WRITING IN BROTHERHOOD: RECONSTITUTING INDIGENOUS CITIZENSHIP, NATIONHOOD, AND RELATIONSHIPS AT THE TURN OF THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

by

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Abstract

The current field of Indigenous literary studies remains overwhelmingly focused on individual authors and their use of traditionally Eurowestern literary genres. While analyzing these individuals’ novels, poetry, essays, and other traditionally single-author literary genres, however, scholars often overlook these same individuals’ participation in the collectivist national and co-national writings of their contemporary Indigenous nations and networks. This dissertation argues for the need to (re)center collectivist texts within Indigenous literary studies and highlights the fluid Indigenous literary networks of North America and the Pacific at the turn of the twentieth century. By juxtaposing the constitutions, petitions, and newspapers of the Hui Aloha ʻĀina (Hawaiian Patriotic League), the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood, and the National Council of American Indians, I trace the hemispheric and trans-Pacific history of collectivist literary genres in order to provide an innovative Indigenous literary history of genre. I argue that when Indigenous peoples write as a collective body, their writings participate within longstanding Indigenous literary traditions—from the Hodinöhsö:ni’ Great Law (ca. 1090–1500) to the Constitution of the White Earth Nation (2009)—that continue to be overlooked in favor of “orature” and contemporary fiction composed by individual authors. By (re)centering collectivism within the study of Indigenous literatures, this dissertation also introduces the theoretical framework of co-nationalism, the process and potential of Indigenous nations working together while maintaining local distinctions and commitments, in order to attest to the ongoing survival of Indigenous literary communities and coalitions, maintain Indigenous lands as central to Indigenous literatures, and disrupt the definitions of literature that continue to marginalize literary expressions of Indigenous solidarity.
Preface

This is an original work of research by the author, Michael P. Taylor.
# Table of Contents

Abstract ............................................................................................................................................... ii

Preface ................................................................................................................................................ iii

Table of Contents ................................................................................................................................. iv

List of Figures ....................................................................................................................................... vi

Acknowledgements .............................................................................................................................. vii

**Introduction: (Re)connecting Indigenous Peoples, Literatures, and Lands** .................... 1

  Ethics, Methodology, and Structure ................................................................................................. 9

  Collectivism: A “Road Forward” for Indigenous Literary Studies .............................................. 14

  Indigenous Solidarity in Motion ....................................................................................................... 21

  Co-nationalism: “The Indians Must Organize” ............................................................................. 26

**Chapter 1: Constitutional Stories** ............................................................................................. 33

  Constitution of the White Earth Nation (2009) .......................................................................... 38

  Ka Hui Aloha ʻĀina. Ke Kumukānāwai\(^{1}\) (1893) ................................................................. 49

  Grand Camp Constitution of the Alaska Native Brotherhood (1917) ...................................... 73

  Constitution and By-Laws of the National Council of American Indians (1926) ............... 90

  Conclusion ..................................................................................................................................... 107

**Chapter 2: Signatures of Solidarity** ........................................................................................... 109

  Petition of the National Council of American Indians (1926) ............................................... 115

  1929 Grand Camp Resolution (Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood) ........................... 132

---

\(^{1}\) Constitution of the Hawaiian Patriotic League
Palapala Hoopii Kue Hoohuiaina² (1897, Hui Aloha ʻĀina) .............................................................. 143

Conclusion ......................................................................................................................................... 148

Chapter 3: Indigenous Paper Routes ............................................................................................... 150

Ke Aloha ʻĀina (1895–1920) ............................................................................................................. 156
The Alaska Fisherman (1923–32) .................................................................................................... 166
Indian News Letter (1929–38) ......................................................................................................... 182

Conclusion: Moving Together along the Road Forward ................................................................. 201

Works Cited ...................................................................................................................................... 211

² Petition Against Annexation
List of Figures

Figure 1: Alaska Native Brotherhood. 1944 the Alaska Native Brotherhood Annual Convention Meeting Minutes. MS/007. Walter A. Soboleff Papers, 1920–2009. Sealaska Heritage Institute Archives. Juneau, AK .......................................................... 25

Figure 2: Hui Aloha ‘Āina. Ke Kumukanawai. March 22, 1893. Ka Leo o ka Lahui [Honolulu, HI]. Ulukau: Hawaiian Electronic Library ......................................................... 67

Figure 3: Alaska Native Brotherhood. Grand Camp Constitution. 1917–18. Philip Drucker's The Native Brotherhoods: Modern Intertribal Organizations on the Northwest Coast (1958) .............................................................. 79

Figure 4: Jean Wanamaker. Certificate of Examination of an Alaska Indian as to Qualifications as to Claims of Citizenship. February 6, 1919. Sealaska Heritage Institute. MS/047. William S. Wanamaker Collection. Sealaska Heritage Institute ........................................ 85

Figure 5: Constitution and By-Laws of the National Council of American Indians. 1926. Amherst College Digital Collections ................................................................. 93

Figure 6: The National Council of American Indians. Campground Letterhead. 1926–38. MSS 1704. Gertrude Bonnin and Raymond Bonnin Collection. L. Tom Perry Special Collections. Brigham Young University .............................................................. 102

Figure 7: Ke Aloha Aina. 5 Jun. 1897. Ho’olaupa‘i: Hawaiian Nūpepa Collection. ulukau: Hawaiian Electronic Library ................................................................. 161

Figure 8: Newspaper Boys. “Ka Makana Hape Nuia A Ke Aloha Aina.” Ke Aloha Aina. 6 Jan. 1906 .............................................................................................................. 164

Figure 9: Alaska Fisherman. February 15, 1923. KETC 10/1-10/3. Alaska State Library. Juneau, Alaska ................................................................. 168

Figure 10: Alaska Fisherman. Jan. 1924. KETC 10/1-10/3. Alaska State Library. Juneau, AK .............................................................................................................. 170

Figure 11: Letter to Captain Bonnin. 15 Apr. 1932. MSS 1704. Gertrude Bonnin and Raymond Bonnin Collection. L. Tom Perry Special Collections. Brigham Young University ........................................ 185

Figure 12: Indian News. 15 Apr. 1929. MSS 1704. Gertrude Bonnin and Raymond Bonnin Collection. L. Tom Perry Special Collections. Brigham Young University ........................................ 187

Figure 13: Indian News Letter. 22 Feb. 1932. MSS 1704; Gertrude Bonnin and Raymond Bonnin Collection; L. Tom Perry Special Collections; Brigham Young University ........................................ 193
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Introduction: (Re)connecting Indigenous Peoples, Literatures, and Lands

Land. If you understand nothing else about the history of Indians in North America, you need to understand that the question that really matters is the question of land.

Land has always been the defining element of Aboriginal culture. Land contains the languages, the stories, and the histories of a people. It provides water, air, shelter, and food. Land participates in the ceremonies and the songs. And land is home. Not in an abstract way... For non-Natives, land is primarily a commodity, something that has value for what you can take from it or what you can get from it.

Thomas King (Cherokee)

At the turn of the twentieth century, U.S. assimilationist policies shifted, in many regards, from fraught treaties, forced removals, and outright war to subtler, though no less coercive, strategies of individualizing Indigenous lands and peoples. After nearly four centuries of outright physical, as well as symbolic, slaughter had failed to completely remove Indigenous peoples from the continent, the United States turned to the privatization, or individualization of Indigenous lands, peoples, and resources with the goal to remove Indigenous peoples from the cooperative solidarity and kinship responsibilities and relationships within their familial, linguistic, spiritual, literary, and land-based communities. On February 8, 1887, Congress enacted a new method of rapid individualization: the Dawes Act, or General Allotment Act, which divided communally owned reservation land into individual plots of private property.

Many celebrated this new direction in dealing with the ongoing “Indian problem.” Alice Fletcher, a prominent American ethnologist and leader of the so-called “Friends of the Indians,” praised this move: “The Indian may now become a free man; free from the thralldom of the tribe. . . . This bill may therefore be considered as the Magna Carta of the Indians of our country” (134). In his 1901 State of the Union Address, U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt forcefully
reiterated Fletcher’s celebration: “The General Allotment Act is a mighty pulverizing engine to break up the tribal mass. It acts directly upon the family and the individual. Under its provisions some sixty thousand Indians have already become citizens of the United States” (23). Fletcher’s comparison of the Allotment Act to the Magna Carta and Roosevelt’s metaphor of the Allotment Act as “a mighty pulverizing engine” demonstrate the explicit violence of the paternalist politics that have sought to intentionally dislocate Indigenous families and relationships, and “break up the tribal mass” by individualizing Indigenous lands and communities one acre and one Indian at a time. Such political maneuvering has sought to cleave Indigenous peoples away from the obligations and opportunities of collective kinship in order to force them, instead, into the deracinating mass of individual U.S. patriots, disappearing as distinct peoples and leaving the land forever free for unimpeded white settlement.

What has happened to Indigenous lands has also happened to Indigenous literatures; dominant literary ideologies and literary elites have individualized them away from collective practices of artistic, literary, and political conception and expression in order to be commodified and consumed by a mainstream colonial academy and public. Just as U.S. settlers have forcefully separated Indigenous peoples from their lands through the imposition of Eurowestern ideologies and models of individual land ownership, Eurowestern literary criticism has, likewise, selectively celebrated individual Indigenous authors in ways that separate such authors from Indigenous literary traditions and communal commitments by imposing non-Indigenous ideologies and models of authorship and aesthetics. Libraries are still organized, anthologies assembled, methodologies developed, and courses taught, for example, by individual author, or within literary movements and modes dominated by Eurowestern ideologies.
Such dominant ideologies have included a nostalgic return to “primitive” works, an appreciation of non-Indigenous translations and interpretations of Indigenous works and the resulting anonymization of oral literature, a selective appreciation of Indigenous writers for their non-political writings, and finally a devaluing of collectivist Indigenous genres and authorship. Through each of these dominant methodologies, Western literary critics have worked toward removing Indigenous literatures from their kinship networks and their commitments to Indigenous lands. While contemporary Indigenous authors and literary critics continue to recover, reclaim, and recreate Indigenous literatures that challenge each of these dominant modes of literary scholarship, the current field of Indigenous literary studies has not yet adequately addressed the mass individualization of Indigenous literatures.

Imposing such single-author-centric approaches to literary criticism on Indigenous literatures came into full force when early twentieth-century non-Indigenous anthropologists, ethnographers, poets, and literary critics began to recognize and become nostalgic for the “primitive” poetics of Indigenous America. Acting on such “imperialist nostalgia,” they captured artistic and spiritual expressions of Indigenous communities only to force them into individualist forms of Eurowestern literature and attribute the final product to the non-Indigenous captors. The mass commodification of Indigenous literatures began, as Harriet Monroe expressed in her concluding editorial comment to a 1917 issue of *Poetry: A Magazine of Verse* dedicated to representing “aboriginal poetry,” when the modern American literati deemed Indigenous literatures as desirable resources and Indigenous communities as profitable aesthetic mines:

3 Renato Rosaldo defines imperialist nostalgia as a “mourning for what one has destroyed” (107), depicting how imperialist racial majorities often use “a pose of innocent yearning” both to capture people’s imaginations and to conceal [their] complicity with often brutal domination” (108).
Vivid as such work is in its suggestion of racial feeling and rhythm, it gives merely a hint of the deeper resources—it is a mere outcropping of the mine. But, although the mine exists with its stores of treasure, the danger is that the tribes, in the process of so-called civilization, will lose all trace of it; that their beautiful primitive poetry will perish among the ruins of obliterated states. (251)

Since Monroe’s call to arms, countless literary miners have gone to work drilling, claiming, and individualizing collective Indigenous expressions away from Indigenous communities and converting them into commodities to be comfortably consumed by non-Indigenous academics and mainstream literary elites.

Already in 1918, for example, American author and editor George W. Cronyn published *The Path on the Rainbow: An Anthology of Songs and Chants from the Indians of North America*, featuring translations and interpretations from some of the leading non-Indigenous ethnographers, editors, and poets of the time: Franz Boas, Constance Lindsay Skinner, Mary Hunter Austin, Frank Gordon, Alice Corbin Henderson, and others. The only contemporaneous Indigenous poet featured in the entire collection is E. Pauline Johnson, whose included poems, “The Lost Lagoon” and “The Song My Paddle Sings,” are among her most apolitical poems. It was only when the “traditional” literary mines seemed to be drying up and the “primitive” began to become passé that some such individual contemporaneous early twentieth-century Indigenous writers as Johnson, Lynn Riggs (Cherokee), Alexander Posey (Muscogee Creek), and Louis Oliver (Muscogee Creek) began to gain mainstream attention, but almost always as individual
writers who can be read either as “vanishing” or as reflecting the celebrated tensions, fractures, and alienation of American modernity (1910–45).⁴

This emphasis on Indigenous dislocation throughout the modernist period has carried over into the contemporary anthologies and the resulting curricular canon of early twentieth-century Indigenous literature. As a result, while an increasing number of Indigenous authors have been featured since the so-called Native American Renaissance (1960s–70s), there are currently a grand total of five Indigenous authors included in the two foremost contemporary anthologies of American modernism. As representative Indigenous authors of the American modernist period, The Heath Anthology of American Literature (2013) includes four authors: Mourning Dove (Okanogan), John Joseph Mathews (Osage), Thomas S. Whitecloud (Chippewa), and D’Arcy McNickle (Flathead-Cree-Métis). The Norton Anthology (2011) representing the same period includes only Black Elk (Oglala Lakota) as mediated through white amateur ethnographer and poet John Neihardt. As the editors of the Heath Anthology explain, “[a]lienation and marginality for the Native American are all too forcibly defined by a society that operates with unseen motives and purposes” (1327). Although these editors lay guilt at the foot of the invisible hand of the U.S. nation, they also participate, albeit unintentionally, in the individualization of all Indigenous peoples by choosing to highlight his (the “Native American” is almost always articulated as masculine) individual “alienation and marginality” rather than their collective literary aesthetics and fierce political commitments, or their collective solidarity

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⁴ In addition to being featured in Cronyn’s The Path on the Rainbow, E. Pauline Johnson’s poetry was also published in popular U.S. and Canadian magazines, including Boys’ World, Mother’s Magazine, American Boy, Outing, and others (Milz 129). Lynn Riggs is the first Native American poet I have found in Poetry: A Magazine of Verse. He is featured once in August 1923, August 1925, January 1943, and August 1943. Alexander Posey and Louis Owens are the only two Indigenous poets anthologized in The New Anthology of American Poetry (2005).
and survival. Such a representation, as it repeats itself within the countless classrooms around the world that continue to base their curriculum on the *Heath*, and more especially the *Norton*, maintains the myth that Indigenous peoples have always been only marginally and recently literate. Such a representation propagates the presumption that the U.S. government has succeeded in forever dislocating Indigenous peoples from their communities and their lands.

As a result, despite the astounding growth and intellectual rigor of Indigenous authors and literary critics since the 1970s, the current field of Indigenous literary studies remains overwhelmingly focused on individual authors and their uses of traditionally Eurowestern literary genres. In its section on genres, for example, the field-defining *Oxford Handbook of Indigenous American Literature* (2014) includes essays on individual articulations of Indigenous nonfiction, autobiography, poetry, drama, cinema, the novel, children’s literature, and fiction that crosses generic boundaries (viii–ix). By limiting analysis to these individuals’ stories, poetry, essays, and other largely individualist literary genres, however, much of the scholarship obscures these same individuals’ participation within the collectivist tribal and intertribal writings of Indigenous peoples. Indigenous literary nationalists such as Craig Womack (Muscogee Creek/Cherokee), Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee), and Robert Warrior (Osage), for example, discuss the poetry and prose of individual authors in order to represent the literatures of entire nations: Alice Callahan and Alexander Posey have become representatives of late nineteenth-century Creek literature; Lynn Riggs, John Milton Oskison, and Will Rogers have come to represent early twentieth-century Cherokee literature; and John Joseph Mathews represents
nineteenth-century Osage intellectualism. Cosmopolitanist scholars, such as Arnold Krupat, similarly turn to individuals like Gertrude Bonnin/Zitkala-Ša (Yankton Sioux), Charles Alexander Eastman (Santee Dakota), and Carlos Montezuma (Yavapai-Apache) as representative interlocutors between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, organizations, and governments. Yet, the bulk of Gertrude Bonnin’s writing, to take just one example, was written in collaboration with, or to represent, a number of Indigenous collectives, including such organizations as the Society of American Indians (1911–23) and the National Council of American Indians (1926–38), as well as tribal nations across the continent, including her own Yankton Sioux Tribe.

Since the field-broadening shift to Indigenous literary nationalism, scholars such as Penelope Kelsey (Seneca) and Kiara Vigil have begun to reclaim and reconsider these same individual Indigenous writers away from the dominant articulations and mindsets of American modernism. By doing so, they (re)connect these Indigenous literatures to Indigenous communities in order to provide a broader textual and theoretical foundation as scholars reconceptualize an era of Indigenous modernism. Kelsey’s Tribal Theory (2008), for example, reconsiders the writings of Eastman, Zitkala-Ša, and Ella Deloria (Yankton Dakota) in order to highlight the need and a possible methodology for “us[ing] tribal knowledges as theoretical frameworks for reading Native American texts” (13). Kelsey’s more recent Reading the

Wampum (2014) pushes even further and reclaims Hodinöhsö:ni’ wampum belts as cultural and textual records of Indigenous adaptability and thought prior to, throughout, and since the early twentieth century (103–5). Vigil’s Indigenous Intellectuals (2015), on the other hand, takes less of an Indigenous nationalist approach and turns to the works of Eastman, Montezuma, Gertrude Bonnin, and Luther Standing Bear (Oglala Lakota) to trace a collective cultural biography of early twentieth-century Indigenous public intellectualism (3). Kelsey and Vigil continue to build upon such Indigenous literary nationalist frameworks as what Cherokee scholar Jace Weaver’s describes as “communitism.”

Weaver argues that the most definitive characteristic of Indigenous literatures is their active commitment to community and to the survival of Indigenous peoples (ix). He goes on to argue that such literature should be broadly defined as the “total written output of a people” (43). While Kelsey’s most recent work encourages critics to engage with the extraliterary texts of Indigenous peoples, her previous work within Indigenous modernism, together with Weaver’s nationalism and Vigil’s intellectualism, analyzes and presents early twentieth-century Indigenous literatures as poetry and prose produced almost exclusively by individuals, rather than the collectively written output of Indigenous peoples. Through the tireless recovery, reclamation, and re-theorizing efforts of Indigenous and allied scholars, critics continue to gather more and more individual Indigenous literary paving stones to build the road forward for Indigenous literary studies. But why should critics continue to recover, reclaim, and repatriate Indigenous literatures one Indian at a time when we could be repatriating by the hundreds, thousands, even

\[7 \text{ Haudenosaunee; whenever possible, I use Indigenous spellings and do not italicize Indigenous words in order to acknowledge the primacy of Indigenous languages in the North American continent and the Pacific, and to emphasize the fluid multilingualism of the Indigenous writers this dissertation engages with.}\]
tens of thousands by broadening our focus to remember simultaneously the work of collective Indigenous organizations and communities? Indeed, we can and need to do both.

Thus, the goal of this dissertation is not to establish yet another reductive binary the individual and the collective. Rather, the goal is to begin to rebuild more of the interstitial mortar that has always connected individual Indigenous peoples, ideas, literatures, and lands. Through such archival paving, I hope to become a more productive ally by contributing toward a wider, further reaching, and more permanent path upon which future Indigenous individuals, communities, networks, and nations can continue to travel together as sovereign peoples in solidarity with one another as protectors of their own and each other’s lands. By (re)connecting Indigenous literatures to the peoples and lands from which they have been extracted, this dissertation also hopes to offer some healing from the brutal literary and literal consequences of early twentieth-century rhetoric and practice exemplified by Fletcher, Roosevelt, and Monroe as Indigenous land and literary resources continue to be exploited today with little, if any, consideration of, consultation with, or tangible benefit for Indigenous peoples. As Métis scholar Jo-Ann Episkinew called for, this dissertation broadens the potential sources for the healing that come from reclaiming Indigenous literatures that “acknowledge and validate Indigenous people’s experiences by filling in the gaps and correcting the falsehoods in this master narrative” of imagined Indigenous disappearance and Eurowestern superiority (2).

Ethics, Methodology, and Structure

In order to fill in more of the gaps in, as well as further challenge, the master narrative, I have organized this dissertation into three chapters to explore the intersections and possibilities of three theories, three organizations, and three Indigenous literary genres. I trace each genre and
theory back to the Hodinöhso:ni’ Great Law (ca. 1090–1500) as one of the earliest textual evidences of Indigenous literary traditions in North America. And although I tie each genre and theory back to the early textual articulations found within the Great Law as a hemispheric Indigenous literary history of collectivist genres, I also work to root this trilateral structural approach to the local cultural, oral, and land-based traditions of each of the three organizations. By emphasizing local specificities while tracing hemispheric parallels, my goal is not to compare and contrast cultures, but rather to evidence vast networks of Indigenous relationship and exchange, and to make my work accountable to the ongoing reciprocity of such relationships. Relationship and reciprocity are central to the methodology, structure, and substance of this dissertation.

Let me share an anecdote from Alaska to illustrate my attempt at such reciprocity. While in Juneau, members of the current Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood were generous enough to allow me to tag along to their executive meetings and to talk to current leaders of the organization. After the first meeting, I was introduced to a longtime Brotherhood member who stood up, turned to me, a young settler scholar, and said, “Why should I talk to you? We have been researched to death and have never received anything for it.” Gathering courage, I acknowledged his concerns and responded, “What would you like to receive? I am here for three weeks and have received funding and full-access to the archive that holds your organization’s documented history. I would really like to be of some service to your organization, but need your help to know what would most benefit you.” “For starters,” he replied, “we want to see everything that you see. We don’t have the time or resources to research our own history in those archives?”
Another Tlingit elder and longtime member of the Alaska Native Sisterhood invited me into her home. I went with formal questions in-hand, looking for specific information. But instead, she asked me to first explain my project. She then responded and I listened for over an hour as she told me about her life, her community, her activism, and how, despite all of the ongoing challenges, every time she sees a whale out in the bay she knows everything will be okay.

Together, the combined frankness and unmatched hospitality of the members of the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood transformed what had begun as a research trip meant to satisfy both my own intellectual curiosities and the academic demands of a dissertation into a sincere desire to produce something of worth, something that would be meaningful for the field of Indigenous literary studies, but more importantly also for contemporary Indigenous peoples, communities, and organizations. As a first step, I concluded my time in Alaska with a public lecture held at the Sealaska Heritage Institute so that I could report on what I had found and what I hoped to do with my findings. In attendance were some of the Brotherhood/Sisterhood members I had already met alongside other local community members, historians, and activists. It was an intimidating and humbling experience to be held accountable by the specific community whose lands, lives, and archives I had entered, uninvited at first. One woman expressed how painful it was to hear her history again through the archived expressions of her people, but also how hopeful and proud it made her to hear the power and purpose of their voices again. At this public lecture, I was able to report, among other things, that I had found a number of versions of the Constitution of the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood that the current organization no longer had access to. This was particularly exciting because the organization is currently working on a constitutional history project, entitled “Analysis of Our Constitution Over
the Years.” Since that lecture, I am still working to fulfill the requests and commitments of making the archive more accessible for the contemporary community. So far, I have made digital copies of all of the surviving newspapers, created an annotated index for all of the collections I have worked through, and am in the process of sharing these back with both the Sealaska Heritage Institute and the current Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood. These commitments of sharing my scholarship back, of forming and fostering reciprocal relationships undergirds the argument of each my three chapters.

In Chapter One, “Constitutional Stories,” I contextualize and place the constitutions of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood, and the National Council of American Indians into conversation with one another in order to illustrate how they participate in an ongoing hemispheric Indigenous literary tradition of constitution-writing that began as early as the Hodinöhsö:ni’ Great Law (ca. 1090–1500) and has been rearticulated as recently as the current Constitution of the White Earth Nation (2009). By including examples from Hawaiʻi and Alaska, Chapter One also illustrates the possibilities of exploring Indigenous literary practices and Indigenous experiences simultaneously throughout and beyond the contiguous United States in order to acknowledge the “significant cultural, political, and literary, as well as imperial and military” histories and relationships they share, as James Cox and Justice explain in the recent Oxford Handbook of Indigenous American Literature (7). While working through both the shared and distinct contexts of each organization, I also explore the ways in which their constitutions should be considered as Indigenous literature: as significant stories as well as legal and aspirational documents.

Chapter Two, “Signatures of Solidarity,” focuses on the petitions of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood, and the National Council of American Indians, and
the tens of thousands of Indigenous activists whom these petitions mobilized. Like Chapter One, Chapter Two traces the Indigenous history of petitioning back to the Great Law in order to determine both shared and distinct Indigenous approaches to petitioning that predate and/or have continued in resistance to unilateral U.S. assimilation. Whereas the constitutions explored in Chapter One speak through a collectivist rhetoric, the petitions juxtaposed in Chapter Two showcase that constitutional collectivism in action.

The final chapter, “Indigenous Paper Routes,” turns to the third collectivist genre employed by each of these organizations: newspapers. Although newspaper-writing is not often considered a collectivist literary endeavor, each of the newspapers discussed in this chapter work, like the constitutions and petitions, through printing presses, writers, commitments, and rhetorical strategies discussed by, approved by, and commissioned by a collective organization. Building upon the previous two chapters, Chapter Three returns to the Great Law and traces an Indigenous history of newspapers that predates and/or adapts to colonial newspaper culture. These newspapers continue the work established by each organization’s constitution and embodied in each organization’s petitions by maintaining a communicative network through which Indigenous news, ideas, culture, politics, and perspectives could be written, read, discussed, and acted upon in various private and public spheres.

Beyond telling three stories of Indigenous activism that have often been neglected or oversimplified, and in order to build upon and/or introduce three theoretical threads that connect each organization throughout each chapter, my goal is to treat each constitution, petition, and newspaper as a significant piece of Indigenous literature for its historical, sociopolitical, and cultural significance, as well as for its literary craftsmanship. To do this, while providing the sociopolitical and sometimes cultural context for each text, I also analyze each in terms of its
purpose, its process and expression of collectivity, its structure and content, the sources it draws upon or alludes to, as well as its distribution, audience(s), and reception. In other words, I seek to listen to each text textually and contextually through the archives, contemporary scholarship, and the lived experiences of Indigenous individuals and communities whom I have had the privilege of beginning to build a relationship with.

At the beginning of my PhD studies, in a moment of feeling overwhelmed and full of self-doubt, I approached my supervisor, Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee), and asked something to the effect of, “What could I as a settler scholar ever do for the field of Indigenous studies?” He responded, “Be humble. And listen.” This dissertation represents the beginning of my ongoing journey of learning how to humbly listen.

Collectivism: A “Road Forward” for Indigenous Literary Studies

The first of three theoretical threads I weave through each chapter is collectivism. The individualization of Indigenous literatures set in motion by the literary leaders of mainstream American Modernism has also infiltrated Indigenous literary studies and criticism, limiting the corpus of recognized Indigenous literature to works by individual Indigenous novelists, dramatists, poets, satirists, and so on. Arthur C. Parker (Seneca), co-founder of the Society of American Indians and chief editor of the Society’s quarterly journal, may have been among the first Indigenous intellectuals to express such an individualist approach to Indigenous literatures. In a 1911 response to Ohio State University Professor Fayette Avery McKenzie’s proposal to establish an Indian university as a preparatory college for young American Indians who could then advance to mainstream American universities, Parker writes, “I should like to see a school of this sort foster an Indian literature, not necessarily the old, but also the new. The poems of
Pauline Johnson, Alex Posey, the writings of Eastman, Simon Pokagon, Zitkalasa [sic] and others might be rescued from oblivion or popularized still further” (qtd.in Maddox 99). While neither McKenzie’s proposed college nor Parker’s proposal to foster Indian literature and contemporaneous Indigenous writers from throughout North America as a distinct field of post-secondary study came into fruition in their lifetimes, together McKenzie’s and Parker’s propositions anticipated our growing contemporary Indigenous academic reality. Our contemporary academic context, while there is still so much to challenge and improve, is beginning to allow Indigenous scholars to teach Indigenous students literature written by Indigenous writers. And together with their allies, Indigenous students and scholars are continuing in tremendous ways to recover and reclaim neglected Indigenous writers, both old and new, while promoting already acclaimed writers and texts even further.

According to Womack, the reality of American Indian literatures being studied as a distinct post-secondary discipline began in the late 1970s and 80s when Indigenous editors began to publish anthologies that emphasized contemporary Indigenous writings rather than only ethnographic orations. As Womack outlines, such collections as Geary Hobson’s (Quapaw/Cherokee) *The Remembered Earth* (1979), Simon Ortiz’s (Acoma) *Earth Power Coming* (1983), and Beth Brant’s (Mohawk) *A Gathering of Spirit* (1984) were among the first to feature “Indians speaking on their own behalf and defining artistic standards for themselves . . . mak[ing] a community of Native writers visible to each other in a way that had never been before” (“A Single Decade” 13–14). Within a few years, Paula Gunn Allen (Laguna Pueblo) published the first book-length contribution to Indigenous literary criticism: *The Sacred Hoop* (1986). Allen recenters Indigenous femininity within literary studies and remains a foundational touchstone for the field. Other book-length works of criticism by Indigenous authors soon

This critical contextualization is in no way comprehensive, but it provides some of the fundamental steps in the ongoing development of Indigenous literary studies as an academic discipline. Since 2000, the Indigenous literary criticism produced by both Indigenous and allied scholars has ballooned into a global Indigenous movement that produces more critical literature, scholarship, and art than any one scholar could ever pretend to be an expert of. These studies, then and now, have provided such field-shifting theoretical frameworks as Vizenor’s “survivance,” Warrior’s “intellectual sovereignty,” Georges Sioui’s (Wyandot/Huron) “auto history”, Weaver’s “communitism,” LeAnne Howe’s (Choctaw) “tribalography,” Womack’s

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“suspicioning,” and Chickasaw descendant Chadwick Allen’s “trans-Indigenous,” enabling students and scholars with the vocabulary and theoretical frameworks necessary to begin to read literatures written by Indigenous authors as distinctly Indigenous, and as the artistic, activist, resistant, surviving, and sovereign literatures that they are.

Within this ongoing expansion of Indigenous arts, literatures, and literary criticism, such path-clearing Indigenous scholars, artists, and activists as Howe, Monique Mojica (Guna-Rappahannock), and Marie Clements (Métis) continue to both imagine new ways and reclaim traditional approaches to recreate and represent the unbroken solidarity of Indigenous peoples, human and other than, that American “modernity” has sought to politically, culturally, rhetorically, and physically dislocate. Since 2011, Howe and Mojica, for example, have been travelling together, alongside others, to the various Earthworks throughout North America in order to collect and collectively recreate land-based Indigenous stories. As Howe explains, “[w]e’re using our physical bodies to locate certain stories that tribes wrote into the land as they were creating mounds and Earthworks across Native North America” (“Embodiment”). Together with the land and a team of mostly Chickasaw and Choctaw lighting, set, and costume designers, Howe and Mojica are producing a play that will function as a healing ceremony that connects audiences and actors to the individual and collective stories recorded by Indigenous lands.

9 Vizenor introduces “survivance” as the combination of survival and resistances, “an active sense of presence. . . , renunciations of dominance, tragedy and victimry” (Manifest Manners vii). Warrior describes “intellectual sovereignty” as “a way of envisioning the role American Indian writers can play in the struggle for American Indian sovereignty and self-determination. . . . [A] cultural criticism that is grounded in American Indian experiences” (Tribal Secrets xxiii). As set forth by Sioui, “autohistory” refers simply to Native history written by Native people with Native values (For an Amerindian Autohistory x). Womack introduced “suspicioning” as a way of examining the silenced issues of same-sex desire, but the approach of “tackling subjects one feels unsure of, but risks a statement anyway” (“Suspicioning” 135), is propelling Indigenous literary studies in provocative ways. Allen’s “trans-Indigenous” methodology emphasizes the possibilities of juxtaposing global Indigenous examples of self-representation (xi-xxxiv).
It is no coincidence that the (re)turn to land-based collectivist Indigenous literature has begun in Indigenous theater, where writers and performers collaborate and play on each other’s strengths to educate and move their audiences. Yet, theatrical collectivism not only reflects the audience as a collective community. As Howe and Mojica’s forthcoming play will present, Indigenous theater also remembers and (re)connects with the collectivism of previous and ongoing communities. A brief description and selective chronology of Clements’ work will highlight one especially poignant example of this current reclamation of the collective as composer, audience, and dramatic subject.

