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## Centering community-driven and -led Indigenous and non-dominant language rights & realities: An inclusive publishing model for Indigenizing and decolonizing the academy

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In this paper, we – the co-founders of Indigenous Languages Rights & Realities (ILR&R) – introduce and explore a groundbreaking publishing space dedicated to amplifying and valorizing Indigenous and non-dominant peoples, their voices, knowledges, and communities. We begin by defining key terminologies to establish a shared foundational understanding. Next, we delve into the origins of ILR&R, highlighting the motivations that shaped its creation and the goals we seek to achieve. To provide deeper insight, we address specific questions that elucidate ILR&R's purpose and aspirations that brought our conceptual ideas to reality. Finally, we conclude by presenting the vision, mission, and a detailed description of ILR&R, underscoring its role in transforming academic publishing.

## 1. Introduction

In this paper, we—the co-founders of *Indigenous Languages Rights & Realities* (ILR&R)—introduce and explore this groundbreaking publishing space dedicated to amplifying and valorizing Indigenous and non-dominant peoples, their voices, knowledges, and communities. We begin by defining key terminology, such as ‘Indigenous,’ ‘non-dominant,’ ‘Indigenize,’ and ‘decolonize,’ to establish a shared foundational understanding. Recognizing the problematic nature of these terms, we attempt to provide a starting point for future discussion in the pages of ILR&R, and elsewhere, as well as to indicate our thinking on these concepts as they relate to the publication: motivation for the publication and our aspirations for the publication. We then delve into the origins of ILR&R, highlighting what shaped its creation and the goals we seek to achieve. To provide deeper insight, we address specific questions that elucidate ILR&R’s purpose and aspirations that brought our conceptual ideas to reality. Our voices are blended and brought together in the following section to align our intentions for ILR&R. Finally, we conclude by presenting the vision, mission, and a detailed description of ILR&R, underscoring its role in transforming academic publishing.

## 2. Introduction to Terminology

In this section, we critically examine key terminology to clarify their deeper meanings and varied interpretations within the context of Indigenous and non-dominant language rights and lived realities.

### *Indigenous and Non-dominant*

We want to note that we capitalize Indigenous following the University of British Columbia’s (UBC) Indigenous Peoples Language Guideline<sup>1</sup>: *UBC uses uppercase for the terms “Aboriginal,” “Indigenous,” “First Nations” and “Native” in all cases, consistent with the larger global community of specific demographics, e.g., Europeans, American.*

Before moving forward, we must attempt to define some challenging terms in the context of this work: *Indigenous* and *non-dominant*. We recognize that the term ‘Indigenous’ has various interpretations and ascribed meanings. In this article, we use the term in the spirit of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) and construct meaning for the term in the description of ‘Indigenous’ throughout the UNDRIP document<sup>2</sup>. The United Nations provides further explication on what it might mean to be Indigenous in the *Indigenous Peoples and the United Nations Human Rights System Fact Sheet No. 9*<sup>3</sup>. Here we believe it is worthwhile to provide the full description regarding *who is Indigenous in the context of the United Nations and Human Rights*.

Indigenous peoples live on all continents, from the Arctic to the Pacific, via Asia, Africa and the Americas. There is no singularly authoritative definition of indigenous peoples under international law and policy, and the Indigenous Declaration does not set out any definition. In fact, its articles 9 and 33 state that indigenous peoples and individuals have the right to belong to an indigenous community or nation, in accordance with the traditions and customs of the community or nation concerned, and that they have the right to determine their own identity. The International Labour Organization’s (ILO) Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (No. 169) distinguishes between tribal and indigenous peoples as follows, highlighting also the importance of self-identification:

1 (a) Tribal peoples in independent countries whose social, cultural and economic conditions distinguish them from other sections of the national community, and whose status is regulated wholly or partially by their own customs or traditions or by special laws or regulations;

<sup>1</sup> [https://assets.brand.ubc.ca/downloads/UBC\\_Indigenous\\_Peoples\\_Language\\_Guide\\_2024.pdf](https://assets.brand.ubc.ca/downloads/UBC_Indigenous_Peoples_Language_Guide_2024.pdf). Cf. <https://www.sapiens.org/language/capitalize-indigenous/> and <https://www.chicagomanualofstyle.org/qanda/data/faq/topics/Capitalization/faq0106.html>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP\\_E\\_web.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/fs9Rev2.pdf> and <https://www.ohchr.org/en/instruments-mechanisms/instruments/indigenous-and-tribal-peoples-convention-1989-no-169>

(b) Peoples in independent countries who are regarded as indigenous on account of their descent from the populations which inhabited the country, or a geographical region to which the country belongs, at the time of conquest or colonization or the establishment of present State boundaries and who, irrespective of their legal status, retain some or all of their own social, economic, cultural and political institutions.

2. Self-identification as indigenous or tribal shall be regarded as a fundamental criterion for determining the groups to which the provisions of this Convention apply.

Despite the lack of an authoritative definition, there are criteria that help to define indigenous peoples. The main one is the criterion of self-identification and those proposed by José Martínez Cobo in his “Study of the problem of discrimination against indigenous populations”, which include:

- Historical continuity with pre-invasion and/or pre-colonial societies that developed on their territories;
- Distinctiveness;
- Non-dominance; and
- A determination to preserve, develop and transmit to future generations their ancestral territories and identity as peoples in accordance with their own cultural patterns, social institutions and legal system.

The United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Peoples has stressed, in addition to the above:

- A strong link to territories and surrounding natural resources;
- Distinct social, economic or political systems; and
- Distinct language, culture and beliefs.

