a convention of thinking about knowledge production in terms of guiding concepts captured by words that start with *R* such as *respect, reciprocity, responsibility,* and *rights,* among others (e.g., Kirkness and Barnhardt 1991; Magnat 2014; Snow et al. 2016). Anchoring all of these concepts is the broader theme that knowledge is *relational*, emerging through and dependent on a multitude of relationships that include humans with other humans; humans with lands, spirits, and non-human relatives; lands with spirits; and so on. As described by Opaskwayak Cree scholar Shawn Wilson, these "relationships do not merely shape reality, they *are* reality" (2008, 7, emphasis in original), and from this ensues the foundational protocol that research must always be accountable to relationships. Similarly, each discretely named *R* must be considered in relation to the others, as they are interdependent. For example, responsibility to knowledge is anchored in respect for the producers of that knowledge, and reverence to the place(s) it developed.

Second, I call attention to a critical approach which has greatly influenced my thinking, and whose name also starts with *R*-: Radical Indigenism. Proposed by Cherokee scholar Eva Marie Garroutte (2003), Radical Indigenism asserts that Indigenous "philosophies of knowledge are rational, articulable, coherent logics for

ordering and knowing the world"—and extends this belief into the academy by arguing for research praxis that centers this principle (113). Garroutte adopts *radical* to mean "root" (source), and emphasizes the value of original Indigenous philosophies of knowledge as reflected in teachings of tribal Elders and sacred stories, along with traditional methods of gaining knowledge such as through ceremony (144–49). Implicit in Radical Indigenism is a critique of the hegemony of dominant knowledge systems and their effects. Indeed, as observed by Leibowitz (2017), Western enlightenment knowledge "is interwoven with violence and imposition, it generates inequality, it leads to alienation, it lacks a foil to counter its own excesses, and it fails to answer the pressing challenges of our time" (99). The hegemony of Western knowledge is so engrained in the academy that Indigenous ways of knowing are often not even mentioned, a problem the current paper responds to.

Aligning with Radical Indigenism is recognition that embodied knowledge emerges from emotional and spiritual experiences in addition to observation. This notion is captured well by Tanana Athabascan scholar Dian Million's Felt Theory (2009), which at its core asserts the validity of knowledge emerging from experiences that are *felt*. From this vantage, Felt Theory centers the lived experiences of Indigenous people as related through our own stories, the telling of which often serves to disrupt the "objective" accounts told to and about us. Million applies this idea primarily to the stories of First Nations women who have experienced trauma, particularly sexual violence, via the structures and effects of colonialism. For the current analysis I extend her framework into a more general critique of the academy, which Million also calls out for its complicity in silencing Indigenous scholars. She notes that academic gatekeepers attempt to prevent "our entry into important social discourses because we *feel* our histories as well as think them" (54; see also Brayboy 2005, 426–27 for a related observation).

As embodied knowledge and the experiencer's background are conceptually intertwined, I next share my background in some detail, focusing on the experiences that motivate the arguments in this paper. Following Indigenous norms of storytelling, I move back and forth among topics, inserting my *felt* experiences throughout.

#### Where I Am Coming From

I am a citizen of the Miami Tribe of Oklahoma and my tribal language, myaamia, at some point around the 1960s ceased to be actively known after a period of community language shift driven by removals, land dispossession, boarding schools, and other colonial violence.<sup>2</sup> This was the point at which myaamia became "extinct" according to linguists. However, myaamia remained well described in close to 300 years of written documentation and never ceased to be claimed by Miami people (Leonard 2008). Linguistic reconstitution using that documentation began in the late 1980s, and was followed by grassroots language recovery efforts in the early 1990s where individual families came together to learn and speak myaamia. These early community-driven efforts were followed in the late 1990s and 2000s by more formal language education programs, ongoing research, and resource development (Leonard 2008; Baldwin and Costa 2018).

My role in this and in other *language work*, a term by which I refer collectively to language documentation, description, analysis, learning, teaching, and advocacy, began in the mid 1990s when I was a young adult and an undergraduate studying Linguistics. However, my tribal connection and commitment were cultivated in my childhood through my relationships with other Miamis and with people from other Indigenous nations. Especially influential was my Miami grandfather, who served as tribal chief for many years and committed his life to strengthening our tribal community (Cowan 2008). In addition to his tribal leadership, he was an educational administrator who early in his career was the principal of a segregated black school, and was well aware of both the racism and the possibilities associated with formal

education. He spoke about both to me, but focused on the possibilities of leveraging knowledge to build a better future for our Miami community (see McCarty et al. 2018, 164–65). With my grandfather's encouragement, I pursued a PhD in Linguistics, seeking to gain knowledge and skills that would help me better support tribal language work.