In 2003, Clements produced and published her first play to both popular and academic acclaim: *Burning Vision*. This powerful play interweaves the individual stories of a pregnant Métis woman, a radium painter,¹⁰ Dené miners, a Japanese fisherman and his grandmother, and a Dené seer in order to explore the interconnected individual levels of accountability in relation to the WWII bombing of Hiroshima. In 2005, Clements again moved audiences throughout and beyond Canada with her play *The Unnatural and Accidental Women*. Based on the true story of a twenty-year serial killing spree aimed at First Nations women in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver, British Columbia, this play reimagines the stories of missing and murdered Aboriginal women as Clements’ protagonist, Rebecca, searches for her own missing mother. Through Rebecca, Clements recreates the silenced community of Indigenous women overshadowed by the public media’s obsession with the non-Indigenous killer.

¹⁰ Radium painters were factory workers throughout the early 1900s who unknowingly contracted radium poisoning while painting watch dials with a radium-based self-luminescent paint.
In 2012, Clements’ *Tombs of the Vanishing Indian* told the story of three Native American sisters first forced to relocate from Indian Country in Oklahoma to Los Angeles, and then separated into foster homes after the sudden death of their mother. Clements sets the sisters’ story in conversation with the 1970s forced sterilization of Indigenous women as another dramatic retelling of the intense federally-mandated violence against individual Indigenous women. In 2013, Clements then collaborated with award-winning Canadian photojournalist Rita Leistner to produce the multimedia *Edward Curtis Project: A Modern Picture Story*. Here Clements and Leistner staged interactions between and juxtapose actual photographs from a contemporary Aboriginal photographer and prolific early twentieth-century American photojournalist Edward Curtis, whose 1907 photo collection *The North American Indian* forever ingrained poverty, isolation, and “vanishing” into the popular conception of Native North America. Through each of these works, Clements reclaims and recreates individual Indigenous stories otherwise silenced by murder, cultural genocide, and popular stereotyping. And while each production showcases individuals within or from Indigenous communities, both urban and rural, the emphasis has consistently been on individual victims or agents often separated from or seeking to rebuild a sense of community.

But while she was working on these stories about individuals, Clements was also exploring the possibility of a more collective subject and a collective practice. In February 2010, Clements debuted a different type of project that is now in production as a docudrama with the National Film Board of Canada: a multi-media musical entitled *The Road Forward*. Clements created and directed the project, and Tuscarora musician Jennifer Kreisberg composed the music. As the *Road Forward*’s playbill attests, however, the stage production was the result of a collaboration of Indigenous writers, musicians, and performers, featuring nineteen songs
composed by at least eight different Indigenous contributors. As Episkinew noted, “[Theatrical productions] are communal both in production and in performance. A community of actors, designers, and technicians work cooperatively to fashion productions that will be worthy of the communities that constitute their audiences” (147). While the production and audience of all of Clements’ previous plays reflect this collective nature of Indigenous theater, *The Road Forward* also introduces the Indigenous collective as composer, audience, and subject.

*The Road Forward’s* purpose is “to honour the Native women and men of the Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood [of British Columbia] and to raise our hands to the Native women missing and murdered on the Highway of Tears and Vancouver’s Downtown Eastside” (Clements, *The Road Forward* 3–6). Through *The Road Forward*, Clements returns to the horrific reality of murdered and missing Aboriginal women. But rather than reimagining communities of individual Indigenous victims, she collaborates with other artists and musicians to evidence the work of an ongoing critical community that has been working collectively since 1931 in British Columbia to fight for the rights and betterment of First Nations peoples. The dominating narrative of “missing and murdered,” including Clements’ earlier works, has focused on individuals, often in terms of isolation and alienation. *The Road Forward*, however, brings together a collective of award-winning Indigenous actors and artists such as Kreisberg, Michelle St. John (Cree), and Cheri Maracle (Six Nations) to recognize the often overlooked collective activism of early and ongoing Indigenous communities, thereby emphasizing “what’s possible when communities come together to achieve a common goal” (Clements, *The Road Forward* 2). As the musical’s final song encourages, *The Road Forward* is the recognition that through “one heart, one mind, with our spirits combined . . . . On the road forward there are no tears. On the road forward there are no fears” (Clements and Kreisberg).
Not only is it no coincidence that a (re)turn to collectivist literary practices is beginning in Indigenous theater, it is also no coincidence that this (re)turn is being led by the passionate art and activism of Indigenous women. Through this dissertation, I hope to signal the need for a similar reclamatory shift in the field of Indigenous literary studies, to follow the lead of Indigenous women, past and present, as producers and protectors of Indigenous peoples, lands, and literatures. In order to move beyond the expressions and resulting academic explorations and exploitations of the tears and fears of Indigenous isolation, alienation, and victimhood, and in order to build upon the more recent articulations of individual activism and resistance, I suggest that literary scholars begin to move along Howe’s, Mojica’s, and Clements’ forward-thinking “road” by exploring and promoting collectivist literatures alongside their individually authored counterparts. And like Howe and Mojica, we must keep these collectivist literatures rooted in the distinct and shared lands of their collective authors. By doing so, we can begin to recast trails and highways of tears as roads of futurity, roads of success, roads of actualized sovereignty, roads of reconnected peoples, literatures, and lands. As Howe, Mojica, Clements, and so many other Indigenous dramatists, musicians, and artists have begun again to depict in such powerfully innovative ways, it is time for literary critics to make the similar return to collectivist literatures in order to further evidence possibilities rather than poverty, to remember solidarity in action rather than alienation, to encourage collective liberation rather than solitary confinement.

**Indigenous Solidarity in Motion**

One of the many purposes of the reservation system in the United States has been to confine and permanently immobilize Indigenous peoples. Through slavery, smallpox, boarding schools, allotment, the sterilization of women, and so on, the settler-colonial governments that
have expanded throughout North America and the Pacific have systematically sought to restrict, either by death or dishonest diplomacy, Indigenous peoples from continuing on the same intellectual, economic, cultural, spiritual, and physical pathways they have travelled since time immemorial. As a result, mainstream narratives of Indigenous peoples have most often been of isolated individuals, who remain culturally, intellectually, technologically, and physically static. In fact, individual motion, such as that taken by Bonnin and others involved in the Society of American Indians, has often been equated with Indigenous inauthenticity, anti-traditionalism, and treasonous assimilation. Yet, Indigenous peoples throughout North America and the Pacific—indeed the world—have always been in various kinds of motion that do not imply a separation from Indigenous lands or kinship networks. Rather, such motion has always been integral to the protection of these. Indeed, the road forward for Indigenous literary studies engenders and requires rigorous intellectual mobility. By (re)centering collectivist texts, this dissertation evidences the extent of physical, intellectual, and technological mobility throughout Indigenous North America and the Pacific as distinct nations have continued to correspond and collaborate with one another in writing and in person as they resist unilateral assimilation and the resulting theft of Indigenous land and resources.

Thus, as I discuss Indigenous mobility and motion throughout this dissertation, it is important to consider the various forms of physical, intellectual, and political mobility as Indigenous peoples have adapted to and moved through new sociopolitical challenges and opportunities. By mobility, I do not mean “progress” in the Eurowestern sense of moving away

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from Indigenous traditions toward Eurowestern cultural norms. Rather, Indigenous solidarity in motion emphasizes the ability of Indigenous traditions to adapt and expand despite the dictates of dominant cultural norms, despite the forced migration away from ancestral territories and onto reservations, and despite the coerced movement away from families and into boarding schools and now foster homes, away from communities and into urban centers, and so on.

A brief introductory example from the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood illustrates this second theoretical thread of Indigenous solidarity in motion. Similar examples could be examined at any of the over one hundred annual conventions of the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood. This particular example is taken from the meeting minutes of the 1944 Convention [fig. 1] that was held amidst the Brotherhood/Sisterhood’s ongoing fight against anti-Native discrimination and public segregation which culminated in the passing of the Alaska Anti-Discrimination Act the following year.12

Each page of meeting minutes is full of various motions. Reading these motions in relationship to the various collective writings and actions explored throughout this dissertation, makes it clear that what seems like a conventional formality borrowed from a Eurowestern procedural simultaneously underlines the understated reality that Alaska Natives have continued in cultural, intellectual, political, and physical motion despite the deracinating restrictions placed upon them first by Russian and then U.S. colonial sociopolitical structures. Each motion of the Alaska Native Brotherhood signifies the physical mobility of delegates from across the territory to gather within a distinctly Alaska Native space, the cultural mobility of adapting to anti-Alaska Native mandates, the intellectual mobility of exchanging, debating, and deciding on potential

12 Alaska’s Anti-Discrimination Act was the first anti-segregation act passed in any U.S. territory or state.
paths forward; and the political mobility necessary to make fundamental changes to anti-Alaska Native laws and practices. Composed because of and in order to further encourage Indigenous mobility, the collectivist literatures analyzed throughout this dissertation are powerful texts that evidence Indigenous solidarity in motion rather than the immobilized displacement and alienation of Indigenous individuals. These collectivist literatures represent more of the words that have been and continue to be published to preserve and protect the literatures, lives, and lands of Indigenous peoples as they continue to survive, write, resist, and maneuver in solidarity.
Resolution No. 47, entitled NATIONAL WAR FUND, was introduced by the Haines Camp ANB.

87. Motion (Paul Jr., Martin) to suspend rules to consider Resolution 47 immediately. Carried.

88. Motion (Paul Jr., Martin) to adopt Resolution 47, Carried unanimously.

The Chair appointed Mrs. Jenny Thunalt chairman of the committee and ordered to name the other members and as many as she desired.

The business by previous order was: Shall the motion to adopt paragraphs 7, 8, 9, and 10 of the Bargaining Agency Committee Report as amended be carried. The motion carried.

Andrew Hopo, chairman, gave the report of the Wage & Meats Committee on paragraph 6 of the Bargaining Agency Committee Report, as follows: That the following be substituted for the language of paragraph 6: "To raise Grand Secretary's salary $300 with the understanding that he assist all bargaining agency camps with negotiations and signing of agreements." Discussion followed.

89. Motion (Hopo, Eliz. Patreatovich) to adopt Wage & Meats Committee report. Carried.

90. Motion (Hopo, Martin) to adopt the Bargaining Agency Committee's Report as amended. Carried.

91. Motion (Paul Jr., Hopo) to adopt the committee report on Resolution No. 11, entitled DIRECT ELECTION OF NATIONAL COMMITTEE. The report was that it did not pass. Discussion followed, and Paul Jr. stated the purpose of introducing No. 11 was educational — to show that it was possible to elect directly by the people as to the National Committee and women of the Republican Party that the delegates should consider the plan for the future, because the irresponsible antics of the Republicans were forcing Indians out of any choice of political parties and into the Democratic Party, which is un-American. Motion carried.

The Secretary announced that the next committee report which had been handed in to his desk was from the Constitutional Committee, Cyrus Pack, chairman, on Resolution 1, entitled CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENTS, with the recommendation to adopt Articles II and III, and that the Convention the remaining sections itself one by one thereafter.

92. Motion (Secretary, Smith) to consider the proposed constitutional amendments section by section beginning with Article II and ending with Article I. Carried.

92a. Motion (Paul Jr., Hopo) to adopt Article II as proposed. Carried.

93. Motion (Secretary, Smith) to adopt Article III as proposed.

94. Motion (Smith, Paul Jr.) to amend Article III by adding after the words "to vote" the words "except in case of emergency."

Without objection, the house recessed for 5 minutes. Upon reconvening, the membership of the National War Fund Committee was announced: Vesta Scott, Mildred Frank, June Frobridge, and Amy Hollingshead.
Co-nationalism: “Indians Must Organize”

The Native Brotherhood of British Columbia that is celebrated in Clements’ latest work was neither the first nor the only moment of collective Indigenous activism in North America. Rather, the Native Brotherhood of British Columbia (1931–) grew out of a concatenation of movements, including the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood (1912–), throughout and beyond North America throughout the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries of establishing Indigenous political action organizations. It was an era of Indigenous peoples coming together to collectively push for various forms of federal recognition, rights, and reciprocity despite, and perhaps because of, the separation of peoples and lands enacted by federal Indian boarding schools, allotment, and other similar territory-specific policies and practices. Early twentieth-century author and activist Gertrude Bonnin summarized the underlying sentiment of Indigenous intellectuals and activists in this way: “It is imperative to join hands, unite our forces, to save our race from dying out, by actual starvation and landlessness” (Letter to S. G. Davis). Then describing her own organization, the National Council of American Indians, she writes, “[t]his is a great national movement. Indians MUST organize. . . . The future will prove organization is the only way Indians can hope to gain power to protect themselves legally, and for their racial preservation” (Letter to Albert Attochnie).

Before helping to form the National Council of American Indians (1926–38), however, Gertrude Bonnin contributed to another continental U.S. Indigenous organization, the Society of American Indians (1911–23), which has received more academic focus than, and come to overshadow, other contemporaneous Indigenous organizations.\(^\text{13}\) In 2013, the *American Indian*

\(^{13}\) See Lucy Maddox’s *Citizen Indians: Native American Intellectuals, Race, and Reform* (2005).
Quarterly and Studies in American Indian Literatures came together to commemorate the centennial anniversary of the Society of American Indian’s quarterly journal, The American Indian Magazine (1913–20), through a special combined issue. This resulting issue features many of the leading voices of the current field of Indigenous literary studies, who offer their interpretations of the work and individuals of the Society. Chadwick Allen, for example, describes the Society as “the first American Indian rights organization conceived, developed, and run by Native people themselves, rather than by sympathetic non-Native reformers or other so-called Friends of the Indians” (“Introduction” 3). Philip J. Deloria (Dakota) encourages readers to remember the individual participants in the Society of American Indians for their complexity and commitment rather than by reducing them to the oversimplified category of “assimilationists.” The subsequent articles then focus largely on the lives, work, and writings of individuals including Gertrude Bonnin, Carlos Montezuma (Yavapai/Apache), and Laura Cornelius Kellogg (Oneida).

While each article sheds critical new light and provides new perspectives on the context and consequences of the Society of American Indians, Taos Pueblo scholar P. Jane Hafen’s article, “Help Indians Help themselves,” is the only one to emphasize the understated reality that the Society of American Indians was but one of many politically active Indigenous organizations of the early twentieth century. Her article speculates on why the Society of American Indians began to fall apart after twelve years as individuals began to move on to form or join other organizations that they believed better represented and suited the relationships and necessities of Native North America. Hafen reports that Gertrude Bonnin, for example, later criticized the

14 The American Indian Magazine began as the Quarterly Journal of the American Indian (1913–15).
Society of American Indians, of which she had served as secretary and chief journal editor for nearly a decade, for being “top-heavy, without any body” (“Help Indians Help themselves” 210). Similar to Bonnin’s criticism of the Society, the emphasis of the joint issue of *American Indian Quarterly* and *Studies in American Indian Literatures* on individual Indigenous intellectuals also overemphasizes the “head” of early twentieth-century Indigeneity in the United States while neglecting the larger Indigenous “body” that the Society of American Indians pledged to represent.\(^\text{15}\)

Still today, many scholars classify the Society of American Indians as the leading organization of a pan-Indian or pan-tribal moment, often emphasizing members’ cosmopolitanism, mixed blood, and progressive politics. This brings us back to perhaps the most influential turn in Indigenous literary criticism in the past twenty years: Indigenous literary nationalism. In the first collection of Indigenous literary criticism published by a distinctly Indigenous publisher in Canada, Jeanette Armstrong (Okanagan) described the necessity of developing “culture-specific” forms of literary criticism, suggesting:

> In reading First Nations Literature . . . [there] must be an acknowledgment that the voices are culture-specific voices and there are experts within those cultures who are essential to be drawn from and drawn out in order to incorporate into the reinterpretation through pedagogy, the context of English Literature coming from Native Americans. (7)

\(^{15}\) For an in-depth study of Indigenous intellectuals of this period, see Kiara Vigil’s *Indigenous Intellectuals: Sovereignty, Citizenship, and the American Imagination, 1880-1930* (2015); as well as Lucy Maddox’s *Citizen Indians: Native American Intellectuals, Race, and Reform* (2005).
What Armstrong prescribed in 1993 anticipated the now foundational works of Simon Ortiz, Robert Warrior, Jace Weaver, Craig Womack, Lisa Brooks (Abenaki), Daniel Heath Justice, and others, who first gave language to the set of approaches that has come to be known as Indigenous literary nationalism. Their scholarship has caused literary critics to become skeptical of scholarship that focuses more on markers of pan-Indigenous identity than on an individuals’ commitment to and promotion of tribal-specific responsibilities, politics, and land. Bonnin’s falling out with the Society of American Indians, however, illustrates that the back-and-forth between Indigenous literary nationalism and cosmopolitanism has been ongoing for at least a century among Indigenous intellectuals and authors. To borrow again from Bonnin’s language, we could say that Indigenous cosmopolitanism has been focused on the “head,” i.e. the urbanized, Washington, D.C.- and New York-based interlocutors, while Indigenous nationalists have been focused on distinct tribal bodies: intellectual, political, literary, and literal.

Since Indigenous literary nationalism effectively reconfigured the field of Indigenous literary studies, scholars have recognized this figurative decapitation and have suggested ways to either rejoin and/or work within the necessary space between the national and the cosmopolitan in order to promote a more productive intellectual and political solidarity between the two. In 2010, for example, Cree-Métis scholar Deanna Reder anticipated that contemporary scholarship would return to pan-Indian methodologies and proposed the powwow term ‘inter-tribal’ as a way of promoting Indigenous solidarity, especially in urban spaces (“Preface” ix). In a similar vein, Justice has suggested a trans/national approach, one that he describes as “a dual perspective of movement from center outward and back again” where the center is always relationship. A

16 As Margery Fee explains, “[a]n ‘inter-tribal is a dance in which those from all nations can join” (571).
trans/national turn promotes the productive acknowledgement that “literary nationalism and cosmopolitanism are—or can be—complementary approaches” (Justice, “Currents of Trans/national Criticism” 338–9). In 2013, Chadwick Allen pushed the possibilities of trans-further to argue for the need to move beyond comparative structures of literary inquiry and to develop a global Indigenous methodology of Indigenous juxtapositions, a strategy that he calls the “trans-Indigenous” (Trans-Indigenous xi–xxxiv).

As productive as the terms inter-tribal, trans/national, and trans-Indigenous can be in recognizing the important collaborations of global Indigenous peoples within culture- or nation-specific contexts, however, each approach remains largely focused on individuals. Reder’s “inter-tribal” invites individuals from nations to come together in the metaphor of dance, especially within urban Indigenous settings, in order to develop what Reder has described as the “Intertribal urban imaginary” (“Ceremony”). Trans/nationalism and trans-Indigeneity, on the other hand, emphasize the ostensibly unlimited ability of a prefix to frame the necessity and reality of collaborating artistically, politically, economically, intellectually, and so on across and through tribal nations. As Chadwick Allen explains, “[Trans-] may be able to harbor the potential of change as both transitive and intransitive verb, and as both noun and adjective.”

“Trans- could be the next post-,” he continues: “It could launch a thousand symposia, essays, and books, enlist sympathetic responses, provoke bitter critiques. It could propel the growth of a still-emerging field toward still-unexplored possibilities” (xv). Indeed, trans- has introduced an array of possibilities within and beyond the field of Indigenous literary studies. In many ways, trans- has propelled this dissertation in the way it embodies and encourages movement, adaptability, and collaboration. However, every prefix has its parameters, especially in its possible overuse. And trans- has its limits. For one, whether in terms of the trans/national or the trans-Indigenous,
the possibilities of trans- have been almost exclusively articulated by or about individual intellectuals, artists, and activists.

In this dissertation, I introduce a new term, *co-nationalism*, a term that I think better illustrates the political context of many turn-of-the-twentieth-century Indigenous communities and literatures, and one that could inform ongoing Indigenous political, intellectual, artistic, and literary collaboration in ways that situate individuals within larger communities or collectives. Particularly at the turn of the twentieth century within the expanding U.S. empire, an era of burgeoning Indigenous activism and authorship in Indigenous languages and English, discussions of nationhood were central in Native circles. It was an era in which American Indians and Alaska Natives became universal U.S. citizens (1924) and a time that anticipated the Indian Reorganization Act (1934), which would allow Indigenous nations throughout the United States to reconstitute themselves and their political relationships with the U.S. federal government.

Yet it was also a period of multiple distinct Indigenous nations, or delegates from these nations, coming together to reclaim longstanding collaborative Indigenous networks in order to engage more effectively with increasingly powerful and oppressive non-Indigenous structures, systems, and governments. Thus, because the turn of the twentieth century was a time of reclaiming Indigenous national specificity through a network of collaborative nations, the term co-nationalism becomes a productive bridge between the nation-specific (Indigenous nationalism) and pan-Indigenous (Indigenous cosmopolitanism) needs, desires, and issues of Indigenous peoples and literary studies. Unlike the prefix *pan-*, which often has a homogenizing effect in the name “unity,” co-nationalism stresses nation specificity and aims for nation-to-nation solidarity. And by emphasizing *co-* (together) rather than *cosmo-* (world/universe) or *trans* (across/through), co-nationalism keeps the land, its resources, and the distinct sovereignty
of individual Indigenous nations central while highlighting the reality of and potential for sovereign Indigenous relationships.

Co-nationalism articulates the reality and potential for Indigenous and Indigenous, as well as Indigenous and non-Indigenous, nation-to-nation relationships in collaboration, negotiation, activism, and resistance. And by doing so, co-nationalism provides a new, field-broadening framework that invites scholars to read nation- and network-specific collectivist writings and writing practices in relationship with one another and with the ongoing reclamation of pre-1960s single-author Indigenous texts. Such a co-nationalist approach would encourage readers to reconsider the robust literary productivity, complexity, and breadth of pre-Native Renaissance Indigenous writers. Recovering and reclaiming the co-nationalist Indigenous literary and political networks active across the expanding borders of the United States throughout the turn of the twentieth century also keeps us rooted in the land that Indigenous nations attend to and rely upon for language, stories, songs, ceremonies, water, air, shelter, food, and home. It is also the land, with its archived footprints, trails, roads, and waterways, that enables us to trace longstanding, hemispheric Indigenous collectivist literary traditions from an Ante-Columbian era to today. It is the land that has recorded an unbroken line of literary co-national Indigenous solidarity and co-national Indigenous action. And it is for the land upon which and for which the thousands of individuals, who made up the Hui Aloha ‘Āina, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood, and the National Council of American Indians, came together and reconstituted themselves, their citizenship, their nations, and their ongoing co-national relationships.
Chapter 1: Constitutional Stories

In the beginning
there was a word.
And the word was good.
And that word was “Huli.”

And that, my brothers, was the beginning.
‘Īmaikalani Kalāhele (Kānaka Maoli)

The Constitution of the United States, no matter how binding it continues to be on individuals living within the confines of the U.S. national borders, was neither the first nor the last constitution written upon the land that the world now recognizes as the United States of America. No, the beginning and the end of constitution-writing within the now states and territories of the United States was, and will be forever Indigenous. Oral, material, and textual Indigenous constitutions have always governed this continent and they continue to govern the nation-specific and co-national relationships and responsibilities of Indigenous individuals and communities toward one another and toward the land. Even before textual constitutions, Indigenous stories and spoken agreements developed, documented, and managed Indigenous peoples’ relationship with one another and the land. As Howe argues, “a native creation story was one of America’s authors” (“Tribalography” 42). In succession, Indigenous lands have given birth to Indigenous stories, and Indigenous stories have created Indigenous constitutions. In return, Indigenous constitutions commit Indigenous peoples to the protection, preservation, and prosperity of their stories and their lands. In order to (re)center collectivist Indigenous literary traditions, it is crucial to first remember that, as Howe argues, constitution-making in North America and the Pacific is an Indigenous literary tradition that predates Eurowestern constitution-writing and has since adapted to Eurowestern constitutional constraints. It is an
Indigenous sociopolitical and literary tradition that has remained committed to protecting Indigenous rights, community, solidarity, survival, and lands. As Brooks argues, constitution-writing is an Indigenous literary tradition that traces its lineage orally, materially, and textually throughout North America back to the more widely known Constitution of the Cherokee Nation (1827), the Quiché Maya Popol Vuh (ca. 1500s), and the Hodinöhso:ni’ Great Law (ca. 1090–1500) (“The Constitution” 48–9).17

I begin with such directness in order to move away from the incessant paralleling of Indigenous and Eurowestern literary genres and forms, away from the implication that Indigenous literatures—in this case, constitutions—are mere copies of their Eurowestern counterparts. Building on Brooks’ research on the connection between the Hodinöhso:ni’ Great Law and the Constitution of the White Earth Nation (2009), this chapter demonstrates that what Brooks identifies as a “continental Indigenous literary tradition,” reaches, in fact, across the Pacific into a hemispheric Indigenous American literary tradition. Indigenous communities throughout the continental and oceanic territories of the United States organized themselves, their relationships with, and their responsibilities to each other and their lands prior to and then as a form of collective resistance against U.S. imperial incursions. Future research will surely evidence constitution-writing as a global Indigenous literary tradition. It is within Brooks’ reclamation of constitution-writing as a longstanding Indigenous literary tradition that I situate the Constitution of the White Earth Nation as a starting point to work retrospectively through the

17 See David E. Wilkins’ Documents of Native American Political Development: 1500s to 1933 for an important pre-Indian Reorganization Act literary history of Native American constitution writing.
constituents of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina (1893), the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood (1917), and the National Council of American Indians (1926).

Thus, the Hodinöhsö:ni’ Great Law (ca. 1090–1500) and the more contemporary Constitution of the White Earth Nation (2009) serve, for the purpose of this dissertation, as the constitutional bookends—though neither represents the actual beginning or end—of Indigenous constitution-writing within the imperial United States from which the constitutions of the National Council of American Indians, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood, and the Hui Aloha ‘Āina speak. Although each group writes from its own cultural, geographic, political, and linguistic location, they all share common commitments that continue to connect Indigenous literatures. Kateri Akiwenzie-Damm (Anishinaabe) describes these shared characteristics as “our connection to our homelands, our histories of colonization, genocide, and displacement, and our will to survive and pass the treasures of our cultures to future generations” (vi). Like the contemporary Indigenous literature that Akiwenzie-Damm and Josie Douglas (Wardaman descent) have brought together in their collection, Skins: Contemporary Indigenous Writing (2000), these constitutions work toward a fruitful balance between, and commitment to, the tribal and intertribal, the national and cosmopolitan, the Indigenous American and the trans-Indigenous. And like contemporary Indigenous literature, these constitutions derive from and can be read as Indigenous stories.

In 2009, forty citizen delegates from the White Earth Nation of what is now Minnesota gathered to ratify a new constitution, thereby declaring independence from the federally imposed 1867 Treaty with the Chippewa of the Mississippi and later Constitution of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe (1936) that consolidated multiple Anishinaabe and Ojibwe/Chippewa reservations into one. Gerald Vizenor, a seventy-four-year-old Anishinaabe university professor
and author of more than thirty books of Native history, literature, cultural studies, and poetry, was appointed principal writer. Associate Professor Jill Doerfler (Anishinaabe), Vice President JoAnne Stately (Anishinaabe), and emeritus Chief Judge Anita Fineday (Anishinaabe) were selected as Vizenor’s constitutional advisors. While Vizenor served as the principal writer, he drafted the Constitution through a collective dialogue with his advisors and other constitutional delegates (Vizenor, *The White Earth Nation* 52). Brooks argues that although critics celebrate Vizenor’s experimental prose, poetry, and incisive scholarship, his writing of the Constitution “may indeed represent an ultimate outcome of his experimentation, the 'word' that could set his creative deliberation into motion” because it represents “the collective imagination of nationhood” (“The Constitution” 58–9). Describing this collective and deliberative motion, Vizenor writes, “The Constitution of the White Earth Nation . . . was ratified by Native delegates with a determined sense of Native presence, of resistance and survivance over absence and victimry” (*The White Earth Nation* 15). It is this constitutional potential to express and enable Indigenous mobility by (re)centering and rearticulating collectivist literary practices, that provides this chapter’s foundation and current significance.

This chapter extends Brooks’ reading of Vizenor and the Constitution of the White Earth Nation by highlighting the co-national commitment of turn-of-the-twentieth-century Indigenous intellectuals who, like Vizenor, worked and wrote within both the cosmopolitan and the national, and by exploring the similar power and potential of collectivist literary expression beyond nation-specific Indigenous constitutions. Vizenor and the constitutional delegates of the White

18 Dr. Jill Doerfler is Associate Professor of American Indian Studies at the University of Minnesota Duluth. Joanne Stately serves as Vice President of Development for the Indian Land Tenure Foundation. Anita Fineday is emeritus Chief Judge of the White Earth Tribal Court.
Earth Nation, as well as the collective authors of the other constitutions under analysis in this chapter, write their constitutional stories with a commitment to maintaining a relational balance between the individual and the collective, the tribal and the intertribal, the national and the cosmopolitan. Many scholars are familiar with these individuals and their works of individual artistic aptitude. It is time for scholars, students, community members, and others to also remember these same individuals’ part within the collective writings and resulting actions of their peoples.

Describing his process of writing the Constitution of the White Earth Nation, Vizenor explains, “the narrative of my strategy to write a constitution is an original Native story” (*The White Earth Nation* 51, emphasis added). As Vizenor states, each constitution, each act of collectivist writing and the narrative processes of such, tell an “original Native story.” Like other Indigenous stories, constitutional stories “seem to pull all the elements together of the storyteller’s tribe, meaning the people, the land, and multiple characters and all their manifestations and revelations, and connect these in past, present, and future milieus” (Howe, “Tribalography” 42). Each constitution’s author(s), or storyteller(s), strings together individual and shared stories, past and present to “define the people as a whole, the community” (Owens 9). Each constitutional community, in turn, tells its own new story. Each constitutional story enables the resurgence and continuance of future individually and collectively embodied Indigenous stories. And these “original Native stor[ies]” are powerful. Sociopolitically, as Anishinaabe legal scholar John Borrows argues, such constitutional stories continue “living legal traditions” that can be traced back to, and have continued to develop from Indigenous oral traditions (6). Literarily, these same constitutional stories, which remain rooted in Indigenous oral traditions, offer stories of solidarity, stories of survivance, stories of Indigenous mobility that have been
omitted from accepted literary records of Indigenous peoples in favor of the more “traditional,” “authentic,” or “assimilated” Indian stories.

These constitutional stories evidence Indigenous presence that countermands non-Indigenous narratives of vanishing and/or stasis. And if Indigenous stories are, as Leslie Marmon Silko (Laguna Pueblo) suggests, “all [that Indigenous peoples] have to fight off illness and death” (2), if Indigenous stories have the power to “create people” and “author tribes” (Howe, “Tribalography 29”), and if such stories truly “have the power to make, re-make, un-make the world” (Vizenor, Fugitive 15), then constitutional stories contribute an oft-overlooked source of essential healing and procreative power. By (re)centering the collective in Indigenous literary studies in a way that emphasizes the various forms of ongoing Indigenous mobility, constitutional stories share the power and responsibility to recreate the Indigenous past and present in order to better imagine Indigenous futures through a more holistic approach to reading, representing, and writing Indigenous literatures in all their varieties.

