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THE Nonprofit QUARTERLY

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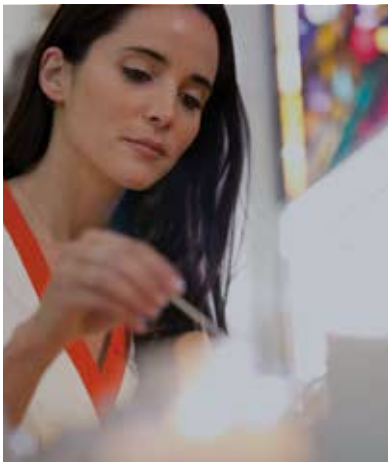

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PHOTO: JESSICA BLACK, NATIVE PEOPLES ACTION BOARD MEMBER (RIGHT)/NATIVE PEOPLES ACTION

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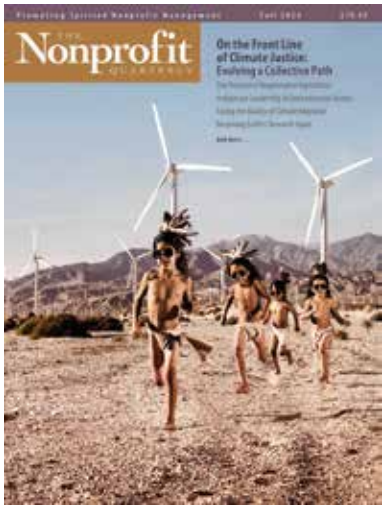
Welcome



Dear readers,

The fall 2020 issue of the *Nonprofit Quarterly* looks at environmental justice and the climate crisis from the perspective of Indigenous activists and leaders. Guest editor Raymond Foxworth, vice president of grantmaking for the First Nations Development Institute, has curated a stellar group of articles focused on Native climate and environmental justice struggles, and on challenging dominant narratives, policies, and practices that exclude or minimize Native peoples in the environmental justice space.

NPQ staff live and work in Massachusetts, California, Oregon, Colorado, Florida, Texas: purloined land, wrested from Indigenous peoples representing hundreds of Tribal nations, that is being ravaged to the brink of destruction. As we prepare to print, Pebble Mine, Standing Rock, and Bears Ears continue to be threatened by Western extractive industry; Indigenous communities continue to fight to be properly accounted for in the U.S. census; and, as Foxworth describes within, "Beyond their colonial and racist origins, and inability to acknowledge that traditional Indigenous knowledge can advance climate and environmental justice, the modern climate and environmental movements perpetuate Indigenous marginalization and exclusion in terms of their composition."

In 2019, Governor Gavin Newsom apologized to Native Americans for California's "war of extermination" a century earlier. In response, there was a call for Newsom's apology to extend to action: "Echoing the debate in Congress this week about reparations for black Americans, indigenous groups argue that government should compensate Native Americans for harms . . . The state of California, indigenous leaders told the *Guardian*, should be looking at land and water rights, education, cultural revival, criminal justice and more . . . Javier I Kinney, executive director of the Yurok tribe, along the Klamath river in northern California, said there were roughly 1m acres of Yurok ancestral territory outside of the tribe's reservation land that the tribe would like to reacquire 'so that we will be made whole'. 'Tribes have really had the key to that knowledge of how to sustainably manage and be the stewards of lands,' he added."

In an article that invites readers to learn, challenge ourselves, and show up for Indigenous endeavors, Native Peoples Action offers their Just Transition framework. It includes five key elements that support collective well-being: "Be Grounded," "Be Sustained," "Be Seen," "Be Heard," "Be Sacred"—principles we hope this edition has supported throughout its production. To that end, the art was chosen in partnership with the authors. "'Evolvers' [cover and pp. 32–34] contextualizes the worldview that our ancestors are here with us, throughout time and place, and are watching and experiencing the changes in landscape and ecosystem," recounts artist Cara Romero. "We are ontologically tied to our landscape—our spirituality and our existence are inseparable from it. And despite development and five hundred years of colonialism, we are still here, and we always will be."

Indigenous Communities *and* Environmental Justice

by Raymond Foxworth

"The climate and environmental justice movements, as well as the philanthropic organizations that support them, have a long way to go to be substantively inclusive of Native communities around climate and the environment," writes Raymond Foxworth. "Centering Indigenous communities and their ways of knowing will go far in developing a more just society for all." This article offers some steps that funders and environmental NGOs can take to self-correct.

I am excited to kick off this first ever series for the *Nonprofit Quarterly* magazine focused on environmental justice and Indigenous communities in the United States. Too often, Native voices in all aspects of American life are silenced and marginalized, and this has continued to be the case in the global environmental justice movement. This series is an attempt to bring Native leaders working for environmental

Raymond Foxworth, PhD, serves as vice president of grantmaking, development, and communications at First Nations Development Institute. Foxworth's professional and academic careers have been dedicated to advancing Native-led strategies for change in Native American communities.

"Climate justice unveil their 'people's to-do list,' November 9, 2016"/Jeremy Sutton-Hibbert/Alamy


PEOPLE'S
PRESIDENTIAL
TO-DO LIST:
WORK FOR CLIMATE JUSTICE
RESPECT INDIGENOUS SOVEREIGNTY
HONOR THE TREATIES
CUT CORPORATE TIES
ZERO BY 2050
BREAK FREE FROM FOSSIL FUELS
COMMIT TO A JUST TRANSITION
NO CORPORATE TRADE DEALS
STOP MILITARISM
END INHUMANE POLICIES
PROTECT WATER

justice in their communities into the conversation, to speak for themselves and discuss how they are mobilizing to stop environmental degradation and racism and build more sustainable futures for their communities and beyond.

Historically, environmental movements have not been an ally to Indigenous peoples and communities.

Native lands today, once thought to be barren and desolate areas fit only for Indians, cumulatively occupy over 55 million acres of land and 57 million acres of subsurface mineral estates.[1] The lands of Native nations sit on top of "nearly 30 percent of the nation's coal reserves west of the Mississippi, as much as 50 percent of potential uranium reserves, and up to 20 percent of known natural gas and oil reserves."[2] In all, according to the Department of Energy, Native lands today house over 15 million acres of potential energy and mineral resources—and nearly 90 percent of those resources are untapped.[3]

Economists Shawn Regan and Terry Anderson have noted that Native communities, especially in the Western United States, are "islands of poverty in a sea of wealth."[4] Some economists have suggested that Native nations exploit these resources for economic gain, to lift themselves out of poverty and enable local community development. In fact, federal policy-makers and extractive industry lobbying groups have long advocated for reducing barriers for Native nations and people to lease these valuable resources to mostly non-Native companies for exploitation and development. Historically, Congress and their extractive industry allies sought to exploit Native lands and resources without Tribal input and consultation or by diminishing Tribal lands.[5] Deals surrounding non-Native access and use of Native lands and resources were the subject of one of the largest settlement cases involving mismanagement and neglect of Native lands and interests by the federal government.[6]

But today, as highlighted by the expert contributors to this issue, Native nations are reversing histories of exploitation by the federal government and other accomplices. Native nations and Native organizations are actively fighting for the protection of local resources. Moreover, the leaders at the helm of this special issue all highlight place-based efforts to advance Indigenous environmental justice, rooted in Indigenous knowledge and epistemologies. These authors make clear that U.S. settler-colonialism continues to be a driving force behind the deterioration and contamination of Native lands, but also that Indigenous peoples are not subjugated, passive victims of "modernity" but rather are taking active stances to fight for justice. Finally, all the authors make clear that for modern environmental and climate justice movements—and philanthropic support of these movements—to be truly impactful, they must let Indigenous peoples lead.

Indigenous Peoples and Environmental and Climate Justice Movements

Historically, environmental movements have not been an ally to Indigenous peoples and communities. For example, the early conservation movement in the United States lobbied to create the national park system that displaced and expelled Native peoples from their homelands and hunting grounds, in an effort to keep these lands in a pristine "state of nature." Originating with Yosemite National Park in the Sierra Nevada mountains around the 1850s (during the California Gold Rush), conservationists were backed with the full might of the U.S. Army to push Native peoples from lands that they had occupied for thousands of years. Seen as a model for successful land and natural resource protection, this system has been exported around the world.[7]

This colonial and violent past continues to plague conservation, climate, and environmental justice organizations today. Indigenous communities across the globe continue to be displaced (sometimes with violence) and marginalized by NGOs claiming to advance environmental and climate justice.[8] In part, this kind of racism and violence perpetrated against Indigenous peoples is motivated by Western environmental organizations assuming Indigenous people have little or nothing to contribute to environmental and climate justice.

But Indigenous people have critically important knowledge systems and practices. For example, as fire archaeologist Hillary Renick has noted, wildfires across the globe have been linked to changes in climate that have created warmer, drier conditions, and increased droughts; and

there is growing recognition that traditional Indigenous land practices prevent forest fires. Calls for the integration of Indigenous traditional fire ecology into mainstream land management practices are also growing.[9]

Beyond their colonial and racist origins, and inability to acknowledge that traditional Indigenous knowledge can advance climate and environmental justice, the modern climate and environmental movements perpetuate Indigenous marginalization and exclusion in terms of their composition. Environmental organizations in the United States largely remain segregated; the most recent and publicly available data note that 80 percent of boards of directors and 85 percent of staff of environmental nonprofits are white. These organizations not only lack diversity but have also become less and less transparent in their reporting of staff and board compositions.[10] At the same time, funders have done relatively little to meaningfully push the environmental and climate justice movements to be more diverse and inclusive, in large part because they are also rooted in whiteness.[11]

Philanthropy and the Funding of Indigenous Environmental Movements[12]

Despite the long history of Native resistance to exploitive and harmful forms of energy and resource development, philanthropic investment in Native environmental justice movements mirrors their overall marginal investments in Native communities.[13]

According to data made available by two nonprofits, Candid and Native Americans in Philanthropy, foundations awarded 1,166 grants totaling roughly $60 million between 2014 and 2019 to Native American environmental and animal organizations and causes. On average, foundations award roughly 194 grants totaling about $10 million annually to these organizations and causes (an average grant size of $51,450).[14]

As a percentage of total foundation giving, the best available data suggest that about 3 percent of total foundation giving goes to environmental causes.[15] This means, on average, that foundations gave a little over $2 billion to environmental causes annually between 2014 and 2019. Only a total of 0.5 percent (five-tenths of one percent) of total foundation environmental giving was awarded to environmental organizations and causes in Native communities.

As the giving data in Table 1 note, the highest year of giving to Native American environmental organizations and causes was 2015, followed by 2016. From 2014 to 2019, the majority of grant dollars was awarded to the top five grant recipients in each year. Among those top five recipient organizations in each of the six years, seventeen were Native-controlled organizations or Native nations, and thirteen were non-Native-controlled organizations. Although a majority of Native organizations appeared in the top tier of giving each year, 56 percent of the resources to these top recipients was awarded to the non-Native-controlled organizations. This is consistent with other research that has identified that non-Native-controlled organizations receive a large amount of resources that are intended to support Native community-based work. Moreover, this research has uncovered that Native organizations receive smaller grants for similar work.[16]

The top two high years of foundation giving (2015 and 2016) do coincide with large and very

Beyond their colonial and racist origins, and inability to acknowledge that traditional Indigenous knowledge can advance climate and environmental justice, the modern climate and environmental movements perpetuate Indigenous marginalization and exclusion in terms of their composition.

Table 1. **Foundation giving to Native American environmental organizations and causes, 2014–2019**

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
Grants Awarded	156	250	326	259	157	18
$ Awarded	$7.3 MM	$17.2 MM	$14.1 MM	$13 MM	$6.6 MM	$1.8 MM
Total Funders	124	147	189	180	108	14
Recipient Organizations	95	175	188	122	91	17

public events in Native communities. It was in 2016 that Water Protectors gripped national headlines as they mobilized to protect land and water on the Standing Rock Reservation in North Dakota, fighting against the Dakota Access Pipeline.[17] Also starting in 2015, Native nations and organizations were at the peak of their organizing, advocating to get Bears Ears in southern Utah designated as a national monument.[18]

The lack of investment in Native-led change and the dismissal of community-based knowledge in promoting environmental justice firmly entrench models of philanthropic colonialism in Native communities.

The vast majority of funding provided by foundations for the past five years has been in the natural resource subject area, as identified by Candid. This includes work targeting energy resources, water and water management, air quality, and more. The second highest subject area of support is biodiversity, including forest preservation, plant biodiversity, and wildlife biodiversity.

What do these data tell us about support of Native environmental justice movements in the United States? In sum, they tell us that Native environmental organizations and causes receive minimal support from foundations.

The amount of foundation support for Native-led change is even smaller. In our work to support environmental justice in Native communities, the communities often express extreme frustration with non-Native-led organizations, which receive grant dollars to do work in or for Native communities. These non-Native organizations bring their own assumptions and values to environmental justice work, and there is no guarantee that Native people are actually meaningfully involved. The lack of investment in Native-led change and the dismissal of community-based knowledge in promoting environmental justice firmly entrench models of philanthropic colonialism in Native communities.

Supporting Native-Led Environmental Justice Movements

The climate and environmental justice movements, as well as the philanthropic organizations that support them, have a long way to go to be substantively inclusive of Native communities around climate and the environment. Centering Indigenous communities and their ways of knowing will go far in developing a more just society for all. Here are some steps that funders and environmental NGOs can take:

1. **Get educated:** Educate yourself about Native issues, lands, and environmental activism. This includes educating yourself on the theft of Native lands and resources, and how this has contributed to U.S. development. This article series is one good start at self-education.
2. **Connect with Native organizations:** There is no shortage of Native organizations doing environmental and climate-related work. Form intentional, meaningful connections with these organizations and Native leaders.
3. **Invest in Native organizations:** Philanthropy needs to invest in Native environmental and climate justice work.
4. **Move beyond whiteness:** Philanthropy and mainstream environmental and climate justice organizations need to move beyond white-centered frameworks in advancing justice. Indigenous peoples have time-tested knowledge systems that are invaluable to advancing environmental and climate justice.

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DETAIL FROM PAGES 4–5/JEREMY SUTTON-HIBBERT/ALAMY

Preserving Our Place: Isle de Jean Charles

by Chantel Comardelle

The Isle de Jean Charles Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe of Louisiana are in a long-standing battle to preserve their home. They are not the first nor will they be the last to face down decades of social injustice and a growing climate crisis, as they organize to resettle, repair, and reunite on their ancestral land.

"Levees built along the Mississippi River after the [1928 Flood Control Act] stopped freshwater floods that had kept the marsh alive and the land elevated with fresh, fertile sediment. . . . Around the same time the road was planned, oil companies took interest in the land the government had called 'uninhabitable swamp' until 1876 and cut canals around the island. The influx of saltwater killed the marsh grasses. Trees that once offered shelter from hurricane-force winds were turned a skeletal white by the salt. . . . From then, years became measured in hurricanes and floods."[1]

It's a beautiful warm morning in south Louisiana, as I travel down to my home, Isle de Jean Charles—"The Island." The water gently laps onto the road as the tide moves inland. The oak trees make a canopy of shade over the paved road leading to what's left of the Tribal members' homes. Reaching my destination, my ninety-year-old grandpa meets me on the raised porch with a hug. The warm saltwater breeze blows as we sit swinging; there is a smell of fragrant coffee brewing for the three o'clock gathering on the porch. We begin talking about the old days, while forever preserving this moment in time.

Preserving a moment in time has different meanings for everyone. Using the five senses helps to create a memory. Throughout time, there are days when we remember exactly where we were and the events surrounding them: Pearl Harbor, December 7, 1941; the John F. Kennedy assassination, November 22, 1963; World Trade Center, September 11, 2001. Just

Chantel Comardelle is Tribal executive secretary of the Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe.

ABOVE: AERIAL VIEW OF ISLE DE JEAN CHARLES, 2018/PHOTO: CHANTEL COMARDELLE

Island Road, Isle de Jean Charles, August 28, 2020—the day after Hurricane Laura hit Lake Charles.

PHOTO: CHANTEL COMARDELLE

Faith Comardelle holds time line aloft—Isle de Jean Charles resettlement planning meeting, 2018.

as these moments were of deep national impact, so this moment is of deep impact for our Tribal nation. Preserving a place, whether physically, historically, or emotionally, usually comes about through great loss—as is the case with Isle de Jean Charles.