The reactions I received from language scientists early in my academic career are revealing, and are among the important *felt* experiences I draw upon in this article. One recurring reaction was a declaration that the language restoration vision of my community was a nice idea, but that it wasn't going to work. Other scholars, mostly white "experts" in Native American languages, left off the "nice idea" part and just directly stated that my community's efforts weren't going to work—even belittling the idea that we were engaged in them (Leonard 2019b). Having since developed more insights about how settler colonialism revolves around legal, rhetorical, and ideological devices to protect settlers' occupation of territory, I have come to recognize that these scholars were trying to uphold their academic territory—manifested here as the power to define, describe, and control the fate of Indigenous languages. They were also applying a racialized assumption of inferiority onto my community, echoing a more general logic of failure that gets applied to Native Americans engaged in language work (Meek 2011). They were wrong: myaamiaatawiaanki noonki kaahkiihkwe. (We speak myaamia today.)

In response to the experiences described above, I have been developing a framework of language reclamation (Leonard 2011, 2012, 2017, 2019a) to describe, theorize, and build further capacity for the tribally centered language restoration practices occurring in my own community and others. Reclamation praxis is transformative and aims to identify and dismantle the colonial and raciolinguistic ideologies that rendered my community languageless when experts labeled myaamia "extinct." As a decolonial project, reclamation firmly rejects the neoliberal demands for "authentic" Indigenous languages and language ecologies—those imagined by settlers—that foster what Povinelli (2002) describes as an "impossible authenticity." Instead, reclamation responds to community ways of knowing and contemporary demographics, which for my community include recognition of our diversity and of Euroamerican influence on contemporary Miami culture (Leonard 2011). Rather than assimilating to dominant notions of "successful" language revitalization, which tend to privilege metrics of "foreign" language learning, reclamation focuses on local definitions of language, and how these perspectives should guide community goals. Though the current paper is not directly about language reclamation, its tenets guide my responses to the colonialism of the academy and its language disciplines.

Many years later, I remain a linguist and am professionally active in both Linguistics and Anthropology, but my faculty appointment is in Native American Studies. I sought this affiliation thinking it would better support work that is driven by, and responsible toward, Indigenous language communities. This has largely borne out and I have gained valuable insights through engagement in Native American and Indigenous Studies, especially regarding the ways in which settler colonialism intersects with racism. Of particular relevance for this paper is how the colonial "logic of elimination" (Wolfe 2006) applies to the ways in which settlers exploit territory and then develop structures to ensure their maintenance of that territory by eliminating Original Peoples. For lands, the process starts with some type of invasion and the ensuing arrival of settlers, with accompanying legal and moral dictates to promote the removals of the Indigenous population.<sup>3</sup> Later, the logic of elimination evolves into indirect strategies to ensure that the Indigenous peoples remain erased or at least at the periphery, as occurs in many academic disciplines today when their practitioners negate the validity of Indigenous intellectual orientations.

At their extreme, the logics of settler colonialism prevent Indigenous intellectual orientations from coming forth at all (since Indigenous peoples allegedly no longer exist). Based on my experiences in the academy, however, Indigenous epistemologies

can come forth and at times are even welcomed—but only in ways that are sanctioned by and do not disrupt the hegemony of the dominant group. I prototypically encounter this pattern operationalized in the academy within discourses of "diversity" where Indigenous knowledges function as add-ons, as exemplified when instructors add a reading by an Indigenous author within a course that at its core centers Eurowestern knowledge. Meanwhile, colonial hierarchies remain rampant in the academy: university-based researchers get credit and community-based researchers are secondary, research published via academic presses counts more than anything produced through other venues even when the latter are preferable for a variety of reasons, and community-based collaborative work remains marginalized in normative measures of academic productivity.

Drawing from my experiences in reclamation work and from ongoing frustrations with language sciences and the larger academic structures they are part of, in 2017 I co-developed the Natives4Linguistics project with Wendat linguist Megan Lukaniec and several additional co-conspirators. Core to this project, which was centered on a 2018 workshop at the Linguistic Society of America annual meeting but remains ongoing, is that idea that Linguistics draws heavily from Native American languages but normalizes colonial ways of defining, valuing, and analyzing them (Errington 2008; Hermes et al. 2012; Perley 2012; Mellow 2015; Davis 2017; Leonard 2017, 2018). As a result, Linguistics has largely left out Native American communities' ways of defining and engaging with language conceptually, and has not developed methods for doing linguistics in ways that align with Indigenous needs and epistemologies.

The 2018 Natives4Linguistics workshop aimed to build a network of people committed to centering Native American needs and ideas about language for linguistic research, linguistics pedagogy, and in the disciplinary norms of Linguistics. Drawing from Radical Indigenism, a recurring theme in workshop discussions was the idea that Indigenous intellectual traditions should be highlighted as valid and valuable tools for framing, executing, circulating, and assessing language work—in general, not only for Native American language work. Another was that the severe underrepresentation of Indigenous scholars and ideas in language sciences is heavily intertwined with the norms, biases, and power structures of language disciplines. Although the workshop did not include Felt Theory as a named framework, the idea of privileging the *felt* experiences of Native American linguists navigating colonial disciplines was prominent. For example, participants relayed accounts of feeling exploitation on behalf of their communities when hearing the communities' languages talked about only in terms of what's "interesting" about their grammatical structures. Several participants noted how they cringe when Indigenous people are assessed only in relation to their ability to produce language for research (e.g., as "good speakers"), or when linguists who exploit Indigenous communities continue to advance professionally. The current paper is informed by these and other experiences shared with me by Natives4Linguistics workshop participants, and by their subsequent scholarship which draws on Natives4Linguistics themes (e.g., Chew 2019; Dupris 2020; Holden 2020; Miyashita et al. 2021).