**Constitution of the White Earth Nation (2009)**

The Constitution of the White Earth Nation is the most current, widely circulated, and thoroughly documented example of a contemporary Indigenous constitutional story. Thus, I provide a brief analysis of the Constitution of the White Earth Nation in order to establish a framework through which we can reimagine the less-documented constitutional stories of the past. An introductory analysis of the White Earth Nation’s new Constitution also highlights the current need to broaden our recovery and reclamation of Indigenous literatures in order to better document and discuss how Indigenous authors and their respective communities continue to
address the interstices of citizenship, nationhood, and relationships through various interconnected literary forms and genres.

The seventeen-page Constitution of the White Earth Nation is separated into two preambles, twenty chapters, and one hundred eighteen articles, outlining the various government branches and citizen rights. The first preamble declares White Earth Nation’s longstanding connection to both “a great tradition of continental liberty” and a literary tradition of creating Anishinaabe stories. The second preamble states the White Earth Nation’s constitutional purposes: “to secure an inherent and essential sovereignty, to promote traditions of liberty, justice, and peace, and reserve common resources, and to ensure the inalienable rights of native governance for our posterity” (1). The chapters continue by defining the White Earth Nation’s “Territory and Jurisdiction,” the citizenry, and the rights and duties of citizens. Other chapters include definitions of suffrage, governance, various councils, and the separation of government powers. Within each chapter, brief articles provide concrete definitions, duties, responsibilities, and rights. The fifth article, for example, guarantees that “[t]he freedom of thought and conscience, academic, artistic irony, and literary expression, shall not be denied, violated or controverted by the government” (Vizenor, the White Earth Nation 65). In summary, Vizenor describes the constitutional structure and content as a direct “manifestation of Native politics on the White Earth Reservation” (The White Earth Nation 17).

Vizenor goes on to describe an empowering connection of past and present Anishinaabe politics to illustrate the Constitution of the White Earth Nation’s reasoning and potential reach:

   I proclaimed in my final presentation to the delegates my heartfelt respect for the communal process of Native sovereignty. By this Constitution of the White Earth Nation we become a nation that advances the formal practices of governance,
cultural sovereignty, liberty, suffrage, justice, and the rights of citizens. . . . By this Constitution we exercise a new political power and communal duties derived from the traditional practices of the Anishinaabeg. These were the cultural practices of continental liberty, reciprocity, courage, and the survivance of our ancestors. (The White Earth Nation 55, emphasis added)

Here Vizenor describes the Constitution of the White Earth Nation’s purpose as enabling the White Earth Nation to reconstitute themselves as a sovereign nation independent from the federally mandated Minnesota Chippewa Tribe in order to gain greater political power and redefine communal responsibilities according to their own understandings of Anishinaabe cultural and political traditions despite the U.S. federal impositions of the Constitution of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe (1936). This 1936 Constitution mandated the unification of six treaty reservations, including the White Earth Reservation, into one with the purpose of “conserv[ing] and develop[ing] tribal resources and to promote the conservation and development of individual Indian trust property” (1). While the Constitution of the White Earth Nation resists the settler-colonial constructs that have limited White Earth’s autonomy since as early as the 1867 creation of the White Earth Reservation, the White Earth Nation also adheres to certain settler-colonial constructs made necessary by federal Indian policy.

David E. Wilkins (Lumbee), for example, places the Constitution of the White Earth Nation in conversation with the 130 tribal constitutions that have been created since the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act which seek “to better reflect [Native nations’] collective desires and, of course, the desires of federal officials as well.” Describing IRA constitutions, Wilkins goes on to assert that “[d]espite persistent misconceptions about these constitutions, many of them did, in fact, broadly reflect the goals of the communities at the time,” yet “[l]ike all national
communities, indigenous nations expand, mature, and become more diversified” (“Sovereignty” 7). The Constitution of the White Earth Nation seeks to attend to the nation’s post-1934 (IRA) expansion, maturity, and diversification in ways that both represent the communal voice and desires of the White Earth Nation, as well as adhere to the mandates of contemporary federal Indian policy.

Vizenor outlines, for example, that within the confines of federal Indian policy, White Earth collectively reclaims Anishinaabe constitutional traditions. Vizenor repeatedly employs the collective pronouns “we” and “our” in order to emphasize how the Constitution of the White Earth Nation represents a national, or communal voice, a democratic declaration of rights and liberty. Vizenor applauds their creation of a new constitution based on the reclamation of traditional Anishinaabe stories of governance. Although he served as principal author, Vizenor details how White Earth’s Constitution embodies a communal voice as expressed within an active dialogic process between forty diverse citizen delegates invited to attend four constitutional conventions. The delegates, all of whom had been nominated from ten Native community councils (The White Earth Nation 49–50), were mostly elders and came from a variety of professional and educational backgrounds. Some were retired; the majority had completed some postsecondary education; and twelve held at least one academic degree. Vizenor records:

Two delegates were college teachers, one delegate was a retired firefighter from Minneapolis, two delegates worked in health services, one delegate directed a youth council, one delegate was a musician, one delegate was a Head Start teacher, one delegate directed human relations at the casino, and seven delegates
were employed by various federal agencies on the reservation. (*The White Earth Nation* 50–51)

These diverse Anishinaabe delegates gathered together on October 19–20, 2007, for their first of four constitutional conventions.

Coming from such diverse academic and professional backgrounds, the delegates at the first convention began by distinguishing and defining such terms as “reservation,” “nation,” and “cultural sovereignty” (*The White Earth Nation* 46). Vizenor admits, “I had my doubts about how the diverse views of forty delegates . . . could be reconciled by association, discussion, and inescapable compromises to create a document of individual rights, duties, and principles of governance and justice” (*The White Earth Nation* 55). Yet despite their differences, difficulties, and initial doubts, the delegates left the first convention eager and confident “in the inauguration of a new constitution” (46). These delegates convened three more times over the next eighteen months to further negotiate, debate, compromise, and determine the course and content of the final Constitution of the White Earth Nation.

At the concluding convention, Vizenor and his advisors presented a final draft of the Constitution of the White Earth Nation, and the collective writing process continued: “Each and every article was read out loud, and delegates discussed the content and purpose of the articles. Necessary changes were made with the full participation of the delegates” (53). Delegates voiced questions and concerns, discussed possible solutions and revisions, and Vizenor made the final necessary changes to the document. Each change was approved through a unanimous vote from the delegates. After the Constitution of the White Earth Nation had been fully revised, all of the attending delegates voted “by secret ballot” and officially ratified the Constitution of the White Earth Nation on April 4, 2009 (54).
But beyond the process of representing a communal voice through the composition of the Constitution of the White Earth Nation, it is important to note how White Earth chose to express that collectivity within the language of the document itself. As Vizenor explains, “We the People,” i.e. the authorial voice used in the U.S. Constitution, “was an exclusive association that would never form a perfect union or establish justice for Natives and for others on the margins of the surety of liberty” (*The White Earth Nation* 33). Thus, the constitutional delegates agreed upon “We the Anishinaabeg of the White Earth Nation” in order to assert what Vizenor describes as “a pithy declaration of Native presence and survivance over absence and victimry” (*The White Earth Nation* 33). The concluding paragraph of White Earth’s second preamble then declares in collective solidarity: “We the Anishinaabeg of the White Earth Nation . . . do constitute, ordain, and establish this Constitution of the White Earth Nation” (Vizenor, *The White Earth Nation* 63).

Throughout White Earth’s new Constitution, the seemingly all-inclusive “We the Anishinaabeg of the White Earth Nation” becomes separated into three distinctions: “The White Earth Nation,” “Citizens of the White Earth Nation,” and “The people.” “The White Earth Nation,” for example, is defined as the government authority that “shall have jurisdiction over citizens” (2). The “Citizens of the White Earth Nation” are described specifically as “descendants of Anishinaabeg families and related by linear descent to enrolled members of the White Earth Reservation and Nation, according to genealogical documents, treaties, and other agreements with the government of the United States” (2). Finally, the Constitution of the White Earth Nation leaves the category of “the People” ambiguous, stating that “[t]he people shall not be denied the fundamental human rights of citizenship in the White Earth Nation” (4), such as the freedom from discrimination, the freedom of thought, and the freedom to bear arms. Yet, the White Earth Nation explicitly protects only “citizens” against banishment from the White Earth
Nation (Constitution 7). Such ambiguity and distinction seem to seek a balance between the rights and resources of citizenship and the wanted cultural, political, and kinship participation of those White Earth Anishinaabeg whose kinship relationships and responsibilities defy “official” documentation. In each case, the Constitution of the White Earth Nation makes an overt move away from citizenship and peoplehood based only on blood quantum as mandated in the Constitution of the Minnesota Chippewa Tribe.

In *Those Who Belong* (2015), Doerfler describes the often paralyzing process of defining constitutional belonging and what “We the Anishinaabeg of the White Earth Nation” is meant to signify: “[A]fter lengthy discussions, constitutional delegates decided . . ., family relationships should take precedence” (83). Doerfler’s explanation builds upon Anishinaabe scholar Scott Lyons’ suggestion that citizenship be defined in ways that promote traditional values (*X-Marks* 59). Thus, through the constitutional ambiguity of “the people,” the Constitution of the White Earth Nation continues the Anishinaabe traditions of continental trade and liberty, which maintains certain respect, rights, and responsibilities for all people, as well as specific citizenship rights for those who have continually attended to and protected White Earth resources and land. The extent of inclusivity in the Constitution of the White Earth Nation far exceeds the U.S. constitutional collective, “We the People,” but also remains problematic both for those whose federally documented genealogies deny their otherwise legitimate cultural, familial, linguistic, spiritual, kinship, and even biological ties to the White Earth Nation, as well as for those hesitant to relinquish control and access to resources that a more liberal inclusion might require. Rather than criticize the White Earth Nation’s strategies for inclusion/exclusion, however, White Earth’s decision to adopt a language of inclusivity, despite the necessary exclusions that all constitutions inherently enact, highlights White Earth’s move toward what Cherokee scholar Ellen Cushman
describes as “a rhetoric of self-representation,” an inclusivity that “includes an affiliation claim and evidence of both authenticity and accountability” (“Toward a Rhetoric” 323).

Surprisingly, although Doerfler describes the White Earth delegates’ deliberation and final decision to represent White Earth citizenship through a traditionally inclusive Anishinaabe understanding of family and kinship relationships and responsibilities, Vizenor places the Constitution of the White Earth Nation in conversation with the Magna Carta and other Eurowestern constitutions. As Vizenor argues, the Magna Carta, what he calls the “foundational chronicle of liberty,” contains “the sentiments of survivance and liberty [which] are surely a celebration of natural reason that prevailed in Native cultures and in the formal declarations of democratic constitutions” (The White Earth Nation 56–7). While he explains how the Constitution of the White Earth Nation engages with or adapts from the Magna Carta and other Eurowestern constitutions, however, Vizenor also asserts specific Anishinaabe distinctions that predate and are related to what many describe as Eurowestern constitutional liberties. As but one example, Vizenor explains:

The Anishinaabe were not directly swayed by habeas corpus as a common law of colonial dominions, but they practiced natural reason and survivance based on cultural reciprocity and totemic associations to secure hemispheric trade routes and a sense of continental liberty. The sentiments of habeas corpus and liberty were only fitfully realized on the federal partitions of treaty reservations. (57).

Through such clarifications, Vizenor reclaims Anishinaabe cultural practices of governance and survivance that predate and/or coincide with, rather than borrow from, the creation of such liberties and governing systems throughout western Europe and the fledgling United States. However, although Vizenor seems to draw a parallel between the Constitution of the White Earth
Nation and the Magna Carta in order to validate the similar pre-colonial democratic governing principles of his Anishinaabe ancestors, he simultaneously understates the reality of a precolonial Indigenous textual history of not only constitution-like social commitments, but as this chapter argues, of constitution-writing throughout the American hemisphere upon which the Constitution of the White Earth Nation also builds.

From the Magna Carta, Vizenor goes on to mark similarities with the U.S. Constitution (1787) and then determines the more recent Constitution of Japan (1947) as the most influential source in composing White Earth’s Constitution. “I literally cut and separated out relevant statements and documents from many sources,” Vizenor explains. “Finally a fundamental structure and organization emerged, and from the transcription of many sources the chapters of the constitution began to take shape. The duplications were combined or eliminated, and each chapter was rewritten many, many times for brevity and clarity” (*The White Earth Nation* 51). It is clear from Vizenor’s narration of the White Earth constitutional conventions as well as his work with Doerfler, Fineday, and Stately, that the many revisions were completed collectively. Yet, here Vizenor slips into the first person singular “I” to discuss the adaptation of non-Indigenous constitutional structures to form the new White Earth Constitution. Vizenor’s use of “I” becomes significant as he admits that his insistence on paralleling the Constitution of the White Earth Nation with other Eurowestern democratic constitutions brought criticism from his fellow delegates (*The White Earth Nation* 56). However, he does not detail the delegates’ criticism or explain why he places their Constitution in direct conversation with a Eurowestern literary history that undergirds ongoing colonialism. Instead, he describes the cutting and sorting process of creating the Constitution of the White Earth Nation as “an original Native story” that
weaves Anishinaabe cultural and political traditions with Eurowestern democratic constitutional dogmas.

In a recent personal interview with White Earth Anishinaabe literary scholar and White Earth constitutional advisor Jill Doerfler, she explained to me the traditional Anishinaabe principles that Vizenor alludes to while outlining his compositional methodology. She described, for example, how the term “‘lineal descent’ is centered on family, love, and inclusion; ‘separation of powers’ captures the understanding that everyone has a gift, and with it a responsibility; and ‘religious freedom’ represents that Anishinaabe tradition of personal autonomy.” In other words, although Vizenor describes the language and structure as derivative of Eurowestern constitutional norms, Doerfler argues that “the whole thing reflects who we are as Anishinaabeg” (Personal interview). In this way, White Earth’s Constitution becomes what Howe describes as a “tribalography” by “incorporating oral traditions, histories, and experiences into narratives and expanding [White Earth’s] identity” (“Tribalography” 46). Doerfler’s explanation of the underlying Anishinaabe political principles that Vizenor alludes to highlights the urgency of tracing the much longer and broader Indigenous constitutional legacy. Constitution-writing is a diverse, hemispheric Indigenous literary tradition that, as Vizenor insists, may bear structural and governing similarities with the Japanese and U.S. Constitutions, and even the Magna Carta. But, as Doerfler, Wilkins, Howe, Brooks, and others contend, it also grows out of a land-based oral, textual, and literary tradition that predates and resists later Eurowestern colonial constitutions.

In preparation for the final White Earth vote, the constitutional delegates distributed the Constitution of the White Earth Nation throughout their community in various forms to ensure that every interested community member could read, understand, and place a knowledgeable vote for or against ratification of the new Constitution of the White Earth Nation. It was
published on various websites, as well as alongside a glossary of constitutional key terms in a special issue of *Anishinaabe Today*, the official newspaper of the White Earth Nation (Vizenor, *The White Earth Nation* 55). The special newspaper issue also describes an informational workbook that includes the Constitution of the White Earth Nation with summaries of each chapter and article, which had already been used in over fifty informational sessions throughout various communities on and off the reservation with recorded video versions available online (Janis 2). These training videos, the full text of the Constitution of the White Earth Nation, the constitutional workbook, the glossary of key terms, audio interviews on Niijii Radio and other stations, as well as a final public symposium held on October 20, 2013 at the Shooting Star Casino, which was likewise made available online through livestream, were all part of the distribution efforts aimed to educate and encourage all citizens of the White Earth Nation to become familiar with and exercise their suffrage in response to the Constitution of the White Earth Nation. Just less than a month after the final public symposium entitled “Symposium on the Proposed Constitution of the White Earth Nation: It’s Your Decision,” the White Earth Nation finally measured the new Constitution’s reception.

On November 19, 2013, the White Earth Nation held the official Constitution Reform Election. 3,492 of the nearly 20,000 enrolled citizens voted; 2,780 approved the new Constitution of the White Earth Nation; 712 rejected it. Although the referendum officially ratified White Earth’s new Constitution through the majority vote required, the transition of fully adopting the Constitution of the White Earth Nation has been stalled. In fact, certain members of the White Earth Tribal Council have worked to invalidate the Constitution’s ratification, and have gone as far as censoring tribal publications, including the *Anishinaabeg Today*, that have promoted the Constitution of the White Earth Nation’s implementation (Erma Vizenor).
Such censorship has come from tribal council members hesitant to open up White Earth land and resources to a less restrictive tribal membership. As tribal law scholar Carol E. Goldberg argues and Doerfler reiterates, “Indian nations’ constitutional reform efforts encounter some of their most paralyzing conflicts over criteria for membership” (Those Who Belong 62), precisely because that membership is connected to an already limited land, resource, and economic base that not everyone would like to share. The ingrained and, at times, internalized individualization of Indigenous peoples and properties has always undergirded U.S. policies and practices against Indigenous nations. But rather than belabor the politics of the current stall, this brief synopsis of the Constitution of the White Earth Nation emphasizes the literary activism of members of the White Earth Nation in their attempt to reconstitute themselves, through distinctly Anishinaabé governing principles, as a sovereign people capable of managing their own land, resources, and citizenry. The White Earth Nation’s constitutional activism also provides the framework through which we can now engage with the constitutions of the Hui Aloha ʻĀina, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood, and the National Council of American Indians.

**Ka Hui Aloha ʻĀina. Ke Kumukānāwai (1893)**

In contrast with the various Indigenous North American nations, including today’s White Earth Nation, who have been forced to deal with the expanding United States, the Hawaiian Kingdom, established in 1810 by Chief Kamehameha upon a system of Kānaka (Native) common law and traditional practices since time immemorial, was already recognized throughout the world as a legitimate sovereign government when foreign U.S. interests first

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19 Constitution of the Hawaiian Patriotic League
began to infiltrate the islands. Thus, it is important to first outline the unique sociopolitical context from which the Hui Aloha ‘Āina produced their Kumukānāwai (constitution).

In 1840, King Kamehameha III commissioned Hawai‘i’s first fully documented constitution: Ke Kumukānāwai a me nā Kānāwai o ko Hawai‘i Pae ‘Āina (Constitution of the Kingdom of Hawai‘i), which outlined the establishment, rights, and duties of the Hawaiian Kingdom. In 1842, in response to the growing influence and expansion of foreign imperial powers, King Kamehameha III sent his secretary and diplomat Timoteo Ha‘alilio (Kānaka Maoli), American missionary William Richards, and former Canadian governor of the Hudson’s Bay Company George Simpson as Hawaiian delegates to the United States and other leading international government powers to secure formal recognition of Hawaiian sovereignty. Soon thereafter, the British and French Governments recognized Hawaiian independence and submitted the following official declaration:

Her Majesty the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, and His Majesty the King of the French, taking into consideration the existence in the Sandwich Islands (Hawaiian Islands) of a government capable of providing for the regularity of its relations with foreign nations, have thought it right to engage, reciprocally, to consider the Sandwich Islands as an Independent State, and never to take possession, neither directly or under the title of Protectorate, or under any other form, of any part of the territory of which they are composed.

(“International Treaties” n.p.)

Three years later, on July 6, 1846, U.S. Secretary of State John C. Calhoun likewise confirmed the delegates’ success in the United States, although less formally:
I am instructed to say that the communication heretofore addressed to you by the Secretary of State (Mr. Webster) . . . , [was] regarded by the President as a full recognition on the part of the United States, of the Independence of the Hawaiian Government. This opinion has undergone no change; and as the course adopted by the Government of the United States in this conforms substantially with the rule by which it has been regulated in all similar cases, it does not appear to the President necessary to introduce any other or more formal mode of recognition.

(“International Treaties,” n.p.)

Having received international recognition as a sovereign nation, the Hawaiian Kingdom amended their constitution in 1852 and again in 1864 in order to more explicitly define constitutional rights and the powers and branches of government. By 1885, Hawaiian sovereignty was so widely recognized that the Kingdom of Hawai‘i joined over forty other internationally recognized independent governments in a Universal Postal Union (“International treaties,” n.p.). Around the same time that he secured international legitimacy, Kamehameha III also commissioned the construction of ‘Iolani Palace, a still-standing, magnificent structure that featured electricity and a telephone five years before either was first installed in Buckingham Palace and twelve years earlier than such technology was installed in the White House. Thanks to the mobilized foresight of King Kamehameha III and the diplomacy of his delegates, the Kānaka Maoli government of Hawai‘i maintained a certain degree of nation-to-nation reciprocal respect among nations throughout the greater part of the nineteenth century.

On July 6, 1887, the forty-first anniversary of Calhoun’s confirmation of Hawaiian independence, however, this reciprocal nation-to-nation relationship changed drastically as a group of Anglo-American missionaries and businessmen living in Hawai‘i, who called
themselves the Hawaiian League, overtook King Kalākaua’s government troops and forced Kalākaua to sign the now infamous Bayonet Constitution of 1887. As a result, Kalākaua’s sovereign executive powers were replaced by an American oligarchical cabinet; American residents on Hawai‘i were granted suffrage with no necessary naturalization process; and a “special electorate” was created of high-ranking, literate, wealthy, male Hawaiian and American property owners. In essence, under the guise of “restor[ing] order and tranquility” throughout Hawai‘i by making the Hawaiian Kingdom compatible as an “enlightened Constitutional Government,” the Bayonet Constitution overwrote the 1864 Constitution of King Kamehameha V in order to grant unnaturalized American foreigners unabated civil, suffrage, and property rights (“Hawaiian Kingdom” n.p.). As Noenoe Silva (Kānaka Hawai‘i) explains, enforcing the Bayonet Constitution “meant that wealthy white foreigners could vote and working-class makaʻāinana [ordinary Hawaiian men and women] and Asian immigrants could not” (Aloha Betrayed 126–27). As a result, anti-monarchists controlled by American industrial interests were able to gain a majority in the King’s Cabinet. Finally, the Bayonet Constitution also “democratized,” or rather privatized Hawaiian lands that had been previously owned, worked, and enjoyed collectively in order to wrest control of land away from the makaʻāinana and their sovereign monarch and into the hands of mostly American profit-craving planters and their constituents. By forcing Kalākaua to sign the Bayonet Constitution, the Hawaiian League privatized Hawaiian lands, granted citizenship and political power to American and other non-citizen residents, and significantly reduced the power of the monarchy.

20 The Bayonet Constitution is officially known as the Hawaiian Kingdom Constitution of 1887.
King Kalākaua passed away in 1891, leaving his sister Queen Liliʻuokalani on the throne that was now fully subject to the Bayonet Constitution. As frustration increased among the majority of Kānaka Maoli, thousands petitioned Liliʻuokalani to draft a new constitution that would amend the Bayonet Constitution and restore property and suffrage rights for all Kānaka citizens. One group of Kānaka women submitted the following:

O makou, me ka haahaa, na poe o kou Lahui Ponoī nona na inoa malalo iho nei . .
. He mau Wahine Ponoī Maoli.
Ke nonoi aku nei me ka iini nui, e hookoia e Kou Kuleana he Moiwahine no ke Aupuni Hawaii, ka hoohana ana aku e hiki ai e loaa koke mai he Kumukanawai hou no ko kakou Aina a me ko kakou Lahui. (FO & Ex 1892)

We, humbly, the people of your own Nation (Lahui) to whom the names below belong . . . are Hawaiʻi’s own Native Women.

We ask with great desire that action should be taken in your authority as Queen of the Hawaiian Government, in order that a new Constitution be immediately acquired for our Land and our People. (Silva, “Ke KūʻKūpaʻa” 161–62)

Responding to such a moving collective voice of Kānaka women and others, Liliʻuokalani composed what is now referred to as the Proposed Constitution of 1893:

I, Liliʻuokalani, Queen of the Hawaiian Islands, in my capacity as Sovereign of this Kingdom, and as the representative of the people, and in accordance with their almost universal desire, and in conformity with their wishes, do annul and abrogate the constitution promulgated by Kalākaua on the 7th day of July, A.D. 1887, and do proclaim and promulgate this constitution. (“Draft Constitution”)
Lili‘uokalani, as author, embodied the collective voice of her petitioning sisters and proposed her new constitution, which sought to restore monarchical sovereignty and reduce property requirements for suffrage, without working through a formal constitutional convention as required by the Bayonet Constitution.

Rather than indict those members of her cabinet and their insurgent supporters who enjoyed the new power granted them by the Bayonet Constitution, however, Lili‘uokalani aimed to reform what she identifies as Kalākaua’s misused agency. Yet after intense deliberation, her cabinet members, who had either embraced the Bayonet Constitution or feared that anti-monarchists would use Lili‘uokalani’s Proposed Constitution as a reason to further challenge her already diminished position as monarch, chose not to ratify her new constitution.

Still because of the threats the Proposed Constitution made to the U.S.-settler control secured by the Bayonet Constitution, some of her cabinet members aligned with the anti-monarchist Hawaiian League and claimed that Lili‘uokalani’s unilateral attempt to reconstitute the Hawaiian Kingdom was a sign of impending mob violence. Together with members of the U.S. Navy stationed in Hawai‘i, they overthrew the monarchy and established a new provisional government self-proclaimed as the Republic of Hawai‘i. This insurrectionary republic immediately turned to the U.S. Congress to apply for annexation. Sanford B. Dole, the son of a missionary school principal, an established lawyer, and distant cousin of the founder of the Dole Hawaiian Pineapple Company, was appointed President of this new oligarchical Republic.

Rather than strike back in violence and risk losing even more of her people, who through disease and an influx of immigrant industries had already been diminished, Lili‘uokalani and her supporters immediately began to organize and write independently and collectively to petition the U.S. government directly and to influence the U.S. public’s and politicians’ widely
caricatured views of the Hawaiian people. By March 4, 1893, those who had originally petitioned the Queen for a new constitution, gathered support throughout the islands and constituted themselves as the Hui Aloha ‘Āina, to oppose annexation and restore sovereignty to the Hawaiian Kingdom (Silva, “The 1897 Petitions” n.p.). Published in the Hawaiian-language newspaper, Ka Leo o ka Lahui,21 the Hui Aloha ‘Āina published Ka Hui Aloha ‘Āina. Ke Kumukānāwai (The Constitution of the Hawaiian Patriotic League) on March 22, 1893 side-by-side in Hawaiian and English. Regrettably, the historical and archival record of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s constitutional process has not been preserved as legibly as White Earth’s. Yet, this section begins the process of remembering the Kumukānāwai as an original Kānaka story that mobilized an era of collective Kānaka resistance and continues to influence current nationalist and co-national Kānaka literature, art, and activism.

Until Silva’s path-clearing dissertation (1999) and subsequent book, Aloha Betrayed (2004), recognition of the anti-annexationist activism of the late-nineteenth-century Kānaka Maoli organization known as the Hui Aloha ‘Āina had been confined to single-paragraph acknowledgements or footnotes within monographic narratives of Hawaiian history (Silva, Aloha Betrayed 123–24). Silva’s work became the first substantial academic intervention to document the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s widespread activism and ongoing influence. Silva, however, focuses largely on the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s petitioning and frames her discussion within a political history of Kānaka resistance.22 The foundational declaration of collective literary solidarity that helped make the later petitions possible, however, was Ka Hui Aloha ‘Āina Ke Kumukānāwai (The

21 Voice of the Nation
22 See Chapter Two
Constitution of the Hawaiian Patriotic League), a constitutional story Silva mentions only in passing (*Aloha Betrayed* 131).

Just as the Constitution of the White Earth Nation can be placed within a longstanding Indigenous continental literary tradition (Brooks, “The Constitution”), constitution-writing in Hawai‘i can be traced to the very origins of the Kānaka Maoli (Native Hawaiians). As ‘Īmaikalani Kalāhele’s 1998 “A poem for Kalama Valley” asserts in this chapter’s epigraph:

In the beginning
there was a word.
And the word was  good.
And that word was
“Huli.”
And that, my brothers, was the beginning. (35)

Through this pithy poem dedicated to both the people evicted from the Kalama Valley of O‘ahu in the 1970s, and to the land desecrated by the resulting profit-driven development of the valley, Kalāhele reinscribes Kānaka literary traditions into the Judeo-Christian creation myth. Rather than an omnipotent, capitalized “Word” which was with and was God (Gordon, John, 1.1), Kalāhele’s creation begins with “Huli.” The beauty and significance of his choice of terms is in the multiple meanings of “huli,” each of which speaks to the cultural and literary practices from which the Hui Aloha ‘Āina composed their Kumukānāwai (Constitution) and subsequent collectivist writings. In translation, “huli” means, among other definitions, “to change, as an opinion or manner of living,” to “search, explore, seek, study,” as well as a “taro top, as used for planting” (“Huli” n.p.). As this section demonstrates, the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s Kumukānāwai embodies each of these definitions in a way that, borrowing from Saulteaux scholar Janice
Acoose, becomes both “rooted in collective memories and linked to the past” and “ensures that future generations will always re-member” the land-based literary activism of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina (220).

The Kumukanawai can be read as “huli” in that it represents how the Hui Aloha ‘Āina chose to change or adapt through careful study and exploration of tradition in relation to current sociopolitical realities. As Brooks argues, Indigenous literatures “emphasize the power of thought in transformation. They tell us that the thinking that creates the world is an ongoing activity with which we, as human beings, are engaged” (“Digging at the Roots” 240). Thus, as an original Kānaka story, the Kumukanawai begins by acknowledging the shifting sociopolitical situation briefed above, calling for unity, and declaring the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s fundamental purpose:

Oiai n ike ia ae nei ka loli ano nui ana o ko kakou aina, he mea hoi e manaoia ai, e hoopilikia ia ana kona Kuokoa ame na Pono Kivila o kona mau Makaainana, a me na Kupa, a no ia mea, he mea pono e kukulua ona Hui manao lokahi a makaala mawaena o na Kānaka a pau e aloha ani I ka Ania, me ka nana ole I ka Aoao Kalaiaina a Manaoio Hoomanan paho. Nolaila:

Whereas vital changes in our country have taken place, which may affect its independence and the Civil Rights of its Subjects and Citizens, thereby rendering
indispensable a compact and zealous Union between all men who love the
Country, irrespective of Party or creed.

Therefore, Resolved that We, the patriotic peaceful and loyal Subjects and
Citizens of Hawai‘i nei (this beloved Hawai‘i), for the purpose of peaceably
guarding our Civil Rights, do hereby form ourselves into a League, under the
following Constitution.

The Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s purpose, as expressed in the preamble, was to peaceably guard the civil
rights of the Kānaka Maoli in solidarity. After announcing their official name, however, Article 2
explains that securing civil rights was secondary to restoring Hawaiian sovereignty:

O ka hana a keia Ahahui oia ka malama ana a me ke kakoo ana, ma na keehina
hana maluhia a kue kanawai oie, I ke kulana Kuokoa o na Pae Aina o Hawaii, a
ina he mea hiki ole ke malamaia ko kakou Kuokoa, alaila, o ka kakou hana oia ka
hooikaika ana I na hana kue ole I ke kanawai a me ka maluhia e hoomau ia ai ka
Pono Kivila o na kanaka Hawaii a me na Kupa makaainana.

The object of this Association is to preserve and maintain, by all legal and
peaceful means and measures, the Independent Autonomy of the Islands of
Hawaii nei; and, if the preservation of our Independence be rendered impossible,
our object shall then be to exert all peaceful and legal efforts to secure for the
Hawaiian People and Citizens the continuance of their Civil Rights.

As stated, civil rights would naturally follow the restoration of sovereignty. Yet without Kānaka
sovereignty, there was no guarantee of civil rights for Kānaka and other marginalized Hawaiian
citizens. Thus like the Constitution of the White Earth Nation, the Kumukānāwai was composed
by the Hui Aloha ‘Āina in a spirit of resistance with the stated primary purpose to restore sovereignty in order to maintain the lands and rights of Kānaka and other marginalized citizens of Hawai‘i.