Isle de Jean Charles is a small ridge of land in southern Terrebonne Parish, Louisiana. "The Island," as locals call it, is home to the Isle de Jean Charles (IDJC) Biloxi-Chitimacha-Choctaw Tribe of Louisiana. The IDJC Tribe settled the Island in the early 1800s, having been pushed into "uninhabitable" lands by European settler colonialism, slavery, and social inequality.[2]

The IDJC Tribe adapted to the changes of living on a secluded island, one accessible only by boat,[3] living solely off the land and surrounding waters. Soon after settling, the Tribe began farming rice and corn and raising cattle to provide for their families. The Tribal children were denied public education until 1952. In the 1930s, a missionary school was developed on the mainland, in Pointe-aux-Chênes, to which the children went by pirogue; and in the 1940s the Baptist Mission built a church on the Island, which was used as a school.[4]

The "Island Road" connecting the Island to Pointe-aux-Chênes was built in 1953, opening the IDJC Tribe to a new world. Crossing the marshland, and wide open to erosion and flooding, this narrow roadway is considered to be both vulnerable and to have added to the erosion of the island.[5] Since 1955, the Island has experienced a 98 percent erosion rate, causing mass changes to Island life. Family homes have flooded and been destroyed by hurricanes.[6] In 2011, the road underwent restoration and elevation, and the Tribe was told this would be the final fix. Since

PHOTO: CHANTEL COMARDELLE

2017, the road has regularly flooded due to the increasingly extreme weather patterns.[7]

Despite all these troubles, the IDJC Tribe has enjoyed generations of bountiful provision from the Island from seafood, agriculture, livestock, and trapping, and the Island has been rich in Native traditions and culture. But our Island is now unable to sustain life fully for our entire IDJC Tribe, because of climate change: sea level rise, environmental disasters, and subsidence due to levees on the Mississippi River.[8]

The IDJC Tribe has slowly begun to leave the Island due to loss of houses, loss of work, and repeated flooding, starting with Hurricane Carmen in 1974.[9] With each storm, more families have left. Hurricane Lili, in 2002, brought the greatest loss—over fifty families, due to severe flooding and damage.[10] As a result, we are separated, displaced, and losing the ways in which we transfer our knowledge.

Grandparents and Elders are not spending daily time with the children. Younger families are choosing to move off the Island for sustainability. We are losing our survival skills, our sustainable ways of living with and off the land and marsh. The fisheries are not producing the same quality and quantity of catch as decades before. Marsh grasses are dying, and the estuaries are becoming more salt based. Additionally, crude oil from the 2010 Deepwater Horizon Oil spill disgorged into our marsh, closing off our traditional fishing grounds and forcing young folks to change careers in order to provide for their families.[11]

The crafts, traditions, and how we live together with what is around us are disappearing. Basket weaving, which has been a strong connection to our ancestors, is declining—only a handful of Elders are still able to engage in the craft. Our lifeways that make the IDJC Tribe who we are have been cut off. Our younger generations are no longer here to learn from the Elders. The slow exodus of people forced to leave has caused a rift blocking our natural flow of history and cultural transfer.[12]

We have long held hopes of reuniting our IDJC Tribe in a safe, sustainable, new community, and putting our traditions and culture back together. In 2000, and then in 2002, Tribal council members advocated for the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers and local government officials to help our Tribe overcome the changes. Attempts to help our Tribal citizens move were stalled, due to outside forces and social injustice;[13] but continued planning for resettlement and to reunite the Tribe proved to be helpful when the state of Louisiana applied for the Housing and Urban Development National Disaster Resilience Grant in 2015, which included our Tribal Resettlement plan, and then when the state of Louisiana was awarded a grant of $48 million in 2016 to build our envisioned resettlement.[14] However, we envision our Tribal resettlement as a living and active bridge to our ancestral Island. Our relationships, ways of life, and identity will be supported by a community center, a museum, and gatherings on acreage inland—all toward the entire Tribe moving back together.[15]

But that hope to breathe Spirit into our Tribe has dwindled, due to the state of Louisiana's slow response and improper execution of the Housing and Urban Development National Disaster Resilience Grant. In the last significant amendment,[16] the state made it clear that the IDJC Tribe was no longer a beneficiary of nor involved in the grant process.[17]

The grant did not turn out to be the catalyst for recreating the self-sustaining society we once loved, but we remain committed to our vision. The Tribe has invested in "Preserving Our Place," a movement to preserve the Island and the IDJC Tribe's long legacy of traditions, culture, and history.[18] In November 2019, the IDJC Tribal Council approved the first Tribal Museum Policy. The establishment of our own Tribal Museum and Culture Center, the first step to realizing our goals, has many moving parts. Community gardens, storytelling activities, craft demonstrations, and historical exhibits are just the tip of the iceberg.

The effort to ensure that the Island does not erode and the IDJC Tribe does not erode along with it is the most important piece of this puzzle. For a displaced, impoverished, and marginalized community, the means to undertake such a task are minimal.

Grandparents and Elders are not spending daily time with the children. Younger families are choosing to move off the Island for sustainability. We are losing our survival skills, our sustainable ways of living with and off the land and marsh.

In order to fully accomplish our goal, we, the people of the Tribe, the community, and the country must ensure that the communities facing climate migration and resettlement are fully resourced.

Thinking of the vast undertaking, for guidance—ironically—I look to the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution, whose Preamble begins, "We the People." In order to fully accomplish our goal, we, the people of the Tribe, the community, and the country must ensure that the communities facing climate migration and resettlement are fully resourced. Communities dealing with these grave climate conditions need everyone to rally behind their vision to ensure the preservation of their place, and come alongside them in solidarity.

The solidarity should include everyone, from the federal government to philanthropy. The Government Accountability Office issued a report in July 2020, stating, "We recommended Congress consider establishing a federally-led pilot program to help communities interested in relocation."[19] The report, which accurately covers the IDJC Tribe's resettlement process, clearly states that there are many complex problems with the current resettlement plan.

So how do we help come alongside the Isle de Jean Charles Tribe and other communities to accomplish their vision? I am so glad you asked! We welcome support in a variety of ways: monetary, physical, and emotional. Following our story on our website, www.isledejeancharles.com, and on Facebook is a great start. Many news stories are published about the communities dealing with climate change, and not all of them are factual or tell the real story—contact community leaders to learn of their most pressing needs. Finally, meaningful monetary support and capacity-building grant opportunities are crucial. In our case, the Preserving Our Place project needs to build capacity to get the project up and running. Archival space, equipment, funding, and a building are some of the immediate challenges we are facing.

Seed money, when we invest in communities that are fighting for self-preservation, is sown into good soil that will yield a return well beyond the initial investment. I challenge each reader to ask themself: "What have *I* been sowing into?"

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Indigenizing Environmental & Climate Justice:

Reconciling the Past May Be the Only Way to a Sustainable Future

by Trisha Kehaulani Watson-Sproat

"The environmental histories and traumas of Indigenous peoples remain largely absent from the environmental justice discussion, and this must be remedied if we are to develop pathways to a just, sustainable future."

The environmental struggles of Indigenous peoples across the world are unique. Whereas the impacts of large-scale industrial activities pose an increasing threat to the well-being of human populations and ecosystems around the world,[1] these threats disproportionately endanger Native peoples, who already, for generations, have been robbed of health, prosperity, cultural access,[2] access to natural resources for subsistence purposes, and other well-being indicators. And these impacts are often exacerbated in Indigenous communities by histories of intergenerational trauma,[3] including the violent displacement of Native peoples from their ancestral homelands.

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PHOTO: TRICIA KEHAULANI WATSON-SPROAT

Rai, also known as stone money, located in Yap. Sea level rise and coastal storm events threaten local communities, cultural resources, and traditional practices.

Understanding that the ways in which inequality and the seizure of land and resources by certain groups at the expense of others are embedded within the foundation upon which the United States was built helps reframe the discussion about the origins of our environmental problems.

Generally, across the planet, there has been an increase in awareness regarding social justice issues, including issues of environmental[4] and climate justice.[5] These movements have surely reinforced each other—environmentalists' long-standing concerns about the health of the planet appear to have received a much-needed boost, driven in part by people directly seeing and experiencing the effects of climate change on their local communities.

Most, if not all, environmental justice and climate justice frameworks tend to focus on more recent environmental harms and subsequent environmental degradation. But injustices perpetuated against Indigenous peoples and their lands have a much longer history and are still firmly rooted in worldviews connected to exploitation and domination of land and its resources.

Social movements focusing on environmental and climate justice need to evolve to center histories of Indigenous injustices and the ongoing consequences for Indigenous peoples. Whereas mainstream discussions of environmental racism typically focus on contemporaneous acts of land use and resource exploitation, Indigenous environmental issues are deeply rooted in cyclical acts of displacement and alienation.

This article provides a brief summary of this past and its linkages to communities of people, both in the United States overall and Hawai'i specifically, who have been routinely attacked, pilfered, and excluded from the prosperity and opportunities that should be available to all. Within this history, contemporary acts of environmental racism in Hawai'i are considered and serve as an important lesson when considering how climate issues should be addressed in the Pacific more broadly. Finally, intersectional environmentalism is examined as one potential area in which a more holistic approach to environmental justice and just futures can be considered.

The environmental histories and traumas of Indigenous peoples remain largely absent from the environmental justice discussion, and this must be remedied if we are to develop pathways to a just, sustainable future.

How Historic Injustices Have Robbed Communities of Their Power

Communities that have been violated by historic injustices are more likely to suffer environmental impact than those that have enjoyed historic privileges.[6] The US Water Alliance explains: "Vulnerable communities face historic or contemporary barriers to economic and social opportunities and a healthy environment. The principal factors in community vulnerability are income, race or ethnicity, age, language ability, and geographic location. This may include low-income people, certain communities of color, immigrants, seniors, children, people with disabilities, people with limited English-speaking ability, rural communities, Tribal communities, people living in unincorporated areas, people living in public housing, and currently or formerly incarcerated people."[7] This is a good example of a definition and framework that appropriately covers the range of vulnerable communities.

All of these groups would benefit from approaches centering upon the long history of settler violence—acts of latent and manifest aggression directed at peoples by settler-colonial forces—that first were perpetuated against Indigenous peoples. This engenders a discussion that recognizes what is largely spoken of as "vulnerability" but which really ought to be relabeled "threat"—not as a modern phenomenon but rather as a fundamental tenet of Western culture that extends back to the very origins of American society. Understanding that the ways in which inequality and the seizure of land and resources by certain groups at the expense of others are embedded within the foundation upon which the United States was built helps reframe the discussion about the origins of our environmental problems.[8]

The past is often romanticized. From historians to scientists to climate change activists, too many start the timeline to today's environmental crisis in the late nineteenth or early twentieth century. This is understandable, given that this is when many groups, particularly people of color (including immigrants), enter the American narrative—but the story actually begins much earlier. It begins when westerners arrived

Hawaiian and local community members work together to restore a traditional Hawaiian fishpond.

on Indigenous lands and began to interact with Native peoples and their ancestral resources.

In Hawai'i, this began with the arrival of British explorer James Cook, who happened upon the Hawaiian Islands during a 1778 voyage in the Pacific. Native Hawaiians quickly began to fall ill with diseases introduced by Cook and his sailors. These foreign-introduced diseases included gonorrhea, syphilis, and, likely, tuberculosis. (Cook also introduced alcohol to the islands.[9]) By the beginning of the 1800s, foreign diseases were having crippling effects on the Indigenous populations. In 1804, approximately 15,000 died from a ma'i 'ōku'u epidemic (literally, the squatting disease, likely cholera), including high chiefs. The Native Hawaiian population would collapse from an estimated 300,000 at the time of Cook's arrival[10] to a low of 34,000 by 1890.[11]

Westerners seized upon the opportunity to acquire land holdings and resources, including fresh water, taken from the ailing Native population. Despite efforts to protect land for the Native people, settlers continuously pulled land resources away from Hawaiians. Much of this was to occur through manipulations of policy and litigation[12] that continue to dispossess Hawaiians of their family lands to this day.[13]

By recognizing how inequality, discrimination, and violence were present in American culture from the first arrival of Europeans, we shift from viewing environmental degradation as resulting from industrialization and technology to understanding it as grounded in long-standing American values—and the ways in which those values perpetrate grave harm against people and the environment. Native peoples were the first to be affected, and continue to suffer the effects today.[14]

Undoubtedly, America's violent racism, early and present, has devastated other groups—most critically, Black Americans. The purpose of this article is not to attempt to give a full history of America or quantify which groups are the most impacted by its culture, but rather to highlight that it was in Indigenous communities where the intersection of racism and environmental abuses originated, and that the current crisis of

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environmental injustice extends from long patterns of displacement that allowed settler groups access to ecologically rich lands and resources, while Native peoples were forced onto less fertile lands with scantier resources. Additionally, Western settlers established property boundaries that were based on political agendas rather than environmental sustainability.[15] The effects of these political constructs remain today. While the resulting disparities and inequities are felt by multiple classes of people in communities across the country, Indigenous peoples' experiences are distinct, often overlooked, and worthy of further understanding.

Ecocolonization, "the process by which Western forces simultaneously colonize indigenous natural resources and the First People who inhabit that environment," is a useful lens through which to focus on these early environmental histories.

Kinship above All Else

The Western Christian worldview that drove and largely shaped dominant American practices centered on dominion theology,[16] which built in part upon the passage from the King James Bible version of Genesis 1:28, in which God gives humans dominion over the earth. The passage reads: "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, 'Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.'"[17]

But Indigenous worldviews and connection to lands have always been fundamentally different from those of Western Christianity. First, the relationship Indigenous peoples share with their ancestral lands is one of kinship above all else. Epistemologies were constructed around cosmologies centered on origin stories that linked the genealogies of Native peoples directly to the earth, often through earth or sky progenitors. In Hawaiian tradition, Earth Mother is known as Papahānaumoku, and Sky Father is Wākea.[18] Margo Greenwood and Nicole Marie Lindsay explain, "Indigenous values, beliefs, customs and protocols are meant to maintain the relationships that hold creation together."[19] When colonization dismantled these relationships, environmental destruction ensued.

The outcome of the displacement and diaspora resulting from foreign contact is the traumatizing forced removal of these descendants from their earth ancestors. One of the most devastating consequences of this was that the Native Hawaiian peoples, who thrived prior to foreign contact, were left largely unable to steward their ancestral lands.

Stewardship, and in particular the self-sufficiency it accords, presumes the active presence of a population physically capable of completing the daily tasks necessary to manage resources and maintain food sovereignty. The loss of life from foreign diseases meant a significant reduction in the physical labor needed to maintain self-reliance. Family members were burdened with the additional task of caring for others afflicted with illnesses of which Hawaiians had no previous experience, leaving them without traditional knowledge and medicines to turn to for treatment. Resulting infertility left many families without descendants to inherit land and take on stewardship.

Ecocolonization, "the process by which Western forces simultaneously colonize indigenous natural resources and the First People who inhabit that environment," is a useful lens through which to focus on these early environmental histories. It centers environmental injustice questions around colonization and imperialism—historical patterns that have done their utmost to marginalize and alienate Indigenous peoples and local communities (IPLC) over the course of centuries.[20]

Ecocolonization has proved to be physically, psychologically, and spiritually devastating for many Native communities, not only Native Hawaiians. For instance, regarding the COVID-19 pandemic, UN News reported that, on the International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres noted, "Throughout history, indigenous peoples have been decimated by diseases brought from elsewhere, to which they had no immunity."[21] The report continues, "While indigenous peoples already faced deep-rooted inequalities, stigmatization and discrimination prior to the current pandemic, inadequate access to healthcare, clean water and sanitation increases their vulnerability, [Guterres] added."[22] It must be recognized first and foremost that

Shoreline immediately in front of my husband's family home. The modest ancestral property has been threatened by numerous flood events and other effects of the rise of sea levels, where the family has fished and dived for food for generations. For decades, the family has used natural elements to maintain the shoreline, like the mature "false" kamani trees, which have an extensive and strong root system that helps to keep sand in place.

PHOTO: TRICIA KEHAULANI WATSON-SPROAT

Less than fifty meters from my husband's family home, king tides and sea level rise have resulted in the complete loss of shoreline areas where families fished for generations. Cultural resources also show that the area was traditionally inhabited by Native Hawaiians.

many environmental challenges today originate in foreign settlement that saw the environment and natural resources like forest products[23] and water[24] as commodities.

Environmental Racism in Hawai'i

In 1986, the United Church of Christ (UCC) initiated studies "to determine the extent to which African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, Pacific Islanders, Native Americans and others are exposed to hazardous wastes in their communities."[25] The study concluded that "disproportionate numbers of racial and ethnic persons residing in communities with commercial hazardous waste facilities is not a random occurrence, but rather a consistent pattern."[26] Despite the environmental justice movement that grew following the publication of the UCC study, very little, if any, effort to identify patterns of environmental racism occurred in Hawai'i.