Many indigenous peoples populated areas before the arrival of others and often retain distinct cultural and political characteristics, including autonomous political and legal structures, as well as a common experience of domination by others, especially non-indigenous groups, and a strong historical and ongoing connection to their lands, territories and resources, including when they practise nomadic lifestyles. While the legal status of indigenous peoples is distinct from that of minorities, they are often, though not always in the minority in the States in which they reside. Minorities and indigenous peoples have some similar rights under international law, although the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is arguably more comprehensive than international legal instruments associated with minorities.

We hope ILR&R will be a place where authors will explore what it means to be *Indigenous* and the term itself.

Turning to the term ‘non-dominant’, we use this term to identify what has been historically referred to as e.g. ‘minority’, ‘marginalized’, and/or ‘Indigenous’ in the spirit of Benson and Kosonen (2013), who note the term refers to those “that are not considered the most prominent in terms of number, prestige ... The term is used in part to avoid the more ambiguous terms “minority language [/communities]” or “indigenous language [/communities],” and in part to highlight the oppressed status of these languages [/communities] relative to dominant languages [/communities] of power” (1-6). We use the term recognizing that some non-dominant community members may see the term ‘Indigenous’ as problematic and limiting in various global contexts. We also recognize that defining these terms is not only challenging, but also potentially colonial in the sense of a tradition in the Western Academy by dominant community members defining and creating the “other”.

### ***Decolonizing and Indigenizing the Academy***

Many Western educational institutions and academies have and continue to construct themselves—on top of Indigenous (sacred) lands, knowledge systems, memories, and the bones of our ancestors<sup>4</sup>—as the “privileged center of meaning-making in this hemisphere dominated by imperial nation-states” (Justice 2004, 101). Education has been used as an effective and dismantling tool to disappear, marginalize, exclude, and exterminate Indigenous and non-dominant languages through cultural genocide, language repression, dominant language medium education—thereby resulting in a shift and acculturation to dominant and majority languages by communities (Galla & Holmes 2024). However, these same institutions that have stripped language away from its people also have the potential to create opportunities for language learning, reclamation, revitalization, and renewal<sup>5</sup>. To decolonize and Indigenize the academy requires a transformational shift in thinking, knowing, being, and doing.

*Decolonizing* higher education involves critically examining and dismantling the colonial structures, practices, and ideologies that have historically dominated educational institutions. This process aims to create a more inclusive and equitable environment by recognizing and valuing diverse knowledge systems, particularly those of Indigenous and non-dominant peoples (cf. Dei & Cacciavillani 2024; Lin et al. 2021; Mihesuah & Cavender Wilson 2004; Mooney 2021; among others). Further, as Shahjahan et al. (2022) note, decolonizing is contextual.

*Indigenizing* higher education, on the other hand, focuses on integrating Indigenous and non-dominant perspectives, knowledge, and methodologies into the curriculum, governance, and overall culture of educational institutions (see references above). This approach seeks to honor and elevate Indigenous and non-dominant ways of knowing and being, ensuring they are respected and incorporated into the academic fabric. As with *Indigenous* and *non-dominant*, these terms and concepts, decolonizing and Indigenizing, are contested. We hope ILR&R will contribute to discussions of what these terms mean, how they are used, and how they can help us arrive at a more inclusive Academy.

For us, ILR&R is an opportunity to take an artifact reflective of knowledge produced by the Academy, *a journal*, and invite Indigenous and non-dominant community members to leverage their own *structures, practices, and ideologies* to shape that artifact and in so doing affect the structures, practices, and ideologies that not only have historically dominated educational institutions but that continue to do so today: an act of decolonization. Further, we see bringing those Indigenous and non-dominant *structures, practices, and ideologies* into the Academy via an academic journal as acknowledging, *valuing, respecting, and amplifying* Indigenous and non-dominant knowledge systems: an act of Indigenization. That is, we see ourselves attempting to, in the words of de Oliveira Andreotti et al. (2015) “centre and empower marginalized groups, and redistribute and reappropriate material resources through a space of radical reform” (31).

For the remainder of the paper, we address the origins, motivation, and goals of this new publishing space. This is followed by the *mission, vision, and description* of ILR&R.

### **3. Origins and Motivations**

In late 2019, we (the authors) hosted the IYIL Perspectives Conference<sup>6</sup> in celebration of the United Nations International Year of Indigenous Languages (IYIL)<sup>7</sup>. The conference was recognized by the United Nations in the United Nations *Evaluation of UNESCO’s action to revitalize and promote indigenous languages: within the framework of the International Year of Indigenous Languages* which described the event as follows<sup>8</sup>:

Good Practice: Perspectives Conference at Purdue University, Fort Wayne, Indiana, USA

Based on a wide consensus, the most important event held in the USA was the Perspectives conference

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Lee and Ahtone (2020) <https://www.hcn.org/issues/52-4/indigenous-affairs-education-land-grab-universities/> for discussion.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. <https://www.nccie.ca/reconciliation-and-nccie/>

<sup>6</sup> <https://iyil2019-perspectives.org/conference-schedule/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://en.iyil2019.org/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000376719>

hosted by Purdue University in Fort Wayne, Indiana, directly inspired by the year and attended by over 400 varied stakeholders from over 17 countries [ . . . ] several members of the [UNESCO IYIL] Steering Committee attended (which was much appreciated). The conference was praised for facilitating a rather atypical dialogue between academics and community based [I]ndigenous language activists in an inclusive and open atmosphere.

It was during this event that the idea for a formal academic journal driven by Indigenous and non-dominant voices and perspectives was born. In particular, during informal discussions and two organized sessions with conference attendees, the following three themes emerged<sup>9</sup>:

1. A need for an Indigenous and non-dominant run academic journal to Indigenize and decolonize the academy;
2. A need for a formal academic publishing space dedicated to Indigenous and non-dominant knowledge, epistemologies, structures, practices, creativity, ideologies, and *in* Indigenous and non-dominant languages; and
3. A need for a publishing space that could bring together different perspectives, experiences, and expressive practices (e.g. formal, creative, folk, legal, etc.) related to Indigenous and non-dominant language rights and realities.