The restoration of sovereignty and natural human rights in Hawai‘i would have included the restoration of both the monarchy and its 1839 Declaration of Rights. Prior to European arrival (1778), the Hawaiian Islands worked together in a sophisticated, self-sufficient, social, cultural, spiritual, linguistic, political, and economic system. By 1810, as European newcomers began claiming private control over Hawaiian lands and resources, the Hawaiian people developed a monarchical governing structure rooted in the traditional leadership practices of honored Hawaiian chiefs, or ali‘i. In 1839, under the direction of King Kamehameha III (Kānaka Maoli) and his Council of Chiefs, Boaz Mahune (Kānaka Maoli), a burgeoning scholar from the missionary school at Lahainaluna, composed the new Hawaiian Kingdom’s first Declaration of Rights. Written originally in Hawaiian, it declares:

Eia kekahi mau waiwai ana I haawi like mai ai I kela kanaka keia kanaka, I kela alii keia alii; o ke ola, o na lala o ke kino; o ka noho hoopaa ole ia, a me ke keakea ole ia, o na mea a kona lima I hanai‘i, a me na mea a kona manao I hooponopono ai.

These are some of the rights which [God] has given alike to every man and every chief—life, limb, liberty, the labor of his hands, and the production of his mind.

This original declaration also established Kānaka land rights, stating:
Ua hoomaluia ke kino o na kanaka a pau, a me ko lakou aina, a me ko lakou mau pahale, a me ko lakou waiwai a pau; aole hoi e laweia kekahi mea, ke olelo ole ia kela mea ma ke kanawai.

Protection is hereby secured to the persons of all the people, together with their lands, their building lots and all their property and nothing shall be taken from any individual, except by express provision of the laws. (30–33)

The following year, King Kamehameha III caused the Declaration to be revised and inserted as the preface to Hawai‘i’s first monarchical constitution: Kumukānāwai No Ko Hawaiʻi Nei Pae ‘Āina (Kingdom of Hawai‘i Constitution, 1840). After issuing five foundational decrees, the kingdom’s Kumukānāwai returns to the question of land and explains:

_O Kamehameha I_, oia ke poo o keia aupuni, a nona no na aina a pau mai Hawaii a Niihau, aole nae nona ponoi, no na kanaka no, a me naʻlii, a o Kamehameha no ko lakou poo nana e oledo I ka aina. Nolaila, aohe mea pono mamua, aohe hoi mea pono I keia manawa ke hoolilo aku I kekahi lihi iki o keia mau aina me ka ae ole o ka mea ia ka olelo o ke aupuni.

Kamehameha I, was the founder of the kingdom, and to him belonged all the land from one end of the Islands to the other, though it was not his own private property. It belonged to the chiefs and people in common, of whom Kamehameha I was the head, and had the management of the landed property. Wherefore, there was not formerly, and is not now any person who could or can convey away the
smallest portion of land without the consent of the one who had, or has the
direction of the kingdom. (40–41)

The Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s 1893 call to restore Indigenous rights and sovereignty is, thus, rooted in
the traditional and constitutional right to live on, work with, and develop the land for the
collective benefit of all Kānaka Maoli that predated European arrival and continued through the
formal constitutional structures of the post-European-contact Hawaiian Kingdom. In this way,
the Kumukānāwai tells a story of ongoing transformation, of Kānaka intellectual mobility that
remains committed to and in relationship with the land, a collective expression of what Cherokee
scholar Christopher Teuton describes as “land-based cultural knowledge and practices” (167).

Thus, in expressing the collectivity of the chiefs and the common Kānaka citizens of
Hawai’i in hopes of restoring the sovereign Hawaiian monarchy, the Hui Aloha ‘Āina shift the
authorial voice of Lili‘uokalani’s monarchical “I” and speak through the collective pronouns
“we” and “our,” defining the collective as “mākou o na maka‘āina” (We, belonging to the
common people/citizens that attend to the land). Rather than the U.S. constitutional “We the
people,” which connects its people to land only in terms of military force and one’s claim to
private property, mākou o na maka‘āina emphasizes a direct relationship with, understanding of,
and commitment to the land. Although it remains unclear which Kānaka attender(s) to the land
physically composed the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s Kumukānāwai, the writer(s) represented the
communal voice of the maka‘āina, concluding, as published in the Hawaiian-language
newspaper, Ka Leo o ka Lahui,23 with the signatures of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s founding officers:

23 The Voice of the Nation
Honorary President J.A. Cummins, President J. Nāwāhi, Vice Presidents J.K. Kaunamano and J.W. Pipikane.

A brief history of each leader’s life provides a glimpse into the Kumukānāwai’s collective authorship John Adams Kuakini Cummins (Kānaka Maoli) was the son of Chieftess Kaumakaokane (Kānaka Maoli) and a wealthy English shipmaster, though he grew up learning “more of Hawaiian arts and sciences than of English lore” (“John A. Cummins Gives In” 1). He served from 1890 to 1892 in the House of Nobles, which was a legislative branch of the Hawaiian Kingdom, and as King Kalākaua’s Minister of Foreign Affairs from June 1890 to February 1891. The Hawaiian Gazette remembered Cummins as “A Man Who Made History in Hawaii,” a patriot to his king and a generous entertainer of all who visited him. Two years after the publication of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s Kumukānāwai, at the age of sixty-one, however, he was “arrested as a royalist for conspiracy in the attempt to overthrow the Republic and reestablish the monarchy.” Cummins pleaded guilty and had to pay $5,000, having been deemed too old to go to prison. In 1893, Cummins provided the funds to purchase a Kānaka printing press in opposition to the oligarchical Republic and to continue to support the restoration of Hawaiian sovereignty (“John A. Cummins Gives In” 1–4).

Joseph Kahooluhi Nāwāhi (Kānaka Maoli) is the most well-known founder of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina. In her memoir, Hawai‘i’s Story by Hawai‘i’s Queen (1898), Lili‘uokalani devotes an entire chapter to his life and work. She remembers his October 1896 death as “a great blow to the people,” describing him as a “man who fearlessly advocated the independence of Hawaii Nei” (Hawaii’s Story 300). He served as a legislator for twenty years (1872–92), advocating for “equal rights to the Hawaiians” (300). His casket was carried by the male members of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina and he was mourned by “the ladies of the Patriotic League.” Lili‘uokalani
concludes, “he was acclaimed and mourned by every Native patriotic organization that existed” (301). Some scholars claim Nāwāhi was the chief organizer of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina (Patrinos vi). At the same time, Nāwāhi was a converted Christian, who had attended and administered at Christian boarding schools. Addressing this apparent contradiction in alliances, Kānaka Maoli historian Jonathan Kamakawiwoʻole Osorio writes, “He was a Christian Native who was, nevertheless, a firm and lifelong opponent of annexation” (161). As Silva argues, Nāwāhi chose to “weav[e] . . . two belief systems together” (“Ke KūʻKūpaʻa” 178).

Like his weaving of Christian and Kānaka beliefs, Nāwāhi also chose to work through both English and Hawaiian. With such a command of languages, he founded and edited the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s newspaper, Ke Aloha ‘Āina24 (Patrinos 92). Nāwāhi was so well known as a force for Hawaiian independence that, upon hearing of his death, the Provisional Government wrote to the United States, stating that his death had discouraged the pro-monarchy activists and they were now ready to vote for annexation, testifying to what Liliʻuokalani calls his “sturdy patriotism” (Hawaii’s Story 302). The Provisional Government assumed Nāwāhi’s death would dissolve the Hui Aloha ‘Āina, but instead, as Liliʻuokalani notes, members from throughout Hawaiʻi gathered to elect new leadership and carry on, “still intent on their patriotic work” (303).

Less has been documented about the life and works of J.K. Kaunamano (Kānaka Maoli). Kaunamano published the first Hawaiian-language newspaper established by a Native Hawaiian, Ka Hoku o ka Pakipika (1861–63).25 This newspaper, with such editors as David Kalākaua prior to his becoming King, served as a critical organ of Kānaka cultural resistance (Brislin n.p.). Silva

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24 The Patriot
25 The Star of the Pacific
reports that Kaunamano was also an opinion writer within the paper (“Ke Kū’Kūpa’a Loa Nei Mākou” 22). Beyond the newspaper, he served as a commissioner of private ways and water rights, a commissioner of fences, an agent to acknowledge contracts for labor, a member of the Queen’s Privy Council of State, and a diplomatic representative, alongside Nāwāhi, for the island of Hawai‘i. Professionally, Kaunamano was a lawyer (Thrum 57, 121, 139).

Of J.W. Pipikane (Kānaka Maoli), little remains outside of his occasional appearances in the Hawaiian newspapers. In September 1890, he was elected treasurer of the Kamehameha Rifle Association (“Local and General”). In November 1891, three newspapers list him as an attendee at a large Liberal Party meeting.26 In January 1895, he is listed as a “lieutenant” and “leader” alongside Cummins in the attempted smuggling of weapons to overthrow the Provisional Government.27 And he is last mentioned in October 1900 for his failed bid to represent the Independent Party and his resolution to still run as a senator (“Nominations of Independents”; “Political Campaign Grows Warmer”). Although the record remains limited, the lives of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s four constitutional signatories demonstrate the prominence, diversity, and collectivity of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s earliest leadership.

Their brief biographies, however, are only four of the tens of thousands of individual stories that informed the collective story of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s Kumukānāwai. According to Lili‘uokalani’s Hawai‘i’s Story by Hawai‘i’s Queen (1898), the Hui Aloha ‘Āina functioned in harmonious collectivity. She describes the result of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina convention called after Nāwāhi’s death:

26 See “Mass Meeting,” “Liberal Party,” and “The Liberal Party: An Enthusiastic Meeting.”
27 See “Royalist Plot told in Court” and “Bushwhacking for the Rebels.”
The Hui Aloha ‘Āina . . . , with the sister organization of the Women’s Patriotic League, are societies much dreaded by the oligarchy now ruling Hawaii.

Sufficient time was given to reach the members in the most distant parts of the Islands, who were notified to meet in convention, which they did. Perfect harmony prevailed; and James Keaulunia Kaulia was elected president of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina. (303)

Although the documented record is limited, the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s gathering was perhaps much like White Earth’s constitutional conventions; delegates from the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s sixty-five branches throughout the islands of Hawai‘i, Maui, Moloka‘i, O‘ahu, and Kaua‘i came together to discuss the new sociopolitical reality that they found themselves within and the necessary adaptations necessary in order to continue in collective solidarity, reclaim their sovereignty and civil rights, and determine how to form more effective co-national relationships to protect their land (Minton and Silva iv–v). As Malea Powell (Indiana Miami/Eastern Shawnee ancestry) writes of late-nineteenth-century continental Indigenous intellectuals, Hui Aloha ‘Āina leaders and members likewise gathered together to collectively “[participate] in their own making and remaking” as “fully human subjects capable of tactical refigurings” within their new sociopolitical situation (405).

As such capable subjects, the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s Kumukānāwai invited “[a]ll Natives of this Country, over 20 years of age, who are willing to pledge themselves to the objects of this League,” and “[a]ll foreigners, . . . willing to pledge themselves to it” to join the Hui Aloha ‘Āina by signing physically signing a copy of the Kumukānāwai [fig. 2]. And as Silva reports, in 1893, Hui Aloha ‘Āina had already come to represent “over 7,500 native-born Hawaiian qualified voters throughout the islands (out of a total of 13,000 electors), and to which is annexed a
woman’s branch of 11,000 members”” (Aloha Betrayed 131). While Indigenous nations throughout the contiguous United States had been coerced into adopting colonial definitions of Indigeneity based on blood, lineage, gender, and race, illegalizing their ability to adopt allied lands and peoples, the Kumukănāwai enfranchised women and non-Kānaka allies, and measured membership only in terms of one’s commitment to Hawaiian sovereignty and Hawaiian land, continuing precolonial understandings of nationhood, belonging, and land tenure.

Similar to the Constitution of the White Earth Nation, the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s Kumukănāwai begins with two brief preambles: the first expresses the need for a “zealous Union” because of the sociopolitical changes underway in the kingdom; the second announces the basic purpose of the Kumukănāwai. The Kumukănāwai then outlines ten articles, defining, among other organizational strategies, the name, object, divisions, membership, and terms of expulsion from the Hui Aloha ‘Āina. After announcing both the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s Hawaiian and English names, and stating its primary purpose, the Kumukănāwai then organizes the Hui Aloha ‘Āina into “one Central Body in Honolulu with Branches in the various Districts of the other Islands.”

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28 See the Cherokee Constitution (1827) for a well-known nineteenth-century example.
Although the constitutional structure seems straightforward and no sources are explicitly named from which the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s Kumukānāwai was derived, the Kumukānāwai’s bilingualism evidences both the far-reaching dialogic Kānaka community throughout the islands.
of Hawai‘i still present despite the very real and colonial narrative of Hawaiian language loss
caused by the increasing influence of Anglo-American missionaries and mission schools, as well
as the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s bold resistance to the provisional government’s overt suppression of the
Hawaiian language. As previously noted, the Hui Aloha ‘Āina published the Kumukānāwai in
Hawaiian and English in the Ka Leo o ka Lahui newspaper, one of at least eleven Hawaiian-
language newspapers circulating at the time (‘Hawaiian Language Newspapers” n.p.).
Developed in 1814—around the same time as Sequoyah’s Cherokee syllabary—by Ōpūkaha‘ia,
a Kānaka missionary residing at Yale University at the time, the written Hawaiian language has
been in print since as early as 1819 (Schütz 85). Although many Hui Aloha ‘Āina leaders and
members had attended mission schools and converted, in some form, to Christianity, Silva argues
that the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s choice to develop and publish in Hawaiian-language newspapers,
signaled a shift away from newspapers that were either “government [or] mission controlled”
(“Ke Kū’Kūpa’a” 24).

However, because such Hawaiian-only newspapers subverted government, mission, and
other non-Kānaka readers and control, provisional government officials and missionaries sought
to silence Hawaiian-language newspapers through derisive letters to the editor written
pseudonymously by white missionaries in Hawaiian; raising printing press charges; and
increasing church censorship (Silva, “Ke Kū’Kūpa’a” 29–43). By publishing the Kumukānāwai
simultaneously in both Hawaiian and English, however, the Hui Aloha ‘Āina invited non-
Hawaiian-reading Kānaka Maoli and allies to participate in the restoration of Hawaiian
sovereignty while also directly confronting non-Kānaka authorities and pro-annexationists in
anticipation of the complete termination of Hawaiian language instruction in public and private
schools throughout the islands enforced by the provisional government just three years later (1896).29

The bilingual publication of the Kumukānāwai also simultaneously provided a space in which to directly connect Kānaka cultural commitments to the current practice of Kānaka political philosophies and to invite Kānaka readers to understand the Kumukānāwai’s inherent commitment to Hawaiian land. Speaking only of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s Hawaiian and anglicized names, for example, Silva writes:

The Hui Aloha ‘Āina was called the Hawaiian Patriotic League in English. ‘Aloha ‘Āina’ means love of the land, which differs significantly in connotation and cultural coding from ‘patriotic.’ It is not gendered, as “patriotic” is (Silva 1996, 8), nor does it share the European genealogy of its own based in traditional Kānaka cosmology. . . . [T]he Kānaka Maoli cosmology articulates a familial relationship between the land, symbolized by the taro plant, and human beings. . . .

. [I]t is important to note that these Kānaka Maoli who worked to retain the sovereignty of their own nation called themselves, not patriots, but “ka po’e aloha ’āina,” ‘the people who love the land.’ (“Ke Kū’Kūpa’a” 164–65)

Through her brief comparative etymology, Silva brings the efforts of the organization back to the question of land, illustrating how by disconnecting Kānaka Maoli from the Hawaiian language, settler authorities sought also to separate Kānaka Maoli from Hawaiian land. Silva’s explanation of the role of taro also traces the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s cultural and political genealogy back to the

29 Hawaiian language instruction reentered the Hawaiian public school system in 1919 and the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa as a foreign language in 1922 (“A Timeline of Revitalization” n.p.)
very beginning, Kalāhele’s poetic and procreative huli. Thus, Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s juxtaposition of English and Hawaiian linguistically omits land from the English version of the Kumukānāwai while positioning land as absolutely central to the Hawaiian version. The English reader might understand only an iteration of Eurowestern political loyalty, whereas the Hawaiian reader would understand the core commitment to and love for one’s family and the land as literal family. Through publishing the Kumukānāwai in both English and Hawaiian, the Hui Aloha ‘Āina simultaneously includes Hawaiian and non-Hawaiian speaking Kānaka Maoli, and keeps land central to Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s collective activism without overtly emphasizing the connection to the oligarchical land thieves.

Silva’s explication of aloha ‘āina also alludes to an immeasurably influential source that undergirds the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s Kumukānāwai. The structure and format, like those of the Constitution of the White Earth Nation, seem largely to adapt a Eurowestern colonial genre, but the central position of aloha ‘āina connects the Kumukānāwai to a longstanding hemispheric Indigenous literary tradition of constitution-writing, as well as to the very origins of the Kānaka Maoli. The Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s new constitutional story, for example, can be read as an adaptation from Hawai‘i’s earliest mo’olelo (history, tradition, or story). As Kānaka writer, scholar, and activist, Haunani-Kay Trask, explains, “In the mo’olelo of Papa and Wākea, ‘earth mother’ and ‘sky father,’ our islands were born... From their human offspring came the taro plant and from the taro came the Hawaiian people. The lessons of our genealogy are that human beings have a familial relationship to the land and to the taro.” She continues: “Therefore, Hawaiians must cultivate and husband the land that will feed and provide for the Hawaiian people. This relationship is called mālama ‘āina or aloha ‘āina, ‘care and love of the land’” (141).
By founding the Hui Aloha ‘Āina upon the traditional commitment of aloha ‘āina located in the creation story of the Kānaka Māoli, the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s Kumukānāwai becomes an original Kānaka story. Like the Constitution of the White Earth Nation, it becomes a “tribalography” that brings Kānaka readers together and grounds them within their genealogy of kinship relationships with and responsibilities to one another and their siblings, the land. Thus, although presented within what can be read as an adopted colonial literary genre, the source of this new constitutional story should, instead, be read as the most sacred Hawaiian story of reciprocity, responsibility, and kinship. The Kumukānāwai is not simply an adoption or adaptation of a Eurowestern literary form; it rewrites this form as Hawaiian in a way that is neither defensive nor reactionary. Instead, it asserts the reality that the collectivism of constitutional literary forms predates, and is being employed against, colonial forms of Eurowestern constitutionalism. Becoming a member of Hui Aloha ‘Āina, was thus, much more than an act of patriotism in the Eurowestern sense of the term; it was an act of kinship. As Daniel Heath Justice (Cherokee) asserts, “Kinship . . . is about life and living; it’s not about something that is in itself so much as something we do—actively, thoughtfully, respectfully” (“‘Go Away Water!’” 148). With such an understanding of active kinship, Hui Aloha ‘Āina required members to physically sign the Kumukānāwai, thereby recommitting themselves to the longstanding, now threatened, inter-island or co-national network of kinship, rooted in a shared aloha ‘āina that the oligarchist Republic of Hawai‘i actively sought to suppress.

Although the story of the on-the-ground distribution of the Kumukānāwai beyond the newspaper publication, as well as the signed documents themselves remains unclear, individual copies of the Kumukānāwai must have been distributed throughout the islands, most likely by Hui Aloha ‘Āina delegates. Surely, the presentation involved educating potential members on the
changes occurring throughout the nation, persuading potential members of the need for a renewed sense of active solidarity, and devoted declarations of aloha ‘āina as members enlisted in the purpose to restore Hawaiian sovereignty and maintain their land and civil rights. Although the exact means and numbers of distribution remain unclear, the Kumukānāwai’s reception can be seen in the sheer numbers of members already enlisted in Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s first year—7,500 men and 11,000 women—as well as the new self-appointed republic’s documented fear of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s ability to inspire large-scaled Kānaka resistance. These numbers also highlight an early episode of the now-burgeoning discourse of Indigenous feminisms. While colonial governments have systematically disempowered Indigenous women from their traditional political, economic, and cultural status within Indigenous communities and nations (Huhndorf and Suzack 4–5), these 11,000 Kānaka women, reclaimed their role as chief protectors of their land.

Under the traditional leadership of Kānaka women, Ka Hui Aloha ‘Āina. Ke Kumukānāwai calls on all Kānaka citizens of Hawai‘i and non-Indigenous allies to rise up and accept the responsibility to defend their sovereignty, rights, and land in solidarity. As the thousands of signed constitutions attest, it is a documented story of the “collective imagination of [Hawaiian] nationhood” (Brooks, “The Constitution” 58). Unlike White Earth’s Constitution, however, the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s Kumukānāwai is not a national constitution, defining the laws and societal structures of Hawai‘i. Rather, the Kumukānāwai story reiterates the shared genealogy of, and expresses the collective imagination of “ka po’e aloha ʿāina” (the people who love the land). It is a story of mobilizing co-national Kānaka minds and peoples to come together again from all regions and ranks to set aside their differences and to stand collectively in direct
resistance to U.S. imperialism, unilateral assimilation, and the resulting rapacious violence against Kānaka Maoli culture, language, sovereignty, peoples, and land.

**Grand Camp Constitution of the Alaska Native Brotherhood (1917)**

Twenty years after the Hui Aloha ʻĀina began resisting the oligarchical overthrow of and unconstitutional annexation of Hawaiʻi into the United States, a growing body of Alaska Natives began to organize themselves under the Grand Camp Constitution of the Alaska Native Brotherhood for a much different purpose; they sought to prove themselves worthy of becoming official U.S. citizens in order to enjoy the ostensible privileges of U.S. statehood. Again, a brief contextual overview helps to situate the possibilities and unique tensions of the Grand Camp Constitution and the subsequent collectivist writings of the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood.

On October 18, 1867 in Sitka, Alaska, Russia transferred their claims to the Territory of Alaska to the United States for $7.2 million without consultation or consideration of the vast majority of the territorial occupants: Alaska Natives. In 1884, U.S. Congress passed the First Organic Act, establishing territorial judges, clerks, and marshals, thereby organizing the territory as a U.S. civil and judicial district and superimposing U.S. political authority over Indigenous lands and peoples. In essence, as Alaskan historian Claus-M. Naske reports, “the First Organic Act provided for a total of thirteen officials who would be responsible for some 586,000 square miles and a population of 32,000 souls, of which 430 were white” (2). Naske’s reported 31,570 non-white inhabitants included the remaining Yupik, Inupiat, Aleut, Athabaskan, Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian peoples, who had survived the exploitation, dislocation, abuse, and killings
introduced by miners and European diseases that had diminished some Alaska Native populations by more than eighty percent (Naske 2–10).

In 1897, gold was discovered and more than 30,000 American fortune seekers made their way to Alaska to join what became known as the Klondike Gold Rush (1897–98). By 1900, with this sudden shift in demographics, Congress passed official civil and criminal laws, increased the number of judges, and established a system of territorial taxation, again without consulting Alaska Natives. All the while, U.S. paternalistic policies and practices prevalent throughout the contiguous United States began to infiltrate Alaska. Alaska Native children, for example, began to be forcibly removed from their familial, linguistic, spiritual, and cultural ways of being and sent to mission and federal boarding schools as early as 1867, sometimes as far away as the eastern United States. Yet, like so many Indigenous students throughout the United States, many first-generation boarding school survivors throughout Alaska worked through the abusive challenges of the boarding school system, using art, music, literature, and collaboration to find a new functional space within the English language and the colonial education and religious systems.

As was common throughout the contiguous United States, Congress recognized the failure of boarding schools to both indefinitely alienate Alaska Native children from their collective kinship relationships and obligations and remake them into a servile class of “Americans.” Thus, Congress extended the 1887 General Allotment Act northward through the Alaska Native Allotment Act of 1906 in order to individuate Alaska Native land ownership with the same underlying goal to more effectively separate Alaska Native individuals and their lands from their communities. In April 1912, Congress determined Alaska an incorporated U.S.
Territory on its way to statehood,

established an election of Senate and House members, and provided a federally appointed, non-elected territorial governor, while exercising complete federal control over Alaska’s fishing, game, and fur resources (Gislason n.p.).

By this time, many Alaska Natives, especially the Tlingit and Haida of Southeast Alaska, had been attending U.S. schools for nearly twenty-five years and had entered the “American” social structures as business owners, Christian clergy, teachers, and politicians. They had become fluent in the languages and laws of both their Native and non-Native—Russian and English—sociopolitical systems. As problematic as their resulting actions seem to contemporary readers, these U. S.-educated Tlingit, Tsimshian, and Haida activists recognized the shifting demographics, the ongoing loss of their peoples, languages, and lands; and many chose to come together under a co-national Alaska Native constitution in order to act rather than be acted upon. As Tlingit activist and educator, Andrew Hope III argues, “The changes brought on by other foreign cultures were forcing [Alaska Natives] to make many heavy decisions that would affect their people for years to come” (3).

On November 5, 1912 at the close of an education conference organized by the U.S. Bureau of Education, thirteen such Alaska Native individuals—a Tsimshian man, eleven Tlingit men, and one Tlingit woman—gathered in Sitka, then-territorial capital of Alaska, to begin to discuss, debate, and collectively make many of the “heavy decisions” that they surely anticipated would directly affect themselves and their communities, in terms of access to and free exercise of traditional languages, knowledge, spirituality, and cultural practices for many years to come. The

30 Congress granted Alaska statehood as the forty-ninth State on January 3, 1959—just over eight months earlier than Hawai’i.
conference had been organized by W.G. Beattie, a former superintendent of the Sitka Industrial School and then district superintendent of federal Indian schools in Southeast Alaska, in order to reunite Native Sitka school graduates and educators and promote further methods of assimilation. Not coincidentally, the conference took place at the same time as the territorial legislature’s first election, one the attending Alaska Native graduates and educators were ineligible to participate in as non-U.S. citizens (Daley and James 60–61). In light of this conference and the coinciding election, such “heavy decisions” revolved around their “paradoxical position . . . [as] not a citizen nor an alien, nor, like the plains Indian, a ward of the government” (qtd. in Mitchell 226), and the implications of adopting English as the primary language, as well as embracing U.S. forms of public education, Christianity, and other requirements in order to gain a more stable status as U.S. citizens. Under the weight of such decisions, these thirteen Alaska Natives founded the Alaska Native Brotherhood.

Although I have not yet been able to conclude exactly where, when, or how the Alaska Native Brotherhood originally constituted itself, or even how they produced their earliest surviving 1917 Grand Camp Constitution, the archive makes clear that the Alaska Native Brotherhood founders immediately began to recruit and work toward achieving their constitutional purpose:

to assist and encourage the Native in advancement from his native state to his place among the cultivated races of the world, to oppose, discourage, and overcome the narrow injustice of race prejudice, and to aid in the development of the territory of Alaska, and in making it worthy of a place among the States of North America. (165)
Unlike the Hui Aloha ʻĀina’s Kumukānāwai, which acknowledged and sought to regain the world’s recognition of Hawaiian independence and sovereignty, the Alaska Native Brotherhood’s Grand Camp Constitution expresses a desire for Alaska Natives to finally gain some form of recognition and to have to be consulted on matters affecting Alaska Native peoples and lands. And unlike the Hui Aloha ʻĀina, the Alaska Native Brotherhood pursued this purpose explicitly in English and through an overtly colonial rhetoric, void of any overt representation of women, and through restricting membership to “civilized” Alaska Natives.

Alaska Natives had been completely unaccounted for within the negotiated territorial exchange between Russia and the United States. Unlike Hawai‘i, Alaska Natives did not represent a monarchy whose independence had gained global recognition and currency throughout. Instead, Alaska Native peoples, though interconnected and interrelated, participated in at least eleven distinct cultures and spoke at least eleven languages, including twenty-two distinct dialects. In Southeast Alaska alone, the Tlingit, Haida, Tsimshian, and Eyak peoples each speak a different language, and they organize themselves into distinct moieties, phratries, and clans (“The Eyak, Tlingit, Haida and Tsimshian” n.p.). And because of the absence of a centralized Alaska Native government at the time of the Russian invasion, and even more so after the transition of territorial control to the United States, Alaska Natives remained unaccounted for, oppressed, marginalized, and made into an unrepresented minority despite their majority population.

Thus with recognition of their waning sociopolitical position, founders of the Alaska Native Brotherhood framed their constitutional purpose in a rhetoric of submission, not necessarily as an acknowledgement of cultural or intellectual inferiority, but as a request to participate more formally in their surrounding sociopolitical situation. As manifesto scholar Janet
Lyon argues, such self-abasing rhetoric has been a common rhetorical strategy utilized by “an unrecognized group striv[ing] for legitimation . . . within a broader interpretative political context” (21). In this sense, the Alaska Native Brotherhood’s rhetorical submission becomes “an instrument of mischief” and as rhetoric scholar Susan Zaeske describes it, a “wedge to enter the realms of political power” (12). Although Alaska Natives did not share the same position of internationally recognized political sovereignty and chose to submit themselves rhetorically to the ruling U.S. governing structures, however, Alaska Natives and Kānaka Maoli did share a similar political, social, and economic context: the sovereignty of both had been overthrown by the United States and blatant racism had severely jeopardized the exercise of their most basic human rights, especially their Indigenous rights to collectively attend to and draw cultural, linguistic, spiritual, and life-sustaining sustenance from their lands. Thus, centered within the stated desire for U.S. recognition, the Alaska Native Brotherhood’s constitutional purpose seeks to “oppose, discourage, and overcome the narrow injustice of race prejudice,” or, in other words, to declare and maintain civil rights for Alaska Natives.

The Grand Camp Constitution represents the Alaska Native Brotherhood’s foundational collectivist story that would guide the many other writings they would soon publish and distribute throughout Alaska and other Indigenous organizations within the United States and British Columbia. The Grand Camp Constitution is organized into eleven articles that formally outline the purpose, membership, organization, and duties of the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood. Although at least ten different printed versions of the Grand Camp Constitution have survived in their original booklet format, with various revised or amended versions ranging from 1921 to 2011, the 1917 Grand Camp Constitution has survived only as a copy of an original printed version in Philip Drucker’s *The Native Brotherhoods: Modern*
Intertribal Organizations on the Northwest Coast (1958). And in that 1917 version, the Grand Camp Constitution [fig. 3] lists neither an individual author nor a body of signatories. In fact, the Alaska Native Brotherhood choose to avoid the use of any pronouns, either first-person singular or collective. Rather than “we the people,” the Grand Camp Constitution states “this organization,” “the Native,” and “[t]hose eligible” (165–68).

APPENDIX 1

ALASKA NATIVE BROTHERHOOD CONSTITUTIONS OF GRAND AND SUBORDINATE CAMPS 1917–1918 SITKA, ALASKA

GRAND CAMP CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE I. Purpose

The purpose of this organization shall be to assist and encourage the Native in his advancement from his native state to his place among the cultivated races of the world, to oppose, discourage, and overcome the narrow injustice of race prejudice, and to aid in the development of the Territory of Alaska, and in making it worthy of a place among the States of North America.

ARTICLE II. Eligibility

Those eligible to membership shall be the English speaking members of the Native residents of the Territory of Alaska.

ARTICLE III. The Grand Camp

The Grand Camp shall be composed of the officers of the Grand Camp, the Chairmen of the Subordinate Camps, the past Grand Presidents, the past Chairmen of the Subordinate Camps, and three delegates from each Subordinate Camp.