My 2002 master's thesis may be the first study to look at how environmental racism[27] applies to Hawai'i's local communities.[28] The study shows how many of the locally unwanted land uses (LULUs) are concentrated in regions with disproportionately high populations of Native Hawaiians. Unlike many Tribal communities, Native Hawaiians do not have reservations. Instead, they have Hawaiian Home Lands—government-controlled and managed lands set aside for Hawaiians with 50 percent or more blood quantum. The federal legislation was passed by the U.S. Congress at the urging of Prince Jonah Kūhiō Kalaniana'ole—heir to the Hawaiian kingdom, who would become the territory's second U.S. congressman—who felt deep concern over his people's alienation from their homelands. Selected and set aside by the federal government during the time when Hawai'i was a territory of the United States, these homesteads led to areas with high concentrations of Native Hawaiians. This has been enabled in part by zoning policies that fail to include protective measures for low-income, high-minority or Indigenous communities, and also in part by the comparatively lower political influence held by these communities.[29]

This study also discusses how O'ahu's two primary landfills, the municipal Waimānalo Gulch Sanitary Landfill and the PVT construction landfill, were both located in the same district, Wai'anae, heavily populated by Native Hawaiians. In fact, Wai'anae and the larger Leeward Coast of the island of O'ahu are home to one of the largest concentrations of Native Hawaiians in the world.

Two years after the study, in 2005, the Hawaii State Legislature passed Senate Concurrent Resolution 140, which directed Hawai'i's Environmental Council to "develop and promulgate a guidance document on including principles of environmental justice in all phases of environmental review undertaken pursuant to Chapter 343, Hawaii Revised Statutes."[30] Despite some policy guidance from Hawai'i's Office of Environmental Quality and Control—which required a nominal consideration of environmental justice issues in environmental review documents—environmental justice regulations were never codified into law. In 2019, when the office updated its regulations, environmental justice considerations were entirely absent.

Nonetheless, an environmental justice movement began to catch fire in Wai'anae, and studies began focusing on the problem of environmental racism in that district.[31] In 2009, the environmental organization KAHEA, in collaboration with a number of local organizations, started Huaka'i Kāko'o no Wai'anae—Environmental Justice Bus Tours.[32] More people started learning about environmental justice, and specifically the environmental racism that continued to grow on the Wai'anae coast. As one 2012 article explained:

> When heavy rains overtopped a reservoir above the municipal landfill and spilled into storm sewers, medical waste washed up on Waianae beaches. The Waianae coast is also home to eleven of eighteen sewage treatment plants, two oil refineries, and the privately owned PVT Nanakuli Construction and Demolition Material Landfill. Residents complain that construction debris includes asbestos dust and other toxic particles blown downwind, contaminating their homes and the nearby elementary school.

Despite some policy guidance from Hawai'i's Office of Environmental Quality and Control . . . environmental justice regulations were never codified into law. In 2019, when the office updated its regulations, environmental justice considerations were entirely absent.

PHOTO: TRICIA KEHAULANI WATSON-SPROAT

The example of PVT demonstrates how strongly political environmental racism is in Hawai'i. Even when communities are able to mobilize to be politically influential, private interests work hard to retain power in a manner that best serves their financial interests.

From an environmental justice viewpoint, Waianae has a poverty rate double the island average, and is home to Oahu's largest Native Hawaiian population.[33]

Whereas the city and county of Honolulu had committed to close the Waimānalo landfill and find a new location, the private owners of PVT Land Company Limited pushed forward with expanding their landfill in Wai'anae, seeking approval to encroach into previously undisturbed lands that house important cultural resources and serve as critical parts of traditional watersheds in the region. For years, PVT has been immediately adjacent to residential communities. Also within the immediate vicinity of the landfill are schools, homes, churches, parks, medical clinics, and community centers.[34]

Additionally, despite nearly two decades of growing concern about environmental justice issues in the area—about which residents and activists had been vocal—the environmental impact statement for the expansion did not make any reference to or take into any consideration the environmental justice impacts of the project on the communities, particularly the Native Hawaiian community. In response to PVT's refusal to consider environmental justice issues, community members mobilized to pass legislation at both the county and state levels to stop the expansion. The municipal measure was still pending as of August 2020, but a state measure to create a buffer zone between landfills and residential areas had passed during a January 2020 legislative session. Senate Bill 2386 prohibits any waste or disposal facility from being located in a conservation district, except under emergency circumstances, to mitigate significant risks to public safety and health; it also requires no less than a one-half-mile buffer zone around residences, schools, and hospitals for the construction, modification, or expansion of a waste or disposal facility.[35] PVT's private owners launched a lobbying and public relations campaign to encourage Hawai'i Governor David Ige to veto the bill.[36] Happily, despite their efforts, Governor Ige signed the bill into law on September 15, 2020.

The example of PVT demonstrates how strongly political environmental racism is in Hawai'i. Even when communities are able to mobilize to be politically influential, private interests work hard to retain power in a manner that best serves their financial interests, even above the welfare of natural or cultural resources. This is a critical lesson to apply to discussions of climate change. As widespread impacts from climate change increase, governments will need to develop equitable ways of implementing climate adaptation, so that the environmental injustice that plagues so many communities does not become further exacerbated.

Climate Injustice on the Horizon

My husband grew up in a small town called Hau'ula, on the North Shore of the island of O'ahu. His childhood home is a small community, where just about everybody knows one another. The majority of the homes are modest dwellings built over a century ago that have been in families for generations and remain largely unchanged. Many of the families also rely on the ocean for subsistence and traditional practices.

Lacking access to the capital and/or other resources to protect their properties, many multigenerational family homes, like those near my husband's family home in Hau'ula, are directly feeling the threat of climate change and the potential loss of family lands. A 2019 *Civil Beat* article about the problem of inequity in the climate response explains:

> Wealthy foreign investors and U.S. mainland speculators have snatched up many of the oceanfront properties in Hawaii, turning them into second homes or vacation rentals for the hordes of tourists who come to experience the islands each year.
>
> But there are also many homes still owned by longtime middle-class residents who bought them before prices skyrocketed or inherited properties from relatives at a time when global warming was discussed more in scientific journals than on international stages as the biggest crisis of our time.[37]

Multigenerational families and working-class families—many of whom are Hawaiian or the descendants of immigrant laborers brought to Hawai'i to work on island plantations, and who inherited their shoreline property from family—increasingly are finding themselves faced with the challenge of protecting their homes as sea levels rise. These families largely rely on natural or low-impact ways—like the maintenance of large trees and other vegetation along shorelines—to protect their properties and livelihoods. This is a stark contrast to new, wealthy, predominantly white residents in the region, who have taken expensive, extreme, and unpermitted measures to build large seawalls to protect recently purchased properties—measures that have significant impacts on beaches and coastal areas. Seawalls are by and large illegal in Hawai'i. Recognizing the serious adverse impacts these structures have on coastal areas, the state has taken measures to significantly limit homeowners' ability to fortify their properties, generally limiting that privilege to seawalls that have been in existence for generations and are grandfathered into state law. Yet this has not stopped wealthy landowners from taking steps, even illegal ones, to protect their expensive homes.

Just down the road from Hau'ula, no more than fifteen miles away, is the area most people have in mind when they picture the North Shore, increasingly defined by large palatial estates. Once inhabited by traditional Hawaiians, the area is now dominated by first-generation residents, many attracted to the area's surfing community. Hawaiian and local residents are often harassed and chased away from beaches by these newcomers. A comparison of these two different towns and two different communities tells us much about the looming climate injustice and its potential impact on Indigenous peoples.

Over the past few years, local news outlets have reported stories of wealthy North Shore landowners taking steps to build large seawalls and otherwise fortify the shoreline between their homes and the sea. One well-publicized example is the case of James and Denise O'Shea, who purchased a beachfront property on O'ahu's iconic Sunset Beach. The O'Sheas bought the property in 2001 for a comparatively reasonable price of $575,000. Within five years, they would make $38,500 worth of improvements to the home, resulting in an increase in the total property assessed value from $596,300 in 2001, when they purchased the home, to $2,043,100 in 2007, after the improvements were completed.[38]

In 2001, when the O'Sheas made their investment, the threat of sea level rise,[39] across the world[40] and particularly in Hawai'i,[41] was already known fact.[42] The O'Shea property was one of only a few properties with "shoreline armoring along this stretch of Sunset Beach," as the seawall was already present on the property.[43] Additionally, the home is located on "ceded" lands, lands that were designated for Hawaiian chiefs and the Kingdom of Hawai'i during the mid-nineteenth century, then seized and ceded by the American government.

An official state investigation would later find: "The beach [fronting the property] is exposed to swells from the north Pacific in the winter months and easterly tradewind waves year-round. The beach is composed of carbonate coarse sand and characterized by occasional outcrops of limestone that are intermittently buried or exposed by shifting sand. Long-term shoreline change rates in the vicinity of the subject property have trended towards chronic recession (approximately 0.5 to 0.6 feet per year)."[44] This meant that the beach in front of the property was already experiencing "chronic" shoreline loss when the O'Sheas purchased the property, in 2001. Warranty deeds issued for the property in 2010 and 2012 even recorded encroachments on the property that either ran within the existing beach access or the Pacific Ocean.[45]

Increased storm events continued and became more impactful in the mid-2010s. Unlike places that experience four distinct seasons, Hawai'i, like many tropical environments, experiences primarily two seasons: a wet (winter) season and a dry (summer) season. With Hawai'i's wet season comes high, often dangerous, surf, particularly on the North Shore. And in September 2017, the seawall on the O'Sheas' property collapsed.[46]

Beaches are critical natural resources that support endangered species, recreation, and

Beaches are critical natural resources that support endangered species, recreation, and cultural practices—and they are disappearing at an alarming rate in Hawai'i.

Unpermitted seawall construction taking place in front of the O'Shea property, 2017.

Without policies that significantly consider injustice and plan for just action, inequities across different social and cultural groups will only increase.

cultural practices—and they are disappearing at an alarming rate in Hawai'i, due to hardening of the shoreline. Seawalls and other forms of shoreline armoring can be highly detrimental to a beach's ecosystem. A hardened shoreline can result in beach loss and beach narrowing by accelerating sand loss in front of and adjacent to it.

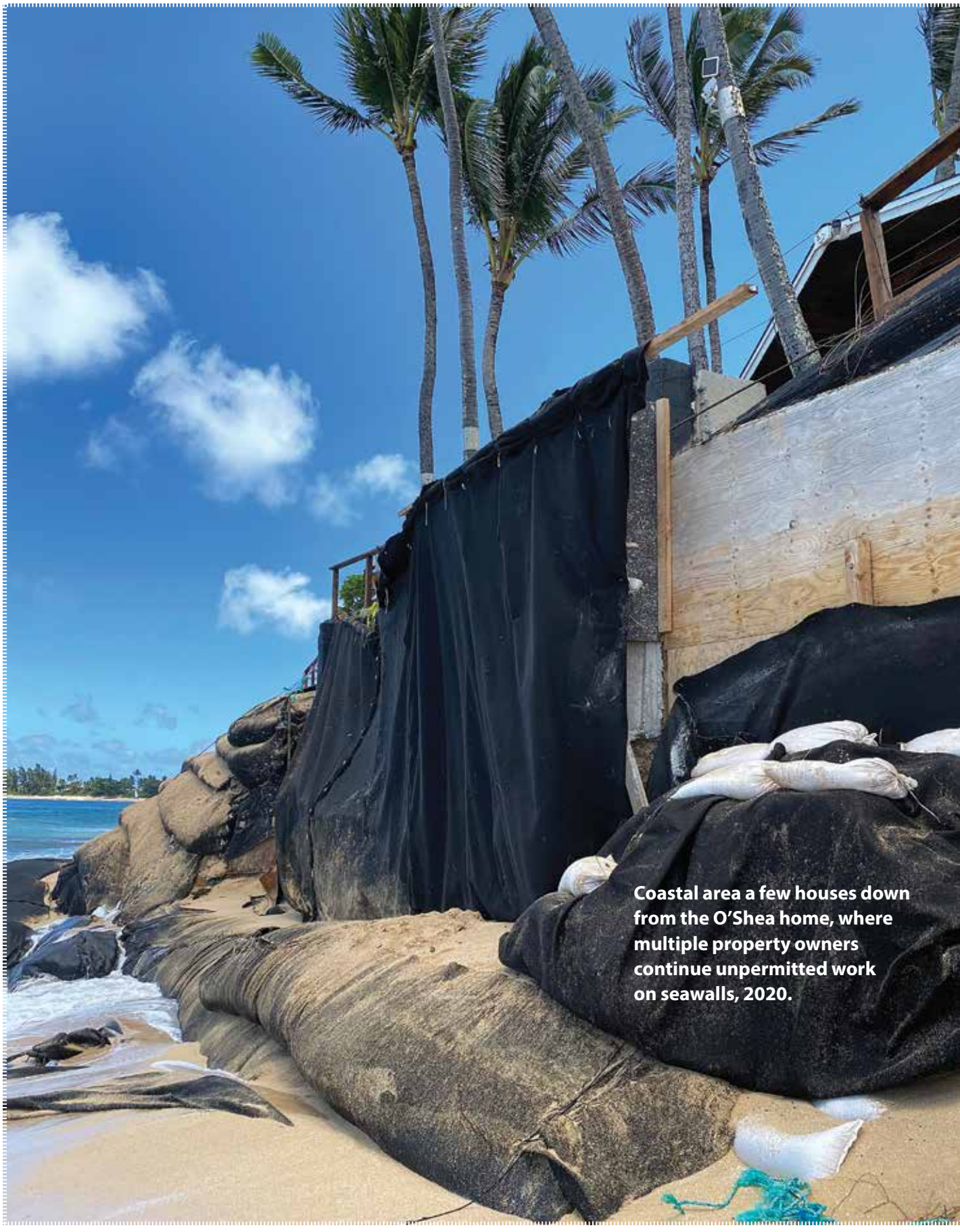
After the O'Sheas' seawall collapsed, they immediately began to reconstruct it without authorization. Despite the significant impact constructing a new wall would have on this pristine North Shore beach, they proceeded unabated. The O'Sheas were reported to the appropriate state enforcement agencies, and an investigation was launched.

The state of Hawai'i served a violation notice and temporary restraining order on the O'Sheas, but work continued on the wall. The state administrator in the case would later testify: "We have essentially a seawall that was completely rebuilt, and it was done without any sort of permit from any government entity, any approval, any consent, on one of the most spectacular beaches in [*sic*] the planet."[47] Neighboring properties have now also begun work on towering, unpermitted seawalls, despite the known detriments to the beach and coastal environment.

As climate change intensifies and climate vulnerability increases throughout the Hawaiian and Pacific Islands, situations like these will only worsen. Without policies that significantly consider injustice and plan for just action, inequities across different social and cultural groups will only increase. Climate crisis does not impact all groups equally. Ethnic minorities, Native populations, and working classes, for instance—groups that have been robbed of wealth and access to resources—are at greater risk of being impacted by the growing climate crisis, and the first to suffer the effects.

It is inevitable that communities, particularly island communities, will need to implement climate adaptation and shoreline retreat

PHOTO: STATE OF HAWAI'I



Coastal area a few houses down from the O'Shea home, where multiple property owners continue unpermitted work on seawalls, 2020.

PHOTO: TRICIA KEHAULANI WATSON-SPROAT

strategies soon. And it is increasingly critical that a social justice lens be applied to these policies and strategies. Failure to recognize how certain communities disproportionately bear the brunt of climate impacts will have calamitous results.

Pacific communities have demonstrated remarkable fortitude over the centuries, but the complete loss of nations and homelands is a catastrophe for which many peoples and countries remain unprepared.

The Pacific has already begun to see large-scale devastation from climate change. Sea level rise and increased severe storm events have ravaged many Pacific islands. These tragedies have taught much about the multitude of ways in which climate injustice impacts Indigenous peoples and local communities.

Pacific Island communities are already underrepresented in important environmental dialogues.[48] This is particularly problematic, since, as a recent *Marine Policy* article explains, "their lives, food, and livelihoods depend on the health of ocean resources." The article continues, "Indigenous Peoples have, through millennia, developed social-ecological systems of marine resources management that rely on cultural traditions as well as an intimate, dynamic and long-term knowledge of the environment."[49]

Pacific Island communities are particularly vulnerable, from the Bikinians—who were forcibly displaced from their homeland beginning in the 1940s, so that the United States military could conduct nuclear testing on their island—to the I-Kiribati, whose home of Kiribati has suffered catastrophic devastation from sea level rise and climate change. The Indigenous peoples and local communities of the Pacific have suffered magnitudes of historic trauma and violence as a result of ecocolonization.[50] While vulnerability to climate is exacerbated in the Pacific due to the nature of its low-lying islands, understanding the political dynamics of how different communities are empowered—or not—to respond to the effects of climate change provide important warning signs of looming patterns of institutionalized injustice.