Also guiding the Natives4Linguistics project is a convention to facilitate critical engagement with academic disciplines, a convention adopted for this paper whose details and rationale I will now make explicit: Though often described as "the scientific study of language," Linguistics is actually a particular set of norms for scientifically studying language, norms developed in a particular (largely colonial) context dominated by particular (largely white) personnel. *Linguistics* is thus not the same as *linguistics*. I use *Linguistics*, with a capital *L*, to reference the scope, conventions, and epistemologies of the scientific study of language in the field that claims this name. This represents a subset of lower-case-*l linguistics*, the study of language in its broadest possible sense. The underlying point in this distinction applies across disciplines. For example, Linguistic Anthropology is not the same as linguistic anthropology. This difference is crucial because it substantiates that *-isms*, however embedded in a named discipline they may be, are not inherent.

### But is there *Really* White Supremacy in an Anti-Racist Field Like (Linguistic) Anthropology?

I have found that the response to the question posed above varies based on who gets asked, but as I tell my students, the more revealing answer might emerge from the demographic patterns of variation within the responses. For the white linguistic anthropologist, I imagine the response including something about the field's colonial origins, but affirming that Linguistic Anthropology has come to center anti-racist work and support social justice. Perhaps it has, but, following Ahmed (2012), I caution that the institutionalization of "diversity," especially in the context of seemingly progressive institutions such as contemporary anthropological sciences, often obscures their deeply embedded whiteness. My answer is that (Linguistic) Anthropology, despite its growing body of valuable anti-racist work, remains rife with epistemological racism.

For instance, I observe that there remain many scholars who, even when outwardly advocating for the opposite, engage in practices that bolster the hegemony of Euro-American research norms and researchers through gatekeeping. One example of this is the actual phrase "that's not Anthropology" in reference to scholarship that clearly adopts an anthropological lens, often even occurring within the structures of Anthropology (e.g., in an Anthropology department), but which is challenged for a variety of reasons. Another example is that affect counts as a variable in Anthropology, but emotional responses must be curated as extracted data by an outside credentialed researcher in order to contribute to theory; *felt* theories directly from racialized scholars are far less accepted. Perhaps most important for the current paper is the broader pattern that Othered peoples' cultural practices and ideologies inform theory, but are expected to be anchored within dominant approaches to knowledge production.

Related to the points summarized above is the theme that many of the anti-racist initiatives in language sciences have been and continue to be incremental—usually better than the immediately preceding status quo, but in many cases centered on shifting the demographics of disciplinary personnel without fundamentally changing the white supremacy embedded within disciplinary structures. The most obvious recurring example in my professional experience is that BIPOC scholars are encouraged to join the field and are then socialized to "play the game," especially until there is a reasonable assumption of job security (a concept which in itself tends to be situated in white normative practices of privileging legal contracts). The associated interventions that junior faculty, at least those who have what disciplinary discourses deem to be "good" positions, might have access to-research funds, sabbaticals, summer salary, course releases—are in themselves important and welcome; scholars should indeed be supported in research and professional development. But the logics that underlie this discourse are often limiting because, as observed by Kubota (2020), they tend to be geared toward making BIPOC scholars assimilate to normative structures, thus often excluding our participation in ways that fully align with our identities, goals, and responsibilities. Playing the game even winning the game—is not changing the game.

I offer the following as examples of the sorts of comments I received as a junior scholar from senior colleagues and that I know many of my BIPOC peers have also received as well as some white peers, particularly those who emphasize social justice work. The portions in parentheses represent responses that I did not actually provide, but that from my current vantage as a more established and tenured faculty member, I wish I had said.

Spend as little time as possible on teaching.

(Why would I do that? I deeply care about my teaching, and doing it well is part of my responsibility. That said, I'd be keen about honing my skills, which might make some of my teaching preparation faster without sacrificing quality, so why aren't you suggesting that?)

#### Be sure to publish in X [high-ranking] Journal.

(I agree that *X Journal* contains some excellent scholarship, but the people I write about and for don't have subscriptions to it. Wouldn't it be better to publish in an open-access journal?)

That work you do for your community is admirable, but don't spend too much time on it. The university expects you to be doing linguistics.

(Are you "the university," or are you just a gatekeeper who hasn't leveraged your own privilege to create structures so that community-based scholarship can be appropriately assessed and credited? And by the way—the work I do *is* linguistics!)

#### Publish or perish!

(Or in some cases, publish *and* perish, at least in terms of soul. Also, rather than putting a vague focus on quantifiable academic publications, how about we shift the conversation to one about my goals, which are grounded in the needs of the communities to which I am accountable, and how appropriate publications can facilitate those goals? I happen to think publishing is important, but I don't want to play a game that reproduces problematic hierarchies and destroys me as a person.)