31 While speaking as a Visiting Scholar at Sealaska Heritage Institute, Juneau, Alaska in 2015, I was able to reintroduce current Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood leaders to what American anthropologist Phillip Drucker documents as the Alaska Native Brotherhood’s first constitution. In the Alaska Native Brotherhood’s current project to prepare an analysis, history, and chronology of their constitution and constitutional amendments, the project leaders had previously documented that the Alaska Native Brotherhood had not published a constitution until 1921. In fact, I was also able to broaden their project by also locating and sharing the 1936, 1963, and 1976 versions that had been so far neglected in the archives.
Those eligible to participate in this new co-national body of Alaska Natives, according to the 1917 Grand Camp Constitution, were “the English-speaking members of the Native residents of the territory of Alaska” (Drucker 165). As problematic as this is, this decision came from former Alaska Native students, who had likely been punished, at times severely, for speaking their Native languages within the “English-only” federal boarding, vocational, and mission schools. At the same time, this decision came as new legislation limited formal education to non-Native newcomers and the few “mixed-blood Natives leading a ‘civilized life’” (Case and Voluck 205). As Gloria Bird (Spokane) and Joy Harjo (Mvskoke) explain, “English literacy has been a tool of assimilation, a way to destroy cultures, a way to erase the past, a way to promote imperialism, a way to speak as though sovereignty never existed” (21). Or as Womack argues, “No one can doubt the mind-boggling abuses/losses that occurred from residential and boarding schools, and forced imposition of English.” Womack continues, however, “but it is also possible that these systems of abuse do not describe the only relationship that Indian people have had with English.” Recognizing these alternative Indigenous relationships with, uses of, and purposes for English, Womack asks, “Might English be one of our Indian languages?” (“Theorizing American Indian Experience” 404). Expanding on this idea of making English Indigenous, Harjo and Bird go on to argue that when Indigenous peoples reinvent the enemy’s language, or when English is used to Indigenous purposes, the language becomes empowering (21).

The Alaska Native Brotherhood’s collective membership of English-speaking Alaska Natives seeking to adapt to and reinvent U.S. colonial systems for Alaska Natives began with its thirteen founding members: Peter Simpson, a Tsimshian business owner from Metlakatla; Chester Worthington, a Tlingit leader from Wrangell; Ralph Young, a Tlingit philosopher from
Hoonah; Paul Liberty, a Tlingit Russian Orthodox Deacon and liturgical composer from Sitka; Marie Orson, a Tlingit writer, interpreter, organist for the Presbyterian Church, and survivor of the Carlisle Indian Industrial School in Pennsylvania; Frank Price, a Tlingit politician from Sitka who became the first Alaska Native appointed to a federal office and the second Alaska Native elected to the Alaska Territorial Legislature; James Watson, a Tlingit activist from Juneau; Eli Katanook, a Tlingit town legislator, elementary school teacher, and opera singer from Angoon; Frank Mercer, a Tlingit musician and conductor of an all-Native orchestra; William Hobson, a Tlingit from Angoon; James C. Johnson, a master Tlingit carpenter and boat builder from Klawock; Seward Kunz, a Tlingit from Auke Bay and one of the first Presbyterian lay missionaries; and George Fields, of whom still little has been formally remembered (Hope 8–33). Although membership of the original Alaska Native Brotherhood was predominantly Tlingit because of the founding location of the Alaska Native Brotherhood in the Tlingit-strong community of Sitka, these founders represented eight distinct clans and came from various familial, professional, religious, and political backgrounds. The networking of many, if not all, of these individuals surely began as students in the Presbyterian mission’s Sitka Industrial and training School, later renamed the Sheldon Jackson School (Metcalfe13). It was also within Jackson’s school that they were forced to learn English and adopt U.S. Christianity, and were indoctrinated with the belief that by abandoning their Native culture to adopt U.S. cultural norms, they would become fully enfranchised U.S. citizens.

Although the founders of the Alaska Native Brotherhood were “formally” educated in and actively participated within the schools and churches of U.S. colonial Christianity, the Alaska Native Brotherhood was unique in that it was the first all-Native Alaskan political organization independent of the control of Euroamerican religious leaders (Metcalfe 19). Rather
than white priests converting followers to a political cause, Alaska Native Christians travelled throughout Alaska organizing for a uniquely Native cause. Paul Liberty’s daughter, Helen Howard (Tlingit), describes the independent collective process of the Alaska Native Brotherhood’s founding:

Peter Simpson was the main organizer. He met with Paul Liberty early on, outlined the idea, and the two men talked it over. After getting together, they invited others to join. They travelled around using their meager pocket money. Eventually they went to Juneau, where they got more men to join, and the [Alaska Native Brotherhood] was officially founded.

Howard continues:

The idea was innovative, and it grew in various communities. . . . At first, they met in homes, rotating meetings from house to house. They finally decided to build a hall. In Sitka, ‘Old Man Katlian’ owned the land that is the site of the [Alaska Native Brotherhood] Hall. He donated the land to the [Alaska Native Brotherhood] through Paul Liberty, who was his Kiks.ádi clansman. (qtd. in Metcalfe 14).

With the Sitka Alaska Native Brotherhood Hall in place, the Brotherhood was then capable of holding annual Grand Camp conventions in order to provide safe discursive spaces for members and potential members to gather and collectively discuss their sociopolitical realities and debate the necessary adaptive strategies to secure the survival of their languages, lands, and peoples.

Although this brief context provides only a glimpse into the individual stories that came together to form the Alaska Native Brotherhood’s constitutional story, the narrative of the Grand Camp Constitution’s collective composition remains, so far, obscured by the limited remaining
archive of the Alaska Native Brotherhood writings housed in the Sealaska Heritage Institute and Alaska State Library in Juneau, as well as the U.S. National Archives. While Howard’s narrative of the Alaska Native Brotherhood’s founding process illustrates Simpson’s and Liberty’s mobility and commitment to forming a co-national organization, for example, it says nothing of the conversations they had with their fellow founders. In fact, the two-page Grand Camp Constitution itself only hints at the content of the surrounding conversations that led to its conception.

Structured into eleven articles, the Grand Camp Constitution defines the organizational structure of Alaska Native Brotherhood leadership, officers, annual conventions, and the establishment of subordinate camps. Even the three adjoining by-laws only further outline the Brotherhood’s organizational strategies. Yet, one strategy, in relation to the stated purpose of “making [Alaska] worthy of a place among the States of North America,” stands out: one of the five standing three-member committees that the Grand Camp Constitution establishes is “Citizenship for Natives.” The other four committees include one for auditing and finance, a constitutional committee, ritual, and benefits. The details of how these committees worked together are still unclear. More details on how the ritual and citizenship committees collaborated would be especially important to understand the delicate balance between the maintenance of ritual and the necessary abandoning of ritual to gain U.S. citizenship. Instead, what remains is the final line of the adjoining Subordinate Camp Constitution which explains the Citizenship Committee’s function: to “endeavor to get as many members to secure certificates allowing them to vote” (Drucker 168). In order to fulfill the Alaska Native Brotherhood’s purpose to gain more equal civil rights by becoming enfranchised into the United States and “overcom[ing] the narrow
injustice of race prejudice,” one of the Alaska Native Brotherhood’s defining purposes was to gain suffrage for Alaska Natives.

Prior to the 1924 Indian Citizenship Act, which granted U.S. citizenship to all American Indians and Alaska Natives, gaining suffrage for Alaska Natives came with a heavy price. In order to become enfranchised in 1912, each Alaska Native had to receive a certificate of citizenship [fig. 4] that attested to his or her attainment of “civilization.” To obtain such a certificate, one had to sign an oath endorsed by two reputable white signatories, representing “a majority of the teachers in the United States Government School,” who were willing to confirm the applicant’s attainment of the “general qualifications as to an intelligent exercise of the obligations of suffrage, total abandonment of tribal customs and relationship, and the facts regarding adoption of the habits of civilized life” (Light 8). But first, Alaska Native individuals had to undergo a formal examination conducted by teachers at a local school and entreat at least five white acquaintances, who had lived in Alaska and witnessed the applicant’s actions for at least a year, to endorse the certificate. Only then could the applicant present the fully endorsed certificate to the U.S. district court and be granted citizenship (“Governing Alaska” n.p.). The “Certificate of Examination of an Alaska Indian as to Qualifications as to Claims of Citizenship” ensured that the said applicant had “abandoned all tribal customs and relationship, has adopted the habits of civilized life and is properly qualified to exercise intelligently the obligations of an elector in the territory of Alaska” (Light 8).

As suffrage historian Allison Sneider documents, the United States had always been arbitrarily selective in granting citizenship and suffrage in the continental west and its other federal territories throughout the expanding United States. In 1887, for example, American Indians living on allotted land who were willing to become “civilized” were granted suffrage. In
the same year, Mormons in Utah were disenfranchised for practicing polygamy (60). With the 1898 unlawful annexation of Hawai‘i, U.S. suffrage was granted, as established originally by the Bayonet Constitution, only to property-holding white men (91). And with the 1920 ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment enfranchising American women, women of the Philippines (then a U.S. Territory) and Puerto Rico remained disenfranchised while men gained suffrage (129).

Figure 4: Jean Wanamaker. Certificate of Examination of an Alaska Indian as to Qualifications as to Claims of Citizenship. February 6, 1919. MS/047. William S. Wanamaker Collection. Courtesy of the Sealaska Heritage Institute. Juneau, AK.
Similar to adopting the English language, gaining U.S. citizenship at the turn of the twentieth century demanded significant sacrifice: i.e. mandatory disconnection from any traditional linguistic, familial, cultural, and spiritual traditions. Like adopting English, however, becoming a U.S. citizen, on paper at least, also entitled Alaska Natives to certain powerful rights: the right to vote, the right to a trial, the right to receive medical services, and so on. Becoming U.S. citizens in pre-1924 Alaska was indeed a heavy decision with lasting implications, yet, the Alaska Native Brotherhood’s Grand Camp Constitution provides evidence that the decision was made only after critical and collective calculation. In fact, as membership continued to grow throughout the 1920s and once U.S. citizenship had become universal for American Indians and Alaska Natives, these problematic spoken and unspoken mandates of English-speaking, Christian, “non-traditional” members disappeared and the Alaska Native Brotherhood membership began to more accurately reflect the larger collective body of “uncivilized” Alaska Natives who had always already been represented by, or at least in continual conversation and relationship with the Alaska Native Brotherhood.32

Although the Grand Camp Constitution itself sheds little light on the content of the Alaska Native Brotherhood’s purpose or the collective participation in deciding how, when, and whether to resist or adapt to U.S. assimilationist pressures, the preserved minutes from later annual conventions reveal how the organizational structure defined in the Grand Camp Constitution enabled a gathering space that allowed members to critically and openly address, discuss, debate, and later publish the concerns of the Alaska Native Brotherhood’s collective membership. The first official gathering, or Grand Camp Convention, held in 1914, illustrates

32 See Chapter Two.
the Alaska Native Brotherhood’s collectivity and content that are not overtly reflected in the language of the Grand Camp Constitution. Thirty-one men attended as representatives from diverse communities throughout southeastern Alaska (Metcalfe 19). 33 Founding secretary Marie Orson, alongside the many Alaska Native women who combined to form the Alaska Native Sisterhood the following year, must have also participated to some degree in the planning, organizing, discussing, fundraising, and writing that made possible and resulted from this first convention, as is acknowledged so frequently in subsequent annual conventions. It is not until the sixth annual convention, however, that the convention minutes have been preserved in full and offer a greater glimpse into the collective conversations, including the active participation and leadership of Alaska Native women, that these conventions made possible.

In November 1920, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood held their week-long annual convention, this time in Wrangell. Although no official convention enrollment has been recovered so far, eighteen men and one woman, representing seven distinct Brotherhood branches, made reports, led discussions, told stories, read letters, and agreed upon a resolution and an official delegate to send to Congress. The Convention began with a Monday evening session discussing “[t]he question of Indian Land titles,” followed by respondents’ discussion of the experiences of “designing men” gaining right to Native lands by advising Natives to “remain Indians” rather than becoming U.S. citizens (Alaska Native Brotherhood, Minutes 8). On the Tuesday, convention attendees discussed the problems of the fishing industry (9). In the Wednesday session, participants discussed the advantages of organizing in order to “shut out the unfair and destructive competition of the whites”; in the same session, delegates discussed the

33 Specifically, Juneau, Haines, Kake, Ketchikan, Metlakatla, Saxman, Sitka, and Wrangell.
problems of the reservation system and how the reservation system would allow them to own businesses, homes, and gardens, but not the land upon which their lives were built (15). By Friday morning, Simpson motioned that “the time had come when, in his opinion, the Brotherhood should stop sending resolutions to Congress to fill their waste-baskets. What the Brotherhood should do was to send a man from their Convention” (16). Simpson nominated William L. Paul (Tlingit) and the attendees unanimously agreed (17).

That evening, the newly nominated William Paul addressed the Convention discussing “The Future of the Indians” by emphasizing the need for a more unified organization of Indigenous peoples. He turned to the earlier co-national campaigns of Tecumseh (Shawnee) and Chief Joseph (Nez Perce) to evidence Indigenous peoples’ longstanding tradition of organized Indigenous resistance. He then told of Charles Alexander Eastman (Santee Dakota), Carlos Montezuma (Yavapai-Apache), James M. Phillips (Cherokee), and others to illustrate contemporaneous Indigenous peoples’ ability to excel and compete successfully within their new sociopolitical reality. After evidencing this network of contemporaneous Indigenous intellectuals, Paul then concluded by reemphasizing the need for greater solidarity “so that [Alaska Natives] might have such influence in politics as would compel the government [to pass] laws” according to the interests of Alaska Natives (Alaska Native Brotherhood, Minutes 24). Such laws would later include the 1935 Jurisdictional Act, which guaranteed the Tlingit and Haida peoples the right to make legal claims against the United States, and the 1945 Anti-Discrimination Act, which ended segregation in schools and other public places.

Although the archive remains too limited to adequately address the various sources for, distribution of, and reception of the Alaska Native Brotherhood’s Grand Camp Constitution, these two acts alone evidence some of the effects of the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Alaska
Native Sisterhood’s organizing that their Grand Camp Constitution set into motion. Just three years after the publication of the 1917 Grand Camp Constitution, these convention minutes provide a glimpse into the critical discussions that the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood considered and responded to collectively. The names that William Paul mentions throughout his 1920 convention speech also showcase the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood’s familiarity with the influential work and writings of other contemporaneous Indigenous activists and organizations throughout the United States, tying the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood’s writings to a longstanding hemispheric, co-national history of Indigenous political and literary activism.

One such contemporary Indigenous organization with which the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood collaborated directly was the National Council of the American Indians. On February 5, 1927, Alaska Native Brotherhood delegate Reverend Samuel G. Davis (Haida) wrote to the President of the National Council of American Indians, Gertrude Bonnin. Writing on the Alaska Native Brotherhood Grand Camp letterhead, Davis tells of his family and his twenty years of missionary work in Alaska. He then congratulates Gertrude Bonnin, stating, “I am very Proud of you for your work,” and expresses his own desire to “do the same thing here in Alaska” (Letter to Gertrude Bonnin). Ten days later, Gertrude Bonnin, who maintained an office, and had been actively engaged in Indigenous politics in Washington, D.C. for more than a decade, responded by sending “some literature” and a copy of the National Council of American Indians’ own Constitution and By-Laws. She writes, “I trust you will become so filled with the constructive effort to re-unite our great big American Indian family into One National movement from their own protection and preservation under the LAWS and COURTS of our land, that you will start a Local Lodge in Alaska.” She then concludes, “[I]t is imperative to join hands, unite
our forces, to save our race from dying out, by actual starvation and landlessness” (Letter to S. G. Davis). Bonnin’s fear of Indigenous death through landlessness restates what she recognized as the shared commitment of Indigenous peoples regardless of tribal nation, language, or religion that she hoped would ensure the ongoing co-national solidarity, survival, and sovereignty of Indigenous peoples: the land. The immediate effects of Davis’ reading of the Constitution of the National Council of American Indians and Gertrude Bonnin’s invitation to “join hands” are unclear. But by the end of March, Gertrude Bonnin’s husband, Raymond T. Bonnin (Yankton Sioux), reported: “Strange as it may seem we have had Alaskan Indians write us for help and when they got it they immediately started to organize and are well underway now. As soon as spring opens up they intend to get the word out among other Indians” (Letter to Sam 2).

In fact, as this section suggests, the Alaska Natives whom Davis’ letter represents had already been “well underway” working and writing collectively as the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood for nearly fifteen years. Rather than noting the beginning of Alaska Native activism as Raymond Bonnin seems to suggest, Davis’ correspondence with Gertrude Bonnin’s highlights how Alaska Native activism was already moving beyond Alaska. What had begun with the Grand Camp Constitution as a localized co-nationalist network of Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian activists was beginning to connect to the cross-continental network of Indigenous collectivism, mobilized solidarity, and co-nationalism that the Bonnins and their National Council of American Indians represented.

**Constitution and By-Laws of the National Council of American Indians (1926)**

Out of all of the individuals discussed throughout this dissertation, none has received as much critical attention as Gertrude Bonnin. Since the late 1970s, scholars have turned to her
early ethnographic and semi-autobiographical stories published under the pen name Zitkala-Ša that gained mainstream attention in the early 1900s. Focusing their attention almost exclusively on these earlier stages of Gertrude Bonnin’s literary career, scholars have analyzed her stories in terms of sentimentalism (Bernardin, “The Lessons”), regionalism (Totten), resistance (Stromberg), translation (Spack), and kinship (Rifkin). Others have begun to build upon this emphasis on Zitkala-Ša’s stories to also explore her work as an editor (Cox), a librettist (Hafen, “A Cultural”), and an intellectual (Vigil). Perhaps, because Gertrude Bonnin’s final efforts prove less “literary” than literal and more collective than individual, however, scholars have only recently begun to consider the last literatures Gertrude Bonnin produced and published. Hafen’s most recent article, “Help Indians Help Themselves,” is the first dedicated explicitly to the tirelessly productive final fifteen years of Gertrude Bonnin’s life.

Gertrude Bonnin’s reply to Davis and the Alaska Native Brotherhood was but one of her and her husband’s many private and public calls for Indigenous solidarity across North America, a monumental effort to which they dedicated the final decades of their lives. In a personal letter written just three months prior to her reply to Davis, Gertrude Bonnin describes the growing interest in the organization that she, Raymond Bonnin, and others had recently founded: The National Council of the American Indians. She writes, “This is a great national movement. Indians MUST organize. . . . The future will prove organization is the only way Indians can hope to gain power to protect themselves legally, and for their racial preservation” (Letter to Albert Attochnie). In another letter addressed to Chief Simon Kahquados (Potawatomi) on May 19, 1926, Gertrude Bonnin explains further, “We are convinced that until the Indians organize themselves in such a way as to insure cooperation, the needs of the Indians will receive little attention from Congress” (Letter to Chief Simon). Founded on February 27, 1926, the National
Council of American Indians became that collective, co-national voice for many Indigenous communities and individuals as they began to garner attention and results from Congress.

Gertrude and Raymond Bonnin’s call for greater cooperative solidarity was, of course, not the first push for co-national organization in the contiguous United States. As Paul describes using allusions to Tecumseh, Chief Joseph, and others in his Alaska Native Brotherhood convention speech, the Hui Aloha ‘Āina, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood, and now the National Council of American Indians were natural outgrowths from a timeless, hemispheric, surely even global, tradition of Indigenous cooperation. This dissertation remembers this tradition by beginning to gather a fuller literary record of past collaborative Indigenous writers in order to further undergird the ongoing reclamation, expansion, and strengthening of today’s global Indigenous community. Just as division, conflict, and disunity have forever been part of Indigenous nations and co-national networks such realities cannot serve to negate the ongoing coalitions, cooperation, and collectivism that have always also been integral to Indigenous societies. Collectivist literatures speak to the many degrees of such longstanding, intricate intellectual, economic, and sociopolitical networks. And the turn-of-the twentieth century marks a return to a new era of co-national relationship building, within which the National Council of American Indians participated.

Like the Alaska Native Brotherhood’s Grand Camp Constitution and the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s Kumukānāwai, the exact authorship of the Constitution of the National Council of American Indians remains unclear. Gertrude Bonnin signed and addressed the cover of the only known surviving copy [fig. 5], and the Bonnins’ letters discussing the Constitution focus more on its purpose than on the process of its production. This lack of named author starkly contrasts other texts Gertrude Bonnin wrote both for and beyond the National Council of American

92
Indians, which she signs almost universally as “Yours for the Indian Cause” (Hafen). The Constitution’s lack of a named author also strengthens the text’s asserted collectivism; it reads as if written by the dialogic community of leading and lay Indigenous thinkers and activists that the Bonnins had fostered and participated within prior to and throughout the National Council of American Indians’ twelve-year effort.

Figure 5: Constitution and By-Laws of the National Council of American Indians. 1926. Amherst College Digital Collections.
The co-nationalist balance of intertribal and tribal-specific representation, recognition, and redress stands as the foundational purpose of the National Council of American Indians and is stated as such in their Constitution. After naming the organization, Article 2 begins in bold: “The main objects of the organization are the protection and preservation of the American Indian people” (3). The article then lists the Council’s eleven underlying approaches to provide effective protection and preservation, including “the practice of brotherhood”; opposition to any anti-Indian movement; presenting and disseminating the true history of the American Indian race; encouraging attendance in public schools; “encouraging Indian women to participate in the activities of American citizens”; providing legal assistance and guidance; defending against personal aggrandizement; studying local conditions and possibilities; and “promoting a more friendly relationship between the Indian tribes” (3–4). There is so much here to unpack, contextualize, and support or problematize through ongoing research. But for now, the Constitution’s final purpose of “ensuring concerted action in the work of the protection, and promotion of the interests of the American Indian People, at the same time encouraging local expression” (4), captures the National Council of American Indians’ co-nationalism in succinct simplicity. Co-nationalism involves multiple distinct Indigenous nations, with their own sovereign lands and governing structures, coming together in order to strengthen Indigenous-Indigenous cooperation and engage more effectively with non-Indigenous structures, systems, and allies. And that final phrase, “at the same time encouraging local expression,” emphasizes the uniqueness of the National Council of American Indians, especially in relationship to the Society of American Indians.

Despite the spreading of the National Council of American Indians throughout the United States and its emphasis on co-national solidarity, the archival record remains, so far, largely
written by or to the Bonnins. While we are forced to remember the National Council of American Indians’ collectivism through the Bonnins and, thus, remain within the traditional representation of individuals, Gertrude Bonnin’s and Raymond Bonnin’s writings repeatedly emphasize the collectivism that the National Council of American Indians enabled through enacting their constitutional purpose. On January 10, 1927, for example, Gertrude Bonnin wrote to a Miss Maud B. Morris inviting her to join the National Council of American Indians as a non-Indigenous associate member: “The National Council of American Indians was created in February 1926 to establish Local Lodges in Indian country for self-help and study how to use their new citizenship that the Indian may become a producer and not a consumer only” (Letter to Maud B. Morris). This letter seems to be only slightly altered from one of the many that Gertrude Bonnin sent around the same time to attendees of a January 6, 1927 Art Club program where she had performed a song and story for a largely non-Indigenous audience (Letter to My Dear). To the most general non-Indigenous audience, Gertrude Bonnin described the National Council’s solidarity from the non-threatening position of self-help.

By January 18, however, Gertrude Bonnin refocused the National Council of American Indians’ purpose from general statements promoting self-help and industry aimed at an audience of non-Indigenous women to the active protection of Indigenous land:

With National Headquarters in the Nation’s Capital, we are able to know what things are being put over in Congress, and the Departments affecting Indians and their property. This information, then is quickly available to the Home Lodges, or Local Lodges on the Reservations. By this arrangement, Indians can get action on matters important to their well being, BEFORE it is too late. (Letter to James)
While addressing an Indigenous member of the National Council of American Indians, Gertrude Bonnin employs “we” to refer specifically to the leadership of the National Council of American Indians based in Washington, D.C.—the cosmopolitan—while “their” represents the distinct reservation-based members of the National Council—the national—in their fight for their nation-specific land and wellbeing. Thus, while the we-their pronouns in Gertrude Bonnin’s correspondence could be read as an us-them dichotomy between the cosmopolitan and the national, the progressive and the traditional, it more accurately depicts a co-national network of collaboration both despite and while maintaining tribal-nation distinctions.

Unlike the Hui Aloha ‘Āina and the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood, both of which represent a comparatively limited demographic, the National Council of American Indians sought to organize and collaborate with as many Indigenous communities as possible within the expanding United States, including Alaska, and perhaps even Hawai‘i. As a result, the expression of collectivity chosen throughout the Constitution of the National Council of American Indians is “American Indian people” or “American Indian race” (The National Council of American Indians 3). As problematic as such terms are with their emphasis on “Indian blood,” they represent an aspirational attempt to organize all American Indian peoples into one co-national diplomatic body.

The process of representing the collective American Indian “people” or “race” involved extensive recruitment, travel, and writing. It was a painful and powerful process that began with an inaugural convention not unlike that described by Vizenor of the Constitution of the White Earth Nation and reimagined in the archives of both Hawai‘i and Alaska. In a letter to Rev. Robert Clarkson of South Dakota, Raymond Bonnin describes the National Council of American Indians’ founding meeting:
[The National Council of American Indians] was started by all Indian delegates from 21 different tribes who were on tribal business here but who saw the advantages to be had in organization. We were surprised, however, when they perfected their organization [and] they elected Mrs. Gertrude Bonnin (my wife) as their President by a unanimous vote. (1)

Here again, Raymond Bonnin emphasizes the co-national nexus that undergirded the National Council of American Indians’ process and expression of collectivity. The independent delegates in D.C. agreed upon the necessity to cooperate and work collectively in order to gain greater representational power in their similar relationships with the United States.

As the letter continues, Raymond Bonnin describes some of the new organization’s resulting successes:

We are happy to say that we have succeeded in several instances in saving the Indians millions of dollars. In this last Congress we fought hard to protect the Flathead Indians from having their waterpower site taken away from them and turned over to white men. We succeeded in killing the bill. The power site was valued at thirty million dollars. We also worked long and hard to protect the Navajo Indians with respect to oil leases. A bill was introduced in Congress which if passed would have caused thirty-seven and a half per cent of the royalties to go to the State in which the Indians lived and only sixty-two and a half per cent go to the Indians. We demanded one hundred per cent for the Indians and finally got it for them. In fact, this bill affects all Indians living on Executive-Order Indian Reservations and therefore involves over twenty-two million acres of Indian land. (2)
Here Raymond Bonnin brings the National Council of American Indians’ fundamental purpose for collective action back to the preservation of nation-specific and co-national land and resources for collective Indigenous peoples within the individual Indigenous communities surviving throughout the United States. In fact, Raymond Bonnin concludes his letter to Reverend Clarkson by listing the individual Dakota Indians, Yankton cases, and other non-Siouxs tribes for whom the National Council of American Indians had already done work in the organization’s first year:

Cheyennes, Arapahoes, Utes, Navajos, Pueblos, California Indians, Chippewas, Kiowas, Comanches, Apaches, Caddos, Witchitas, Osages, Delawares, New York Indians, Pottawatomies, Miamis, Poncas, Sac & Foxes, Kansas Indians, Klamath Indians, Yakimas, Flatheads, Assiniboine, Blackfeet, Shoshone, and even for Alaska Indians. (1–2)

The pride with which Raymond lists the individuals and individual tribes defended by the National Council of American Indians signifies his celebration of the co-national network the National Council of American Indians had already rebuilt and the power that such a network possessed to enact nationwide reform while simultaneously protecting local lands and interests.

But the National Council of American Indians was not simply a network of letters and ideas; like the delegates of the Hui Aloha ʻĀina and the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood, Gertrude and Raymond Bonnin, as well as other National Council of American Indians delegates, physically travelled from community to community throughout the United States to gather and to strengthen the National Council of American Indians’ membership, as well as to be eyewitnesses to the concerns of local communities in order to better support and represent them.
back in D.C. Gertrude Bonnin described one such trip to then-Chairman of Indian Welfare, Mrs. H. A. Atwood:

Without going at length into the subject, I want to say, after our 10,600 miles trip through various Indian tribes’ reservations, I returned to Washington with a great depression. The Indian people, alas! are headed straight for the poor houses through the miscarriage of justice to them, and wasting of their resources, and funds.

In the same letter, she outlines what she sees as the solution: “It is adult education for Indians beyond school age and opportunity, who still may vote and who ought to know his their legal rights as a citizen(s), to INSIST upon those rights, and the protection of his property under the laws of the land” (strikethrough in original).

Describing a 1927 trip through California and Arizona, the Bonnins record travelling an additional 3,320 miles in sixteen days with Senator Lynn J. Frazier, chairman-to-be of the Senate Indian Affairs Committee; Rev. O. H. Bronson, pastor at 1st Presbyterian Church, Santa Barbara; Stanford University biologist, Dr. Eshref Shevky, and his wife; as well as John Collier, U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs and his wife. They visited boarding schools, Hopi villages, a Mormon trading post, as well as Pima and Navajo reservations as they held local National Council of American Indians meetings, interviewed current and former employees of the Indian Service, met with superintendents and missionaries, and addressed school and community children. They then travelled another 1,495 miles over the next four days through sand storms. They write, “We were entirely lost for one night. But weather even in the low desert was cool; and we had only 1 puncture on the trip. However, we ran the last 100 m[iles] on four cylinders” (“ITEMS and HIGLIGHTS”). After each of these tours, the National Council of American
Indians’ D.C. office became inundated with letters from those whom the Bonnins had met and Gertrude and Raymond Bonnin made a concerted effort to reply individually to each, sending along, in many cases, copies of the Constitution of the National Council of American Indians, alongside other National Council of American Indians and allied publications. Gertrude and Raymond Bonnin’s recorded 15,415 miles travelled within the National Council of American Indians’ first two years is also a testament to the mobility of peoples, ideas, and literatures enabled by their co-nationalist Indigenous constitution that was becoming a new Indigenous story (Raymond Bonnin, Letter to Dear Active Member). The miles travelled evidence the National Council of American Indians constitutional story in motion, an impressive itinerary that defies the dominant narrative of static Indians and evidences the solidarity of the continental “we” that the Constitution of the National Council of American Indians asserts.

In order to accomplish this co-nationalist balance within the process and expression of collectivity, the National Council of American Indians’ eight-page Constitution sets forth eight articles with three pages of by-laws that specifically define the National Council of American Indians’ organizational structure. In an undated document entitled “How the National Council of American Indians Came into Being,” Gertrude Bonnin explains the purpose and potential of the Council’s organization further:

For a great many years Indian Tribal Delegates have come to Washington, D.C. in vain attempts to procure redress for their many grievances on their scattered reservations. They met each other in hotels and held informal councils where they discussed their problems and the difficulty to secure favorable action. . . . The plan of the organization is to have the National Headquarters in Washington as a
Listening Post, and Local Lodges organized in all Indian country, in the course of time, until all the tribes be reunited under the rights of citizenship. (n.p.)

This idea of a central listening post to which local lodges could express their nation-specific concerns in order to create a greater collective voice for change stands as the central image of the National Council of American Indians. It is depicted in what Gertrude Bonnin calls “the campground picture” atop the National Council of American Indians’ official letterhead.

The campground letterhead image [fig. 6] consists of a central teepee enclosed by a circle of smaller tepees. A fire still burns next to the central teepee on the left. On the right, sits a circle of council members attentively listening to a speaker standing in the center. Beyond the outer circle is a luscious horizon dotted with wild game and horses. In the front, a young family enters the circle on horseback into what Gertrude Bonnin describes as the “universal brotherhood” (Letter to Hon. Charles J. Rhoads). The letterhead is filled with stereotypical images of Plains Indians and seems, at first, to suggest that a universal brotherhood of Indigenous North Americans can only be accomplished through an assimilative melting of tribal diversity into a singular colonial stereotype. On the other hand, underneath the stereotypical imagery there is a power of solidarity, of listening, learning, and working together from within an imposed imagery in order to create a radically different image of co-national political activism. Still further, the teepee imagery may not be stereotypical or imposed at all, but rather it may be reflective of the Bonnins’ own Sioux ideology and thereby a representative example of co-national solidarity, of working for and from one’s own nation while working to empower all nations.

This visual rhetoric that works within both non-Indigenous cultural assumptions and Indigenous cultural and political realities can also be reread through the written rhetoric of the Constitution. Located on an open expanse of fertile land populated only by game, each of the
forty-six teepees and thirty-six council members represents the desires, successes, and grievances of an individual tribal nation. The opening of each teepee faces the central teepee and burning fire, illustrating a shared goal and vision, as well as the individual angles, perspectives, and relationships that inform and influence the center. A new nation presenting the futurity of the National Council of American Indians and of sovereign American Indian peoples is represented through the family with young children entering from the west. With careful consideration and some imaginative latitude, what appears like just another colonial rendering of teepees, feathers, and blankets, begins to depict the purpose and promise of the National Council of American Indians’ co-national brotherhood.