Climate change threatens to wipe out entire island nations. Indigenous peoples and local communities throughout the Pacific face daily threat from cyclones, tsunamis, king tides, and washover events, all of which imperil cultural resources such as the Rai (stone money) of Yap (see photo on pp. 16–17), Indigenous pedagogies, traditional and customary practices, and ancestral communities. Pacific communities have demonstrated remarkable fortitude over the centuries, but the complete loss of nations and homelands is a catastrophe for which many peoples and countries remain unprepared.

Traditional Ecological Knowledge and Just Solutions: Intersectional Environmentalism as a Potential Path to Justice and Sustainability

Hawai'i serves as an important example in analyzing how institutional racism and environmental issues intersect to put certain communities at greater risk of impact resulting from climate change. Hawai'i's history of environmental racism provides critical information in creating a new paradigm by which to assess and bolster these communities. Understanding the ways in which institutionalized racism has impacted land use and natural resources can lead to the creation of new matrices that can inform policies on climate.

Scholars are beginning to explore linkages between environmental inequality and environmental vulnerability, despite their having developed as distinct dialogues.[51] There is still so much work to be done to fully explore this intersectionality, particularly as it relates to environmental racism and Indigenous communities.[52]

This is where philanthropy can play an important role in supporting indigenizing environmental and climate justice—and through that work, identifying critical solutions from larger environmental problems toward supporting Indigenous groups in increasing their community, cultural, and ecological strengths. This is a particularly important endeavor, right now, as COVID-19 is disproportionately impacting Indigenous peoples.[53]

Another important effort is support for intersectional work. Some of this work is already under way, as in recent years movements have intersected with issues of race, gender, class, and, to a lesser degree, indigeneity. Intersectional environmentalism has steadily gained traction,[54] finding footing not only in communities but also in some government agencies across the country that are looking to identify more equitable processes and outcomes.[55]

Bringing diverse groups together is powerful work. These communities can learn from each other and build coalitions and partnerships that address environmental challenges in a holistic and just way. All of society benefits from such efforts.

The solutions for the future demand that we look back into the past. It must be a long, hard look, and it will surely be uncomfortable for many people, especially those belonging to groups that have enjoyed privilege at the expense of others. That gaze into the mirror can be a hard one to reconcile. It doesn't need to be.

There's perhaps a mistaken impression that Indigenous peoples call for this hard look at history because there is a desire to assign blame. This isn't true. Indigenous advocacy for embracing the past is much more about healing than hurt. The perpetuation of traditional ecological knowledge has been shown to be an important element for healing Native communities and improving their well-being.[56]

These intersectional efforts are about more than justice; they are also about understanding the ways in which traditional ecological knowledge can provide important solutions for addressing the effects of climate change. Hawaiians, like many Pacific Islanders and Indigenous peoples, possess intimate knowledge of their surrounding environment. This knowledge, acquired over multiple generations, was built upon a scientific mythology that employed observation to develop best practices in maintaining sustainable communities. This deep kinship with nature provided Indigenous peoples with the ability not only to thrive in their environments but also to adapt to changing environmental conditions.

Indigenous peoples are situated to be powerful actors in the future of environmental and climate solutions. As knowledge keepers, they can be problem solvers within their homelands and around the world. Once upon a time, the Indigenous peoples of this world not only lived among nature but *thrived* alongside it. It is a glorious past, and one that can help us to navigate a collective path toward a powerful, just, sustainable future.

These intersectional efforts are about more than justice; they are also about understanding the ways in which traditional ecological knowledge can provide important solutions to addressing the effects of climate change.

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Regeneration—*from the Beginning*

by A-dae Romero-Briones

A number of alternatives to the extractive agricultural systems that replaced Indigenous relationships with the environment "find ways to work around the colonial framework or minimize the producer to focus on the natural processes of the environment; but few, if any, challenge the historical injustice and violent removal of Indigenous peoples from their lands and corresponding stewardship of those lands," writes A-dae Romero-Briones. "Regenerative agriculture can and should challenge those harms. It can restore the balance of relationship between people and land, environment and production, history and future."

"EVOLVERS" BY CARA ROMERO/WWW.CARAROMEROPHOTOGRAPHY.COM

Indigenous people have been growing food, creating complex systems of agriculture, gathering, and practicing land stewardship long before the formation of any discipline, area of study, or social movement describing the relationships between environments and humans. Violent colonization and willful ignorance of these Indigenous land stewardship systems have led to the destructive replacement of the Indigenous relationships with our environment with parasitic, extractive systems, which now urgently need to be corrected.

Ironically, many of the movements (including current ones) that call for better understandings of and relationships with our environments have not included participation of Indigenous people. From its beginnings, the environmental movement broadly has excluded Indigenous peoples, ideologies, and practices worldwide; in many ways has justified the inhumane treatment of Indigenous peoples—removal, forced assimilation, continued aberrations of cultural practice in our own homelands; and has often been the strongest advocate for extinguishing Indigenous land rights.[1] As hard

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as it may be to acknowledge and accept the truth of this reality, it is necessary in order to create better options and strategies that include Indigenous people and communities—for the balance of the environment and social health of society.

Regenerative agriculture holds great promise for the formation and direction of Indigenous inclusivity. Traditional agriculture and the environmental movement are rooted in the same Western anthropocentrism, in that they both start with timelines and definitions that often do not include Indigenous peoples, practices, and worldviews—and, further, are fiercely opposed to their inclusion. But regenerative agriculture, still in its infancy, has the power to be more than another oppressive movement. We have an opportunity now to create longevity that begins with Indigenous inclusion, which has much to teach through historical examples of where other fields of study and production have gone wrong. In this way, regenerative agriculture can actually generate change and socio-environmental balance.

The Violent Birth of the U.S. Environmental Movement

The environmental movement in the United States has roots in the Sierra Nevada mountains of California, the birthplace of the Sierra Club. In the mid- to late 1800s, California attracted men like Alexander von Humboldt, Josiah Dwight Whitney, and John Muir and Joseph Le Conte (cofounders of the Sierra Club)—"explorers"/scientists who studied, wrote about, and dedicated their lives to the protection of nature's sublimity, in a time of growing national industrialization that required extractive industries to fuel its progress. They would become the foundation of the new discipline of environmental conservation and, generally, environmental science.[2]

When California became a state, in 1850, these men were in a frenzy to protect California's natural

landscapes, threatened largely by the discovery of gold, but even before that, by the extractive industries of California's other rich resources—from oil to plants and trees to silver. They wrote incessantly about California's natural beauty, consistently omitting California's Indigenous people from their writings. This created the protocol for Indigenous omission thereafter—not only in the environmental movement conversation and land conservation policy development, but also in science; many of these early writers became founders of important scientific institutions, such as the California Academy of Sciences and, eventually, the University of California. Indeed, as Zachary Warma writes in "The Golden State's Scientific White Supremacist," Le Conte "spent the entirety of his life advocating and advancing the cause of white supremacy"[3]—and Muir was a proponent of eugenics.[4]

As Muir, Clarence King, Whitney, Le Conte, and others were writing about the natural beauty of what is today called California, they never mentioned the ongoing campaign to violently eradicate Indigenous peoples from their land. Even before the California Gold Rush, the Spanish had created a mission system across California to indoctrinate and forcibly convert Indigenous people to Catholicism. They also introduced systems of indentured labor that dispossessed many Indigenous peoples of their land, which was then granted to Spanish settlers. This essentially created massive homelessness among Indigenous nations, whose people then returned to the missions.

This cycle of forced Indigenous labor lasted until around 1835, and the traditional lands became permanent land holdings in the American transfer from Mexico. After the signing of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo of 1848, which officially put an end to the Mexican-American War, American occupation of California began with the ceding of Spanish land holdings to the Americans.

Between 1846 and 1873, while the U.S. government upheld grandiose ideas of freedom and liberty, California Indigenous people suffered unprecedented loss of life and land. This was often justified by Western science, including the popular eugenics movement and the newly formed environmental science movement, which regularly sought to create national parks in locales populated by Indigenous villages (sometimes directly on top of villages, as in Yosemite), gathering areas, and homelands. Some of the most prominent national parks—from Yosemite to the Redwood Forest National Park and the Sequoia National Park—were Indigenous homelands, cared for and stewarded over thousands of years. These places were—and are—spectacular because of Indigenous stewardship.

These coveted lands only became "available" when they were no longer occupied by the Indigenous people. Government-sponsored militias, who were paid as little as $1 per head, and U.S. military regiments sent under the guise of "surveying" would ultimately eradicate entire communities, sometimes at one time. While government-sponsored bounties on Indian body parts were alive and well, many Indigenous people continued to return to their homes, fight for their lands, and seek out allies to help them secure their lands. Eighteen different treaties were negotiated in California between numerous Indigenous nations and the U.S. government, but those same treaties were never ratified and then were bound to secrecy by a directive of the U.S. Senate to be "printed in confidence."[5]

The very lands that mesmerized both the environmental scientists and extractive prospectors alike (and who were often one and the same) were the homelands of Indigenous people who were fighting to remain alive and on their lands during one of the darkest periods of Indigenous history—the very same period in which we see the birth of the environmental conservation movement.

This juxtaposition of death and birth remains a recurring theme in present-day environmentalism. Until recently, conservation largely meant an absence of human presence. Visit any national, state, and county park, and you will see these rules upon entry: "Stay on the trail. No picking plants. No disturbing the animals. Carry out what you bring in." This is quite literally the opposite of Indigenous stewardship practices, which center on constant interaction with the landscape, an interdependence that can only be cultivated through continuous access. Many of the Indigenous stewardship practices have weakened

The very lands that mesmerized both the environmental scientists and extractive prospectors alike (and who were often one and the same) were the homelands of Indigenous people who were fighting to remain alive and on their lands during one of the darkest periods of Indigenous history.

because of inaccessible landscapes that have been "preserved" for future generations. Given this country's historical and current policies and practices, one has to question whether Indigenous people are included in this idea of future generations. Recently, Muir's affiliation with racist ideologies such as the eugenics movement made headlines when the Sierra Club officially cut ties with him.[6] But he was but one player in a larger systematic institutional erasure of Indigenous people from both the study and the land. The pillars of those institutions still stand today, even without men like John Muir.

If regenerative agriculture is a means of addressing harmful production systems of the past, the essential question is, what harms should we be addressing?

Regenerative Agriculture

Regenerative agriculture, a current area of interest for many in the agricultural community, holds promise. But as many within and around the field watch regenerative agriculture unfold and grow, it is important to remember the beginnings of previous movements. And the unanswered question is: How can Indigenous people be justly included at the inception?

The idea of regenerative agriculture has been circulating since at least the early 1980s, but it wasn't widely adopted until around 2014. It started out in much the same way as the environmental movement and traditional agriculture, in that it was a response to destructive systems of land stewardship. In the 1980s, Rodale Institute's formulation of "regenerative organic" agriculture was a holistic approach to farming that encouraged continuous improvement of environmental, social, and economic measures.[7] This was later refined in 2018 by Ethan Roland Soloviev and Gregory Landua, who identified four levels of regenerative agriculture, organized as successive stages in a progressive framework of principles and practices: (1) a "functional" level, focused on best practices that regenerate soil health and sequester carbon; (2) an "integrative" level, focused on more holistically designing farms to improve the health and vitality of the wider ecosystems, not just soil; (3) a "systemic" level, which views the farm within wider ecosystems of enterprises building multiple forms of capital; and (4) an "evolutionary" level, involving "pattern understanding of the place and context" over generations within which agriculture takes place.[8] More important, regenerative agriculture seeks to replace the harmful practices of past production systems.

If regenerative agriculture is a means of addressing harmful production systems of the past, the essential question is, what harms should we be addressing? While many regenerative agriculturalists focus on soil and carbon depletion, these are outputs—the end of the story. The beginning and plot of the story are the "how and why" of the adoption of agriculture and its current state. This beginning and plot, too, must be understood and addressed. The study of American agriculture and its promotion was largely a creation of Euro-American forefathers, who used agriculture as a distinguishing trait to differentiate the "yeoman farmer worker/settler" from "the wild, untamed Indian"—as if Indigenous people did not practice agriculture. This historical narrative allowed for the removal of entire nations of Indigenous people to reservations to make way for "progress" that began with the plow—but in reality, the underlying message was that progress began with removal of the Indian. Similarly, the environmental conservation movement itself began when Indigenous people were violently removed from their homelands. The recurring theme in both approaches has been to remove the Indians; regenerative agriculture must not follow suit.

We should answer the question "What harms are we addressing?" by starting at the beginning of the story. Environmental conservation and agriculture are examples of colonial erasure and extraction because they erase Indigenous history, negate past and present contributions, and make it that much harder to participate in future directives in either field. This parasitic framework is damaging to all of society—however, many producers, organizations, and communities have developed their own responses to it: Sustainable agriculture, organic agriculture, permaculture, agroecology—to name a few major movements and communities—are proposed solutions to an anthropocentric agricultural system that dominates America. (Arguably, we have entered a new era of technological agriculture that minimizes

humans altogether.) Many of these responses find ways to work around the colonial framework or minimize the producer to focus on the natural processes of the environment; but few, if any, challenge the historical injustice and violent removal of Indigenous peoples from their lands and corresponding stewardship of those lands. Regenerative agriculture can and should challenge those harms. It can restore the balance of relationship between people and land, environment and production, history and future.

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If there is a lesson to be learned from the not-too-distant timelines of the environmental conservation movement and the study of agriculture, it is that the stories are largely controlled by the founders, who chose to mythologize or even omit altogether Indigenous peoples. Regenerative agriculture is at its very early stages and could incorporate Indigenous founders, practitioners, and communities into its understanding, ethos, and practices. In its attempts to regenerate diminished, exhausted, and exploited lands as a result of anthropocentric agricultural systems, regenerative agriculture shouldn't just focus on the soil itself. The *story* of our soils, our lands, and the Indigenous people who carry those stories—those harms and the history—have always been the beginning of the story, whether told or not. In those stories are not just the tale of food production and resource management but also the tale of exploitative institutions that damage our entire society. But this story also contains narratives of strength, love, painstaking survival, fortitude, endurance, and adaptability that even the most powerful of institutions could not erase, despite their attempts. After all, when it comes to the revitalization of a damaged system, Indigenous people have quite literally lived, and continue to live, through all the phases, from creation to destruction to regeneration.

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Regenerative agriculture . . . can restore the balance of relationship between people and land, environment and production, history and future.

An Indigenous Vision for Our Collective Future:

Becoming Earth's Stewards Again

by Native Peoples Action

"Implementing an Indigenous just transition framework requires a shift in consciousness within and across federal, state, and local governments, as well as the philanthropic sector," writes Native Peoples Action. "This collective shift in consciousness is how we are going to move into the next decade and beyond. Philanthropy and government can either get on the train or fall off through irrelevance."

Alaska Native peoples were stewards of this place we call home for more than ten thousand years prior to contact with Europeans. Despite centuries of colonization, our Alaska Native bloodline remains one of strength—evolving still today as we adapt to new ways of survival in our changing natural, cultural, and built environments. We find each other and become united in our fight to overcome the multiplicity of attempts to dismantle our ways of life through the generations of colonization, disease, and now climate change. We find each other, and we link arms.

Moving Back to an Ecosystem that Provides for Balance and Harmony

Alaska has been described as the "The Last Frontier"—a "wild" and "rugged" landscape "unknown" and "uncharted" by those living in what we refer to as *the Lower 48*. Alaska became a state in 1959; prior to that, our Alaska Native ancestors lived in reciprocity with the environment and animals, without a hierarchical system in which one species dominates another but rather living within an ecosystem that provides for balance and harmony. As the First Peoples of these lands, for centuries we have shared and continue to share land and water with a vast range of relatives, including bears, deer, sheep, moose, caribou, wolves, whales, fish, seals, and many other species of wildlife. We are also blessed with tundra, plant medicine, and berries, cedar, roots, and other wild trees and plants essential to our health and livelihood.[1]

Alaska is home to eleven distinct and diverse Native cultures, including numerous subcultures with differences in dialect, cultural activities, and traditional ways of life.[2] The eleven different cultures speak over twenty distinct languages and include 229 federally recognized Tribes, which constitute roughly half of all federally recognized Tribes in the United States.[3] Our Tribes are ethnically, culturally, and linguistically diverse nations, occupying an area of about 365 million acres—more than the combined area of the next three largest states: Texas, California, and Montana. While Alaska Native people once

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Native Peoples Action (NPA) is a statewide 501(c)(4), whose mission is to take a stand, work together, and mobilize action to ensure Alaska Natives are heard in all levels of policy making and to transform social and political systems.