Over the course of the next four years (limited by the pandemic), we went to work to realize a means of meeting the identified needs of 1-3 above. Initially, with significant infrastructure support from Purdue University Fort Wayne<sup>10</sup>, we began plans to develop and publish a single journal that would be available free online and print on demand. However, through the usual twists, turns, and adventures of academic work, we found ourselves in a remarkable conversation with Racquel-María Sapién the Editor in Chief of Language Documentation & Conservation (LD&C)<sup>11</sup> after she had managed the publication of our Perspective Conference proceedings (Sandman, Bischoff, & Clegg 2023)<sup>12</sup> in late 2022.

With the successful publication of a volume reflecting the spirit of the journal we wished to create, we shared with Racquel our vision and aspirations for a new journal. Our timing could not have been better. Racquel and the LD&C editorial board had been discussing how the journal might broaden its reach in ways we were envisioning. Over the course of the next year and a half, we worked to create what has become ILR&R agreeing that our first volume of papers would be papers presented at the 2023 United Nations Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues<sup>13</sup>.

Naturally, a lot transpired from 2021 when we began conversations about what would become ILR&R and the publishing of the first volume. With LD&C's support, conversations became more focused on the "ideologies" that would drive the publication. This was due to the fact that infrastructure issues (e.g., building a platform to collect, review, and disseminate free online and print on demand publications) were suddenly significantly less challenging. It was thanks to the willingness of Racquel and the LD&C editorial board, to support us and take a chance on our vision, which we believed aligned with theirs. Over the course of the process, Racquel became an important contributor to the ideological and practical perspectives that motivated the ILR&R and that have led to what you see before you.

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<sup>9</sup> In addition to the publishing needs listed here, participants also identified the need for English as a tool to communicate and advocate for Indigenous and non-dominant linguistic and human rights globally. They further identified a need for more Indigenous-led educational opportunities focussed on Indigenous and non-dominant needs. To address the issue of English we incorporated programming specifically for Indigenous and non-dominant partners in our Purdue English Language Partners program (<https://sites.pfw.edu/tenl/elp-program.html>). We also developed the free *Indigenous Languages: From Policy and Planning to Implementation and Planning* MOOC with the University of British Columbia and edX to support educational needs (<https://www.edx.org/learn/language/university-of-british-columbia-indigenous-languages-from-policy-and-planning-to-implementation-and-assessment>).

<sup>10</sup> We wish to acknowledge the work of Sarah Sandman who played a crucial role helping develop the vision of what has become ILR&R. Dr. Sandman played a crucial role in identifying what the needs were, what was being done in the publishing world to meet them, what infrastructure was needed, and what the scope of any publication might be. We also wish to acknowledge Connie Kracher Associate Vice Chancellor of Research at Purdue Fort Wayne who worked tirelessly to help secure resources for the development of what has become ILR&R.

<sup>11</sup> <https://nflrc.hawaii.edu/ldc/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://nflrc.hawaii.edu/ldc/sp27-voices-perspectives-from-the-international-year-of-indigenous-languages/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://social.desa.un.org/issues/indigenous-peoples/unpfii>

## 4. From Concept to Reality

In this section, we provide insights and attempt to answer questions that have come up in our discussions surrounding the creation of ILR&R that have, at times, caused us to pause, to reflect, to interrogate, to struggle, and to move forward as best we can. In the end, we believe it is better to act, leverage, and use the resources at our disposal to do what we can in the hopes that good will result rather than being paralyzed by over theorizing, not doing anything, and fear of making a mistake.

### *What is our positionality?*<sup>14</sup>

Positionality statements and/or the weaving of one's identity is becoming a common practice in publications and is even more prevalent among Indigenous and non-dominant scholars. These narratives help the readers to learn about the relationship that the academics, researchers, and authors have with the people, community, cultures, and languages they engage. There have been valid arguments made for (e.g. Holmes 2020) and against positionality statements (Savolainen et al 2023). Also see Oswald (2024) for discussion regarding the negative implications of positionality statements specifically for non-dominant scholars and Gani and Khan (2024) for arguments that positionality statements are colonial in nature.

**Bischoff:** Positionality is inherently complex, as individuals often hold multiple positions and identities. For me personally, in the context of ILR&R, positionality is about trust, transparency, guided reflexivity, an acknowledgment of bias, enhanced understanding, and ethics. A hope is that ILR&R can avoid reinforcing hierarchies that limit access to resources. Instead, it should serve to help with the recognition of the role identity plays in the dissemination of knowledge without identity overshadowing this process, while also respecting legitimate privacy concerns associated with positionality and positionality statements. Additionally, I hope that positionality does not lead to essentialism in the case of ILR&R.

So, what is my positionality as it relates to ILR&R? Here is my "academic bio":

Dr. Bischoff completed a double major in Anthropology and Linguistics for his PhD work at the University of Arizona, with a minor in computational linguistics. He was a research fellow at the University of Tokyo and has conducted post-graduate work at the University of Pennsylvania. His research encompasses computational linguistics, formal linguistics, language documentation and conservation, language rights and human rights, pedagogical linguistics, and linguistic anthropology. He has secured over \$2 million in funding for his work, including seven National Science Foundation grants, one National Endowment for the Humanities grant, and two grants from the Japanese Society for the Promotion of Science. His work has been cited in *The Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Linguistics*, *The Oxford Handbook of Language Attrition*, *the Routledge Handbook of Linguistics*, *the Routledge Handbook of Syntax*, *The Routledge Handbook of Linguistic Anthropology*, *The Languages and Linguistics of North America*, *Second Language Learning Theories*, and *the Handbook of Research Ethics and Scientific Integrity*, among others. Dr. Bischoff's publications span a number of presses including Oxford University Press, MIT Press, and De Gruyter Mouton, as well as Q1 journals. He has presented as an invited speaker at the United Nations, UNESCO, the British Council, and Cambridge University, among others. He is, or has been, a member of several scholarly societies including the Comparative & International Education Society, the Linguistic Society of America, the Society for the Study of Indigenous Languages of the Americas, and the American Academy for the Advancement of Science. He has received awards for his teaching and research, including nominations for the Franz Boas Prize and winning the Ken Hale Prize with his research team in 2018. Dr. Bischoff is actively involved in UNESCO's International Decade of Indigenous Languages initiatives and has taught at institutions such as the American Indian Language Development Institute and The Institute on Collaborative Language Research.