[in reference to women and BIPOC faculty being overloaded with service:] Just say no!

(This didn't work when Nancy Reagan said it, and it doesn't work now.)

The final response requires some familiarity with United States First Lady Nancy Reagan's "Just Say No" War on Drugs campaign in the 1980s, which I remember well since it was promoted in my elementary school. As widely discussed within progressive circles, this campaign failed in its stated goal of reducing drug usage and addiction because it did not address the underlying issues of this public health crisis. Instead, it largely blamed the victim, who in public service announcements was often depicted as a racialized Other. This reminds me of how women and BIPOC faculty (the racialized Other) who are assigned heavy service loads then get blamed for being "unproductive." Although I regularly remind myself and my peers that setting limits is important for leading healthy lives and achieving professional goals, "just say no"-directives often fail to address why people of certain backgrounds might be asked to do more service than others to start with, or how the freedom to decline occurs in relation to the particular power relations within a given interaction. True structural change entails dealing with the latter issues, along with actively supporting the growing calls in academia to properly credit service.

I will conclude this section by speaking out about a disciplinary barrier that I know other Indigenous scholars have also *felt*, which is that the venues in which we are expected to share our research as "good" scholars often erase us, even when (perhaps especially when) those venues include a lot of work *about* Indigenous peoples. Consider, for example, my experiences attending the 2019 conference of the American Anthropological Association, which was held concurrently with the Canadian Anthropology Society meeting in Vancouver, British Columbia. (That I provide only the settler place name is intentional.) Beyond sharing the frustrations and critiques expressed in a number of online forums regarding conference exclusivity with respect to cost, nationality (visa problems for many scholars), and even being able to enter the conference buildings without harassment by guards, I was especially struck by what was not centered in the conference. I refer here to the place and the Original Peoples who are its past, present, and future caretakers.

Vancouver is built in the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Coast Salish peoples—Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), Stó:lō and Səlílwəta?/Selilwitulh (Tsleil-Waututh), and xwməθkwəyəm (Musqueam) Nations—but this was barely apparent in the conference. It was certainly not marked in the conference maps, for example, which provided great detail in the Western cartographic tradition to show conference spaces but left out the fundamental detail of *where* these rooms were built. And in the

conference's 468-page handbook the name Musqueam appears only twice, both times parenthetically as the affiliation of presenters. (After discovering this, I chose not to search for the names of other local First Nations.) I was fortunate in that I was able to draw upon my previous visits to this territory and existing connections to members of local First Nations, but this was nevertheless a jarring experience that reminded me of where and who Anthropology comes from.

#### An Anthropological Analysis of Anthropology Research and "Our Knowledge"

I call for the decolonization of knowledge production, with a critical lens applied to the question of what it means to produce ideas in conversation with others. In Anthropology, as in many disciplines, I have observed that this process revolves around "our knowledge," a phrase which in context excludes the intellectual traditions of the communities that are the focus of scholarship because *our* implicitly refers only to professional anthropologists (Jones 2020). A revealing example of the hegemony of "our knowledge" occurs in Anthropology publications, and by extension through the expected roles of these publications in teaching and future research.

Unlike publications in Linguistics, where it remains possible to publish a paper about Indigenous languages without mentioning the associated language communities or relation of the researcher to those communities, Linguistic Anthropology publications have always included the former and are now generally expected to also address the latter. This expectation to discuss researcher positionality represents a beneficial development toward disrupting what Flores (2016) terms "hegemonic Whiteness," in this case manifested through norms of de-centering researcher identity under a guise of "objectivity" (e.g., Meyer 2001; Leonard 2018, 60–61; Motha 2020, 128–29). However, for many Anthropology articles there remains a part that I believe covertly manifests and reproduces epistemological racism. This is the part where the author summarizes "our knowledge" on a particular topic in the form of a literature review, a genre with several problematic conventions.

An underlying problem is that the authorship within the canon called "the literature" is strikingly unreflective not only of wider community demographics, but usually also of the specific groups whose cultures and experiences are being written about. Indeed, this section, which I have come to think of as "Section 2" owing to its prototypical placement within academic articles, privileges the disciplinary contributions of white scholars. Given the extent to which earlier Anthropology focused on Indigenous peoples, particularly in the North American context, writing Section 2 creates an especially challenging situation for Indigenous scholars since we may have to incorporate the work of individuals who are deeply distrusted within our own communities. Meanwhile, core tenets of Indigenous experience and values are not mentioned in this review of "our knowledge" unless they happen to have been described and formally disseminated through normative academic networks, in which case they might be described as research findings but rarely as theories. Moreover, the very idea of discussing "the literature" in a discrete section, separate from the discussion of lived experiences (if this is present at all), centers a dominant logic of knowledge as discrete rather than relational.