"FISH WHEEL, CHENA INDIAN VILLAGE, ALASKA"/PHOTO: DANITA DELIMONT/ALAMY

stewarded the entirety of what is now Alaska, the amount of land in Tribal ownership now is just a small fraction compared to that owned by federal and state governments, churches, private entities, and Alaska Native corporations.

The animals, waters, and lands are in trauma. Yet today, in 2020, we continue to have elected leaders who hesitate or outright refuse to admit that climate change is human-caused, or even acknowledge that it is happening at all.

Alaska is bounded on three sides by water, and has a coastline that stretches about 6,600 miles (excluding island shorelines, bays, and fjords). This accounts for more than half of the entire U.S. coastline in totality, and these areas range from rocky shores, sandy beaches, and high cliffs to river deltas, mud flats, and barrier islands. The coastline constantly changes due to wave action, ocean currents, storms, and river deposits, and is subject to periodic, severe erosion. Alaska also has more than twelve thousand rivers, including three of the ten largest in the country—the Yukon, Kuskokwim, and Copper Rivers. While these and other rivers provide food, transportation, and recreation for people, as well as habitats for fish and wildlife, their waters also shape the landscape and harvesting patterns. In particular, ice jams on rivers and flooding of riverbanks during spring breakup change the contour of valleys, wetlands, and human settlements.[4]

Like elsewhere in our country, the federal government has recognized Alaska Tribes as sovereign nations.[5] Notwithstanding federal recognition, the United States has not worked with Tribes in a government-to-government fashion. Colonial government systems continue to criminalize our customary and traditional ways of life. Alaska's laws and state constitution do not recognize Tribal sovereignty or our customary and traditional life ways, forcing us to fight for our rights to steward our own lands, animals, and waters. Instead, state government and educational systems recognize non-Native "pioneers" and more recent newcomers as key figures in Alaska's history, essentially leading to Indigenous erasure.

Despite this blatant erasure, Alaska's Indigenous population comprises roughly 24 percent of the state's population[6] and roughly 17 percent of the voting population—but we continue to experience underrepresentation across our elected and appointed leaders in our state, a reality we share with other American Indian Tribes across the United States.[7] Thankfully, our voices have not been silenced, because our people are strong, as history has proven. Our cultural knowledge and community connections have endured. As we strive to protect our homelands from the effects of climate change, we will continue to exercise our rights and use our voices as our Elders have taught us. Our strength is needed now more than ever.

As our Elders predicted, we are living in unprecedented times, as climate change devastates the planet. In Alaska, droughts and wildfires are occurring in the Tongass National Forest (America's largest rainforest, with approximately 17 million acres); severe coastal and river erosion is forcing villages to relocate; warming water temperatures are causing massive die-off of chum salmon before they have a chance to spawn; and ice and glaciers are melting at alarming rates, adding to the potential for a large tsunami.[8] All of these cause-and-effect, human-driven impacts need swift and bold action. The animals, waters, and lands are in trauma.[9] Yet today, in 2020, we continue to have elected leaders who hesitate or outright refuse to admit that climate change is human-caused, or even acknowledge that it is happening at all.

Instead of faltering through fear, stumbling to act, or ignoring altogether this dark reality, we can embrace the values of Alaska Natives to help us restore balance: returning to an Indigenous worldview consisting of a paradigm grounded in spirituality and a belief that "we inhabit a living world in which all things are related."[10] The fundamental postulation is that everything has an animating spirit; and people, plants, animals, and the landscape are to be understood in terms of that spirit.[11] As such, there is a responsibility that flows from humans to the earth through the act of reciprocal relationships.[12] This is done through the construction of an intricate, subsistence-based worldview.[13]

Original Stewards and Ecologists

Subsistence refers to the complex set of cultural relationships that make up a worldview based upon traditional knowledge of the

natural world.[14] Traditional laws were passed from generation to generation, intact, through the repetition of legends and observance of ceremonies, and is largely concerned with the use of the land, water, and the resources contained therein.[15] Subsistence living is not only a way of life but also a life-enriching process.[16]

The traditional economy of Alaska's Indigenous peoples is based on subsistence activities that require special skills and a complex understanding of the local environments that enable people to live directly from and with the land.[17] These skills, passed down from generation to generation, enabled people and their environments to live in symbiotic relationships with one another. The traditional subsistence economy is predicated on a reverence for cultural values and knowledge that Elders and culture bearers have passed down to younger generations, and which continues to this day. While technological advances have been made that have altered some traditional subsistence practices and livelihoods, the underlying values, principles, and cultural significance remain the same.

Subsistence livelihoods also involve cultural values and attitudes: mutual respect, sharing, resourcefulness, and an understanding that is both conscious and spiritual—the intricate relationships that link humans, animals, and the environment.[18] Unlike the Western tradition, in which there is a recognized hierarchy of beings, with human beings on top, the Indigenous worldview reveres all life equally, in coexistence.

Anthropologists have called Indigenous peoples the "original ecologists."[19] Indigenous peoples were able to sustain their traditional subsistence economy for millennia because "they possessed appropriate ecological knowledge and suitable methods to exploit resources, but possessed a philosophy and environmental ethic to keep exploitive abilities in check, and established ground rules for relationships between humans and animals."[20]

Native peoples' reciprocity with the natural and spiritual realms ensures that a sacred relationship and balance are maintained—a form of cross-species interaction and dependence that is now being recognized by Western science, in the field of ecology, which studies the interactions between living things and their environments. The concept of ecology and the framing of "ecological democracy" are derived in part from the wisdom of Indigenous peoples that "*everything is connected*. . . . Every part of an ecology is connected to, and has impacts on, every other part."[21] The merging of science and Indigenous worldviews is finding voice. As Indigenous author and scholar Robin Wall Kimmerer declares, "I dream of a world guided by a lens of stories rooted in the revelations of science and framed with an indigenous worldview—stories in which matter and spirit are both given voice."[22]

Armed with a worldview and philosophy that humans are stewards of the land, Alaska's Indigenous peoples are on the front line of climate justice—pushing back against extractive development projects that would contribute to global climate change and destroy aquatic systems and terrestrial habitats that provide sustainable livelihoods. Three examples illustrate Native environmental justice efforts in Alaska.

1. The Ch'u'itnu drainage. There has been a successful effort to stop a planned surface coalmine in the Ch'u'itnu (Chuitt River) drainage of Cook Inlet, Alaska. The Ch'u'itnu drainage supports all five stocks of salmon species, and constitutes a Traditional Cultural Landscape (TCL) associated with the Indigenous Tyonek Dena'ina, or Tubughna, people.[23]

PacRim Coal, LP, proposed a surface coal mine about twelve miles inland from the village of Tyonek that would remove and market an estimated 300 million tons of subbituminous coal from the Ch'u'itnu watershed.[24] The depth of the proposed mine would be up to 350 feet, directly through a salmon stream. The plan was to completely remove eleven miles of streambed and more than three hundred feet of underlying soil and rock strata.[25] Because construction of the mine would require alterations to waters of the United States, the project could not be undertaken without a permit issued by the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers, under the Clean Water Act.[26]

The Tyonek community opposed the development of the mine on the basis that it would

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destroy the Ch'u'itnu watershed, the salmon and other resources that it sustains, and the lifeways of the Tubughna people. Via a petition to the National Register of Historic Places, Tyonek showed that the Ch'u'itnu watershed qualified as a living cultural landscape, and was therefore eligible for listing.[27]

Tyonek's petition was unique in that it relied on data and information derived from the Tubughna worldview. With the help of anthropologists, Tyonek's narrative described the historical pattern of salmon subsistence and how it influenced and continues to influence Tubughna spiritual beliefs.[28] Such beliefs reflect deep associations with the landscape and its wild animals and plants, each of which is understood to have will and to interact with humans willingly.[29]

On April 17, 2017, the mine developer announced that it was suspending permit efforts for lack of investment.[30] The drop in the price of coal, coupled with the closing of coal plants and fierce local opposition from environmentalists and the Tyonek Tribe, created an unfavorable market for the development of a strip mine.

2. The Bristol Bay watershed. Tribal advocates in the Bristol Bay area are likewise pushing back against the development of a large-scale mine, in this case at the headwaters of the Bristol Bay watershed, one of the most pristine ecosystems left in the world.[31] The watershed's streams, wetlands, and other aquatic resources support world-class, economically important commercial and sport fisheries, as well as a more than 4,000-year-old subsistence-based way of life for Alaska Natives.[32] The Pebble Mine deposit is a large, low-grade copper deposit, and is likely to involve excavation of the largest open pit ever constructed in North America.[33] In assessing the potential mining impacts on salmon ecosystems of Bristol Bay, the EPA conducted numerous hearings and listened to hours of testimony from Native people in twenty-five villages located in the Bristol Bay watershed. The EPA summarized its findings as follows:

> Salmon are integral to these cultures' entire way of life via the provision of subsistence food and subsistence-based livelihoods, and are an important foundation for their language, spirituality, and social structure. The cultures have a strong connection to the landscape and its resources. In the Bristol Bay watershed, this connection has been maintained for at least 4,000 years and is in part both due to and responsible for the continued undisturbed condition of the region's landscape and biological resources. The respect and importance given salmon and other wildlife, along with traditional knowledge of the environment, have produced a sustainable subsistence-based economy. The subsistence-based way of life is a key element of Alaska Native identity and serves a wide range of economic, social, and cultural functions in Yup'ik and Dena'ina societies.[34]

Based on the strength of Indigenous testimony and upon a finding that the cumulative impact of the mine would detrimentally affect the watershed, in 2014 the EPA released a proposed determination that would restrict discharge of dredged or fill material related to the mining of the Pebble Mine deposit.[35] But in 2019, the Trump administration withdrew the proposed restrictions, with instructions to fast track the permit process.[36] Consequently, the Pebble Mine project has become highly political, and the outcome of whether it goes forward or not will depend on the next presidential election.[37]

3. The Arctic National Wildlife Refuge's coastal plain. Another Indigenous campaign to push back against extractive development involves the Gwich'in Tribes, who live just north of the Arctic circle. The Gwich'in are the northernmost Indian nation, living in fifteen small villages scattered across a vast area extending from northeast Alaska in the United States to the Northern Yukon and Northwest Territories in Canada. The word *Gwich'in* means "people of the land."[38] Oral tradition indicates the Gwich'in have occupied this area since time immemorial.[39]

In 2017, Congress enacted tax reform and appropriation legislation that contained a provision opening the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge's

coastal plain to oil and gas development.[40] The Refuge's coastal plain is home to the calving grounds of the Porcupine Caribou Herd—one of the largest wild herds in the world—and serves as a source of great cultural importance to the Gwich'in Tribes of Alaska, who refer to the area as "Iizhik Gwats'an Gwandaii Goodlit" ("The Sacred Place Where Life Begins").[41]

The Gwich'in Tribes have an intimate relationship with the Porcupine caribou. As Gwich'in Elder Sarah James explains, "We are caribou people. Caribou are not just what we eat; they are who we are. They are in our stories and songs and the whole way we see the world. Caribou are our life. Without caribou we wouldn't exist."[42]

Like the Tubughna, Yup'ik, and Dena'ina Tribes of Bristol Bay, the Gwich'in Tribes reject development at the cost of damage to the land and waters and the sustainable life they support. Each Tribe draws from its traditional knowledge—gained from millennia of experience and relationship with the natural world, and passed from generation to generation—that teaches that we are stewards, we are caretakers, and we have an obligation to protect the earth. These values are the lifeblood of our Tribal education, governance, familial, spiritual, social, and individual systems.

Climate Change Impacts

But the ultimate challenge to our survival and collective well-being is upon us in the form of climate change, coupled with one dominant culture suppressing others. Because we have burned fossil fuels relentlessly for ravenous economies and exploding populations, Earth has entered a new geologic era.[43] Due to the consequences of overextraction, overconsumption, and carbon emissions from the use of fossil fuels, we now have to confront the certainty of climate change. Indigenous communities in Alaska tend to be disproportionately exposed to its effects, which are having multigenerational and cultural impacts.

The tiny Inuit village of Kivalina, on the Chukchi Sea in Northwest Alaska, is among those that are dealing with relocation efforts due to climate change.[44] Kivalina residents are Inupiat (Inuit), whose ancestors came to the narrow spit of land they now occupy in the early 1940s, when they were ordered to settle there permanently and enroll their children in school or face imprisonment.[45]

As people in-migrated to Kivalina, the federal government provided little more than a school and schoolteacher. Over time, federal—and, eventually, state—government agencies began to provide services to the people of Kivalina: an airport was put in; massive fuel tanks were barged in to hold a winter's worth of fuel oil; public water and waste facilities were developed; a health clinic was established; and a new school was built. Even with all of these adaptations to modern Western living, the people of Kivalina still maintained their subsistence way of life.[46]

A number of years ago, the people of Kivalina started seeing changes in their environment that were apparent to all but difficult to grasp. Sadly, the changes were beyond what Elders had previously experienced, and they were of an extraordinary nature. People witnessed firsthand: rain in January, in what was otherwise a month characterized by -50°F temperatures; Pacific salmon making their way to waters typically too cold for them to spawn in; grizzly bears moving north into polar bear habitat; and polar bears staying on vast land rather than risk moving onto sea ice that threatened to break apart with the first strong wind. People witnessed winter storms of unprecedented force and gigantic sinkholes from permafrost that seemed to appear out of nowhere.[47]

For Inuit peoples, sea ice is a critical part of the natural world. It allows for safe travel on perilous Arctic waters and provides a stable platform from which to hunt its bounty.[48] The ice, once it has frozen solid, serves not only as a road for winter travel but also a critical grocery store. Deteriorating ice conditions imperil life in many ways. Ice pans, used for hunting at the floe edge, are more likely to detach from the land, setting hunters adrift. Many hunters have been killed or seriously injured from falling through ice traditionally known to be safe.[49] Thinner ice also means much shorter hunting seasons, as the ice forms later and melts sooner. In turn, not only

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humans but also many ice-dependent species are experiencing adverse impacts.[50]

Retreating sea ice and thawing permafrost have exposed Kivalina to erosion from Arctic storms, which have become fiercer and more frequent than in the past.[51] The four hundred village residents have watched one end of their village being eaten away, losing as much as seventy feet of land overnight in one storm.[52] In the past thirty years, one hundred feet of coastline has washed away.[53] An investigation by the U.S. General Accounting Office, an investigative arm of Congress, found that 184 out of 213 Alaska Native villages (86.4 percent) experience some level of flooding and erosion.[54]

The cost of relocating these villages will be high, ranging from $100 million to over $400 million.[55] And while Kivalina residents voted to relocate the community several years ago, they lack the many millions of dollars such a move would cost. For now, Kivalina, and other Alaska Native villages the federal government have found to be "imminently threatened," must remain where they are, exposed to the consequences of climate change, until there is a commitment from the federal government to extend the resources necessary to relocate.[56]

The economic system that has sustained Alaska for over forty years is unraveling. Since the 1970s, an oil-based economy has dictated the speed and sectors of business growth. Alaska is lagging behind in the global movement to reorient economies away from declining extractive resources.

Indigenous Just Transition Framework

In addition to attention to and adequate resources for dealing with the climate change impacts Alaskans are facing, an Indigenous just transition framework is needed to help guide climate-change adaptation actions that ensure durability and successful outcomes. The Indigenous Just Transition framework, recently created for similarly situated Tribes, was developed collectively among Indigenous leaders, experts, and allies to guide what we are working toward at Native Peoples Action and Native Peoples Action Community Fund (NPA/NPACF). Offered as a vision to help with the transition away from current threats, the framework's success will depend heavily on local community and Indigenous buy-in and ownership of the plan and the process.

Just Transition is about revitalizing the Indigenous worldviews that have been colonized and assimilated—stolen from traditional societies and cultures. The framework guides our climate justice strategy, and is founded on our Indigenous worldviews. We are redefining, or returning to, a more "true" economy by centering our core values: our home, traditions, and spirituality. We need an economy that is in alignment with what the earth provides and that ensures an economic shift that is fair and equitable for all. We do this work through the same principles of respect and honor learned from our traditional knowledge system. Our ancestral connection to the lands and waters uplifts us and all of our languages and cultures. With this as our foundation, we are able to work on the many important issues around our state.