This at once establishes my credibility and authority within the Academy while also constructing an *academic identity and positionality, as a linguist*: an identity that has been rightly problematized in Indigenous and non-dominant commu-

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<sup>14</sup> Here we are talking about "positionality" in the context of community work in order to establish, clarify, articulate, power relations, roles, kuleana (responsibilities), accountability, expert knowledge, cultural and material capital.

nities.

For most, this obscures the fact that I have been fortunate to have collaborated for over 20 years with the same Indigenous and non-dominant scholars, activists, and experts on various projects. The trust and respect they have shown me, has inspired the creation of ILR&R. This includes over 20 years of an active relationship with the language program of a North American tribal community, engagement with several Indigenous-led educational institutions in North America, and five years working with Indigenous activists and educators in South America. Additionally, I have over 15 years of experience working with refugee diaspora from Southeast Asian non-dominant communities and active involvement in Southeast Asia with language rights, human rights, and education for Indigenous and non-dominant communities. Relationships developed with Indigenous and non-dominant diplomats, as well as those working with the United Nations and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), have greatly shaped my desire to see ILR&R come to fruition, and the role I could play in that.

As a scholar, I believe that Karl Popper (1935) was correct in his arguments for a science that focuses on falsifying hypothesis rather than searching for absolute truth. I also believe that, as argued by Einstein (1954), “Pure logical thinking cannot yield us any knowledge of the empirical world; all knowledge of reality starts from experience and ends in it” (265). I am a firm believer that observation, reasoning, acknowledgment of fallibility, and collective effort are the essence of the scientific method. Further, I believe that there is much to learn from Snow (1959) and the very real divide between science and the humanities today, as Snow noted, the two pillars of the Western intellectual and academic tradition: a tradition with (significant) roots beyond the borders of the so-called West.

From the above it should be clear that I am a product of the Western Academic Tradition: the good, the bad, and the biased.

Further, my first-hand personal experience with poverty, far removed from the Western Academic Tradition in the general case, remains in part, and shapes how I respond to my “positionality” today.

Duden and Sarvestani (2023) discuss attempts by outsider dominant society scholars to work with an Indigenous non-dominant community using an “Indigenous Rights” approach to conduct respectful, collaborative research with, rather than on or about, Indigenous peoples. In creating ILR&R, there has been significant discussion about whether this work is Indigenous/non-dominant-led, -driven, -based, etc. My hope is that it is collaborative and that my colleagues with different positionalities see my contributions as equally meaningful. I aim for my skills, resources (material and otherwise), and cultural capital to be valuable to the shared goals outlined in our vision and mission for this publication, which prioritizes being a platform for Indigenous and non-dominant voices within the academy, in the spirit—and when possible, the letter—of the four Rs (Kirkness & Barnhardt 1991): respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility.

The above perspectives have been shaped by the Indigenous, non-dominant, and dominant scholars I have learned from and worked with. I was fortunate to be introduced to linguistics as an undergraduate by a linguist who was the mother of a deaf son. She taught me that language is more than its structure; it is an articulation of identity, culture, and ways of being human. As a graduate student, I witnessed firsthand the modeling of the four Rs by my mentor and inspiration: an immigrant from Sicily and the son of a Sicilian prosecutor. He became a fluent speaker of the Indigenous language of his collaborators and used his expertise to help them build an Indigenous-led language center and other educational institutions. These two mentors provided a model of what we might today call an “ally.”

As a PhD student, the Indigenous faculty who invited me to be part of their work profoundly shaped my understanding of the Academy and Indigeneity as it relates to language, language rights, human rights, and identities. These scholars helped me understand the need to Indigenize and decolonize the Academy—not through lectures and classes, but by inviting me into their academic and community-led lives. These scholars, along with my Indigenous and non-dominant classmates (including Candace AKA Dr. Galla, AKA Kaleimamoowahinekapu), mentored me in ways that changed how I saw myself, my community, the Academy, and the opportunities we have to do good in the world with our skills, resources, knowledge, and willingness to learn from others. This, more than anything, has defined the work I strive to do: work that is positive and meaningful and serves a purpose.

**Galla:** Positionality, for me, is far more than a cursory biographical statement listing credentials, certifications, publications, awards and achievements. And while I do share my degrees, positions, and institutions I am and have been affiliated with, my positionality transcends validating my role within academic institutions or professional spaces.

As our CV documents our entire academic history reminding us of our research, teaching, and service commitments and accomplishments, this document does not capture life's roadblocks and junctures, relationships that were fostered that took years to establish trust, cultural gatherings and events that you engaged in to nurture your wellbeing—all the learning that has shaped how we engage with the world. I am humbly reminded that I am more than my work. My understanding of positionality is deeply rooted in who I am, where I come from, and how I navigate the world as an Indigenous community member and scholar-educator at the University of British Columbia in the department of Language and Literacy Education (Faculty of Education) and the Institute for Critical Indigenous Studies (Faculty of Arts).