Before outlining this argument further, I will address a query I imagine occurring around this point in the discussion if I were directly sharing the ideas of this paper with my imagined white linguistic anthropologist: I am fully aware that it is demonstrably false that literature reviews always include only the work of white scholars, or that they always exclude Indigenous perspectives from outside the academic canon, or that they always occur as discrete sections. The same idea applies to all of the colonial patterns discussed throughout this paper; they all have notable exceptions. I emphasize that my reactions, while informed by empirical evidence and advanced training in language sciences, are framed around *felt* experiences. It is true that *felt* experiences might at times be based on incorrect or incomplete information,

and there is value in knowing the fuller context for a given issue, but enumerating counterexamples does not address underlying problems and often rhetorically shifts the blame to the victim. Indeed, a common strategy to protect the status quo involves highlighting exceptions, sometimes employing the "not all white people..." trope or similar manifestations of white fragility (DiAngelo 2011).

Returning to the example of literature reviews as well as the more general process of drawing upon existing scholarship as part of research, an ongoing problem is that BIPOC scholars' work is left out even when it's relevant, important, and accessible. For example, in their pilot study of leading Anthropology journals, Smith and Garrett-Scott (2021) find that Black women anthropologists are significantly underrepresented in citations relative to their absolute representation in the field.<sup>6</sup> I have noted the same problem in reference to work by Indigenous scholars being left out even from papers that are about Indigenous communities and languages. An intervention that has increasingly been advanced is to cite the work of BIPOC scholars, calls for which may be accompanied by deeper activism that identifies the racial dynamics which underlie the production, circulation, and validation of knowledge (e.g., Ahmed 2013; Bolles 2013; Tuck et al. 2015; Smith and Garrett-Scott 2021; Smith et al. 2021). I support these movements, and am enthusiastic about the scholarship I have found by more actively engaging with the question of who I am citing and how I should go about searching for relevant work, a key lesson being the importance of looking beyond the primary scholarly outlets of legacy disciplines. However, I caution that even when the work being cited reflects a broad array of scholars and perspectives, dominant approaches to achieving this eventuality may reinforce white supremacy by drawing on the raciolinguistic ideology which assumes that the fix for marginalization lies in assimilating to the white norm.

To frame this argument, I find it useful to think in terms of the following comparison: hiring more BIPOC scholars as faculty in predominantly white institutions is deeply needed, but this by itself does not entail engagement with why a given institution is predominantly white to begin with or how its structures reproduce white supremacy. To be certain, citing BIPOC scholars is fundamentally different from simply hiring BIPOC scholars. The latter may simply tokenize us unless it is embedded into a comprehensive anti-racist praxis. Conversely, the former does in fact draw from our intellectual contributions and also paves the way for some structural shifts since citation functions as an academic metric ("impact") where higher scores facilitate entry into positions from which individuals are better able to effect change. However, even reformed citational practices may reproduce assumptions such as the following, which warrant critical examination:

#### Authorship is a Proxy for the Source of a Publication's Ideas, as well as their Credibility and the Associated Credit

Sometimes this may be true, but in many cases the situation is far more complex and academic conventions of identifying authors, alongside broader norms of attribution, reflect settler-colonial logics (Anderson and Christen 2019). Knowledge created in community contexts often does not lend itself to discrete authorship of the sort that is prototypical for academic publications, and academic pressures to be an author (for many language sciences, to be the *sole* author) of research products is incongruent with the protocols of relational knowledge that are central to Indigenous epistemologies.

### The Quality and Credibility of a Publication can be Measured via the Prestige of the Outlet; "Good" New Contributions are those that Add to "Good" Earlier Work

Based on my own informal assessment, I agree that there are indeed major differences in standards among publication outlets, and that this bibliographic detail also provides crucial information about the context from which a given research

product came to be. However, I also recognize that the "best" venues are often those that have the longest history; by extension, they are the most likely to have been created within the auspices of legacy disciplines that significantly incorporate(d) white supremacy into their structures. It is great when BIPOC scholars put our work into these venues, but I question to what extent we are able to be true to the ways in which we speak and think and process information if we are constrained by the norms of "good" scholarship.

#### The Accuracy and Quality of a Publication is Confirmed through the Process of Peer Review

I have received tremendously valuable feedback through the peer review process, and hope that I have been able to do the same as a reviewer of others' work. Indeed, peer review makes scholarship better, but peer review practices have a lot of problems. When reviewers include only credentialed academic experts, a group that is notably weak in *felt* Indigenous expertise, among other areas, the hegemony of Eurowestern knowledge is easily reproduced. The more general problem is that although there are always a number of stakeholders for a given research product, only some in the latter group are *Peers*, and the demarcation of Peer-hood is guided by the same structures critiqued throughout this paper.

## Written Sources must be Formally Cited. However, Contributions from other Sources do not need to be Referenced with Anything Close to the Same Level of Precision, if Acknowledged at All

I believe that this statement is straightforward, so I will just share my experience of what has normally happened when I have raised this issue in the past. Only rarely have I encountered resistance to incorporating important community literatures, especially references such as tribal newsletters that are easy to cite in academic styles. More often, the problem with these is that they are not part of the canon, and thus their omission easily goes unnoticed during the peer review process. Oral literatures, on the other hand, are not part of literature reviews. This is not to say that they are not welcome in Anthropology, but rather to point out that they are generally considered to be "data."