Alaska is experiencing an unparalleled moment of systemic political, economic, and ecological crisis—one that has required Alaskans to rethink how we balance our current and future needs. The economic system that has sustained Alaska for over forty years is unraveling. Since the 1970s, an oil-based economy has dictated the speed and sectors of business growth. Alaska is lagging behind in the global movement to reorient economies away from declining extractive resources. Just Transition is a framework for a fair shift to an economy that is ecologically sustainable, equitable, and just for all Alaskans. We know that transition is inevitable—but justice is not.[57]

Implementing an Indigenous just transition framework requires a shift in consciousness within and across federal, state, and local governments, as well as the philanthropic sector. Any funds dedicated to climate change adaptation, environmental justice, protection strategies, food security, and sustainability need to go directly to Indigenous and locally derived solutions—solutions envisioned by local and Indigenous citizens and leaders, based on their own scientific observations, wisdom, responsibility, and commitment to future, current, and past generations.

By funding local and Indigenous visions directly, instead of making them fit into a prescribed philanthropic or government mold, we enter into a self-determination model that

has sound results, demonstrated by our robust Alaska Native Tribal Health system.[58]

This collective shift in consciousness is how we are going to move into the next decade and beyond. Philanthropy and government can either get on the train or fall off through irrelevance. With the collective power we still retain, let us shatter the illusions, which are a by-product of commodification, wealth, extraction, short-term thinking, hierarchy, and a culture of dominance and oppression. As described by Kimmerer:

> Children, language, lands: almost everything was stripped away, stolen when you weren't looking because you were trying to stay alive. In the face of such loss, one thing our people could not surrender was the meaning of land. In the settler mind, land was property, real estate, capital, or natural resources. But to our people, it was everything: identity, the connection to our ancestors, the home of our nonhuman kinfolk, our pharmacy, our library, the source of all that sustained us. Our lands were where our responsibility to the world was enacted, sacred ground. It belonged to itself; it was a gift, not a commodity, so it could never be bought or sold. These are the meanings people took with them when they were forced from their ancient homelands to new places. Whether it was their homeland or the new land forced upon them, land held in common gave people strength; it gave them something to fight for.[59]

For us in this movement, that means building a regenerative economy and ensuring that local needs are met with global support—and that we seek out and perpetuate interconnectedness in approaching our solutions. Mother Nature, we have been taught, does not see things as good or bad, in black or white. There is simply balance or chaos, equilibrium or disorder.

Let us return to balance.

Let us take a moment, in honor of all those who have come before us, to pledge that the sacrifices and struggles they endured to make our world a better place will take a new form, not worsen or stay the same.

Let us take a moment, too, to recognize that this shift in consciousness that we speak of is the current momentum and trajectory *we are already on*. As stated by Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, "There is no justice and there is no combating climate change without addressing what has happened to indigenous communities."[60] Hand in hand with addressing what has happened is honoring and returning to what once was, before interruption.

Kikiktagruk Kotzebue Retreat

In 2016, twenty-five Alaska Natives came together in the city of Kotzebue, at the founding retreat for our NPA/NPACF work, focused on the principles of creating a system that supports collective well-being. They identified five separate elements that embody an Indigenous just transition framework (Be Grounded, Be Sustained, Be Seen, Be Heard, Be Sacred), surrounding a central pinnacle (Be Well)—based on experience and vision:[61]

If you have been waiting to be invited, or want some ideas for how to join this movement, let us help you make that happen:

- For starters, learn whose traditional lands you live and work on, and whose traditionally stewarded waterways you benefit from. Dig deeper into the truth and seek to learn beyond what our American education history books, Western research, and the mainstream media are telling us to believe.

Let us take a moment, in honor of all those who have come before us, to pledge that the sacrifices and struggles they endured to make our world a better place will take a new form, not worsen or stay the same.

If you are uncompelled or uncomfortable with this invitation and opportunity to learn from and lift up Indigenous worldviews of how to move forward collectively, then you likely have not yet come to understand that we are all equal in the sacred balance of life.

- Then, build personal and professional relationships with all kinds of beautiful souls from the non-Western-dominated segments of society. This brings stories and real, lived experiences and new perspectives into your learning journey. This also creates a pathway for you to challenge stereotypes and prejudgments, as you peel back the layers and begin to see how systemic racism and oppression have blinded you. Learn how to say, *I don't know, but I'm here to listen and help.*
- Show up for local and Indigenous endeavors, not as a savior but as a supportive ally. "Indigenous Peoples need allies to help secure long-term support for Indigenous-led conservation."[62] The Indigenous Land Needs Guardians program out of Canada offers some tools and actionable recommendations.[63]

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It is because of our Indigenous relatives and ancestors that we still remember the ways of our Earth Mother. It is because of our immense love and connection to the seen and the unseen alike that we offer these words as a collective blessing. We offer this to you as an expression of the collective vision shared by Native Peoples Action and Native Peoples Action Community Fund, and to share some of the spark that lit our fire and compelled us forward in this moment and movement.

If you have already shown up and are knee-deep in this work—*thank you, we need you.*

If you are becoming aware of these things and are on your path to awakening—*thank you, we need you.*

As people awaken to new values, they can adopt new values. Values inform ways of life. Indigenous ways of life are derived from living in balance with nature, values deeply needed today—for example, values grounded in unconditional love: how to be in service to the community above oneself; how to share; how to feel gratitude and be in relationship with all things.

A Native Hawaiian teaching, offered as a gift for us today as we seek how to move forward, is to recognize that *the land is a chief, man is its servant.* While it is our cultural *values* that underpin our Indigenous Just Transition framework, it is our cultural *practices* that show us how to take care of Mother Earth: as we honor how she cares for us, we begin to return to balance—and in doing so, we protect what we love and each other.

If you are uncompelled or uncomfortable with this invitation and opportunity to learn from and lift up Indigenous worldviews of how to move forward collectively, then you likely have not yet come to understand that we are all equal in the sacred balance of life. There is no room for that, not under our watch—and believe us, we are watching! Our collective vision is inclusive of your well-being; it is our common starting point. Let us begin again through an Indigenous framework, and *return to balance.*

Social and economic suppression, racial inequality, and other pressing forces largely keep Indigenous stories and solutions out of reach and in the dark—even when desperately sought out and needed. Overcoming this requires fearless leaders and allies who understand how to use, support, and build strong networks, and how to cultivate community partners. This movement—returning to balance—requires us to advance healing and wellness; to restore lands, waters, animals, and people through a cultural lens; to share and champion what can be passed on from Indigenous and Tribal Elders, mentors, and natural environmentalists, and all those who carry geographic intelligence; to move us forward far into the future, another 10,000-plus years. This is what NPA/NPACF's work is all about.

Thank you in all of our Indigenous languages for reading this and for learning some of our stories. In solidarity, *We Warrior Up, We Take a Stand, We Mobilize Action.*

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Network Governance as an Empowerment Tool

by Blythe Butler and Sami Berger

"We cannot meet the transformational needs of our society without redesigning how we interact with one another, make decisions, and hold one another accountable. Nonprofits seeking to drive change through networks and collaboratives will need to build their adaptive governance capacity based on empowerment, trust, and belonging. The uncharted territory we are facing requires nothing less."

Where we stand.

We are living and working on Treaty 7 lands, the traditional territory of the Niitsitapi, Tsuut'ina and Stoney Nakoda Nations, and part of Métis Region 3.

The challenges that networks seek to address are systemic and are impacted by structures, policies, and histories that create injustice across lines of race, gender, class, sexuality, and ability. We strive to fight against this in our work.

We stand as allies of Black, Indigenous, and peoples of color.

We advocate for nesting the economy within the environment, not the other way around.

We are grateful to all who have supported and contributed to our understanding of networks over the past seven years. Our network scientist colleagues; fellow network strategists, learners, facilitators, and enablers; the people part of the networks we've had the pleasure to work with; and the Human Venture Institute have all provided invaluable contributions to our caring, thinking, and practice.

Thank you.

Decisions, Decisions, Decisions

"I hereby call to order the Morning Coffee Steering Committee. Our agenda item today is to decide what kind of coffee Alvin will order this morning." After thirty minutes of intense deliberation, the group takes a vote. The final tally is: 3 for cappuccino, 1 for flat white, and 2 for drip. Majority rules. Decision made. Alvin will buy a cappuccino.

This scenario is obviously ridiculous. No one needs a Morning Coffee Steering Committee. When it comes to matters of caffeine, we are well equipped to make decisions for ourselves, quickly and easily: the stakes are low, the choices are obvious, and there are very few people involved. That being said, the reverse is also true: When we're working in networks with others on complex issues, the way we make decisions is more complicated, and the stakes are higher.

There is not *one* form of governance that enables empowerment. The most effective structures will depend on where the group is starting from and what it's trying to achieve. The impact of COVID-19 has proven that governance structures need to be adaptive and fluid to meet the challenges that nonprofit networks are facing. This article explores three governance archetypes and seven characteristics that support leading-edge nonprofit network governance.

High quality networks are loose, fluid, ambiguous, and emergent; rely on distributed leadership; have messy accountability structures; and often come together to address long-term, complex challenges. By definition, this is a rejection of the hierarchical, structured ways we work in conventional organizations. This also means that some of the more standard ways of

making decisions, which have proven to be incredibly efficient and effective in certain contexts, aren't appropriate in nonprofit networks. As strategies are forced to change or evolve for networks, so should their governance structures shift. Especially when networks are facing times of crisis and uncertainty, being able to empower their members is paramount to successfully navigating uncharted territory.

Ultimately, the way that we make decisions is inevitably intertwined with what we're trying to achieve and how.

Governance: What and Why?

"Governance is how society or groups within it organize to make decisions."[1]

Ultimately, governance is about how we organize ourselves to make decisions. When we're working as a team, it is critical to ensure that the process of making decisions is clear and visible. This enables the group to adapt these structures as challenges and opportunities emerge.[2]

It's easy to focus on the structures of governance that we can *see*: advisory boards, stewardship groups, steering committees, organizational charts. It's far less common to think about what these structures are trying to achieve. What are we making decisions about? What kinds of relationships are these structures supporting? Whose voices are included? Do these structures support engagement? Empowerment? Self-authorization? Shared voice? Does it matter?

Over the past six years, we've been trying to figure out how to build effective governance structures within networks.

What is the decision-making process? Whose voice is included in decision making? How is accountability structured?[3]

What's Special about Nonprofit Networks?

"With clarity comes confidence, with confidence comes commitment."[4]

If governance facilitates decision making, there are particular challenges in networks, where people are expected to step into leadership and decision-making positions in a collaborative way. In fact, oftentimes you are relying on participants to *choose* to give their resources to the group. Therefore, in order to be effective, governance structures must empower people to engage with the network and feel able to participate.

Empowering people to act within a nonprofit network can be tricky, because the work tends to be ambiguous, messy, and supported off the sides of people's desks. This isn't necessarily problematic, but it is essential to understand whether this ambiguity is causing people to feel unclear or confused. Having a sense of clarity is critical for one's ability to engage and commit. This clarity might be achieved through processes and structures, but it can also be achieved through relationships and spaces that encourage people to be vulnerable and act even if they're unsure. Any approach to empowering people to act within a network should be supported by the network's governance structures.

If you can empower people through a feeling of safety and connectedness, they will offer you things you would never have imagined.

However, there is no one-size-fits-all. Some people feel empowered by very strong top-down guidance. Telling someone what to do might not sound like empowerment, but some people require top-down instruction in order to feel they have the clarity and confidence to contribute. Others feel empowered and engaged by contributing in ways that are open-ended and loose. They shut down when they are told what to do and how to do it. So, in that case, a more open-ended governance structure will empower them to contribute in meaningful ways.

People feel empowered for different reasons, and those reasons can change over the course of the collaboration.

To the extent that a nonprofit network empowers people to collaborate, contribute, engage, and continuously think about, care about, and improve the network, it is successful. One reason for this is that networks thrive when intelligence and leadership are distributed. Ideally, many people across the network understand its strategy and are taking responsibility to move things forward. Part of being able to do this is to have structures and processes that honor and leverage what people care about and give them a way to bring it forward, even if it feels outside the scope. If you're building capacity in a network, the governance will need to change and adapt to the people involved, their individual capacities, and the stage of the collaborative.

And there are some cultural aspects within networks that enable or derail their success. For example, governance approaches can either support or get in the way of trust,[5] a sense of safety, and connection[6]—all of which are important for a healthy network. Governance should be a mechanism for creating and supporting the culture or behaviors you want to see in the group. The needs, and corresponding governance structures, will change as individuals, context, and the network change. This is especially apparent in times of crisis or rapid transformation.

If the trust and relationships in a group aren't naturally occurring, how can the governance approach support that goal?

Governance can also help to reinforce or undermine a network's values and mission. If a network values transparency, transparent decision-making processes can reinforce that value within the group, while secretive ones can undermine it. Being consistent with the stated values also helps when a group is under stress, when it is easiest to yield to unhelpful behavior.

What Network Characteristics Do We Need to Pay Attention To?

The type of governance structures you build depends on your network's starting place. We've identified seven dimensions that should inform how you make decisions about governance.

Level of comfort with a network mindset

In effective nonprofit networks, individuals feel that their voices are heard, they're treated fairly, the process is transparent, the group has power, and their colleagues are contributing value to the group. This is all in a context that tends to be ambiguous, more fluid, reliant on relationships, and dependent on healthy communication. It's important that governance structures empower people to act while also encouraging them to adopt a network mindset.

Characteristics of participation

People participate in networks for different reasons. In some cases, participation is mandatory: individuals might be required to attend by their nonprofit, or nonprofits might be mandated by their funder. In other cases, participation is restricted: participants might have to meet certain criteria to engage. Finally, participation can be entirely voluntary and open.

History of collaborative attempts

The outcomes of and experience with previous networks will influence the assumptions that people have about what a network is, what is possible, and the opportunities and challenges ahead. It's often necessary (and difficult) to undo people's presuppositions about the work. Outside of formalized collaborations, there are also histories of individual and organizational relationships. It's always worthwhile to understand the nature of these relationships and how they might be leveraged, be improved, or act as barriers.

Impetus for the network

Networks start for different reasons. Sometimes, funders mandate that people collaborate with one another. Other times, the need for a network emerges organically or as a result of grassroots efforts. Moreover, a network strategy might be building on another effort (with existing resources, engagement, and expectations), or starting from scratch.

System pressures

Every network will exist within a broader context. That context might be ripe for a networked approach: there could be strong leadership, healthy information flows, and ample resources. In contrast, the system can also be in flux, be generating a variety of pressures on potential participants, and/or be promoting toxic, competitive relationships.

Resources of the core group

The types of resources that the network has access to will impact the opportunities and constraints in the groups' decision-making process. In addition to people's time and energy, which are an enormous resource in a networked approach, this also applies to financial resources for communication, evaluation, project management, and coordination.

Characteristics of funding

The resources that the group has access to are closely related to but also different from the specific nature of and requirements of funding. The amount of funding (and whether it is short or long term), reporting requirements, and ideas about outcomes can all impact the way a network builds its strategy and its approach to governance. It's also important to pay attention to the funder's comfort or discomfort with long-term planning, and its level of involvement in the initiative.

Archetypes: The Tapestry, the Container, and the Trampoline

The following governance archetypes—*the tapestry*, *the container*, and *the trampoline*—illustrate how different approaches to governance enabled three different networks to build capacity to engage participants, supporting their common desire to work together and contribute to the goals of the network. The seven dimensions are helpful to think about across these archetypes.

The Tapestry

I trust you know what you are doing—and this is a place for you to do it, share it, and for us to build on it.

Participants were already comfortable with a network mindset.

Open participation was practised.

There was a long history of past attempts at collaboration, often funder driven.

The network emerged in response to an influx of resources (data, money, and support) in its sector (early childhood).

The system operated with a scarcity mindset/a lack of integration within the broader system.

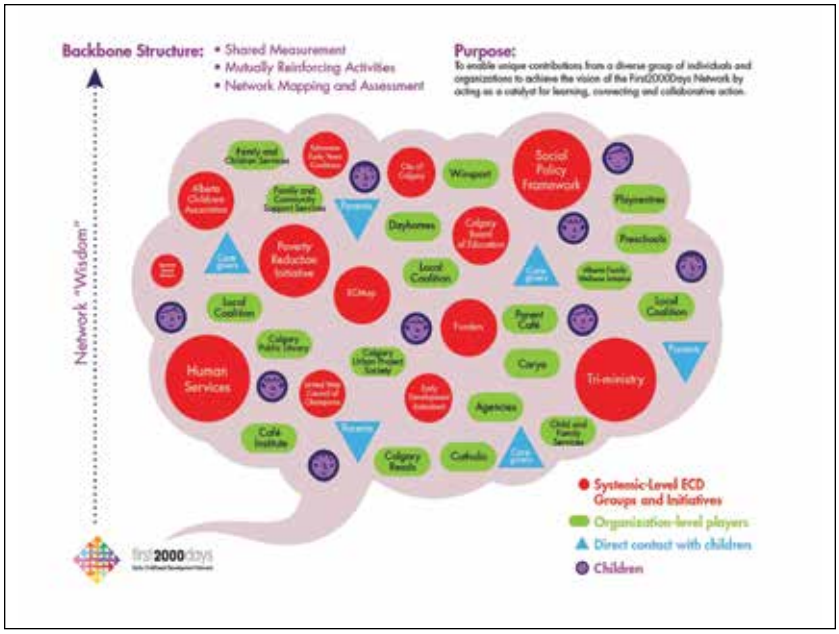
Core functions (including network weaving, evaluation, and engagement) were resourced.