At its core, my positionality is shaped by my identity as a Kanaka Hawai'i and Filipino—my connection specifically to my birthlands of Hawai'i, the Hawaiian culture I was born and raised in, and Hawaiian language that I continue to learn, which ground and sustain me. These elements form the foundation of my understanding and guide how I engage in academic and community spaces. My positionality is also an acknowledgment of where I am in my ongoing learning journey. It is dynamic, evolving, and ever-changing, reflecting my role as a lifelong learner and my commitment to being in reciprocal relationship with the communities I serve. At the time of writing, I have lived over half of my life as part of the diaspora away from my homelands of Hawai'i - living on traditional homelands of other Indigenous peoples on what is now known as the United States and Canada. As a guest and visitor to the homelands of the Tohono O'odham during my undergraduate and graduate studies at the University of Arizona in Tucson where I met Shannon, and now to the ancestral and unceded territory of the hən̄qəm̄iñəm̄ speaking xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam) people as a faculty member at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver, I have become hyper-aware of my positionality (as I often find myself as the sole Native Hawaiian or among a very small number of Polynesian or Oceania scholars within academic institutions).

Through my positionality, I seek to demonstrate relationality. My relationships—with people, places, and the more-than-human world—are central to my work, taking precedence over outputs such as research, publications, or accolades that are highly prioritized in the academy. These connections, rooted in responsibility, ethics, and care, remind me that my work is never in isolation but always in relationship with the broader web of life.

Additionally, my positionality encompasses the multiple roles and kuleana (responsibilities) I hold, carry, and have yet to materialize—some more profound and/or visible than others. As a Native Hawaiian community member, Indigenous woman, hula practitioner, cultural educator, language learner, mentor, mentee, partner, daughter, sister, aunty, niece, cousin, and friend, I balance these alongside the identities that have resulted from skills and training received in the western tradition at the University of Arizona (BA in Linguistics, MA in Native American Linguistics, and PhD in Language, Reading and Culture). My academic experience has afforded me current roles that include but are not limited to: professor, Indigenous language and revitalization educator, teacher educator, language and technology educator, supervisor, community-centered researcher, collaborator, language rights and policy advocate, author, editor, keynote and invited speaker, grant writer, curriculum developer, board member, advisor, consultant - locally, nationally, and internationally. This multiplicity of identities and method of “Two-Eyed Seeing”<sup>15</sup> as coined by Albert Marshall informs the way I approach my work and the lens through which I engage with my students, colleagues, allies, accomplices, co-conspirators, and communities I serve, while remaining true to the values and commitments that guide me.

Central to my understanding of positionality is an ongoing practice of critical reflexivity—of revisiting and reaffirming my “why.” Why am I engaged in this work? My scholarship focuses on Native Hawaiian and Indigenous peoples and their languages, emphasizing education, and community-centered revitalization, digital technology, well-being, traditional and cultural practices, and policy and planning. My “why” keeps me grounded, ensuring that my work remains aligned with my worldview, ideologies, and practices. These, in turn, inform the way I contribute to scholarship and the communities I am a part of.

Ultimately, positionality is a declaration of my commitment to integrity, relational accountability, and a recognition of the interconnectedness of all things. It invites readers and collaborators into an understanding of the lens through

<sup>15</sup> [https://youtu.be/DTJtAdH9\\_mk?si=MZf1U1IEl5NE1GFJ](https://youtu.be/DTJtAdH9_mk?si=MZf1U1IEl5NE1GFJ)

which I view and approach my work, fostering a space where relationships, rather than individual achievements, stand at the center.

### ***What is our role and contribution to ILR&R?***

**Bischoff:** I am the assistant editor. I work with the associate editor in the production of the journal. Along with Candace I am one of the founders of ILR&R. My role includes living up to the vision and mission of ILR&R and serving those that use ILR&R as a platform.

**Galla:** Despite academic efforts to promote diversity, equity, and inclusion, many still struggle to accept leadership, guidance, and direction from women in academia<sup>16</sup>, particularly those from Indigenous and non-dominant backgrounds. I have witnessed this first hand from coworkers who have no expertise in anything Indigenous, but are certainly vocal and reluctant to Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing. As an Indigenous woman, I have encountered resistance that is not merely about authority but is deeply rooted in white supremacy, cis-heteropatriarchy, and settler colonialism (cf. Wolfe 2006 and Trask 2020) legacies that persist within academic institutions (cf. Battiste, Bell & Findley 2022; Bailey 2016; Hyslop 2021; Krause 2016). The issue is further compounded by the reality that many individuals—consciously or unconsciously—defer more readily to non-Indigenous, mainstream figures, particularly men, as their understanding of leadership aligns historically with entrenched power structures. This dynamic—reinforces exclusionary practices, marginalizing the voices and expertise of Indigenous women while privileging those who fit the dominant mold. Such barriers not only limit professional growth but also hinder the much-needed diversification of perspectives in academia and leadership, ultimately constraining progress toward genuine equity and reconciliation. It is not my responsibility (cf. Galla forthcoming) to make my non-Indigenous counterparts comfortable with decisions that impact Indigenous realities and imagined futures.

With this being said, my role is the associate editor. It is important for ILR&R to have a lead that is from an Indigenous and/or non-dominant community as we launch this new and bold initiative that amplifies Indigenous and non-dominant peoples, their language work, and lived realities. While I assume this role, I will work in partnership with Shannon - who I consider a co-conspirator - as we have conceptualized together this publishing space over the last several years and strategically leveraged our individual and collective networks and resources to make this a reality.

It is part of my responsibility to ensure that we hold ourselves accountable to ILR&R's vision and mission and bring attention to the brilliance and critical work of Indigenous and non-dominant scholar-educators, academics, researchers, cultural practitioners, and community members and offer a space that is safe, respectful, and trustworthy for them to publish, share, disseminate, and make visible the language work they are engaged in.