#### Toward an Indigenous Linguistic Anthropology

In response to the problems summarized above, I offer in this section a model of linguistic anthropology where the norms of the discipline center Indigenous epistemologies and protocols. I emphasize that I do not aim to be prescriptive or to suggest that a specific set of worldviews should guide the production of knowledge, as this would simply shift an existing problem. Rather, my intent is to highlight the need for change in academia and to share insights for radically reimagining and improving a particular area of scholarship that, despite my many critiques, I find to be very valuable. For this reason and also for clarity when making comparisons, I choose not to capitalize my imagined framework, but will continue to capitalize Linguistic Anthropology in reference to the existing discipline. Due to length limitations, I focus on the topics discussed earlier, but hope that others will expand and improve this outline of what an Indigenous linguistic anthropology might look like.

Following the tenets of Radical Indigenism, I begin by considering the concept of "linguistic anthropology" as it might emerge in relation to Indigenous knowledge systems. In my imagined framework, Indigenous concepts would be the intellectual base by design, so *linguistic* (or *language*), *anthropos*, and *-ology* will likewise be conceptualized through Indigenous worldviews. I have already addressed the *-ology* component in my discussion of Indigenous research methods, which capture how the

production of knowledge is a relational process such that concepts like responsibility and reciprocity are embedded in every stage. Next I offer some thoughts about *language* and *anthropos*.

To illustrate how one might address the first concept, I draw from a definition of language provided by L. Frank, a well-known Indigenous artist whose tribal language, Tongva, was declared "extinct" and like myaamia is being reclaimed from archival documentation. A language learner and self-described decolonizationist, L. Frank offered the following as an answer to "What is language?" during a conversation about Indigenous language work:

Language is the basket that holds all of our culture ... in order to understand why this oak tree sitting on a hilltop is *so critical* to my afterlife, the language is the only thing that explains that and carries that and is that ... I need the language to understand. I don't want to take a wrong road when I get to the edge of the land of the dead ... so language is pretty much everything. (quoted in Leonard 2017, 24)

Like many Indigenous definitions of language, L. Frank's revolves around relationality, thus providing a foundation for other *R*'s. This definition also guides people to the areas that warrant focus in Tongva language work, thus showing how local epistemologies can demonstrate what research would be most *relevant*.

This example definition also draws upon a broader theme that I imagine would be central to an Indigenous linguistic anthropology, this being that language and peoplehood are strongly linked, even ontologically co-dependent (e.g., Clarke 1996; Holm et al. 2003; Meek 2010; Leonard 2017). It follows that there should be celebration of intimate grammars (Webster 2015) and more generally of the "the complex socio-historical, political, and deeply personal contexts in which [languages] actually occur" (Davis 2017, 40). In many ways, contemporary Linguistic Anthropology is already well aligned with this approach, particularly compared with other language sciences, but I nevertheless still regularly encounter the white linguistic anthropologist focusing on what languages or language-related phenomena mean for theory (often through a query that begins, "what can we learn from...?"). This reduces the associated language communities to their value for theory, thus evoking the general colonial practice of exploiting colonized populations for their resources. Such a frame is antithetical to an approach centered in respect and reciprocity.

Since Indigenous people have and refine theories, the problem with the situation summarized above is not about theory per se, but rather about the racialized research dynamics around which theory production is often framed. In particular, I observe that the white linguistic anthropologist often controls which relations count and who can occupy certain positions, especially research roles. This is a key problem: as the "researcher," the white linguistic anthropologist maintains the power to determine what counts as theory and to exploit the Other for purposes of creating it. By contrast, through an Indigenous approach, I imagine that theoretical work would not evoke such Othering since it would be collaborative by design. For the same reason, concepts such as "researcher" would be used less since this title would often be too vague—many participants in a research project might occupy it. Instead, in alignment with the idea that knowledge is co-produced, the subset of individuals who most directly administer a given investigation might be called "research coordinators" or something similar. Authorship would also be broader, with information about individuals' and communities' contributions to a given project prominently featured in the resulting products.<sup>5</sup>

Another theme that emerges from L. Frank's definition is the **significance of non-human relations**. This differs from the norms of Anthropology, which indeed puts significant focus on how humans relate to non-human relations, but outside of non-human primates normally does not include these other entities as part of the discipline's focus. Based on the Indigenous ontologies that I am familiar with, I suggest that an Indigenous linguistic anthropology would not be framed around

anthropos understood narrowly to mean 'human being,' but instead around diverse units of peoplehood as they emerge in Indigenous ontologies such that spirits, animals, and land as an agentive participant or interlocutor (Engman and Hermes 2021) might all be part of a shared unit of analysis that includes humans.