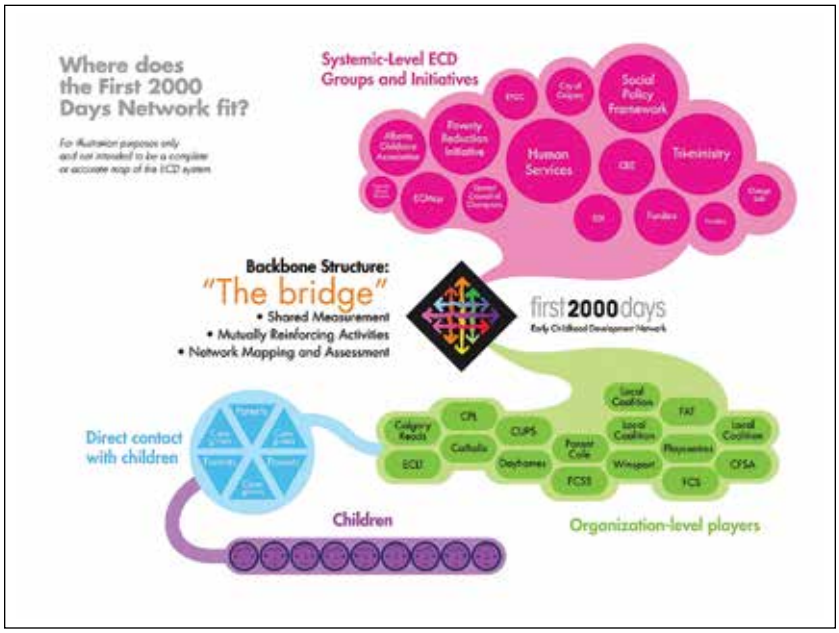
Collaborative outcomes were not funder driven. The funding requirements gave a lot of space for exploration.

The First 2000 Days Network emerged because of an opportunity: the government was releasing data on, and funding grassroots coalitions focused on, early childhood development. The network saw this as an opportunity to share, link, align, and leverage the emerging and existing work in the sector. It was funded for three years, and the only requirement was to explore the preconditions for a collective approach to addressing the number of children who were not progressing appropriately in one or more areas of development. There was an enormous amount of space given to exploration and to creating a strong foundation.

Because it came about in a grassroots, organic way, the network had very little "legitimacy" or formal power. This starting place also reflected an intentional pushback against past collaborative efforts that were funder driven and "invitation only." People wanted something that felt and looked different. This meant that, by definition, those who were most involved in the network were also the most comfortable with the ambiguity, openness, and relationship-based approach (otherwise, they just opted out).

With that starting point, the network's governance was built to reflect its core function: acting as a bridge between the work going on at the community, organizational, and system levels, as well as working to link, align, and leverage all of that activity. It took almost three years for the First 2000 Days to articulate its role in the system.





The First 2000 Days leaned into its organic roots: whoever wanted to step into the work was empowered to do so. People were explicitly encouraged and trusted to do what needed to be done on behalf of the network. This structure encouraged participants to be "network weavers": to bring the network's strategy into their everyday work and to bring their everyday work back to the network table.

This lack of traditional organizational structure emphasized the feeling that people could step in and support the network in whatever way they were able: it empowered them to take action. The governance processes were set up to communicate that participants in the network were the experts, knew what needed to be done, and were trusted to do it.

There was no formal reporting or hierarchy within the network. The group met once a week for six years to ensure that the people who were engaged at the time could see and hear the most strategically significant opportunities around the table and contribute to them. A handful of consultants were tasked with some of the core operations for the network: evaluation, communication, network weaving, and engagement were all resourced on a part-time basis.

The Container

We all know what we're trying to achieve; now we can govern around that.

Patterns and norms of interaction among members were well established (habits that support and don't support a networked approach).

There was an existing group of members.

This particular group already had a history of working together in a collaborative (though not necessarily "networked") way.

Groups came together for reasons other than acting as a network.

There was a need to scale impact, which leads to an exploration of a different type of approach.

There was resourcing linked to existing structures.

There was funding linked to existing structures.

The next group already had a collaborative strategy, but they wanted to explore what might be required to deepen that or shift it to a more intentional, networked approach. That meant that the group already had a history of working together, norms, processes, and structures guiding that work, and expectations of what would be most effective. Funding was also often linked to their existing structures.

The first step to building governance in this context was to be explicit about the structures and processes that had been guiding the group up to that point. How did they currently make decisions? How was that approach helpful? How was it insufficient? How did they expect it to change by taking a networked approach?

From there, it would be possible to leverage the existing container and shift it in ways that approximate a more robust and intentional network strategy. One of the biggest risks here is throwing the baby out with the bathwater. It's important to understand what made the group successful to date, why there was interest in shifting things, and the expectations surrounding the changes that were being made. Governance structures (like any structure) can be external ways of keeping people accountable to the behavior changes that they're striving toward. It can provide the crucial clarity that is required for people to feel able to participate in a new way, especially when they are used to something different.

Governance structures can provide the clarity required to participate in a new way.

The Trampoline

We have a clear process; now we can work together to prove the concept and get things done together.

There were varying levels of comfort with a network mindset. There was a common need for structure and process.

The executive directors opted to participate.

There was a history of collaboration at the regional level, but resistance at the provincial level.

Several executive directors decided there was a need for a provincial- and sector-level strategy.

The nonprofit sector is diverse and broad, and there were many voices and interests to represent.

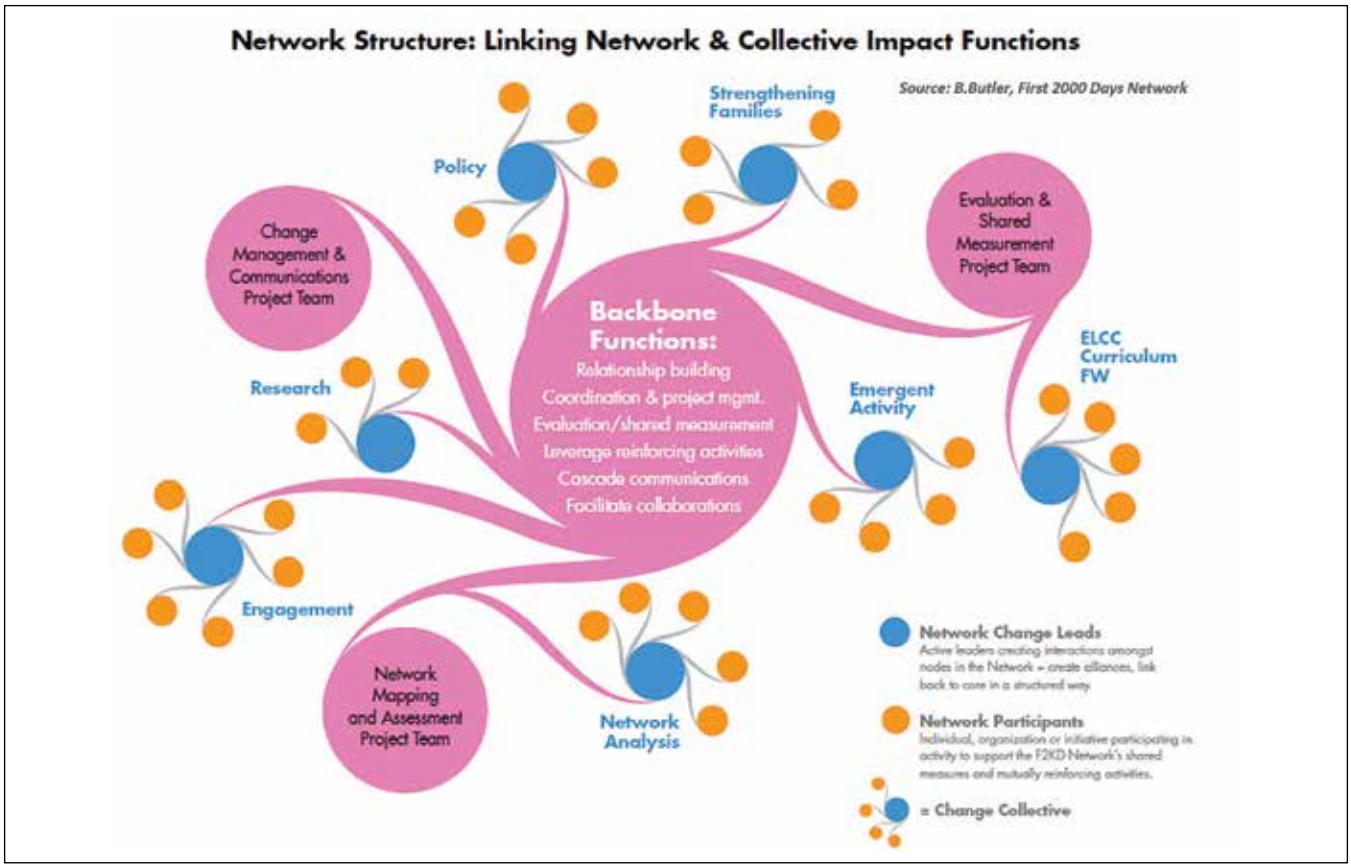
Core functions, including network weaving, evaluation, and communication, were resourced. Because of their position, participants could also mobilize resources from inside their organizations.

There were flexible funding requirements in the earliest phases.

The Alberta Nonprofit Network (ABNN) started with a group of executive directors of organizations that serve the nonprofit sector in Alberta, Canada. Although it had been a topic of discussion for decades, there was no history of collaboration at a provincial level (there *was* at a regional level). Because of their position within their organizations and the sector, there was incredible organizational—but varying collaborative—capacity. The fact that all of the core participants were formal leaders within their organizations meant that there was an enormous potential to leverage this formal authority for change. Moreover, all of the people involved had experienced success in an organizational setting, and valued the processes, structures, and relationships that make organizations work. These are almost always different from the characteristics of a network, which means a lot of time will be spent building new ways of working together.

ABNN's funding allowed them time to explore, and also hire some network weaving and evaluation capacity early on, which helped to intentionally build the network capacity. However, as the network scaled, there was some impatience to move toward action, there were different ideas about outcomes, and there was a resulting need for more resources to match participants' ambitions for change.

The network was structured with a tight group of network stewards "in the middle." There were terms of reference and formalized decision-making processes, supported by tools like a decision tree and scoping forms. The decision tree embedded questions that reflected a networked approach (i.e., is this leveraging existing capacity?) but was a formal structure to guide decision making. This approach used structures that were recognizable in an organizational context, and adapted them to function in a way that supports healthy network development. These structures, which were familiar and reassuring, become a way for participants to practice engaging in the network. Bouncing off these structures helped maintain momentum and trust in an uncomfortable



new way of working. It provided them with the structure they needed to start to work and engage with one another, which is the only way to build healthy relationships.

Governance based on organizational familiarity was the proxy for trust and foundation for momentum.

The Archetype Trap

". . . I suppose it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail."[7]

Like any framework, archetypes are helpful because they simplify a more complicated reality. They point out some of the patterns that might be useful to pay attention to in your own context. That being said, they are only useful to the extent that you acknowledge the complexities of your own context. While we hope that some of these pieces resonate with you, no starting point is the same. Our best advice is to pay attention to the governance structures that will empower people in *your own evolving, nuanced situation*. This is especially relevant in this current period of rapid change in the nonprofit sector and within the communities it seeks to support.

To the extent that you're able to do this, you are more likely to design a healthy nonprofit network. The whole point of networks is to be more effective as a whole—governance should be actively helping you increase levels of:

distributed intelligence
caring
responsibility
resources
capacity
adaptability
understanding

such that the group "sees what needs to be done, can do it successfully, without being told what to do" to address complex, dynamic, emergent social issues.[8]

• • •

Ultimately, the group's ability to mutually reinforce intelligent assessment of the territory is at the core (you can enable people to address all the wrong problems—something to avoid). The collective ability to intelligently define the problem and solve it is the ongoing governance opportunity for all of us. Because social change—and the networks being used to address it—is by nature adaptive, emergent, and complex, it is all the more essential to develop adaptive, emergent, and complex governance and leadership. We cannot meet the transformational needs of our society without redesigning how we interact with one another, make decisions, and hold one another accountable. Nonprofits seeking to drive change through networks and collaboratives will need to build their adaptive governance capacity based on empowerment, trust, and belonging. The uncharted territory we are facing requires nothing less.

Notes

1. Institute on Governance, "Defining Governance," accessed August 19, 2020, iog.ca/what-is-governance/.
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Blythe Butler and **Sami Berger** are partners in Collaborative Management. They work together to design, lead, and implement collaborative management systems, leveraging their expertise in change management, network science, and evaluation to help networks understand their contexts and achieve their social and system change goals. **Butler** is the founder of Atticus Insights. She is currently supporting the development of multiple networks and collaboratives, using network analysis, developmental evaluation, and capacity building to improve both process (systems) outcomes as well as program and client-level outcomes. Butler's practice focuses on change management, evaluation, and capacity building to support the development of adaptive learning cultures within organizations. **Berger** is the founder of Curious Compass. She works with organizations and initiatives that are striving to make a meaningful change and are interested in thinking critically about their strategy.

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Who Owns Philanthropy? A Look through an Antiracist Lens

"If a reparations lens were applied," contends Takema Robinson, executive director of the Greater New Orleans Funders Network, "the whole view of what philanthropy is doing in response to a rapidly deteriorating situation could come into far clearer focus; but for that to occur, philanthropy will have to find a way to release its death-grip on the capital that it controls, and admit that the money it stewards needs a radical change in direction."

Editors' note: *This article, from an interview with Takema Robinson, executive director of the Greater New Orleans Funders Network and CEO of Converge Consulting, brings a core question front and center regarding the uses and effects of philanthropy in a democratic and racialized context, applying it to disaster philanthropy—a frame that is in much use right now.*

For decades, an ongoing debate within and around philanthropy has centered on who "owns" the money held in a philanthropic trust. When questions about holding philanthropy accountable are posed, it is common for conversations to shut down, or for these inquiries to be rebuffed with a comment to the effect of, "But it is, in the end, their [the philanthropist's] money."

Many argue that it's not, in fact, the philanthropist's money past the point when it is donated; rather, institutional philanthropy consists of dollars that are held in trust for the good of society. But who determines what is in society's best interests?

And there lies the rub.

In our current formalization of philanthropy, it is the donor and/or the designees (foundation staff) who get to answer that question—and do so in ways that reflect their comfort zones, their experiences, and their judgments of other people.

Who controls the money impacts core decisions—from how quickly the corpus will be spent to who receives grants and why. In nearly all cases, "elites" control philanthropic money. These are primarily white and male and monied, and this starkly limits philanthropy's transformative potential. As long as its central design begins with the assumption that the money belongs to the elites who extracted and accumulated more money than is good for their communities, we are unlikely to end up anywhere else than in an ever more extreme version of our present oligarchy.

This oligarchy seems to get increasingly entrenched, with financial crises often leading to further concentrations of power and wealth. That is why we need a radical shift in the way philanthropy does business.

As Takema Robinson, of the Greater New Orleans Funders Network, explains, philanthropy, along with the country in general, needs to hand over its ownership rights in the form of reparations and control to those whom it has most seriously injured through the accumulation of wealth, especially people of color—people excluded from the prosperity deserved by all—and the movements and organizations they lead.

Robinson knows more than most about the ways that philanthropy behaves during crises; she has worked in and around philanthropy for many years, dating back to when Hurricane Katrina hit the Gulf Coast, fifteen years ago. The storm and its aftermath laid devastation to the whole region, but its effects were most catastrophic to those who had the least. This is a common pattern—one we're seeing again with the COVID pandemic, which has hit people denied the social protections, prosperity, and well-being that should be accessible to all, harder and in many more ways than others. The traditional ways of approaching such disasters, says Robinson, which at first may look evenhanded, typically reinforce preexisting conditions of inequity, forcing the hardest hit into the most marginalized positions.