### ***How did this publishing space come about? What inspired this?***

**Bischoff:** ILR&R came about, in part, as the result of a lot of discussion with friends within non-dominant and Indigenous communities and colleagues in higher education, education policy, human rights, linguistic rights, and so forth around the globe. Perhaps, the biggest contributing factor was discussions during the 2019 IYIL Perspectives Conference where many of the participants including Indigenous artists, Indigenous poets, Indigenous activists, dominant and non-dominant academics, government officials, among others, expressed a desire for such a publication. It also seemed like an opportunity to take theoretical conceits about “decolonizing” and “Indigenizing” and explore them through an applied lens. Finally, there were a lot of people I knew who had interesting ideas for papers but no where to publish them: I wanted to read and see those papers.

**Galla:** I have experienced firsthand the “mystery” and challenges of publishing as I wasn’t groomed or socialized in “writing for publication” in my graduate programs or early in my career. I learned from conversations with Indigenous thinkers and scholars and through multiple rejections and revisions that sterilized my words where editors were not comfortable with me writing about my Indigenous reality and truth that speaks to colonialism, assimilation, genocide,

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<sup>16</sup> Cf. <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000386876>

and so forth. The back-and-forth of revisions and resubmissions in a textual format didn't allow for verbal discussions to transpire that would allow the author(s), reviewer(s), and/or editor(s) to share their perspectives about the manuscript. I was left to interpret comments, questions, and feedback—some constructive, some personal, and some irrelevant recommendations that didn't advance or enhance the paper due to the lack of understanding of Indigeneity in general or nuances of language/community context. I thought that if Shannon and I were to create a space for Indigenous and non-dominant voices to be amplified, we should also not repeat the traditional submission process. Understanding that the editorial team has the final say and power, I wondered how the publication process could be transformed to allow for relationships to be fostered, for mentorship to be nurtured, and for feedback to be communicated face-to-face (in-person or virtually) to make this process personal and respectful of the author's time, effort, and contributions. We felt that this would speak to the relational space that we wanted to cultivate.

Another barrier we sought to overcome was an opportunity for authors to submit their manuscript in a language they are most comfortable in or one that they want to elevate and promote. While most will choose to write in English and/or another dominant language like we are doing now, we decided that it would be important for authors to also have the option to communicate in their Indigenous or non-dominant language. In instances where there is a small population of speakers, we would need to have a level of trust with the author. Since not all communities have a standard orthography or in cases where the language is still only oral (and without a writing system), ILR&R welcomes alternative forms of scholarship that may include podcasts, video recording, and other creative representations and accept different genres of writing that includes poetry, short graphic novels, interview dialogue, and short stories. Considering that Indigenous and non-dominant language users still experience restrictions from living their languages fully in all domains of life, we are committed to ensuring that authors are able to practice their language rights in ILR&R without having to translate their work. Also, understanding that the editorial team may not be able to read and/or provide feedback on all submissions (especially ones written in languages we are not familiar or proficient in), we would require support from our Advisory Circle—those within education institutions and/or within Indigenous and non-dominant communities. More specifically, the Advisory Circle is comprised of Indigenous and non-dominant multilingual scholars, community members, language educators, human rights advocates, policy makers that are from across the globe and connected to communities in the North America, South America, Australia, Europe, Asia, and Africa<sup>17</sup>.

***What do we bring to the table to navigate this system in ways that allow ILR&R to reach the goals outlined for it?***

**Bischoff:** As an academic, I have a wealth of experience working with and in academic publishing as an author, editor, co-editor, reviewer, etc. Naturally, the skill set developed through that experience will be useful. Additionally, I have worked with and developed relationships with Indigenous and non-dominant community members around the globe. This includes conducting community-led work, co-authoring publications, and other projects with Indigenous and non-dominant partners. These relationships have already helped to shape ILR&R and will continue to do so as ILR&R evolves. Most important however, is the trust that has been given to me by Indigenous and non-dominant community members.

**Galla:** While my non-Indigenous colleagues may not need to “hide” their identity, “bleach” their words, or be neutral and apolitical to make editors, the publishing company, and/or the non-Indigenous community comfortable, I had to learn how to traverse this rocky terrain. My experiences are not unique to me and in no way negates the daunting work of Indigenous academics, community scholars, and mentors before me who endured and navigated injustices of all kinds—intentional and by design—as they were determined to survive yet another calculated reckoning of the Western institution. Their fortitude and leadership in carving a path are the same hearts, minds, and hands that have provided me strength, determination and the confidence to lead and engage in what I hope is a transformative endeavor and making what may seem impossible possible.

Being viewed and treated as an “outsider” by my non-Indigenous coworkers and not mentored to navigate the uneven terrain has made me quite resilient. As an Indigenous academic choosing to remain in the academy and wanting to secure a permanent position, I have had to conform somewhat to the norms and standards as part of the “publish or perish” narrative while being cautious of when to challenge exclusionary tendencies as I would be seen as the “angry/

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. <https://nflrc.hawaii.edu/ilrr/about/>

disgruntled/bitter” etc.<sup>18</sup> Indigenous woman. This way of navigation or some may say “playing the game” is my demonstration of survivance (Vizenor 2008), which I hope has the potential to prompt “thrivance” in the academy for future Indigenous thinkers and scholars to continue the work that started generations before me.

By navigating these structures, I have gained insights into leveraging the system to create space for Indigenous peoples and knowledges, particularly when it comes to maintaining an authentic Indigenous voice. While the academy may begin to accept the presence of Indigenous knowledges, it often resists the connection to Indigenous bodies, identities and voices that reflect a deeply rooted and personal connection to people, community, culture, and land. The rigidity of the “academic voice” frequently demands a detachment from the self (Menezes de Souza 2019) that is at odds with the holistic and relational ways of knowing, being, and doing that is inherent to Indigenous peoples. Furthermore, the exclusivity of academic publishing compounds these challenges. Access to publication opportunities is often reserved for those who meet specific criteria, adhere to certain norms, and write and follow a certain convention which continues to marginalize individuals who bring new, refreshing, diverse methodologies, epistemologies, and lived experiences to the academy. This exclusivity not only limits representation but also stifles the transformative potential of Indigenous knowledge systems we need within academic discourse. By acknowledging and addressing these dynamics, I aim to foster a publishing space that prioritizes the inclusivity of Indigenous and non-dominant peoples, bodies, and voices where we can be our full and whole selves in the academic landscape.