Having established the topics on which an Indigenous linguistic anthropology might be focused, I next turn to broader issues of how such a field would operate, a core one being its conceptualization of knowledge. Most important, given the theme of knowledge as a relational process rather than an object, I imagine significant attention to the details of how relationships guide the production of knowledge, including when, where, by whom, and how it is meant to be used and shared. Emerging from the common Indigenous protocol whereby specific knowledge is the intellectual property of a particular community, in contrast to dominant academic approaches in which knowledge is often deemed to be universal and context free—"without knowers" as described by Barth (2002, 2)—I envision much more specificity about the sources of particular theories and information. Such specificity is necessary for knowledge to be used in ways that are respectful and congruent with Indigenous data sovereignty (Kukutai and Taylor 2016; Rainie et al. 2017; National Congress of American Indians 2018). "Our knowledge" would still be a possible phrase, but in an Indigenous approach I imagine the pronoun our as always being contextually specific, not to implicitly refer to professional practitioners in the

As a matter of responsibility emerging from relationships, also known as **relational accountability**, it is crucial that research be appropriately crafted and evaluated. I envision that some disciplinary socialization practices that are characteristic of Linguistic Anthropology would also apply in an Indigenous linguistic anthropology, but that they would not be about playing a colonial game. Instead, the focus would be on how to strategically, productively, and ethically employ academic tools around *R*'s, especially as these concepts relate to questions of appropriateness in research questions, methods, and circulation. I also envision that an Indigenous linguistic anthropology would be similar to Linguistic Anthropology in emphasizing peer review. The process of selecting reviewers, however, would likely be different. Not only would it be more expansive to go beyond disciplinary experts (who would still be included), but it would also be more engaged with reviewer positionality as an important criterion, along with the broader question of who has the prerogative to determine that scholarship has been completed rigorously and ethically.

Regarding the first point, I respect that even in an Indigenous linguistic anthropology, the themes of which generally point toward open reviewing, there would be situations in which anonymous reviewing might be preferred for the same reasons it is called for in Linguistic Anthropology. Still, I believe there would be direct mechanisms to ensure consideration of reviewer positionality. For example, reviewers could be asked to state the particular background from which they offer their review, with details that compromise their anonymity shared only with the editor. I contrast this to the norms of Linguistic Anthropology, where the burden generally falls on the editor to discern such information from a reviewer's public profile as a scholar, and there are no structural mechanisms to ensure that even this will happen.

As for the second issue, it is common in Indigenous protocols to consult with Elders to assess research products that involve the community, and more generally, to emphasize the importance of having lived experience in community contexts when making such assessments. I note that it is already possible in Linguistic Anthropology to call upon community-based reviewers, such as tribal leaders who can vouch for the legitimacy of how their cultures are being represented. However, my experience is that although many anthropologists choose to do this on their own, for the publication process this type of review generally occurs only if the community-based experts happen to also be professional academics. Conversely, in an Indigenous linguistic anthropology, some type of community-based review for publications that

are about a particular community would be a default practice. There are various strategies to facilitate diverse participation in such reviewing. For instance, feedback need not be written or created by individual agents; mechanisms such as talk circles may be more suitable. And as a matter of economic inclusivity as well as reciprocity, reviewers who provide labor outside of an existing reciprocal arrangement should of course be compensated.

Next, I turn to the question of citation, as emphasized by Kubota (2020) in her critical analysis of Applied Linguistics and for this paper in reference to Anthropology's citational practices, which also reproduce epistemological racism. There are indeed serious problems with current norms of citation, but I emphasize that they stem from contemporary power structures and dominant assumptions of knowledge production and attribution, not citation as a concept. The idea of citation is actually well aligned with Indigenous ways of knowing because it highlights genealogy, which in Indigenous epistemologies tends to be central. An Indigenous linguistic anthropology thus calls for citational practices that center relational accountability and other *R*'s. For example, citing the bearers of knowledge systems (who may or may not have written a given product) would be crucial; demonstrating respect for these knowledge systems would likewise be crucial.

Because there is so much variation in naming practices even among the North American Indigenous communities with which I am familiar, I hesitate to recommend particular bibliographic styles for achieving relationally accountable citation. For example, the appropriateness of referring to people by name, particularly the deceased, varies across Indigenous communities. I thus imagine an Indigenous linguistic anthropology as having defaults based on protocols that are widely shared and grounded in Indigenous research themes, but with intentional flexibility in bibliographic styles to facilitate adherence to the particular community protocols that are appropriate for a given situation. Collectively, I imagine that the defaults will call for a lot of information, including details that are prototypically part of major academic citation and bibliographic styles, along with additional information to capture authors' and other contributors' backgrounds.

I end with the question of professional meetings, drawing from the *felt* experiences I had for the conference discussed above. Like others who coordinate research dissemination such as journal editors, conference organizers can center relational accountability and other *R*'s by integrating them into the review process. For example, conference abstracts might require discussion of social impacts, consultation, and related issues. Abstract review can and whenever possible should include members of the communities featured in the research. The style of abstracts and presentations might default to structures that broadly center Indigenous norms, but where there is always flexibility to ethically accommodate specific community protocols. In other words, an Indigenous linguistic anthropology conference would integrate Indigenous methods and protocols throughout.