The problem, in Robinson's opinion, is that basic precepts of philanthropy are built on biased assumptions. These

assumptions show up vividly in crises, she says, and they can be boiled down to the fact that "there is no expectation that the very people from which the capital in these institutions has been extracted should have a seat at tables where regions are being reimagined—because in philanthropy, the concept of reparations is not yet taken seriously. Therefore, the idea that a central focus on reconstructive equity—equity that acknowledges the harm and makes people whole—should take precedence, is foreign to many philanthropists."

The patterns in which inequitable disaster philanthropy plays out in its two initial phases, Robinson says, are familiar and identifiable. The first phase focuses on emergency interventions. During this phase, when emergency needs are the focus, the impact of preexisting conditions starts rolling out in the public eye. This is when it is noted, for example, that more Black, Brown, and Indigenous people are getting sick from COVID-19, or are being impacted disproportionately by a natural disaster. In phase two, however, when discussions begin about reimagining space, place, and power, a struggle begins over who will define the future. It is here, Robinson says, that you will see the powers that be peel off into separate rooms and lay the foundation for what is to be done.

This is the result of entrenched power relationships and unequal access to resources, including democratic decision making.

As Robinson relates, following Katrina, a small group of business people were selected by the Mayor to serve on the Bring New Orleans Back commission, to decide the fate of the city and all its residents. Once revealed, the resulting plan (popularly known as the Green Dot Plan) seemed designed specifically to discourage the return of some portions of the population—particularly, economically disenfranchised Black residents. And, indeed, New Orleans is a very reconfigured city fifteen years later.

The pushback from dispersed New Orleans community leaders and residents was swift, Robinson says, and some foundations did respond, with grants to support a more participatory process that would come to be known as the Unified New Orleans Plan. While well intended, many of these grants were focused, she says, on "overcoming immediate challenges rather than investing deeply in the necessary building of power. What people really needed was fluency in political and policy advocacy work based directly in the communities that were hardest hit."

Albeit many delays transpired, this shift toward investing in power building eventually occurred, as some philanthropic organizations set aside their imported priorities to allow community partners to lead, says Robinson. Examples include Ford's deep investments in power building, Kellogg's generational commitment, Surdna's investments in arts and culture—and all of these foundations standing up with Foundation for Louisiana, Louisiana's first statewide public charity explicitly committed to equity and justice.

With the future of communities on the table, community groups were too often in the position of soliciting foundations for the necessary resources to fight back while politely negotiating various capacity-building and technical-assistance offers, which often contained "code phrases," notes Robinson, for "We don't trust you." By the time all of the "compliance" work was done to vet organizations on the ground, planning had already commenced, with existing power bases in full sway. When such traditional power bases are in control, the dynamic then becomes reactive.

What should be done? Robinson

asserts that philanthropy should collapse that first and second phase; we need to elevate investments in power building as an ongoing priority, and when disasters occur, we need to double down while also addressing the immediate life-preserving needs for food, water, shelter, and medical support.

That takes intentionally overinvesting in community infrastructure before acute disasters hit, trusting current leadership in communities that have been damaged by centuries of exploitation, and understanding that these acute disasters only exacerbate perpetual crises like housing and income insecurity. Such investment would allow those working on the ground to build the necessary power bases over time, to be mobilized to address the deeper problems that have flowed from racism and extractive capitalism.

Philanthropy, Robinson says, often sees acknowledgment of the effects of racism and extractive capitalism as risky, in that it is often in current relationships with those for whom extractive capitalism is an active practice; and in that context, so-called risk aversion really just often boils down to one more example of structural racism. Philanthropy's risk-aversion calculator, she remarks, needs to be transformed, along with philanthropy's capacity-building and technical-assistance approach. Without an antiracist analysis, these two tools can, unfortunately, be used to further spread toxic assumptions about who is and who is not worthy of investment. To be clear, Robinson is not suggesting that technical assistance and capacity building be abandoned—but she does suggest that if foundations feel driven to provide technical assistance, to look to themselves first by hiring more staff of color.

The country is currently besieged with multiple disasters, says Robinson, not the least of which is the crumbling of our democracy—and philanthropy is behind the curve. She suggests that if a reparations lens were applied, the whole view of what philanthropy is doing in response to a rapidly deteriorating situation could come into far clearer focus; but for that to occur, philanthropy will have to find a way to release its death-grip on the capital that it controls, and admit that the money it stewards needs a radical change in direction. Robinson reminds us that if philanthropy is to live up to its definition—the betterment of humankind—it must put people first. And she insists they be those most impacted by the persistent disasters of racism and extractive capitalism.

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Can Volunteers Help Nonprofits Keep Their Community Roots Alive?

by Sue Carter Kahl

"Volunteerism provides a unique function and opportunity in nonprofit agencies," writes Sue Carter Kahl. "Their work is both a concrete and a symbolic endeavor between the organization and the community. This rich nexus of the instrumental and expressive through service can be powerful if volunteers are engaged well." And nonprofits are beautifully set up to do just that.

In a 2018 article, nonprofit leader Jan Masaoka called the nonprofit sector to task. She named the growing professionalization of the sector and its reliance on consultants as a step away from nonprofit roots in activism and the causes that drive it.[1] This shift has led to increasing "sophistication" in nonprofit operations, with paid professionals more often at the helm. In many cases, it has also sidelined communities as active participants in nonprofit work.

Is there a way to address this? A renewal of volunteerism may provide one path.

One CEO of a large social service agency with government contracts shared, "Volunteers are a great way that we can reconnect with our advocacy and our social justice roots." His government contracts emphasize numbers, but he views volunteers as a key part of what (and, more importantly, how) the organization delivers those numbers.

Likewise, the volunteer director of a faith-based agency notes that it is volunteers who give the agency the ability to offer services that are compassionate, caring, and community building. Yet volunteer work is routinely challenged by financial pressures.

These observations and the following perspectives offer insight into the push-and-pull tension that nonprofit leaders experience between the narrow accountability of funded work and the broader accountability to their missions and communities.

Nonprofit Priorities as Functions of Their Instrumental and Expressive Elements

One way to view this tension is as a function of organizations' instrumental and expressive dimensions. *Instrumental elements* are practical, achievement oriented, and resource seeking. *Expressive elements* are symbolic, value oriented, and resource consuming. Wenjue Knutsen and Ralph Brower examined this topic in a study of Canadian nonprofits, and helped paint a picture of how these elements play out in day-to-day life.[2]

For example, nonprofits pursue instrumental tasks, such as program delivery and fundraising, to accomplish their objectives. Conversely, the reasons nonprofits carry out these tasks reflect their expressive dimensions. Expressive work often manifests as values like dignity, equity, hope, or care.

Knutsen and Brower had an intriguing finding in their study. They proposed that when leaders are accountable to many stakeholders, "expressive accountabilities have a risk of being traded off."[3] The strong, externally driven forms of instrumental enforcement, combined with the limited visibility of the expressive, risk "'crowding out' an organization's attention to mission," leading to a loss of "organizational autonomy and weakening the pursuit of values."[4]

In other words, nonprofit leaders can be so consumed with meeting external mandates (such as grants or funder reports) that the community gets short shrift. Funders or contract partners are centered at the expense of clients and missions.

How is this possible? For one, instrumental work is much more visible and measurable. You can see people served and count dollars raised. Instrumental

activities are often linked to funding and have tangible mechanisms of accountability (such as grant reports). In addition, instrumental tasks have a penalty for failure: the withholding of funding or other critical support.

By contrast, expressive work is hard to measure and often invisible and/or intangible. (For example, how do you measure values?) The mechanisms that provide accountability are difficult to measure and see. (How do you assess an agency's sense of shared ownership with the community?) There are downsides for failing to operate in alignment with the mission or values (such as mission creep), but expressive accountability is typically voluntary and internal.

Volunteerism as the Nexus of the Instrumental and Expressive

Volunteerism provides a unique function and opportunity in nonprofit agencies. It operates at the intersection of the instrumental and expressive. Volunteers take actions that benefit the organization (the instrumental). Simultaneously, their service is often driven by and functions as an outward expression of values or identity (the expressive). Their work is both a concrete and a symbolic endeavor between the organization and the community. This rich nexus of the instrumental and expressive through service can be powerful if volunteers are engaged well.

Thoughtful volunteer engagement provides a host of instrumental and expressive benefits. For example, it:

- generates valuable labor,
- educates the community about organizational mission and social issues,[5]
- leads to funding and in-kind gifts,[6]
- contributes to a sense of shared ownership of and commitment to a cause,[7]
- expands the organization's expertise and networks,[8] and
- fosters organizational trust and transparency.[9]

Organizations rely on these unique contributions of volunteers and the volunteer engagement function for success. However, because it is not easy to see, touch, or measure these by-products of good volunteerism, service tends to be underappreciated. Because few external partners require nonprofits to track these benefits as grant deliverables, service gets overlooked as a meaningful and investment-worthy strategy. As a result, volunteer engagement tends to be underresourced,[10] which sets up a vicious cycle. Poor investment leads to poor results, which makes it difficult to justify more investment.[11] Despite the benefits of good volunteer engagement, it tends to be a casualty of more instrumental functions.[12]

Many have responded to these challenges by using instrumental tools to reveal and amplify the work of volunteers. So, nonprofits count and monetize it, apply human resources models used in businesses to "professionalize" it, theorize and study it, and build a case for it.

Borrowing instrumental tools can be a worthwhile strategy. Yet nonprofits do a disservice to their communities when instrumental strategies crowd out the diverse purposes of involving volunteers. Specifically, the work of volunteers is devalued when nonprofits report their numbers and financial value and omit their expressive value and meaning. The value of volunteer service is diminished when nonprofits emphasize only its instrumental dimensions.

Reintegrating the Instrumental and Expressive Dimensions in Nonprofits

Clearly, nonprofits need to tend to both the instrumental *and* expressive aspects of the mission. Having values or purpose does not mean much without putting action behind them. If there is a tendency for the instrumental to crowd out the expressive, however, how can nonprofits ensure that the expressive remains central to the work? Put another way, how can nonprofits ensure that they maintain at least as much accountability to their mission, values, clients, and community as they do to their logic models, strategies, funders, and board members?

- First, embrace the expressive element of nonprofit work. One glance at today's headlines makes it clear how much need there is for values like compassion, stewardship, and love. If you need a permission slip to be emboldened to prioritize organizational values, client needs, and community voices, consider this article "permission granted."
- Next, adopt volunteer engagement as a vehicle for the expressive dimension of nonprofit work. Most nonprofits address causes that are complex adaptive challenges. These causes require not only labor but also a reckoning of values and how we want to live in alignment with those values. Volunteerism can be a portal into nonprofit organizations and the community conversations that are so desperately needed right now.
- Reconsider your relationship with efficiency, a significant driver of the instrumental. It is tempting to look for efficient solutions, especially during upheaval. Yet nonprofits work with people, not widgets—and complex lives are much more difficult to streamline than inert objects or raw data.

The siren song of efficiency shows up frequently in volunteer engagement. There seems to be a general annoyance that working with volunteers takes time and energy. Of course it does! When done well, though, the time and effort pay off in advancing the mission and engaging the community as partners. It is not

efficient in traditional terms, but it is effective.

- In addition, reconsider your relationship with numerical outputs as primary accountability mechanisms. Charity watchdogs and other leaders pressure nonprofits to distill their highly complex work into oversimplified numbers like overhead rates and financial values for volunteer labor. There is a time and place for these figures, but not every time and every place.[13]

  Therefore, share the complicated narrative that undergirds your mission and programs. Supplement volunteer-related numbers with images, stories, and symbols that capture the expressive essence of the work. Talk about the interconnecting levels of program and volunteer impact on clients, their families, volunteers, paid staff, the organization, and/or the community. Articulating the complexity of service takes time but is a necessary step in helping the community understand nonprofit work.
- Finally, align volunteer engagement and expressive elements of nonprofit work with your equity and inclusion efforts. Many say they value human dignity and collaboration, yet patterns of power reveal otherwise. Most nonprofits collaborate and listen to their funders, boards, and partner organizations, in what is called *upward* and *lateral accountability*. *Downward accountability* with clients and volunteers often trails behind. For example:
  - Do you have mechanisms in place for eliciting and acting on client voices?
  - How do you capture insights from volunteers who serve the community directly?
  - Are your programs and volunteer roles designed with meaningful input from the people you serve?

Engaging clients and the community as volunteers will cost time and is hard to measure, but it is an essential part of the work to balance power.

• • •

These recommendations may feel challenging. It is difficult to push back against funders and agencies that control resources. Yet, as the following quote (commonly attributed to Alice Walker) reminds us, "One of the most common ways people give up their power is by thinking they don't have any." Nonprofits have an obligation to exercise—and ample opportunity to expand—that power by creating pathways for community members and volunteers to exercise their own voices. In doing so, nonprofits honor the instrumental and expressive work that is theirs to do.

Notes

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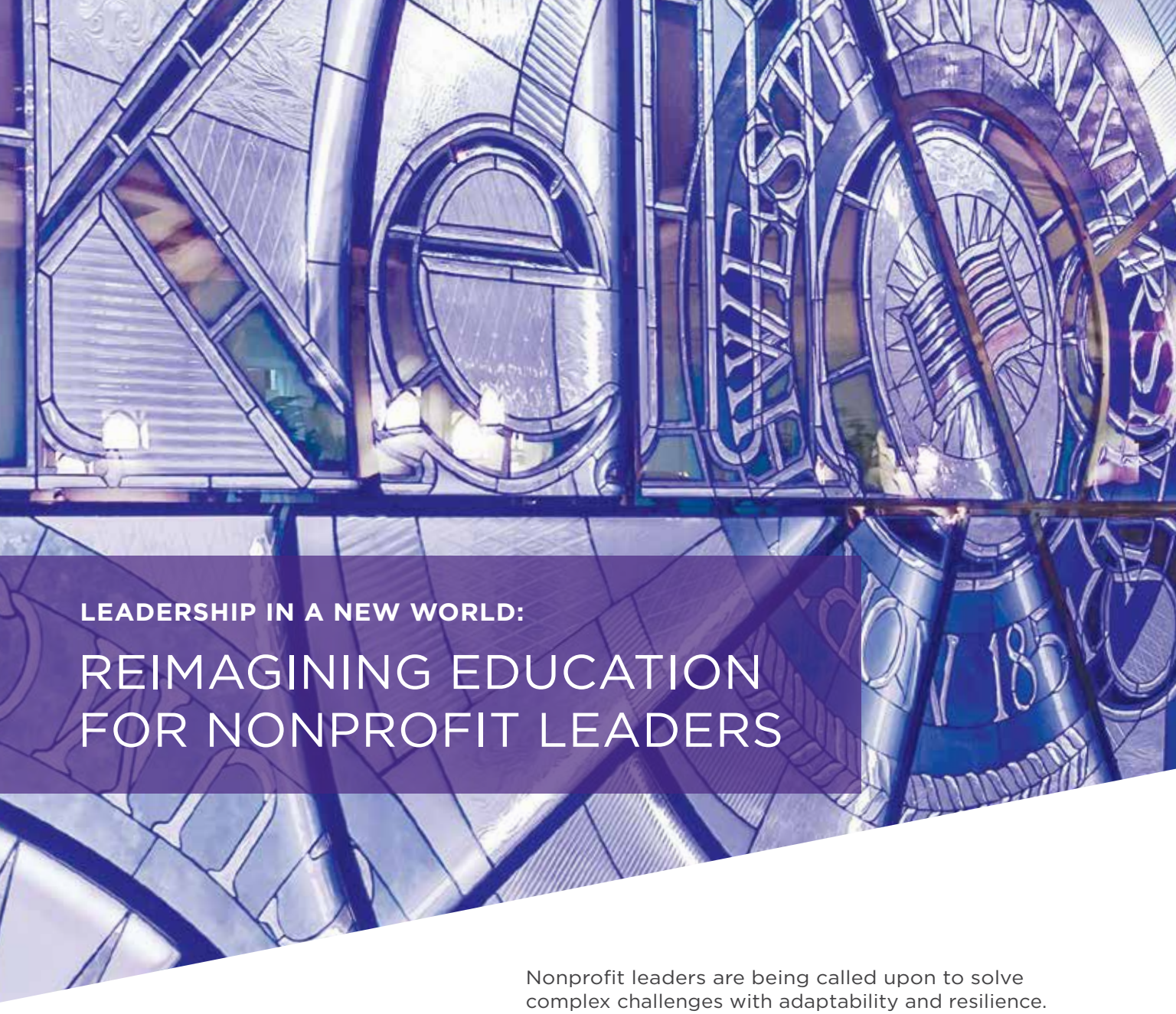

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