### *What sets this ILR&R apart from other academic and Indigenous journals and publishing spaces?*

**Bischoff:** Western academic writing and epistemologies are naturally privileged in higher education settings in the US. However, that reality has ensured that higher education is exclusionary to the detriment of all. ILR&R is a space to try and remedy some of the exclusionary aspects of academic publishing and make the sciences and humanities truly collaborative. Other elements that set ILR&R apart are the following:

- The Advisory Circle, composed of multilingual Indigenous and non-dominant scholar-educators, community members, language users, advocates, cultural practitioners, artists, and leaders, has been given the authority, by the editorial team, to hold us accountable to our Vision and Mission while providing guidance in reviews<sup>19</sup>.
- The Advisory Circle and Indigenous and non-dominant Editors are entrusted with equal authority, responsibility, and influence to ensure ILR&R is Indigenous and non-dominant-led.
- By embracing the collaborative nature of inquiry and acknowledging the fallibility of scientific methods, we incorporate Indigenous and non-dominant worldviews within the Academy, questioning and expanding what counts as knowledge.
- We aim to bridge the gap between grassroots, Indigenous, and non-dominant institutions and dominant institutions by fostering connections for the inception, expansion, and validation of research through Indigenous and non-dominant languages.

**Galla:** Our intention is that ILR&R would emerge as very different from what are typical publications in the Academy. ILR&R is inclusive of diverse forms of contributions (e.g. literary, multimodal, multimedia), formatting and style conventions, language and orthography that authors choose to write and publish in, and weaving in the author’s positionality and relationship to the community they are engaged with. We would demystify the publishing process to make those who have a justifiable reluctance to trust the Western academy and educational institutions consider this new and transformed academic space. In addition, the peer review process would include guiding principles for our potential reviewers, thus adhering to a set of values that are grounded in care, respect, relationality and reciprocity. More importantly, we would center our work in the people, first and foremost, as languages cannot and should not be discussed and written about void of people and their lived realities—at least in *our* publishing space.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Movono et al. (2021) <https://theconversation.com/indigenous-scholars-struggle-to-be-heard-in-the-mainstream-heres-how-journal-editors-and-reviewers-can-help-157860>

<sup>19</sup> See Bartlett, Marshall, & Marshall (2012) for discussion regarding the importance of an advisory council or circle of this nature.

While there are non-Indigenous co-conspirators, accomplices and allies, this space is ours to be lead by Indigenous and non-dominant scholars. Nothing about us, without us; nothing for us, without us. Our Advisory Circle provides ILR&R with the care, support, guidance, direction, integrity, social and cultural capital, and authority to hold us - the editorial team - accountable to ILR&R's mission and vision, while also being responsive to the changing landscape of the academy.

### **What role does ILR&R have in the context of Indigenization and decolonization?**

**Bischoff:** It seems to me that it can be a case study in how Indigenous and non-dominant individuals can actively shape the Academy (via the shaping of this “formal academic” publication) thus Indigenizing a part of the Academy. Additionally, bringing Indigenous and non-dominant voices into the Academy via the journal is an act of decolonization. Ultimately, ILR&R can serve to *normalize* the inclusion of Indigenous and non-dominant voices in the community of Western Academic Scholars: Thus, adding to, and expanding, the conversations on the nature(s) of the human experience(s) and lived realities. Something that dominant scholars will benefit from and should welcome.

**Galla:** ILR&R challenges the traditional norms of the academy, which often marginalize or tokenize these individuals, communities, nations, peoples, and knowledges. While efforts toward Indigenization and decolonization are frequently driven by Indigenous and non-dominant scholars, achieving meaningful transformation requires the active, ongoing, intentional, and reflexive participation of conspirators, accomplices, and allies. Together, we must embrace a fundamentally different way of knowing, being, and doing — one that transcends the confines of publishing and permeates all aspects of the Academy, local community, and global society.

ILR&R plays a critical role in inviting a cognitive transformation and unlearning within the academy to accept and understand cautious reconciliation and the hope and possibility of gained trust by and *from* Indigenous and non-dominant peoples if they so choose. The potential engagement *with* (not *on* or *for*) allows Indigenous peoples and knowledges to be genuinely engaged rather than researched, studied, mis-/appropriated, and/or exploited — as continues to be a typical practice that is perpetuated and taught in many of our traditional disciplines and institutions. By advocating for the recognition of Indigenous knowledges (e.g. written, oral, creative, and artistic expressions) as expert knowledge, valid and equal alongside dominant worldviews, ILR&R challenges hierarchical epistemologies, valorizes Indigenous and non-dominant peoples, and advances a pluralistic approach to scholarship, contributing to a more inclusive and equitable academic landscape.