One especially important issue within this general principle is the need to recognize the people(s) on whose lands a given gathering occurs. The ensuing specific protocols would presumably vary based on local needs and norms, articulated through consultation with the Original Peoples of a proposed conference site if they are not themselves the organizers, but I envision that relationality and responsibility would always be prominent regardless. The Native American and Indigenous Studies Association offers a useful example: The first sentence of its 2020 call for papers states that "Tkaronto has been home of Haudenosaunee and Anishinaabe peoples since time immemorial and part of the original homelands of the Wendat people." The website further invites the reader into a good way of thinking and being in relation to land, and toward practicing ethical practices of consent not only with other attendees and their collaborators who are not attending, but also with lands and waters. Although that conference ultimately did not occur due to the COVID-19 pandemic, key elements of relational accountability were nevertheless fostered simply by how the conference was planned, organized, and advertised. I envision a

similar outcome for an Indigenous linguistic anthropology, such that statements like "I am Indigenous; I am a scholar" would no longer represent contradictions. As I say to my students, I am Miami when I am at home—and I intend to remain Miami when I go to campus. Structurally embedding Indigenous values into the academy facilitates the latter.

#### **Concluding Thoughts**

Racism and settler colonialism represent processes that have been built and reproduced over generations. The same must be true for anti-racism and anti-colonialism; they are processes, not events. However, while the former will happen naturally without intervention, the latter must be intentional, captured through praxis and not through isolated interventions. In cautioning that "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house," Andre Lorde (1984, 112) expresses how dismantling white supremacy entails not only fundamentally changing institutions, but in many cases reimagining them altogether. Lorde observes that incremental changes, the particular example in this case being that she was called upon to be a token Black lesbian feminist presenter in a conference that was framed broadly around American women, do not alter the status quo. I share Lorde's sentiment and extend her metaphor to the notion that the white linguistic anthropologist's tools will never dismantle the white linguistic anthropologist's field—but maybe Indigenous tools can.

In this paper I have explored how Indigenous research methods and knowledge systems can facilitate the re-imagining and improvement of structures and processes in Anthropology whose current versions I believe are anchored in the logics of white supremacy. It is my hope that my having told the story has by itself crafted a change, as Million (2009) argues has occurred via the telling of the First Nations women's stories that she draws upon to outline the concept of Felt Theory. Recognizing that I come from a specific positionality and am limited by my experiences, I close by calling upon BIPOC peers to also share their stories so that we may continue to work toward a truly anti-racist praxis in Linguistic Anthropology and beyond.

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#### Notes

- 1. See Motha (2020) for a related critique of Applied Linguistics, and Leonard (2020) for my thoughts on this issue in Linguistics.
- 2. myaamia, usually written in lower-case, technically refers to the people and culture; *myaamiaataweenki*, a verb that means "myaamia is spoken," describes our language. However, many tribal members use *myaamia* to also refer to our language, a convention I adopt for this paper. For clarity, I will use "Miami" to refer to the people.

- 3. In 1846, my Miami ancestors were forcibly removed by United States agents to Kansas from ancestral territories in Indiana. They were subsequently forced to move again from the Kansas reservation to Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma).
  - 4. See https://natives4linguistics.wordpress.com.
- 5. Although there are many words with this suffix that I believe are positive, such as feminism, I adopt -ism as shorthand for terms connoting injustice such as racism, (settler) colonialism, sexism, ageism, and ableism, along with related oppressive ideologies such as anti-blackness and cisheteronormativity even though their names do not have this suffix.
- 6. See also Bolles (2013) for a similar analysis and call to action, and Williams (2020) for a discussion of how Bolles' call to action has transpired.
- 7. For an insightful critique and overview of the different levels to which academic institutions can engage Indigenization, ranging from increasing the presence of Indigenous persons to truly dismantling colonial structures, see Gaudry and Lorenz (2018).
- 8. Though an Indigenous linguistic anthropology would presumably frame these concepts in an Indigenous language rather than a colonial language, for this article I will theorize the topics in English. I acknowledge that while doing so is inclusive in the sense that English is widely known, it is ironic and unsatisfactory in a number of ways.
- 9. The Tromsø Recommendations for Citation of Research Data in Linguistics (Andreassen et al. 2019) provide some guidelines for realizing this principle for citing data. Genee and Junker (2018, 306–07) exemplify how individuals' roles and contributions in a project can be attributed.
- 10. Elements of Indigenous Style: A Guide for Writing By and About Indigenous Peoples (Younging 2018) provides an excellent overview of common Indigenous protocols, as well as guidance for thinking about related issues raised throughout this paper. Several websites such as the following address protocols and methods for citing Indigenous Elders: https://libguides.kpu.ca/indigenous/citation#s-lg-box-16020014 [accessed April 19, 2021].
- 11. See https://www.naisa.org/annual-meeting/call-for-papers/ [accessed September 15, 2020].

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