Similar to the campground letterhead, and much like the constitutions of the White Earth Nation, the Hui Aloha ‘Āina, and the Alaska Native Brotherhood, the National Council of
American Indians’ Constitution seems, at first, overtly Eurowestern. But Brooks’ reminder that these constitutions participate first within an Indigenous literary tradition while choosing to adapt to and simultaneously write for new Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences, encourages readers to reconsider many of the often internalized, colonial assumptions still extant in literary studies. The local lodge structure with representatives convening regularly in D.C., for example, seems like a simple borrowing of the U.S. democratic federal-state structure, until we remember that Benjamin Franklin was admittedly influenced by many ideas from the Great Law of the Hodinöhso:ni’ as he and other U.S. founding fathers sought ways to unite and organize the separate colonies into the United States (Franklin). Rather than the blind adoption of a colonial literary genre, the Constitution of the National Council of American Indians aims to organize Indigenous peoples by building upon past Indigenous organizing in order to rewrite rhetorical and legal structures readily recognized by the colonial powers and populace that the National Council of American Indians had to work both from within and against.

Thus, while written exclusively in English, the National Council of American Indians’ Constitution had to also “speak Indian” in order for American Indians to be persuaded to organize. It needed to, as Indigenous rhetoric scholar Kimberly Roppolo (Cherokee/Choctaw/Creek ancestry) suggests, “speak to [its] communities in ways that [were] culturally acceptable and recognizable” (321). In order for the National Council of American Indians to gain recognition as an organization that could legally collect dues, directly address U.S. government officials, and build relationships with non-Indigenous ally organizations including the American Christian Missionary Society, the Washington Salon and United Arts Society, various Federation of Women’s Clubs, the League of Women Voters, the National Urban League, the Urban Negro League, and the League for Political Education, and others, however,
the Constitution of the National Council of American Indians had also to speak Anglo-American legalese. A close reading of the Constitution highlights the National Council of American Indians’ attempt to adequately address each audience. The Constitution demands “Indian blood” for membership, for example, as required by federally imposed tribal blood quantum, but does not set a minimum blood percentage for membership. It adheres to Robert’s Rules of Order and is organized through a rhetorically patriarchal hierarchy, while placing Gertrude Bonnin as President and encouraging Indigenous women to reclaim their places as local political and cultural leaders, as well as to exercise their newly won suffrage despite the ongoing disempowerment and degradation of Indigenous women by U.S. popular and political propaganda, and at times internalized by individual tribal governments. The Constitution singularizes the American Indian Race as colonial powers so often do, while constitutionally protecting the expression and further development of local specificity. And as has already been mentioned, the Constitution establishes an organization that mirrors the U.S. constitutional government while simultaneously paralleling the precedents of earlier Indigenous constitutions.

Similar to the receptions of the constitutions of the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood, the Hui Aloha ‘Āina, and the White Earth Nation, reception of the National Council of American Indians’ Constitution can first be told through the names and numbers. And in this constitutional story of co-national Indigenous solidarity told against the much louder canonical narrative of Indigenous dislocation and alienation, names and numbers are a significant story on their own. By 1931, the National Council of American Indians
consisted of a ninety-member Advisory Board representative of forty-eight separate tribes.\textsuperscript{34} Beyond the advisory board, personal correspondences between the Bonnins and local leaders and members identify at least another 269 members with at least 250 additional members whose names have not yet been recovered. Although the actual number of copies of the Constitution of the National Council of American Indians printed remains unknown and the actual number of readers remains impossible to calculate, Gertrude Bonnin reports that the National Council of American Indians printed 10,000 copies of their later petition (Letter to Mrs. Holtzman). While these names and numbers attest to the growing dialogic community that the National Council of American Indians worked to rebuild, personal responses from individual readers also evidence the more qualitative and individual effects of their Constitution’s collectivist rhetoric.

On February 21, 1927, for example, Advisory Member James LaPointe wrote to Gertrude Bonnin from Pine Ridge, South Dakota, explaining his process for increasing local lodge membership: “We don’t beg, beseech or plead with anybody to join. We just simply and plainly explain the advantages, the constitution and by-laws and the work the organization has already done. If that doesn’t induce them, we let them go” (Letter to Gertrude Bonnin). Three years later, another member, Miles (Ed) Good Shield from Parmalee, South Dakota, wrote the Bonnins enthusiastic to join after reading the Constitution, but with one request: “I wonder if you can revise or translate in Dakota Language all these Constitution and by-laws.” Having heard that Pine Ridge had received an “English-Dakota” version, Good Shield explains, “I could get some new members but they likley [sic] not understand very well. All these laws” (Letter to

\textsuperscript{34} According to the Constitution of the National Council of American Indians, the Advisory Board held the responsibility of electing the National Council of American Indians’ President, Vice President, Councilor General, and the Executive Secretary-Treasurer (6).
Gertrude Bonnin). Together these letters provide a mere sampling of the countless positive receptions from Indigenous readers of the Constitution. They also allude to the National Council of American Indians’ linguistic flexibility as the National Council of American Indians encouraged local lodges to adapt to their own communities’ needs as necessary, though so far only the single English version pictured earlier has been located. As La Pointe goes on to explain, however, the Constitution of the National Council of American Indians and its push for co-national, multilingual Indigenous solidarity also invoked “bitter enemies” from amongst Indigenous “traditionalists” who were apprehensive to embrace yet another “help the Indian” organization (Letter to Gertrude Bonnin).

Despite the, at times, harsh criticism the National Council of American Indians’ work invoked, Good Shield’s request for and disclosure of an English-Dakota version of the Constitution reiterates the potential and power of the National Council of American Indians’ commitment to “the work of the protection, and promotion of the interests of the American Indian People, at the same time encouraging local expression” (Constitution 4). It also emphasizes the National Council of American Indians’ responsibility to translate the jargon-ridden laws and issues in their attempt to resist such laws in co-national solidarity. Surely this act of translation from the official English document into an Indigenous language occurred, at least at the local lodge level, not only for the South Dakota Sioux.

The Council’s Board of Directors, led by the Bonnins, also made translating legal English into common English a priority and sent these translations in the form of newsletters to the general membership to ensure that all members could take an informed stance on the most
important general and local issues concerning Indigenous peoples. And as the Constitution established the productive space and organizational mobility for local and general translation to diverse Indigenous audiences, the National Council of American Indians had to also succeed in translating its resistance to non-Indigenous audiences, especially those with direct influence in Washington, D.C. The Constitution’s ability to speak persuasively to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences can be seen through the Bonnins’ ongoing correspondence with and support from Senator Thomas F. Bayard of Delaware, who as will be discussed in Chapter Two, went on to present the National Council of American Indians’ later petition to Congress, and funded the National Council of American Indians’ distribution of their petition throughout and far beyond its membership.

**Conclusion**

The distinct constitutions of the National Council of American Indians, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood and the Hui Aloha ‘Āina, with their rhetorical and literal successes and shortcomings, were written from specific cultural and sociopolitical contexts. Like the Hodinöhsö:ni’ Great Law (ca. 1090–1500), the Quiché Maya Popol Vuh (ca. 1500s), the Constitution of the Cherokee Nation (1827), and the Constitution of the White Earth Nation (2009), each promoted its own unique purposes, expressed its own collective voice, developed its own rhetorical structure, was derived from its own diverse set of sources, was distributed in its own way and to its own audiences, and was received differently by each. Through juxtaposition, however, we also see how each participates within a longstanding Indigenous literary tradition

35 See Chapter Three.
that, returning to, Akiwenzie-Damm, sought solidarity in terms of a shared connection to homeland and common histories of colonization, displacement, and genocide. But unlike the contemporary individual writers Akiwenzie-Damm and Douglas anthologize, these constitutions express these similarities collectively rather than individually. These national and co-national constitutions express, in a deep, longstanding Indigenous literary tradition, the stories of thousands of diverse Indigenous individuals coming together in collective constitutional resistance against the ongoing genocidal individualization project of the United States. These national and co-national constitutions trace a hemispheric Indigenous literary tradition that encourages contemporary Indigenous scholars, intellectuals, activists, artists, writers, and their allies to, as the Constitution of the National Council of American Indians outlines, practice a more sincere brotherhood and sisterhood in order to more effectively oppose anti-Indigenous movements, present and disseminate truer histories of Indigenous peoples, encourage Indigenous traditional and public education so that Indigenous men, women, and two-spirit peoples may more actively and effectively participate in ongoing cultural and political activities, to defend against scholarship, art, and activism that promotes the individual over the communal; and finally, to more effectively protect Indigenous peoples and lands from further encroachment, exploitation, and violence.
Chapter 2: Signatures of Solidarity

If constitutional stories record the ongoing cultural and sociopolitical continuity and mobility of Indigenous peoples, Indigenous petitions evidence the resulting national and co-national solidarity in motion. In fact, part of the purpose of the Bonnins’ 15,415-mile tour through Native America was to distribute the 10,000 copies of the Petition of the National Council of American Indians as included in the April 24, 1926 U.S. Congressional Record. The urgency with which the National Council of American Indians composed and presented their petition—only two months after the National Council of American Indians was organized—suggests that one of the purposes of the Constitution of the National Council of American Indians was indeed to enable further collectivist literatures of action. This chapter builds upon constitutions in order to trace another collectivist Indigenous literary history across the continental United States and the Pacific: Indigenous petitions.

Petitioning, whether in writing or some other material form, has been a critical avenue of voicing collective Indigenous ideas since long before European contact. In fact, although the Petition of the National Council of American Indians cites Council members’ rights as U.S. citizens to petition Congress, the tradition of petitioning dates back at least to the petitions of the Hodinöhsö:ni’ Confederacy. The Great Law, which Abenaki literature scholar Lisa Brooks turns to in connection to the Constitution of the White Earth Nation as evidence of the longstanding Indigenous constitutional tradition, also traces the textual tradition of petitioning that the Hodinöhsö:ni’ practiced prior to European contact:

A bunch of wampum shells on strings, three spans of the hand in length, the upper half of the bunch being white and the lower half black, and formed from equal contributions of the men of the Five Nations, shall be a token that the men have
combined themselves into one head, one body and one thought. . . The white portion of the shell strings represent the women and the black portion the men. . . This string of wampum vests the people with the right to correct their erring Lords. (Parker 46)

Here strings are the paper and wampum shells the ink that represents the coming together of all local men and women, “the people,” to collectively protest or petition the actions of their leaders, a right that by contrast the Magna Carta (1215), the foundational document of Anglo-Saxon liberty, reserves solely for nobility.

In these earliest recorded Indigenous petitions, the Hodinöhsö:ni’ acknowledged the necessary participation of men and women as distinct, but unified, in order to petition from various nations and social strata as “one head, one body and one thought.” As Kelsey describes, from the beginning of the Hodinöhsö:ni’, as the Peacemaker and Ha:yëwënta36 brought together each of the Six Nations, the politico-social structure was centered on the “Mother of Nations” a role that has since become deemphasized simultaneously with the “erosion of matrilocal and matrifocal knowledges and narratives” since European contact (Reading the Wampum 66–7). Thus, the Hodinöhsö:ni’ guarantee as a constitutional right and requirement that women maintain their central position and petition alongside their men.

Not only does the Great Law predate similar literary rights in the Eurowestern literary tradition, Indigenous communities within the United States have continued to adapt their petitions to their new nation-to-nation relationships with the U.S. nation state. As Brooks argues:

36 Hiawatha
Birchbark messages became letters and petitions, wampum records became treaties, and journey pictographs became written ‘journals’ that contained similar geographic and relational markers, while histories recorded on birchbark and wampum became written communal narratives. (*The Common Pot* 13).

Brooks concludes, “These texts, which emerged from within Native space, represent an indigenous American literary tradition” (13). Kelsey explains further, “Wampum itself . . . both functions ‘as words’ . . . and surpasses language’s finite nature in its ability to transmit messages” (*Reading the Wampum* 73). Thus, rather than borrowing from the petitions of abolitionists, suffragists, or any other supplicating group throughout the United States and its expanding territories throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, or even from influential early individual Indigenous petitioners such as Samson Occom (Mohegan), William Apess (Pequot), and Sarah Winnemucca (Paiute). Although these individuals surely spoke and wrote their petitions as representatives of their communities, I, like the Petition of the National Council of American Indians itself, draw exclusively from episodes of early collective Indigenous petitioning as “portals to resilient memory and creative adaptation” (Bernardin, “Seeing Memory” 177).

In fact, this continuous adaptation affirms the members of each organization’s claims to their own “rhetorical sovereignty,” their “inherent right and ability . . . to determine their own communicative needs and desires . . . , to decide for themselves the goals, modes, styles, and

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languages of public discourse” (Lyons 449). In order to illustrate such sovereign petitioning, Brooks turns to an Abenaki awikhigan (petition) posted in 1747 outside an English fort in Kwinitekw and argues:

As a historical and literary document, the petition poses a challenge to narratives of progressive colonial expansion. . . . Most important, this ‘text’ demonstrates that writing was operating as a tool of communication and delineation in Native space, independent of colonial institutions and even in direct opposition to the colonial project. (emphasis added)

Brooks concludes, “It may be the first piece of American Indian protest literature” (The Common Pot 43). Brooks describes this Abenaki petition and other writing in English as a tool, a weapon wielded in opposition to increasing colonial encroachment, and argues for the need to read not only what Indigenous peoples write, but, as Malea Powell (Eastern Miami/Shawnee ancestry) suggests, “how American Indians use writing.”

Rather than reinforcing any claims of “firstness” for any particular group, however, a claim Jean O’Brien (White Earth Ojibwe) identifies as a powerful ploy of colonial rhetoric that overwrites the complexities and multiplicities of converging histories (Firsting and Lasting), Brooks’ discussion of the Kwinitekw petition emphasizes the longstanding Indigenous literary genre of petitioning as perhaps the earliest genre of Indigenous protest literature in English, with an even earlier extra-English and extra-“literary” genealogy. What is crucial about this genealogy are the many individual branches that came together to post this earliest Indigenous protest literature. These earliest Indigenous petitions in English, as well as their non-English oral and material ancestors, expressed the protest of the collective tribal and co-national community.
Yet, many literary scholars continue to neglect collectivist Indigenous petitions to celebrate, instead, the solidarity, resistance, and literary activism of their non-Indigenous contemporaries.

As but one example of this colonial oversight, Tiya Miles turns to the early nineteenth-century anti-removal petitions of Cherokee women. In terms of anti-removal activism, white women have been memorialized, often by their posterity, as the driving force behind movements both to “save these poor, oppressed natives” and to establish white “women’s place in national political discourse” (221–22). Yet, as Miles argues, such memorialization has, until recently, neglected Cherokee women’s own anti-removal activism and petitioning. Miles writes, “Not only did Cherokee women’s organized action against Indian removal [1817] predate white women’s activism [1829]; it may even have influenced the later campaign” (222). And like the 1747 Abenaki petition, the Cherokee women’s anti-removal petition remained intrinsically committed to the land.

Addressing an assembly of Cherokee chiefs and warriors in council, the May 2, 1817 petition reads:

Your mothers, your sisters ask and beg of you not to part with any more of our land. We say ours, You are our descendants; take pity on our request. But keep it for our growing children, for it was the good will of our creator to place us here. . . . Only keep your hands off of paper talks for its own country. For [if] it was not, they would not ask you to put your hands to paper, for it would be impossible to remove us all. For as soon as one child is raised, we have others in our arms. . . . Therefore, children, don’t part with any more of our lands but continue on it.

(qtd. in Miles, *Ties that Bind* 254)
Not only do the Abenaki and Cherokee petitions share a commitment to maintaining their lands, they also reclaim the centrality of women in the political process and share the similar intellectual and literary history of wampum. As Cushman explains, “[Cherokee] wampum belts, like those of the Iroquois, were made of purple and white quahog shells woven together. . . . These Cherokee wampum belts were made as texts, an archiving system of sorts, which chronicled events, negotiations with other tribes and colonists, and Cherokee philosophies” (“Wampum” 117). My goal in tracing the literary tradition of petitions from the Great Law through the 1817 Cherokee women’s anti-removal petitions and to the petitions authored at the turn of the twentieth century is not to devalue the influence of white women writers such as Catharine Beecher and Lydia Sigourney on the anti-removal movement, or to argue about source material for the first amendment of the U.S. Constitution. Rather, my goal is to emphasize the need to read and discuss Indigenous petitioning as a vital form of land-based, collectivist Indigenous literature by evidencing the reality that when Indigenous communities choose to petition their own or any other government they do so within a longstanding and continuous Indigenous literary tradition that remains rooted in Indigenous lands. This remains the case even when the individual form of each petition evolves in order to adequately address each new audience and cause.

As prescribed by the Great Law, interpreted by Brooks, and exemplified by the Cherokee anti-removal campaign, Indigenous communities before and throughout the expanding United States have continued to band together, most often through the activist leadership of Indigenous women, to petition in order to present the desires, grievances, and needs of their people; to correct erring Indigenous and non-Indigenous authorities; and to protest encroaching politico-economic authorities. And just as the Abenaki community in 1747 and the Cherokee women in
1817 adapted their language and rhetoric to their audience, each community and committee petitions in its own way and for its own purposes. Yet, the similarities are striking; each emphasizes the need and responsibility to protect the lands, rights, and lives of Indigenous peoples, thus connecting Indigenous petitioners throughout the North American continent and the Pacific in a longstanding history and network of Indigenous petitioning.

**Petition of the National Council of American Indians (1926)**

On April 24, 1926, Gertrude Bonnin and her newly formed National Council of American Indians submitted their Petition aimed at reclaiming treaty rights, sovereignty, and outlining the complex congressionally enforced challenges facing newly enfranchised American Indian citizens of the United States. While the purpose of the National Council of American Indians as defined in its Constitution was “the protection and preservation of the American Indian people” (3), the central purposes of their Petition were specifically to hold Congress responsible for past and present treaty agreements, and identify ongoing injustices against American Indians. And while they place their Petition within a longstanding Indigenous history of petitioning, they frame their right to petition as U.S. citizens in terms of the U.S. Constitution:

> In the exercise of the right of petition guaranteed by the First Amendment of the Constitution, the National Council of American Indians, on behalf of the Indian citizens of the United States, addresses this, its petition, to the Senate of the United States Assembled, for the redress of their grievances, setting forth and

38 The Indian Citizenship Act, granting all American Indians and Alaska Natives U.S. citizenship, was signed into law on June 2, 1924 by President Calvin Coolidge.
alleging the manifold wrongs that are being done them by the Congress and the
Government of the United States in violation of the terms and the spirit of the said
treaties and the Constitution of the United States, as follows. (1–2)

What then follows are four sections spread over the remaining forty-one pages: “I. The
Constitutional Rights of the Indian Citizens,” “II. The Indian Citizens are today without a
Remedy at Law for the Invasion of their Constitutional Rights,” “III. The Constitutional Rights
of the Indian Citizens are Denied and Ignored by the Guardian Government,” and “IV. The
Social and Economic Situation of the Indian Citizens of the United States.”

As the section titles suggest, each section expresses a branch of the petition’s overall
purpose. The first section begins by asserting tribal sovereignty within a discussion of the U.S.
Articles of Confederation, describing Indigenous tribes as “communities politically dependent
upon the United States but independent of the authority of any state” (2). The National Council
of American Indians then cites the Confederation Congress Proclamation of 1783, which
expressly required all dealings with Indigenous peoples and lands to go directly through
Congress. After locating Indigenous sovereignty and the nation-to-nation negotiating structure
within the foundational documents of the United States, the National Council of American
Indians turns to an early Indigenous petition submitted to Congress by the Indian National
Confederacy in 1786.

According to American Revolution historian Colin Calloway, the 1786 Indian National
Confederacy included delegates from the Five Nations, as well as from the Hurons, Delawares,
Shawnees, Ottawas, Chippewas, Potawatomis, Miamis, Cherokees, and Wabash, who described
themselves as the “United Indian Nations.” Calloway continues, these “revived Indian
confederacies continued the wars for their lands and cultures into the 1790s and exposed the
American theory of conquest for the fiction it was” (289). U.S. representatives, however, seem to have refused to acknowledge any continental Indigenous coalition and to refer to the United Indian Nations as the Wabash Confederacy, the Northwestern Confederacy, and the Miami Confederacy.\textsuperscript{39} The National Council of American Indians seem to reference the Indian National Confederacy—United Indian Nations—as perhaps the most flexible and far-reaching political network of chiefs, clanmothers, and faith keepers, who were committed to work together in order to protect all Indigenous peoples and lands, in order to align the National Council with the longstanding sociopolitical tradition of Indigenous collaboration upon which the National Council sought to build. They align themselves with powerful past and ongoing co-national Indigenous networks whose rights and laws Congress has continually ignored and overstepped.

As the Petition of the National Council of American Indians explains, the Confederacy’s 1786 petition urged Congress to “kindle one great Council Fire at which to treat with the Indian National Confederacy and to settle by a general congress all questions between the United States and the Indians” (3). Because the United States rejected the Confederacy’s request and repeatedly negotiated with its member tribes individually, the Confederacy issued a second petition the following year and spoke out in “solemn protest” (National Council of American Indians, Petition 3). Congress, individual U.S. states, and individual American citizens, however, continued to act against presidential promises to the Confederacy and against U.S. constitutional assurances that treaties with Indigenous tribes were to be made only on a nation-to-nation basis (Kelsey, \textit{Reading the Wampum} xxiii–iv).

\textsuperscript{39} See P. Jane Hafen’s forthcoming critical edition of the writings of Gertrude Bonnin.
While most historians blame bribery, whiskey, and other corrupt strategies for the United States’ violation of original treaties with the Indian Confederacy (Jennings 13), such a historical narrative, regardless of its accuracy, also erases the agency and intellectual aptitude of Indigenous individuals and individual tribes who also agreed to negotiate separately for perceived personal or tribal gain. Thus, by mentioning the petitions of the Confederacy in their Petition, the National Council of American Indians holds Congress responsible for continuing illegal dealings with Indigenous individuals while simultaneously reasserting the Council’s constitutional purpose of criticizing individual aggrandizement at the expense of collective Indigenous well-being.

Section One goes on to affirm that despite the reiterated assurances of the U.S. Supreme Court, Congress had continued to infringe upon the property rights of American Indians by passing such acts as the Preemption Act of 1842, the Railway Acts of 1862 and 1864, and the Homestead Act of 1862. The National Council of American Indians then argues that “no adequate provision [has] been made for the protection of Indians against the lawless horde of land grabbers that was turned loose by those laws upon their lands” (10). After presenting this history of federal land grabbing, Section One concludes:

Today there are pending in Congress, as we shall show, legislative measures designed for the express purpose of further divesting the Indians of their rights and despoiling them of property which was voluntarily ceded to them at a time

41 The Preemption Act and Homestead Act allowed individuals to purchase or work 160 acres of unsurveyed land (Krall 58). The Pacific Railway Acts of 1862 and 1864 provided federal support to build the first transcontinental railroad and telegraph (Davis 49-51).
when it was believed to possess no value in exchange for what was taken from them by force. These facts we will undertake to establish in any judicial tribunal to which you may give us access just as we have proved similar ones in the past that are clearly recorded in the decisions of the Supreme Court. (11–12)

Describing this first section, Hafen maintains, “This general claim for civil rights calls out the hypocrisy evident in American history, where ‘rights’ are defended for those with privilege and power yet denied for the first inhabitants” (“Help Indians” 207). The confidence the National Council of American Indians expresses in the justice and documented history of their case to have their constitutional rights realized, and their reliance on the documented literary history of Indigenous petitioning, continues throughout the subsequent three sections.

Section Two begins, “Having shown what are the constitutional rights of the Indian citizens, we now propose to show that Congress has denied to the Indian citizens a legal remedy for their wrongs” (13). Like the previous section, this second section contextualizes the National Council of American Indians’ claims regarding the extent of discrimination present in the U.S. legal system through well-known past and contemporaneous events, as well as congressional acts that evidence the systematic barring of Indigenous citizens of the United States from seeking direct legal action against the ongoing injustices they suffer. The section concludes by calling for “sweeping reform of the existing law with respect to Indian legal remedies . . . if justice is to be done the Indians by affording them the power at law to compel a proper accounting on part of the guardian Government of its trust” (18).

Section Three then connects these discriminatory legalities back to the central issue of land, reminding Congress of its role and responsibilities as a guardian of autonomous Indigenous nations within the United States. The National Council of American Indians explains:
A guardianship is a trust, and a political no more than a private individual guardian can convert the trust property, whatever control may be exercised over the wards and their property. Yet, the Government of the United States does not hesitate to contend that Congress, in the exercise of its plenary authority over the Indians may dispose of their property as it may see fit without legal liability on the part of the United States, notwithstanding the fact that it has been held over and over by the courts that a property right that has become vested in an Indian may not be repealed by Congress. (19)

Although the National Council of American Indians repeatedly chooses not to vilify individual members of Congress or even the Legislative Branch exclusively, suggesting that the injustices detailed are the result of “unintentional oversight” (18) and that individual members of congress are simply “cogs in the rusty gears of Indian bureaucracy” (22), the Petition directly declares, with ample evidence and legal precedent, that the ongoing denial of constitutional rights to American Indian citizens of the United States is directly connected to the continual unconstitutional confiscation, occupation, and exploitation of Indigenous lands.

The Petition’s final section continues, “It has been shown what are the legal and practical discriminations existing against the Indian citizens of the United States. We now propose to point out to the Senate their social and economic grievances” (24). The National Council of American Indians then begin their discussion of the roots and causes of the American Indian social and economic situation with the U.S. Declaration of Independence. The petition states, “When the United States in 1776 asserted its sovereignty over the ancestors of the Indian citizens of the United States they had no conception of land as property” (24). In this first grievance, the National Council of American Indians turns the national narrative of declaring independence and
sovereignty from England to U.S. revolutionaries declaring sovereignty over the Indigenous inhabitants of North America and their land. The Petition goes on to describe the history and current conception of collective land ownership and describes the failure of Congress to effectively encourage Native America to become a productive entity within the U.S. sociopolitical economy as a fundamental misunderstanding of “Indian nature.” This final section then takes a surprising turn for contemporary readers, but one common in the writings of Indigenous intellectuals and progressive activists throughout the early twentieth century, and appeals to congressional paternalism.

Rather than outline the countless faults of Congress, the Petition addresses Congress as a legal guardian, a parent. Members of the National Council of American Indians quote from a report by Reverend Jedidiah Morse submitted to Congress in 1820 by President James Monroe, a report the National Council of American Indians describes to exhibit “irrefutable logic”:

The Government, according to the law of nations, having jurisdiction over the Indian territory, and the exclusive right to dispose of its soil, the whole Indian population is reduced, of necessary consequence, to a dependable situation. They are without the privileges of self-government, except in a limited degree, and without any transferable property. . . . They are entitled as “children” of the Government, for so we call them, peculiarly related to it, to kind paternal treatment, to justice in all our dealings with them, to education in the useful arts and sciences, and in the principles and duties of our religion. . . . If we fulfill not these duties, which grow naturally out of our relation to Indians, we can not avoid the imputation of injustice, unkindness, and unfaithfulness to them—our national character must suffer in the estimation of all good men. If we refuse to do the
things we have mentioned for the Indians, let us be consistent and cease to call them “children,” and let them cease to address our President as their “great father.” Let us leave to them the unmolested enjoyment of the territories they now possess and give back to them those which we have taken away from them.

(Bonnin, “Petition” 29–30)

Then calling on Congress to be the self-appointed parent it demands to be, the National Council of American Indians concludes, “This government unquestionably should be in its nature parental, absolute, kind, and mild” (30). The Petition then returns from an—at times—sentimental plea for a more responsible paternalism to its legalistic rhetoric, outlining how Congress has been a negligent, abusive parent by not providing adequate education, passing laws that exploit Indigenous lands, and encouraging the reservation system “to be utilized as permanent economic prisons for a race on which to keep it incarcerated forever,” rather than as the temporary protective asylums they were ostensibly designed to be (31–32). The section goes on to further problematize the reservation system, allotment, and—at length—the entire Indian system. All the while, the National Council of American Indians returns to the sentiment expressed by Rev. Morse: if Congress demands to remain a guardian government and enforce a certain way of life upon its Indigenous citizens, it is time to guard more effectively, economically, and responsibly. Otherwise, Congress should, as Vine Deloria, Jr. (Oglala Sioux) expressed so passionately in Custer Died for Your Sins (1969), accept a “cultural leave-us-alone agreement, in spirit and in fact” (27).

To claim that the Petition of the National Council of American Indians demands that Congress leave American Indians alone in such Delorian fashion is perhaps a gross overstatement. Rather, the National Council of American Indians petition Congress to make the
changes necessary to make Congress the protective parent it had always declared itself to be.

After outlining the four stated purposes of the Petition—to demand “the constitutional rights of the Indian citizens” (2), explain how Indigenous citizens have no legal remedy against the ongoing “invasion of their constitutional rights” (13); to identify how “the constitutional rights of the Indian citizens are denied and ignored by the guardian government” (19); and to explain the sources and realities of “the social and economic situation of the Indian citizens of the United States” (24)—The National Council of American Indians declare anew:

The Council has but one purpose—the organization of a constructive effort to better the Red Race and make its members better citizens of the United States. These objects it cannot attain unless the Indians are accorded the rights essential to racial self respect and a spirit of loyalty to the United States. It is for that reason alone that it presents their grievances. (36)

While the National Council of American Indians claim as their sole purpose to make American Indians more productive U.S citizens, the vast majority of the assertions in their Petition do not suggest a smooth, unilateral, assimilationist transition from communally-minded tribal peoples into loyal individual, privatized U.S. patriots. Instead, it holds Congress accountable as a self-appointed guardian for a longstanding and ongoing history of injustice and violence. By demanding that Congress pass laws that remove the discriminating limitations on American Indians that keep them from enjoying the constitutional rights guaranteed to other U.S. citizens, the Petition expresses the National Council of American Indians’ desire for Indigenous peoples to become capable citizens of the United States who maintain Indigenous spirituality, resist doctrines and theories of discovery, assert tribal sovereignty, and remain committed to attending to their lands.
The Petition concludes by invoking the Indian National Confederacy again and condemning Congress’ ongoing strategies of disrupting co-nationalist Indigenous action, or as Theodore Roosevelt declared, “break[ing] up the tribal mass” (23):

Fearing the power that comes of union, even now agents of the Government advise the tribes not to join [the National Council of American Indians]. . . . Such is ever the case in a struggle between progress and the forces of bureaucratic reaction. We know that it is only to be expected that the forces will persist in that diplomacy which proved so effective in breaking up the Indian National Confederacy and which has ever since kept the Indians disrupted. (36–37, emphasis added)

As the Petition attests, dominant U.S. culture and its resulting congressional actions demand the homogenization of all Indigenous cultures to become either assimilated “Americans” or remain within the imposed cultural confines of the “traditional” American Indian. Diplomatically, however, Congress demands dislocation and distance between Indigenous nations. The Petition of the National Council of Americans does the opposite; it calls for a resistant reclamation of co-nationalism: Indigenous nations remaining culturally and territorially distinct while becoming diplomatically unified.