## **5. A Blending of Our Voices**

We see our positionality, expertise, knowledge, and perspectives as complementary and necessary for ILR&R to be successful. At the time of this writing, we have known each other for 20 years now. However, in the past 6+ years we have collaborated on a multitude of academic and community-centered projects, initiatives, and knowledge mobilization. We have organized conferences, delivered presentations, written proposals for funding, developed a massive open online course, and created this new publishing space...just to name a few documented deliverables. Building on our strong suits and identities as an Indigenous female scholar or non-Indigenous male scholar, we have encountered varying experiences throughout our career—some privileging and benefitting one over the other. Our academic partnership is representative of a reciprocal mentorship and co-learning journey (Bartlett, Marshall & Marshall 2012, 334) where we have had distinct lived experiences within and outside the academy—as described above in our positionality. Through the process of our many collaborative projects, we have been able to mentor one another, provide insight, process and think through relevant contexts as we “weave back and forth between our different worldviews” (Bartlett, Marshall & Marshall 2012) and ideologies. This process of Two-Eyed Seeing has helped us to navigate uncharted terrain while being guided by Indigenous knowledge systems and values, principles, and the potential strengths from Western knowledge systems. This co-learning journey which began when we were classmates, has led us to similar lessons that Bartlett, Marshall, and Marshall (2012) arrive at. Notably we:

1. Acknowledge that with our positionalities and identities, we can benefit from each other and our experiences, thus encouraging a co-learning journey

2. Are guided by Two-Eyed Seeing and draw on the strengths from Indigenous and Western knowledge systems
3. View “science” and ‘knowledge” in an inclusive way that demonstrates reciprocity
4. Learn through actions (rather than “just talking”) in a creative, grow forward way that benefits Indigenous and non-dominant communities
5. Align our intentions, actions, and knowledges to our values and principles; which can be examined and discussed
6. Weave back and forth between our worldviews as we center Indigenous and non-dominant communities
7. Develop an advisory circle of willing, knowledgeable stakeholders, drawing upon individuals both from within the educational institution(s) and within Indigenous and non-dominant communities

ILR&R is the brainchild we created to establish a new, bold, and exciting space for publishing. A space where much of what has been written here, and elsewhere, can be explored, challenged, revised, and revisited in the spirit of collaborative knowledge generation and understanding or put another way, a space to help us all on our co-learning journey.

## 6. Indigenous Languages Rights & Realities

### ***Vision***

A transformed academy where Indigenous and non-dominant peoples, languages, cultures, knowledges, and practices have an equal presence, influence, and power. Further, where this transformation impacts the lives of all.

### ***Mission***

To Indigenize and decolonize academic publishing by intentionally ...

- Centering Indigenous and non-dominant peoples, their languages, ways of knowing, being, and doing;
- Prioritizing ethical and relational community-led and -driven language work;
- Mobilizing and disseminating Indigenous and non-dominant voices through accessible platforms (in and through their knowledges and languages);
- Championing the celebrating, (re)vitalizing, (re)claiming, (re)learning, (re)normalizing and/or (re)newing of Indigenous and non-dominant languages;
- Strengthening relational accountability and trust between Indigenous and non-dominant communities and those dominant communities and their members that publish about them, their way of being, and their languages;
- Honoring, recognizing, and promoting oralilty and signing;
- Minimizing the gap between grassroots, Indigenous, and non-dominant institutions and dominant institutions by creating connections for the inception, expansion, and validation of research through Indigenous and non-dominant languages; and
- Embracing the collaborative nature of inquiry and acknowledging the fallibility of scientific methods by incorporating Indigenous and non-dominant worldviews within the Academy.

**Description<sup>20</sup>**

Indigenous Language Rights & Realities (ILR&R) is a formal academic publishing space led, driven, and administered by Indigenous and non-dominant scholars. ILR&R privileges and centers the work of Indigenous and non-dominant scholars, including elders, language speakers and learners, knowledge holders, cultural practitioners, educators, researchers, and advocates from various cultural, intellectual, and institutional traditions and practices.

ILR&R focuses on disseminating work derived from ethical, community-led initiatives. Additionally, it publishes work grounded in collaborative and accountable relationships, embodying the four Rs (Kirkness & Barnhardt 1991): respect, relevance, reciprocity, and responsibility. Publications highlight the rights and realities of Indigenous and non-dominant peoples and all aspects of their language use across all domains of society, including home, community, school, work, government, online, and digital.

ILR&R publishes original papers on topics related to Indigenous and non-dominant community-centered, -led, -driven language work as it relates to their rights and lived realities. This includes, but is not limited to language revitalization, reclamation, education, policy planning, and linguistic rights. We privilege submissions authored or co-authored by Indigenous and/or non-dominant community members and/or in partnership with Indigenous and/or non-dominant communities or community members.

All authors are encouraged to include and weave into their submission their positionality to demonstrate relationality, respect, responsibility, and relevance to the language community(ies) featured. ILR&R encourages authors to be critical of their roles and positionality in relation to the community, language, work and research that they are a part of. **We will not publish** submissions that do not demonstrate respect and responsibility to language communities and work that reflects knowledge extractive practices that exploit communities, community members, and/or community resources. Our expectations regarding relational accountability as well as Ethics & Malpractice Statement can be found online<sup>21</sup>.

## 7. Transformational Path Before Us

Now, with years in the making, we are delighted to launch *Indigenous Language Rights and Realities* (ILR&R) as a dedicated publishing space that amplifies and centers Indigenous and non-dominant voices. Our intention is to create a platform and space where these voices, languages, knowledges, and perspectives matter and can thrive within an academic landscape that has traditionally and historically marginalized them. As we embark on this journey and uncharted course, our initial goal is to publish one volume and one special issue per year, providing consistent opportunities for meaningful contributions. We warmly invite submissions that are community-centered, -led, and -driven, as these align with our commitment to fostering reciprocal, relational, responsible, authentic, collaborative, and transformative scholarship. Through ILR&R, we aim to challenge norms, inspire critical dialogue, and contribute to a more inclusive and equitable academic publishing environment, community, and culture - locally, regionally, and globally.

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<sup>20</sup> Cf. <https://nflrc.hawaii.edu/ilrr/submit-an-article/> for further discussion.

<sup>21</sup> <https://nflrc.hawaii.edu/ilrr/ethics-malpractice-statement/>

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