Unlike the Constitution of the National Council of American Indians, the Council’s Petition identifies Gertrude Bonnin, acting as Council President, explicitly as the author of the Petition. However, attributing sole authorship of the Petition to the President was surely more strategic than accurately reflective of its process of composition. Hafen argues, for example, that the legal voice highlights, at least, Raymond Bonnin’s part in the process (“Help Indians Help themselves” 206). Raymond Bonnin had worked as both a law clerk and attorney for tribal cases
in D.C.-based legal firms (Stowell 368). Specific discussions regarding the Petition’s composition have not yet been recovered. But, similar to the Constitution, the National Council of American Indians’ Petition reasserts tribal lands and sovereignty by emphasizing the collective: both the aspirational collective of all “Indian citizens of the United States” (1), as well as the actual collective of at least the founding delegates from twenty-one separate tribes.42 What could be read, on the one hand, as hyperbolically hopeful in terms of future Council membership reflects, on the other hand, the National Council of American Indians’ constitutional purpose regardless of membership: “The protection and preservation of the American Indian people” (Constitution 3). This declaration of citizen and Indigenous rights, as well as the sentiment of representing all of Native America, repeat as the National Council of American Indians highlight critical moments of collective action in the history of and relationships between Indigenous nations and the United States.

The Council’s connection to the Indian National Confederacy also highlights the possibilities and strategies of co-nationalism. Within the limits of a single petition, the National Council of American Indians acknowledge neither the cultural and sociopolitical distinctions between each of the collaborating nations nor the limited demographic that the Confederacy represented at any given time. Instead, the Petition presents the Indian National Confederacy as the co-national voice and sentiment of all American Indian peoples. This seems to neglect the National Council’s constitutional purpose to “ensur[e] concerted action in the work of the protection, and promotion of the interests of the American Indian People, at the same time encouraging local expression” (4, emphasis added). But co-nationalism is not an all-or-nothing

42 See Chapter One.
approach to protecting and preserving Indigenous peoples and lands. Instead, co-nationalism recognizes the necessary maneuvering to present various degrees of “concerted action” and “local expression” to various audiences. To Indigenous audiences, co-nationalism emphasizes cultural and sovereign specificity while embracing the reality of and need for multiple nations to work together. To non-Indigenous audiences, co-nationalism emphasizes diplomatic solidarity. Thus, by perhaps overstating the representation of the Indian National Confederacy into a continental polity, the National Council of American Indians attest to the shared concerns and approaches of the Confederacy and the National Council, and holds Congress accountable for its similar strategies of breaking treaties and disregarding agreements to acquire further Indigenous lands across the continent. Such colonial strategies, such land-based co-national commitments, and such collective solidarity in resistance were not limited to past Indigenous confederacies. Thus, when speaking to a colonial audience, the National Council of American Indians work from within their co-national commitments and simplify national distinctions, for the moment, in order to increase the rhetorical effect of speaking on behalf of all American Indians.

Later in the Petition, the National Council of American Indians also connect their collective voice to Tecumseh’s (Shawnee) 1811 co-national campaign:

In the vain hope of saving his people it was now that Tecumseh proclaimed his philosophy of Indian Nationalism founded upon the conception that not only the tribal Indians but the Indian tribes as such owned all the remaining Indian lands in common, and that for them to part with their land meant their certain destruction.

(23)

The Petition continues, “Moreover, his scheme of salvation for his race embodied the holy campaign preached by his brother, the Prophet, for the moral regeneration of our people who
were being debauched by their contacts with the hitherto unknown vices of European civilization” (28–29, emphasis added). Through the collective possessive pronoun, “our,” members of the National Council of American Indians trace their ancestry of co-national Indigenous activism to another well-known land activist in order to petition Congress to stop repeating the unconstitutional injustices the Petition of the National Council of American Indians documents. Throughout the Petition, the National Council also connect their work to such well-known Indigenous land activists as Sitting Bull (Hunkpapa Lakota), Chief Joseph (Wallowa Nez Perce), Little Turtle (Miami), Black Hawk (Sauk), and Osceola (Creek).

Through their collective voice and the lineage of Indigenous petitioning that they document, members of the National Council of American Indians structure their Petition along their four fundamental grievances and cite numerous Indigenous and non-Indigenous sources to both evidence ongoing injustice and propose potential paths forward. An epigraph, citing the First Amendment of the US Constitution, prepares readers to accept the Petition as continuous with the U.S. constitutional right to petition. The Petition then begins by echoing some of the language in the Declaration of Independence. But rather than declare independence under God, the National Council of American Indians remind their readers of the doctrine of discovery and the renowned Swiss international legal philosopher Emer de Vattel’s *The Law of Nations* (1758) in order to petition for a more responsible guardianship under the Great Spirit: “When in the course of human events a civilized state asserts by virtue of an alleged right of discovery the power of preemption in an aboriginal territory, it assumes before the Great Spirit . . . and under the Law of Nations, an obligation for those whose possession it displaces” (1). Although the Petition does not specifically distinguish between the Great Spirit and the Judeo-Christian God, the National Council of American Indians petition Congress with a commitment to the creator
similar to the American founding fathers’, yet distinct from the insatiable Judeo-Christian God of divine conquest and domination. After rewriting the opening lines of the most foundational document of U.S. liberty, the Petition of the National Council of American Indians goes on to draw precedence, evidence, and argument from a range of texts including the Proclamation of 1783, two petitions of the Indian National Confederacy, various treaties and congressional acts dating back to as early as 1789, including U.S. presidential pledges and inaugural addresses back to George Washington, Supreme Court decisions, Committee on Indian Affairs reports, and so on. Together, these sources intertwine to assert Indigenous sovereignty and survival, demand justice, and hold Congress accountable to the agreements that it has forced onto Indigenous peoples.

This variety in source material also highlights the National Council of American Indians’ multiple audiences. Senator Thomas F. Bayard from Delaware seems to have been the initial Congressional audience. It was, after all, Bayard who presented the Petition of the National Council of American Indians to Congress and had it printed in the Congressional Record. It was also Bayard who helped the National Council of American Indians with the costs associated with their printing of 10,000 copies (Gertrude Bonnin, Letter to Thomas). On April 30, 1926, the same day she wrote Bayard to thank him for his service, Gertrude Bonnin also wrote describing her plan to study the Petition of the National Council of American Indians with Mrs. J. Marc Fowler, Vice President of the Illinois Women’s Club, as part of the Club’s yearly work plan (Letter to Mrs. Holtzman). By May 7, Bayard had also written to Colonel Jennings C. Wise, a

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43 The Proclamation of 1783 declared that the federal government must consent to any extinguishment of aboriginal title to Indigenous lands.
Virginian lawyer, asking him to send copies of the Petition to four influential women from Wisconsin, including Jessie Jack Hooper, President of the Wisconsin League of Women Voters (n.p.). While Bayard helped to circulate the Petition among leading women in Wisconsin, Gertrude Bonnin also reached out to Chief Simon Kahquados (Forest County Potawatomi), sending twenty-five copies of the Petition to circulate in his community (n.p.). Throughout the next year, Gertrude and Raymond Bonnin, and others continued to distribute the Petition throughout Native and non-Native America by mail or by hand, confident in their cause and in the Petition’s potential to speak persuasively to its diverse readership.

Although the Petition of the National Council of American Indians gained support from Bayard and other like-minded Congressional members, the various women’s clubs in which Gertrude Bonnin participated, and a number of other influential non-Native friends and allies, Gertrude Bonnin’s letter to Chief Kahquados also expressed concern in the false information circulating in reaction to the Council’s Petition to Congress, especially within Indigenous communities:

In the work of the organization of this Council—the first purely Indian organization—which is designed to afford a medium for racial expression and improvement . . . , we are naturally meeting with the usual obstacles placed in the path of the Indians by influences who do not desire them to develop the power of cooperation. Every conceivable kind of propaganda is being put out to create the impression among the Indians that the National Council of American Indians is but another organization by means of which the Indians can be exploited by self-seekers. (n.p., emphasis added)
Gertrude Bonnin’s letter then concludes, “We are convinced that until the Indians organize themselves in such a way as to insure cooperation, the needs of the Indians will receive little attention from congress” (n.p.). As is frequent in her correspondence, Gertrude Bonnin’s letter to Chief Kahquados emphasizes the need for co-national cooperation, to speak collectively as one voice, as the most critical and effective medium for Indigenous “racial expression.”

Mainstream media accounts of the National Council of American Indians’ work, on the other hand, portrayed the Council as either unilaterally assimilated or stereotypically “traditional.” Only a week prior to presentation of the National Council of American Indians’ Petition, the New York Times printed an article entitled “Red Men take Up Civilized Ways.” The subtitle reads “Only 20 of the 371 Tribes Hold to the Tepee.” Reporting on the National Council of American Indians’ recent formation, the article then reads, “The Indians themselves are asserting their rights in a way familiar to the whites—by organization” (X15). After briefly outlining the National Council of American Indians’ organization, the article continues, “Association with the white man has made the Indian anxious to have more of the ‘advantages of civilization’” (X15). The article then concludes, “By a curious coincidence, the formation of the National Council of American Indians was organized not far from the spot where the powerful Algonquin tribes once held periodic council. There is no doubt of the influence already exerted by this Indian organization” (X15). This article recognizes the influence of the National Council of American Indians and correctly labels the National Council of American Indians, as Gertrude Bonnin confirms to Chief Kahquados, as an “Indian organization,” but insists that any connection to tribal intellectual, activist, or sociopolitical traditions are nonexistent, or residual if at all.
At the same time, other news outlets said nothing of influence and assimilation. Instead, they presented the National Council of American Indians and their push in Congress through demeaning stereotypes of “tradition,” thereby removing any credibility for “contemporary” influence. The Florida *Evening Independent*, for example, writes alongside Gertrude Bonnin’s portrait and a stereotypical cartoon:

The Red Man, rising in council to speak, now addresses the chief as “Madame President.” It’s because Mrs. Gertrude Bonnin, . . . has been made president of the newly organized National Council of American Indians.

The president is of the aristocracy of the famous Sioux tribe, and bears the title of princess.

The condescending article, entitled “‘Squaw’ Heads Indians’ New National Council,” continues, “We believe the American people want the Indian treated fairly,’ says the smiling, convincing, faintly copper-hued ‘squaw’ chieftain” (7). While the *Times*’ piece focuses on the National Council of American Indians as an organization operating within a non-Indigenous sociopolitical tradition, the *Evening Independent* emphasizes Gertrude Bonnin as a playful, buckskinned princess steeped in Indian “tradition” and surrounded by teepees.

The Petition published one week after each of these articles, however, says nothing of Gertrude Bonnin the individual. Instead, it presents the National Council of American Indians as an organization grounded by choice, not coincidence, upon the longstanding collectivist lands, lives, and literatures of other prominent Indigenous organizations throughout the history of Indigenous North America. As Hafen concludes, the Petition “outlines the history of injustice and current social and economic problems. Yet there is an idealism here grounded in the concept
of citizenship and loyalty that should be rewarded.” She continues, “the petition of the NCAI claims basic human rights. However, it does so within the rubric of the federal system, arguing for rights as American citizens, free from discrimination. Additionally, the NCAI claims the proprietary Indigenous rights related to land and community” (“Help Indians” 208). The National Council of American Indians draw on Anglo-America for legal rhetorical tools and for documented evidence of treaties, promises, and founding political philosophies, but continually assert Indigenous spirituality, sovereignty, and survival within the longstanding Indigenous literary and sociopolitical tradition of petitioning.

**1929 Grand Camp Resolution (Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood)**

As Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood delegates from throughout Southeast Alaska convened in Haines in November, 1929, for their seventeenth annual convention, bringing with them anger, agency, and ideas for potential paths forward, they did so as part of an early twentieth-century network of Alaska Native and American Indian intellectuals, artists, and activists. They gathered, informed by centuries of Indigenous petitioning orally, materially, and textually both within and beyond Alaska.

The 1929 Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood convention commenced by reading the minutes of the previous year’s convention, a Christian invocation, singing “Onward Christian Soldiers,” and listening to a thirty-minute sermon by Reverend E.E. Bromley. After two sessions of financial reports from the various delegates, U.S. District Judge for Alaska James Wickersham was invited to address the convention as the opening evening’s keynote speaker. In his speech, Wickersham presented a legal history of Alaskan land since Russian contact. According to the surviving meeting minutes, Wickersham explained:
The Russians were in Alaska for the purpose of buying furs. They did not claim anything, and still they sold Alaska for $7,200,000.00 cash money to the United States. At the time Russia sold Alaska, the present towns of Yakutat, Hoonah, Klukwan, Haines, Douglas, Juneau, Angoon, Sitka, Kake, Petersburg, Wrangell, Ketchikan, Hydaburg, Kasaan, and all the land and timber on it belonged to the Natives. Russia had no land in Alaska, with the exception of a little strip in Sitka, Kodiak and Russia Point at Wrangell. (Alaska Native Brotherhood “Grand Camp Alaska” 5)

Wickersham goes on to ask, “Why haven’t the Natives been paid a cent for their land?” and then answered, “Because nobody has asked to be paid for their land so far” (5). Wickersham went on to express his belief in the United States as a fair government that would listen if Alaska Natives, now as enfranchised U.S. citizens, would simply ask for just compensation.

Following Wickersham’s speech, leading Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood members conducted a discussion on land ownership and citizenship. They then moved and seconded the appointment of five men as a committee to investigate the possible compensation for Native land in Southeast Alaska. The Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood members appointed the five men by unanimous vote the following day: Ralph Young (Tlingit), Charles Newton (Tlingit), Frank G. Johnson (Tlingit), George Haldane (Haida), and Samuel Jackson (Tlingit) (Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood “Grand Camp Alaska” 6). Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood delegates then voted upon the committee’s duties. Their foremost responsibility was to investigate “the feasibility of suing the U.S. for our lands” (9). Delegates arranged for the investigating committee to work in conjunction with a team of Alaska Native lawyers to determine the possibility and process of seeking redress from the United States for
stolen lands, though it remains unclear whether the legal team originally imagined the actual return of land or simply monetary compensation for lands already accepted as lost. With the investigation and legal team appointed and unanimously supported, they then drafted the following resolution:

WHEREAS when the United States government took over Alaska from our forefathers, it was a land of plenty, with rivers teeming with all kinds of salmon, the woods with fur and game animals, and forests were free to us; and

WHEREAS the United States government has locked up the forests so that what was formerly ours must now be purchased from a government that gave us nothing for it; and

WHEREAS our fish streams have been taken from us by the United States Government so that we can [n]either fish nor live near our ancient fish streams, not only because in the changing civilization the same Government has taught us to live like civilized people and not on a diet of fish like our fathers, but also because our Government without giving us a hearing has prohibited us from catching fish at our ancient fish streams for our support; and

WHEREAS the same Government has made fishing regulations so that the only people who can catch fish with profit are those who can afford to invest from ten to twenty-five thousand dollars in a huge fish trap; and

WHEREAS all of this has reduced our people till our income averages less than $150 to a family of five all of which endangers the health of our children; and
WHEREAS all of this responsibility must be laid at the door of our own Government;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that we petition in the name of the Alaska Native Brotherhood, that great organization of our people comprising over 5,000 native Indians in southeastern Alaska, to the Congress of the United States for relief; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that Congress be asked to delegate a committee of fair minded men to investigate our condition, with money to get the evidence, uninfluenced by the different bureaus which are directly responsible for our condition; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that copies of this resolution be sent to each Senator and Representative of the Congress of the United States with the hope that some day one may be touched to ask justice for us. (“Grand Camp Resolution”)

And with the action this resolution committed delegates to, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood transformed the conference resolution into a petition representing the protest of 5,000 Alaska Native individuals working and writing collectively against the historic and ongoing theft and mismanagement of Alaska Native lands.

As the convention minutes describe, this petition emerged out of a highly structured space created and controlled exclusively by Alaska Natives. Non-Indigenous attendees, like Judge Wickersham, participated as allies and friends, by invitation only. Writing and presenting the initial resolution were acts by individuals, perhaps a committee of likeminded delegates. Passing the Resolution and carrying out the required action, however, were acts of collective
agreement. The Resolution came out of the prayers, songs, discussion, listening, debate, and revisions of individuals dedicated to and participating within a larger interconnected community. Unlike the process by which the Petition of the National Council of American Indians was recorded in the U.S. Congressional Record, however, the collective process of the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood’s 1929 petition—one of many Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood annual resolutions especially concerning land and discrimination—has been documented and preserved in the form of meeting minutes available, so far, only in the archived collections of the Sealaska Heritage Institute in Juneau, Alaska. The 1929 minutes record the names of sixty elected Alaska Native Brotherhood and twenty-seven Alaska Native Sisterhood delegates whose voices raised, as representatives from their sixteen distinct Southeast Alaskan communities, in support of the petition as representatives (“Grand Camp Convention” 25–29). And rather than sealing the petition with the singular presidential signature, as the National Council of American Indians chose to do through Gertrude Bonnin, Grand President William L. Paul and Grand Secretary Frank G. Johnson (Tlingit) signed the 1929 Grand Camp Resolution as attesters, participants, and witnesses rather than authors of this collectivist document of Alaska Native land-based literary activism.

The language that the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood employ in their petition also highlights their emphasis on co-national activism. Throughout their petition, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood speak through plural possessive pronouns, through a communal voice that attests to collective sovereignty and land ownership, thereby rejecting the privatization of Alaska Native Land. The petition refers to “our forefathers,” forests that were “formerly ours,” “our fish streams,” “our fathers,” “our ancient fish streams,” “our support,” and so on (emphasis added). The petition also relies on this communal voice to represent those affected by and those
speaking out against the U.S. government. It describes “forests [that] were free to us,” “a government that gave us nothing,” water ways “taken from us by the United States Government so that we can [n]either fish nor live.” The Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood then declare: “[W]e petition . . . to ask justice for us” (emphasis added). Rather than writing only through individual essays, poems, stories, and/or plays, these 5,000 Alaska Native men and women out of approximately 30,000 total Alaska Natives, who make up the we, our, and us of the Grand Camp Resolution, chose to speak as a collective body, as the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood.44

Although the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood’s petition emphasizes collective ownership and activism and expresses the collective through the communal voice of inclusive plural pronouns, however, the collective voice is framed as exclusively masculine. Unlike the National Council of American Indians’ Petition, which although its language emphasizes the collective “red man” is spearheaded by a Yankton Sioux woman, the Alaska Native Brotherhood’s Resolution does not mention the women of the Alaska Native Sisterhood who are utterly silent from the petition. Yet, within the convention’s meeting minutes, resolutions are passed to officially thank the twenty-seven Sisterhood delegates for their individual and their communities’ contributive service. Although these sister delegates participated throughout the convention in the songs, prayers, presentations, and passing of resolutions, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood chose to address Congress as a Brotherhood. They chose to speak as an exclusively masculine political body in search of legitimacy from a largely masculine U.S. Congress.45 In this sense, the Alaska Native Brotherhood’s petition parallels the National

44 The 1930 U.S. Census Bureau accounted for 29,983 total Alaska Natives, including 15,359 men and 14,624 women (“Indians of Pure and of Mixed Blood” 11).
45 Of the 100 senators and nearly 450 representatives, only seven were women (“Women in Congress” n.p.).
Council of American Indians’ in that they both choose to gender their collective voice as masculine despite the reality that Indigenous women have always undergirded, oftentimes led, these organizations’ activism.

Like the National Council of American Indians’ Petition, the Alaska Native Brotherhood’s Grand Camp Resolution also speaks through a formal Eurowestern legalistic structure and rhetoric while simultaneously challenging the U.S. civilization project, asserting Alaska Native sovereignty, and basing that sovereignty on traditional and ongoing relationships with the land. Recognized today as the first Tlingit attorney, William Paul’s role in the petition’s composition is obvious; however, the coupling of Eurowestern legalese with Alaska Native understandings of land and sovereignty also points to the understated connection between early Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood leaders and their local community elders. After a 2015 public lecture I delivered at the Sealaska Heritage Institute, Rosita Kaaháni Worl (Tlingit), current President of Sealaska Heritage Institute and active Alaska Native Sisterhood member, explained this relationship to me and the audience and expressed the need for scholarship to begin to acknowledge the strategic, purposeful, and productive relationship between “traditional” knowledge keepers and “progressive” Indigenous activists. In response to the common criticism, including the criticism she expressed as she was a new Alaska Native Sisterhood member, of the “assimilationist” choices of early Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood leaders, Worl explained:

I finally came to the conclusion . . . That [early Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood leaders] were looking for us to get the tools that we needed to protect ourselves. And when you look at their early work and the early leaders, [you realize] that their early work that they were doing was not on land,
specifically. I did a study of leadership and when I was looking at the traditional leadership of the clans, they were always talking about land. 1912 comes, they organized the Alaska Native Brotherhood and they talk about learning to speak English, getting educated. They were looking for the tools that we needed in order to survive. . . . We still had clan leaders. And they would touch base with the clan leaders. Even though they said we had to speak English, they gave deference to the clan leaders.

Worl then referred me to the work of Paul Jackson (Tlingit) who suggests, “It was a specific strategy that part of our people would become educated in the western way, but we would still keep our traditional leaders, who would then come back and educate us during this time period. They were the educators. These people who continued our traditional practices, they would become the educators in this time and era” (Steinbright 105). Rather than feel shame for the loss of language and culture, rather than accept a narrative that reduces active Indigenous adaptation as unilateral assimilation, Worl and Jackson both address the complexity of the era while reclaiming a history of collective anticipation of, adaptation to, and action against the underlying colonial desire of Indigenous disappearance. Like Brooks in her analysis of early Abenaki petitions, Worl has come to understand the use of English, and other ostensibly assimilationist adoptions, as tools, strategies of survivance to continue to resist, reclaim, and survive into the future.

Likewise, although the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood constructed their 1929 petition only after Judge Wickersham’s encouraging address, and although they elected to petition in English only, Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood founders were building upon an Alaska Native tradition of petitioning in English dating back to as early as the 1867 Russia-U.S.
Territorial exchange. One such petition, for example, “A Petition to the President of the United States,” published in English and Russian in the *Russian Orthodox American Messenger* in 1897 provides a glimpse into an Alaska Native literary tradition from which the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood’s petition grows. The 1897 petition, signed by ten Tlingit leaders of the time, begins:

Dear Sir:

From the very time the United States raised its flag here and throughout the entire territory, our people have not ceased to appeal directly to the Government in Washington through its representatives, the most prominent chiefs and leaders. We have done this, despite our knowledge of the presence of Government representatives here, such as the Governor and other officials.

Overstepping the unelected territorial jurisdiction, these ten leaders conclude:

Without mentioning our previous petitions made during the last few years we appeal only about the issues listed here:

1) [T]o forbid [Mr. Brady] to destroy buildings and other property in the process of construction of the road.\(^{46}\) We do not lay claims on the land which he now owns, despite the fact that it had been the property of our ancestors since time immemorial and was used by them as a cemetery. It is enough that he illegally took possession of that land and used some of the bones to bank his road, while he threw others in the water. . . .

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\(^{46}\) John G. Brady was Governor of Alaska from 1897–1906.
2) We ask that Mr. Smith, the superintendent of the Baranoff Packing Company, would be forbidden to take away our lagoons, bays and streams where we used to fish long before the arrival of white people.

3) We do not want American saloons. We ask the Government to close them down. Tramps and idle people such as soldiers and sailors, bring whiskey into our midst from those establishments, they make our wives and daughters drunk and often seduce them in that state. We do not want a civilization that not only does not close such establishments but even encourages them. We do not want education that tears our daughters away from their homes and alienates them, teaching them the English language, which only makes it easier and more profitable for them to engage in prostitution. (Kamenskii 134–36)

Here, as in the Alaska Native Brotherhood’s 1929 petition, these ten Tlingit leaders make certain concessions and subject themselves as “humble servants” to Washington, while simultaneously demanding access to and respect for their stolen ancestral lands and waterways, sovereignty over remaining lands, and protection from extralegal exploitation of Alaska Native women and girls under the guise of “civilization.”

Tlingit leaders addressed their 1897 petition to President William McKinley and distributed it widely in the bilingual *Russian Orthodox American Messenger* published in New York City, thereby reaching the widespread congregation of Russian American Orthodoxy to which many Tlingit had converted. The Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood, on the other hand, addressed their 1929 petition to every individual member of Congress and seem to have published the petition alongside other convention resolutions in the Alaska Native Brotherhood’s
English newspaper, the *Alaska Fisherman* (1923–32), though the surviving copy of this specific issue is too illegible to identify each of the specific resolutions included. The preserved minutes, notes, and surrounding personal correspondence are also limited in their discussion of the distribution of the Alaska Native Brotherhood’s petition within and around Alaska specifically.

Correspondence from subsequent conventions, however, highlight that it was common practice for the Alaska Native Brotherhood Grand Camp Secretary to send an individual copy of the convention minutes and resolutions to all local camp leaders and registered members, but again I have not yet been able to determine if this was the case with the 1929 petition. It was, however, the only resolution designated explicitly that year as the “Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood Grand Camp Resolution,” and the only one to invoke all of southeast Native Alaska. The many other subject- and/or community-specific 1929 resolutions included “Permanent Population: extend prohibitive tax on non-resident fishermen,” “Petition to Secretary of Commerce to make hookoff illegal,” and “Wireless station wanted at Yakutat” (“Grand Camp Convention” 21). Surely, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood delegates carried their Grand Camp Resolution and narrated the convention’s conversations and collective action back to their local communities. It was, after all, this 1929 Resolution that became a catalyst for the resulting petition and co-national action that placed Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood leaders on a six-year path toward what is now known as the Tlingit Haida Jurisdictional Act, which authorized Southeast Alaska Natives to bring suit against the United States, making possible the later Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act (1971), the most substantial land claims act up to that point in U.S. history.

While the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood’s ancestors sent petitions, community leaders, and chiefs to protest the unlawful erasure of Alaska Native sovereignty and civil rights
in the Alaska territory, Indigenous activists from nearly 3,000 miles across the Pacific also
taveled to Washington to petition Congress against the illegal seizure and cessation of their
collectively attended lands from the Kingdom of Hawai‘i. It is a colonial presumption to imagine
that these two parties, as well as the many other Indigenous leaders and delegates, who were
continually writing to and visiting Washington at the turn of the twentieth century, did so in
isolation from one another. Such colonial pretense elides the ever-broadening recovered evidence
of co-national relationship building and solidarity that has existed since long before European
contact. The writings of the National Council of American Indians, the Alaska Native
Brotherhood/Sisterhood, and so many other Indigenous organizations assure contemporary
readers that Indigenous activist interaction has continued to occur regularly in and away from
Washington.

**Palapala Hoopii Kue Hoohuiaina (1897, Hui Aloha ʻĀina)**

Danika Medak-Saltzman (Turtle Mountain Chippewa) describes these now reemerging
turn-of-the-twentieth century interactions and co-national collaborations as moments of
“transnational Indigenous exchange.” Turning to a fascinating photograph captured at the 1904
St. Louis Exposition, entitled “Ainu and Patagonian Women Getting Acquainted,” Medak-
Saltzman argues that although “examining the experiences of these women at the fair might seem
an impossible task. . . [] the prevalence of such events [Indigenous-to-Indigenous interactions]
suggests that rather than being anomalies, these historical moments are evidence of an ever
emerging and expanding Indigenous consciousness, similar to the way colonial nation-states

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47 Petition Against Annexation
were trading in knowledge of colonial processes” (591–93). Although concrete evidence of direct Kānaka Maoli and Tlingit exchanges in Washington throughout the late 1890s has not yet reemerged, let us not assume that Indigenous activists on all ends of the ever-expanding borders of the U.S. imperialist project did not seek out opportunities to meet and discuss their shared and specific concerns and approaches of survival and resistance. After all, there were only just over 230,000 residents in 1890s Washington, D.C. and, as illustrated by the founding of the National Council of American Indians, Indigenous delegations from throughout the imperial borders of the United States knew and interacted with one another in D.C. and elsewhere (“Population of” n.p.).

On December 6, 1897, James Kaulia (Kānaka Maoli), David Kalauokalani (Kānaka Maoli), John Richardson, and William Auld convened with Queen Liliʻuokalani in Washington, D.C., entrusted with five hundred and fifty-six pages of signatures with the purpose of protesting the unlawful and unwanted annexation of Hawaiʻi. Three days later, Liliʻuokalani and her delegates watched as their Palapala, pregnant with the hopes of their nation, was presented to the U.S. Senate. Only ten years earlier, Liliʻuokalani’s brother, King Kalākaua, had been forced to sign the now infamous Bayonet Constitution of 1887, which had, as Noenoe Silva (Kānaka Maoli) explains, transferred suffrage from the common Hawaiʻian people and naturalized Asian immigrants to wealthy white foreigners with no contingency of naturalization (Aloha Betrayed 126–27). The Bayonet Constitution had also rendered Hawaiian Crown lands violable and privatized land ownership for the first time. By 1893, the oligarchy of white missionaries and planters, empowered by the Bayonet and with help of the U.S. Navy, had overthrown the inclusive Hawaiian Kingdom and proclaimed themselves the U.S.-settler Republic of Hawaiʻi. Immediately, delegates of the Republic travelled to D.C. and lobbied Congress to annex Hawaiʻi.
Pledged as an anti-imperialist, President Grover Cleveland denied annexation and ordered an investigation into the overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom. From the investigation known most commonly as the *Blount Report*, Cleveland determined the overthrow an “act of war” carried out without congressional approval and demanded that the provisional republic be dissolved and Liliʻuokalani be restored as Queen ("The Annexation" n.p.). The determined delegates of the provisional republic returned frustrated but confident in the public support they had garnered, knowing they could lobby again with a new U.S. president in less than four years. On June 16, 1897, newly elected President William McKinley, alongside leaders of the oligarchical republic, signed the unconstitutional Treaty of Annexation.

Rather than reacting in revolutionary violence, Kānaka Maoli across the islands and from all social strata began to organize into pro-Hawaiian Kingdom activist organizations or leagues, the largest being the Hui Aloha ʻĀina, to peacefully protest annexation, promote the restoration of the monarchy, and demand equal civil rights denied within the new republic (Hui Aloha ʻĀina, “Ke Kumukanawai”). During a mass meeting of Hawaiian patriots held in September, James Kaulia (Kānaka Maoli), newly elected President of the Hui Aloha ʻĀina, declared, “Let us take up the honorable field of struggle, brain against brain. . . . Do not be afraid, be steadfast in aloha for your land and be united in thought. Protest forever the annexation of Hawaiʻi until the very last aloha ʻāina [lives]!” With this call for non-violent resistance, leading women of the league boarded ships and canoes to neighboring islands and began to gather signatures of protest. Leaders of the men’s branch soon followed. Upon their arrival in Hilo, Abigail Kuaihelani

48 This investigation was led by U.S. Commissioner James H. Blount named members of the U.S. Navy as guilty of acting without congressional approval.
(Kānaka Maoli) and ʻAʻima Nāwahī (Kānaka Maoli) were welcomed with leis and gifts of inter-
island solidarity. Silva reports: “[It was] proclaimed that a Hawaiian double-hulled canoe would carry them into the harbor. They had decorated five seats on the beautiful vessel with leis of maile, lehua, and other flowers, and had a Hawaiian flag waving at the back.” By October 1897, league delegates had gathered over 21,000 signatures, making up more than half of the population of Native Hawaiians at the time (Silva “The 1897 Petitions” n.p.). In addition, the sister organization of Hui Kālaiʻāina had also collected an additional 17,000 signatures (hoʻomanawanui, *Voices* 21).

The collection of 38,000 signatures at a time when Indigenous peoples of the western hemisphere were being cast by politicians and popular media as vanishing and primitive is a significant piece of Indigenous literary history in itself. It is a textual testament of solidarity, resistance, collective adaptation, survival, and of a late-nineteenth-century co-national network throughout Hawaiʻi. The petition that solicited so many signatures indeed represents what Silva describes as the “hard work and hopes of the whole nation” (“The 1897 Petitions” n.p.). The one-
hundred-twenty-word Palapala, printed side by side in English and Hawaiian, concludes by emphasizing its collective solidarity:

O Makou, na poe no lakou na inoa malalalo iho, na wahine Hawaii oiwi, he poe makaainana a poe noho hoʻi no ka Apana o ____________, Mokupuni o ____________, he poe lala no ka Ahahui Aloha Aina Hawaii O Na Wahine o ko Hawaiʻi Paeaina, a me na wahine e ae I like ka manao makee me ko ka Ahahui I oleloia, ke kue aku nei me ka manao ikaika loa I ka hoohuiia aku o ko Hawaii Paeaina I oleloia ia Amerika Huipuia I oleloia ma kekahi ano a loina paha
We, the undersigned, native Hawaiian women, citizens and residents of the
District of __________, Island of __________, who are members of the Women’s
Hawaiian Patriotic League of the Hawaiian Islands, and other women who are in
sympathy with the said League, earnestly protest against the annexation of the
said Hawaiian Islands to the said United States of America in any form or shape.

(Minton and Silva)49

Similar to the gendering of subjects and the erasure of land through the translation of aloha ‘āina
into “patriotic” discussed in relation to the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s Kumukānāwai in Chapter One,
‘āina again eludes English translation while remaining central to the Hawaiian version of the
Palapala. Here ‘āina does not only appear in the League’s name. It also defines the signatories. In
English, the undersigned are described as “native Hawaiian citizens and residents.” In Hawaiian,
they are “he poe makaainana a poe noho oiwi Hawaii.” The term makaʻāinana, of which ‘āina
appears as the root, translated into “citizen,” is particularly interesting. Whereas the English term
“citizen” signifies “an inhabitant” or “legally recognized subject” (OED), the term makaʻāinana
can signify both “subject” or “citizen,” as well as “commoner” or “people that attend to the land”
(Nā Puke). Understanding this underlying distinction between languages, audiences, and cultural
commitments, highlights how the 1897 Palapala can be read as both an early example of
collective Kānaka Maoli “protest literature,” as well as a powerful example of collective Kānaka
Maoli land-based literature within a longstanding Indigenous literary tradition of collectivist
petitioning.

49 The men’s petition was identical with the omission of “women.” It reads, “We the undersigned, native Hawaiian
citizens” (Minton and Silva).
Still today, these petitions represent a moment of inter-island Indigenous mobility and solidarity in the fight to secure Indigenous sovereignty and land. Given the fact that King Kamehameha had forcibly unified the islands only some eighty-seven years prior to these petitions, the Palapala Hoopii Kue Hoohuiaaina also represents a co-national coming together despite, and in acknowledgement of, island-specific distinctions, grievances, and longstanding disagreements. As Nālani Milton (Kānaka Maoli) and Silva suggest while explaining the significance of having recovered these petitions from the U.S. National Archives, “Our ancestors’ actions to make pono [right] the wrongs of their time infuse us with the mana [spiritual power] to make pono ours. We are the continuation of a living culture: the aloha ‘āina of this land” (viii).

Conclusion

The 1897 Palapala of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina, alongside the 1929 Grand Camp Resolution Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood and the Petition of the National Council of American Indians are but three of the many petitions that have been and continue to be written by Indigenous communities. They participate within a longstanding Indigenous literary tradition that has been, so far, deemed by the individualist modes of Eurowestern literary studies as not “literary” enough to be read as literature, and not “Native” enough to be read as Indigenous. Yet, each writes from within specific and shared ancestral and ongoing Indigenous literary traditions that are committed to Indigenous land and promote the collective over the individual. As early American literature scholar Caroline Wigginton, describes:

[Indigenous petitions] assert the existence of community governance bodies that make decisions. They assert their continued occupation of the land and their
desire to participate as sovereign nations in the economy. They assert their physical needs. They assert their own relationship to traditional religion and a Christianity that is not mediated by white missionaries. They assert their intellectual right to tell their own stories. They assert their ability to construct their own versions of history. (26)

But not only history, like the still burgeoning body of Indigenous poetry, fiction, scholarship, and drama, these petitions assert Indigenous peoples’ desires, abilities, and choices to imagine and direct their own futures in relationships to the lands of both their ancestors and their posterity. Alongside Indigenous constitutions, petitions are many of the “word[s] that could set [Indigenous peoples’] creative deliberation into motion” (Brooks, “The Constitution” 58). They are the kinetic words that resist a colonial narrative that continues to render Indigenous peoples as static. They are the words that evidence communal solidarity rather than displacement and alienation. And most importantly, Indigenous petitions are many of the words that have been and continue to be published to collectively maintain and protect the sovereignty, rights, lives, and lands of Indigenous peoples.
Chapter 3: Indigenous Paper Routes

Before had England
   even before had
   Jesus!
   there was a voice and the voice was
   maoli.
   ʻImaikalani Kalāhele (Kānaka Maoli)

Throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, these same trails and waterways that have connected Indigenous communities throughout North America and the Pacific, since long before the advent of colonial calendars, developed into Indigenous paper routes. They began to carry Indigenous news, politics, culture, and literature from one Indigenous reader to the next in the form of newspapers. The common historical consensus agrees that Indigenous North American newspapers began in New Echota, in what is now Georgia, with the publication of the *Cherokee Phoenix* (1828–34). It had been over a century since the first American newspaper had been published before the Cherokee Nation began to publish this first Indigenous American newspaper. Many may read this century-long gap as the time necessary for the Cherokee to reach a level of “civilization” capable of producing their own newspaper. The growing body of scholarship by Brooks, Weaver, Warrior, and so many others that my work hopes to build upon, however, suggests the opposite. Rather than the time requisite for Indigenous print-cultural “progress,” I read the century prior to the *Cherokee Phoenix* as the time necessary for U.S.-led settler colonialism to adequately disrupt traditional communicative networks to such an extent that a new form of national and co-national communication became necessary.

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50 *The Boston News-Letter*, first published on April 24, 1704, was the first English newspaper published in North America (Brigham 327).
Cherokee Phoenix editor Elias Boudinot (Cherokee) described the purpose of the newspaper as “comprising a summary of religious and political events, etc., on the one hand; and on the other, exhibiting the feelings, dispositions, improvements, and prospects of the Indians; their traditions, their true character, as it once was, as it now is, and the ways and means most likely to throw the mantle of civilization over all tribes” (qtd. in Murphy and Murphy 24). Here Boudinot expresses how the Cherokee Phoenix promotes the cultural and literal survival of the Cherokee people in their resistance to the unilateral “civilization” project being waged with increasing pressure, in particular through the forced removal of the Cherokee and other Indigenous peoples from their ancestral lands, by the U.S. federal government throughout the nineteenth century.

To do this, Boudinot featured articles both in English and Cherokee, beginning with the Constitution of the Cherokee Nation on the first page of the first issue, and moving on to include Cherokee-specific laws, customs, and culture, as well as U.S. news and news from other Indian tribes across the continent. According to Boudinot, he circulated 200 copies of the Cherokee Phoenix weekly and they were read with “great interest,” including neighborhood gatherings to read the paper together (Cushman, “The Cherokee Syllabary” 629). The Cherokee Phoenix was also reprinted throughout the eastern United States and distributed to subscribers from as far as western Europe (Murphy and Murphy 27). While scholars agree that the Cherokee Phoenix was the first, historians have since located at least fifteen other Indigenous newspapers or periodicals that circulated throughout Native America in the antebellum United States (Littlefield and Parins xii; Danky and Hady xv). These calculations, however, completely neglect the many nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Kānaka newspapers of Hawai‘i, as well as smaller Indigenous circulars and periodicals distributed throughout the North American continent and territories of
the United States. Like the early twentieth-century Indigenous literary scholarship that focuses narrowly on individual leaders of the Society of American Indians and other intellectuals who attained some degree of mainstream attention and influence, limiting the record of Indigenous newspapers to the fifteen most circulated newspapers of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Native America neglects the broader, more intricate on-the-ground networks of ongoing collective and co-national literary exchange. Because of the prevalence of focusing on select individuals and select newspapers, Indigenous American newspapers, both the documented and largely forgotten ones, have seldom been analyzed as collectivist Indigenous literatures in terms of their purpose and production; as well as their direct relationship to the ongoing land-based struggles over sovereignty for the Indigenous peoples each newspaper represents. This chapter presents the beginnings of three such newspaper-specific studies. And although newspapers are not often read as a genre of collectivist literary expression in the same way petitions and constitutions can be, the newspapers discussed in this chapter, came into being through collective action and their writers chose to speak through a collective voice.

While literary historians identify the Cherokee Phoenix as the beginning of Indigenous American newspapers, it was by no means the beginning of transcontinental and/or trans-Pacific Indigenous intellectual and textual exchange. Warrior, for example, argues that “ideas have moved from time immemorial along the same paths as foodstuffs, medicines, textiles, tools, and toys,” an understated reality he describes as “the metaphor of intellectual trade routes” (181–83). Textual evidence of the functionality of these intellectual trade routes can be found by returning again to the Hodinöhsö:ni’ Great Law, as the starting point for this chapter’s final history of Indigenous literary collectivism. The Great Law states:
When a Confederate Lord dies, the surviving relatives shall immediately dispatch a messenger, a member of another clan, to the Lords in another locality. . . . When the runner arrives at the settlement the people shall assemble and one must ask him the nature of his sad message. He shall then say, “Let us consider.” Then he shall tell them of the death of the Lord. He shall deliver to them a string of shells (wampum) and say “Here is the testimony, you have heard the message.” (Parker 40)

The Great Law continues, “It now becomes the duty of the Lords of the locality to send runners to other localities and each locality shall send other messengers until all Lords are notified. Runners shall travel day and night” (40). Mohawk author Tehanetorens reminds readers that although the Six Nations functioned as a confederacy, each nation designed and communicated through its own distinct national or tribal wampum belt (13). The Great Law outlines further that this co-national system of tireless runners also functioned to announce and interpret dreams and to warn of invasion (Parker 22, 42).

Surely, this interconnected network of nation-specific Hodinöhsöꞌni’ runners, travelling day and night to share newsworthy information from one community to the next was emblematic of the interconnected routes of intellectual exchange throughout the precolonial northwestern hemisphere. As Warrior argues:

Trade routes . . . have existed in the Americas since the first pathways linking people emerged in a time that no one can remember. Those pathways became trails and then networks of trails that crisscrossed the single landmass that is the Americas. The many hundreds of cultures and civilizations that dot the American
landscape are connected by those crisscrossing trails, and the supposed European
discovery of the continent took place along those trails. (182–83)

Just as Indigenous peoples everywhere have continued to strategically develop and adapt to new foods, medicines, textiles, tools, and toys introduced by both Indigenous ingenuity and visiting or intruding cultures, Indigenous peoples throughout North America and the Pacific have continued to strategically utilize more efficient avenues for maintaining various networks of intellectual, cultural, and communicative exchange.

Just as Boudinot, as editor of the Cherokee Phoenix, continued a longstanding continental textual tradition of co-national Indigenous intellectual exchange, as Abigail Kuaihelani, Emma Nāwahī, and others travelled throughout the islands of the Hawaiian Kingdom to collect signatures as representatives of the women’s branch of the Hui Aloha ʻĀina in 1897, they navigated familiar waterways that have connected and carried countless Kānaka people, materials, writings, news, and ideas throughout the Pacific since Papa and Wākea first gave birth to the Hawaiian Islands and people. These Kānaka women not only reasserted their roles as political and cultural leaders; they also evidenced their intellectual, cultural, and physical mobility.

Te Āti Awa scholar Alice Te Punga Somerville’s Once Were Pacific (2012) traces this reality of women activist mobility and pre-colonial Indigenous exchange across the Pacific through her innovative reading and genealogy of the traditional tapa cloth:

Although the paper mulberry plant itself is found around the [Pacific] region, having been carefully and painstakingly carried in seed form as a part of the progression of migration across the ocean, and though most of the processes of
collecting, preparing, and finishing the bark bear strong relation to each other, the
cloth produced in every region of the Pacific is distinctive. (4)

While Te Punga Somerville traces the trans-Pacific migration of tapa cloth—a precursor to paper—in order to attest to pre-colonial, trans-Pacific Indigenous mobility and relationship, she is also careful to note island-specific distinctions. In this way, the same tapa Te Punga Somerville tracks as trans-Pacific can also be read as an early embodiment of, or at least a gesture toward, precolonial trans-Pacific co-nationalism: a fostering of relationships among island nations while maintaining national distinctions and commitments. Te Punga Somerville continues, “As a metaphor, tapa provides an opportunity to reflect on cultural (including scientific, philosophical, material, architectural, legal, artistic, spiritual, and social) and genealogical continuities across the Pacific and simultaneously to observe local specificities” (4). Like the co-national network of tapa Te Punga Somerville traces throughout Hawai‘i, Fiji, Samoa, and Aotearoa (New Zealand), Indigenous peoples of the Pacific have continued to maintain and develop effective avenues of intellectual, economic, and cultural exchange. As Warrior and Te Punga Somerville trace such exchange across North America and the Pacific, such mobility and exchange has also always occurred within specific nations,51 and all the way across the Atlantic.52 Indeed, these ante-colonial and ongoing routes of runners, tapa, and intellectual trade continue to connect Indigenous peoples globally and have always existed as much more than metaphor.

52 See Jace Weaver’s The Red Atlantic (2014).
As Kānaka nationalist poet ‘Īmaikalani Kalāhele maintains in this chapter’s epigraph, the earliest voices travelling throughout the Hawaiian Islands and the Pacific, like the intellectual voices Te Punga Somerville and Warrior retrace across their representative geographies, were “maoli” (Indigenous). In fact, as discussed in Chapter One, when it came time for the Hui Aloha ‘Āina to publish their Kumukānāwai (1893), they did so through the newest medium circulating within their longstanding communicative network in the form of Hawaiian-language newspapers. Kānaka paperboys and newsstands delivered these papers along Indigenous paper routes that followed the ancestral trails and waterways of Te Punga Somerville’s tapa and of the Kānaka Maoli. Ka Leo o ka Lahui, which featured the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s Kumukānāwai was one of at least eleven Hawaiian-language newspapers circulating in the 1890s and was a leading Maoli voice within the burgeoning Kānaka print culture in both Hawaiian and English (Mookini 44).

The first Hawaiian-language newspaper, Ka Lama, was founded in 1834—the same year Georgian authorities stopped publication of the Cherokee Phoenix as part of an attack on Cherokee nationhood—at Lahainaluna Seminary, a Protestant missionary school in Lahaina. Ka Lama was “designed as a channel through which the scholars might communicate their own opinions freely on any subject they chose” (Mookini IV). A number of mission-run—both Protestant and Catholic—Hawaiian newspapers soon followed and although these newspapers promoted a certain degree of freedom of expression to their student writers and editors, their

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53 Constitution
54 The Voice of the Nation
55 The Light
expressed goal was “to create a nation that was not only Christian in name and spirit but also intelligent and industrious” (Mookini V). The founders of these papers sought to frame the newly emerging Hawaiian print culture as exclusively Christian in both content and commitment. Unlike Boudinot, who edited the Cherokee Phoenix as a converted Cherokee Christian committed to maintaining Cherokee land, early mission-run Hawaiian-language newspapers sought to disconnect Kānaka converts from Kānaka land.

In 1861, however, J. K. Kaunamano (Kānaka Maoli), later the Vice-President of Hui Aloha ‘Āina, began to print Ka Hoku o ka Pakipika, the first Hawaiian-language newspaper established by a Native Hawaiian, and the first Hawaiian-language newspaper to express overt Kānaka resistance to the Christian missionary-industrial complex that was gaining increasing political control over the Kānaka Maoli and their land. Ka Pakipika was edited by Kaunamano, G. W. Mila, and soon-to-be King David Kalākaua (Kānaka Maoli) and was published by an association of Kānaka men, wanting to publish a Hawaiian paper that was:

e pili ole I ka aoao hookahi wale no, aka I nupepa e pili ana I na aoao a pau. Aoao Kalavina, Katolika, Moremona, poe makamake I na kaa, poe makemake I na mele maikai, poe makemake I na Nuhou o na aina e, a pela aku.

(not affiliated with one denomination, but a newspaper concerning all the denominations. Calvinist, Catholic, Mormon, people who want stories, people

56 The Star of the Pacific
57 G. W. Mills
who want good mele, people who want news from abroad and so forth). (qtd. In Silva, *Aloha Betrayed* 63–4)

As Silva describes, *Ka Pakipika* began to render Hawaiian orature as written literature alongside anti-missionary and pro-Kānaka prose, as well as foreign ideas and news the editors felt were purposely being omitted from mission-run presses (*Aloha Betrayed* 64). Silva highlights the threat that such an independent newspaper posed to the aspirations of foreign Christian imperialists. Under the pseudonym “Puni Maʻemaʻe” (chastity/purity lover) for example, one *Ka Pakipika* reader published a letter in the Hawaiian missionary newspaper, *Ka Hae Hawaii*, condemning the paper for its ostensible obscenity:

> Malaila ua heluhelu au I na olelo pelapela, lapuwale, he mea hoohaumia I ka naau o ke kanaka. Hilahila wale kekahi mau olelo I hoolahaia ma ia pepa, he mau olelo I paa I na manao wela o ke kuko, e hoao ana I na kuko ino a pau o ke kanaka.

> [In *Ka Hoku o ka Pakipika*] I read obscene, worthless words, something to contaminate/defile the minds of people. Some of the words published in that paper were very shameful, they were words held in the burning thoughts of desire, tempting all the evil desires of people. (qtd. in Silva, *Aloha Betrayed* 64).

In a brilliant moment of Kānaka literary resistance, as Silva also includes, *Ka Pakipika* reprinted the critical letter alongside a response signed pseudonymously as “Puni Nūpepa” (Newspaper Lover). Here, the pseudonymous editor identifies “Chastity Lover” as a haole (white settler) posing as a Kānaka, explains the cultural context of the mele (traditional song), which had been

58 *The Flag of Hawaiʻi*
originally composed by a Kānaka convert to teach his fellow Kānaka Maoli as a Christian missionary; parallels the mele’s ostensible moral “impurities” with the Bible, and attests to the ongoing resistant strength of the Kānaka Maoli as signified by their paper (Silva, Aloha Betrayed 65).

But as is the case of the Cherokee Phoenix, settler resistance to such Kānaka freedom of the press continued to gain momentum, breaking up the original association that had produced Ka Pakipika because of the desire to wrest Kānaka control from the newspaper. In an anonymous editorial published in Ka Pakipika on September 26, 1861, the writer exclaimed:

I ke kui ana aku o ka lono e pai ana kekahi Nupepa ku I ka wa ma ka olelo maoli—I Nupepa I kokua ole ia e ke Aupuni, aole hoi ma ka aoao hookahi kana hana—I Nupepa hoi kahi e hiki ai ke kamakamailio no na mea e pili ana I ke Aupuni, na aoao hoomana, ka mahiai ana, a me ka noho ana o kanaka, a kahi hoi I hiki ai I na kanaka maoli ke hoike pono aku I ko lakou mau manao . . . ua hoeuia ka manao kue o kekahi, a ke [w]alo aku nei mawaena o keia mau Mokupuni ka pihe o ka uwa kumu ole o ka poe nana I kukulu I keia manao kue. . . . Ua nui na hana ino I hanaia I mea e poino ai keia Nupepa iloko o kona wa opiopio; o kekahi poe e ku ana ma na kuahu halepule, ua kapa mai lakou I keia Nupepa he “puahiohio,” nana e make nui ai I keia lahui.

(When the news went out that a special Newspaper would be published in the native language—a Newspaper not sponsored by the government nor by any denomination—and a Newspaper where people could discuss the Government, the churches, farming, and people’s lives, and a place where Kānaka Maoli could
fully express their opinions—opposition to this was stirred up, and the shouts of the people forming this baseless opposition are resounding all around the Islands. Many bad things have been done to harm this Newspaper in its young days; some people standing at the church pulpits have called this Newspaper a whirlwind [of worthless talk]/something to misinform the people/sway people off the right path, one to bring mass death to this nation/people.) (qtd. in Silva, *Aloha Betrayed* 68–9)

The letter goes on to describe how certain denominations had banned their congregations from reading *Ka Pakipika*, and to criticize the church for becoming a platform for condemning Kānaka freedom of the press. The letter then concludes with this proposition: “Ua hopohopo paha ko lakou manao e loa auanei ia kakou ka noonoo ano okoa I ko lakou mea I oleloia mai (Perhaps they are worried that we will acquire thinking which differs from what [we] have been told by them)” (qtd. in Silva, *Aloha Betrayed* 69). Perhaps non-Kānaka authorities worried that Kānaka newspaper writers, editors, and publishers would frame Hawaiian print culture for their own purposes rather than to proselytize for Christianity. Indeed, non-Indigenous continental contemporaries shared similar fears about the anti-imperial consequences of African Americans and other oppressed peoples becoming literate in English. But like the fear that motivated the shutdown of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, the colonial fear was that Kānaka newspapers were also connected to Kānaka land. Thus, marked as deviant by both the Christian churches and the provisional government, *Ka Pakipika* and the Kānaka newspapers that followed remained committed to their Kānaka culture, governance, language, livelihood, literature, and land. They embraced accusations of literary deviance with collective power and poise.
In 1895, amidst this tension between Kānaka literary activists and profit-driven haole expansionists both writing within the Hawaiian-language press, Joseph Nāwahī, President of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina, turned to the intricate network of Hawaiian-language newspaper routes and created a specific newspaper of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina designed to represent and disseminate their collective Kānaka perspective on important local and foreign news. Appropriately, he titled the newspaper *Ke Aloha Aina* (1895–1920). Nāwahī served as chief editor until his death in San Francisco, California the following year. He had travelled to California at the request of his friends to be treated for what was later identified as tuberculosis (Silva, *Aloha Betrayed* 193). According to his biography, written by Nāwahī’s nephew and subsequent *Ke Aloha Aina* editor, Edward Like (Kānaka Maoli), the paper’s purpose was to become “a shining torch for his fellow countrymen, to advise them to remain constant in their love for the land” (Nogelmeier 215). This purpose is repeated as the motto on the first page [fig. 7] of every issue “ʻUa Mau ke Ea o ka Aina I ka Pono” (Preserve the sovereignty of the land for justice/prosperity/rights).

![Ke Aloha Aina](image)

**Figure 7:** *Ke Aloha Aina*. 5 Jun. 1897. Hoʻolaupaʻi: Hawaiian Nūpepa Collection. ulukau: Hawaiian Electronic Library.

59 *The Patriot*: the lover of/attender to the land
According to an article published in *Ke Aloha Aina* on September 26, 1896, Nāwahī repeated that central purpose as his final words to his loyal wife, ‘A‘ima (Emma):

Mama, don’t worry about me. I’m just going to talk with you, and you should write it down so you don’t forget. If I should die here, let me be taken back to Hawai‘i. . . . Kiss your sister and those beautiful children of ours; give my love to the family, to our close friends and to all of our associates. Give my love to my Queen and the nation that I have loved, and speak for me on my behalf. Continue to be steadfast in your love for the land. (qtd. in Nogelmeier 229)

And as a result of Nāwahī’s passionate land-based leadership and editorship, Edward Like reports, “The citizens came together with unity and seized the newspaper “*Ke Aloha ‘Āina* as their banner, their guiding light” (Nogelmeier 217). As Like describes, although the limited histories of this crucial moment in Hawaiian collectivist literature place Nāwahī as founder and editor of the newspaper, the people of Hui Aloha ‘Āina understood the paper as theirs and Nāwahī as “our famous orator and editor” (Nogelmeier 222). Nāwahī was both their president and their editor, not editing as an individual, but as the appointed editorial voice of the collective body of aloha ‘āina throughout the Hawaiian Islands.  

Not only did *Ke Aloha Aina* serve as a mouthpiece of Kānaka solidarity, the newspaper also featured a variety of Kānaka writers and often spoke through a collective Kānaka voice of solidarity. Like their Kumukānāwai (Constitution), and Palapala (Petition), when authors, named and unnamed, wrote of local or foreign news and its effects on their Kānaka readership, they

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60 Although I have not been able to trace the exact election process for the founding leadership of Hui Aloha ‘Āina, Queen Lili‘uokalani briefly describes the gathering and resulting unanimous election of Nāwahī’s successor as described in Chapter One (*The History of Hawai‘i* 303).
often chose not to write as individual authors, but as speakers of their collective aloha ‘āina. To give one example, on August 13, 1898, Like published an article describing the growing uneasiness of the provisional government as Kānaka resistance and activism continued to grow. He describes the oligarchical government as a “cancer” and its supporters as “gullible Hawaiians who betrayed their native land.” In direct contrast, he maintains his confidence in Kānaka solidarity. “As for ourselves,” he writes:

> [T]he people living according to our convictions for the good of our land, our convictions persist, we sleep well at night, we were not made destitute by the troubles committed by those who abused us. But all those things are like a useful tool, everything is in its place, and it is in the soil that we obtain the things that will feed us. . . . Therefore, let us remain steadfast until the last Hawaiian for the sovereignty of our beloved land. (qtd. in Arista 101–2, emphasis added)

As Like describes the illegitimate government, he outlines a hierarchy of individuals who seek to “rule over the land and greedily consume the fruit of someone else’s labor” (Arista 101). In contrast, he writes from within a community of aloha ‘āina who share in the conviction, commitment, and connection to the land, and who share in both the labor and fruit of respectfully cultivating and benefitting from their shared sovereign soil.

> It was along those traditional routes across that sovereign land and water of the Hawaiian Kingdom that Ke Aloha Aina was carried by foot, canoe, and/or boat, connecting Kānaka Maoli from every island to foreign news and politics, current local events, ancestral orature, each other, and the land. And while there existed an imagined and embodied “we,” “us,” and “our” in the collective readership, authorship, and editorship of the newspaper, this “we” was also distributed through a collective body of young Kānaka activists who chose to commit their physical labor to
the language, literature, peoples, and lands from which the provisional government was so forcefully working to dislocate them. A photograph [fig. 8] captures this young collective Kānaka literary activism in a way that an academic description never could.

![Figure 8: Newspaper Boys. “Ka Makana Hape Nuia A Ke Aloha Aina.” Ke Aloha Aina. 6 Jan. 1906.](image)

Edward Like originally published this photograph as the centerpiece of a 1906 *Ke Aloha Aina* calendar given as a new year’s gift to readers and described the photograph as “a picture of the typesetters of this Office, who stand at the left of the picture, as well as some of the boys who sell the paper every Saturday. . . . This is not all of the paperboys of *Ke Aloha Aina*; there are many who were not photographed” (4).61 These four typesetters, seventy young men and boys, and those not present on the day of this spontaneous photograph represent the collective male labor dedicated to the distribution of *Ke Aloha Aina*. They were, as American literary scholar

Karen Sánchez-Eppler says of nineteenth-century newsboys, “the disseminator[s] of all that [was] most important for the nation” (155). And although Like included no individual names of the typesetters and paperboys, the variety of their dress, ages, complexions, hats, expressions, and postures portrays the diversity of their social, racial, and educational backgrounds, all working together within the Hui Aloha ‘Āina. Because Like excludes their individual names, their anonymity also becomes representative of the collective young male body of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina, the multifaceted labor force of Ke Aloha Aina, working in solidarity with their grandparents, parents, and peers to publish in order to preserve the sovereignty of their Kānaka people and Kānaka land.

Through this weekly, twenty-five-year collective effort, Ke Aloha Aina became, as foremost Hawaiian newspapers scholar Helen Geracimos Chapin describes, “among the most popular and successful of all Hawaiian language papers” (100). In fact, although specific distribution statistics have not yet been recovered, it was through fundraising that Emma Nāwahī and others were able to restart the paper after the oligarchic republic had temporarily shut Ke Aloha Aina down out of fear that the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s influence and petition drive were becoming too strong (Silva, Aloha Betrayed 197). These paperboys represent the next generation of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina in complete contrast to the formal photographs of federal Indian boarding school students that circulated throughout the late-nineteenth and early twentieth century. These young Kānaka activists of Ke Aloha Aina, whose young bare feet knew and chose to travel the intellectual trade routes of tapa and aloha ‘āina, became the contemporary runners within a longstanding network and collectivist literary tradition of Kānaka intellectual, cultural, and communicative exchange.
Thirty-four years after the Protestant-run Lahainaluna Seminary published the first known Hawaiian-language newspaper, and 2,718 miles north across the Pacific, Thomas G. Murphy published the first newspaper in the Alaska territory. Under the pseudonym Barney O. Ragan, Murphy, an Irish tailor, handwrote *The Sitka Times* from September–November 1868 and then began printing the paper with a newly acquired printing press in May 1869 (“Alaska Newspaper Project”; Snodgrass 42). Many English-language newspapers soon followed. According to the Alaska State Library’s “Alaska Newspaper Project,” a statewide microfilming project that took place in the 1990s, the first statewide newspaper committed specifically to Alaska Native issues did not surface until the *Tundra Times* edited by Howard Rock (Inupiat Eskimo) in 1962. And here we see the power of a single word—statewide—to erase the important pre-statehood literary history of Indigenous paper routes throughout Native Alaska.62

By 1923, although the influence of the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood had not spread throughout the entire territory of Alaska, they had begun to publish a newspaper dedicated entirely to Alaska Native issues. They built upon the communicative network of land routes and waterways they had maintained through personal travel, correspondence, and annual conventions since long before the 1912 founding of the Alaska Native Brotherhood. Prior to 1923, Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood leaders had already been publishing Alaska-Native-focused editorials in the *Thlinget* (1908–12) and subsequent *Verstovian* (1914–71), both of which were published at the Sheldon Jackson School in Sitka.63 On February 15, 1923, William Paul, serving

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63 Since the *Verstovian*, the Sheldon Jackson School continued to publish a school newspaper (*SJC Today* and then *SJC Adventurers*) until the school closed in 2007 (Atwood and Williams n.p.).
as Secretary of the Alaska Native Brotherhood, began publishing the first Alaska newspaper published specifically by and for Alaska Natives: *The Alaska Fisherman* (1923–32). Although the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood went on to publish a second corresponding newspaper, *The Alaskan*, in Petersburg from 1926 to 1932, as well as the later *Voice of Brotherhood* (1954–76), in this chapter, I will focus only on the *Alaska Fisherman*.

Priced at ten cents, Volume 1, Number 1 of the *Alaska Fisherman* [fig. 9] began with a large, bold-printed headline: “Native Fishermen Vigorously Protest Reservations” (1). Throughout the *Alaska Fisherman*’s first issue, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood address everything from discrimination, particular politicians and their platforms, current Alaska Native resistance, illegal poaching, Alaska-wide politics and policies, salmon reservations,64 Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood-specific news, the need to care for aging community members, and wider U.S. and international politics. The Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood explicitly published articles that promoted what William Paul printed as “Our Platform”: Alaska for Alaskans, Abolishment of All traps, Full Territorial Government, and “One Nation, One Language, One Flag” (2).

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64 Salmon reservations were areas of water established to appease conservationists rather than limiting commercial fishing traps, packing, canning, etc.
One year prior to the 1924 Indian Citizenship Act, this platform concluded by paralleling the unifying structure preached by the ancient Christian apostle Paul, “One Lord, one faith, one baptism” (Ephesians 4.5). Through such allusion, the Alaska Fisherman’s platform expressed the problematic, yet critically productive balance between the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood’s constitutional purpose of “civilization” and statehood described in Chapter One, and their ongoing fight for Alaska Native sovereignty, civil rights, and land. This balance became even more apparent when in May 15, 1924, nineteen days before U.S. President Calvin Coolidge signed the Indian Citizenship Act, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood dropped the patriotic final platform and exchanged it for “Competent Christian Citizenship” (4). Despite the resulting loss of culture and language from pursuing such a platform, with its resulting English-only and anti-Native policies, Patrick J. Daley and Beverly A. James, two of the few literary scholars who have recognized the Alaska Fisherman as a critical venue of pre-statehood Alaska Native literary expression, agree that beneath the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood’s social commitments as educated Christian citizens, their newspaper’s
fundamental purpose was to “reclaim [Alaska Natives’] cultural voice and to fight for their fishing rights” (40).

By May of 1923, William Paul had moved the *Alaska Fisherman* from Juneau to Petersburg to join his brother, Louis Paul (Tlingit). By January 1924, they had moved the paper to Ketchikan, the *Alaska Fisherman*’s permanent location for the remainder of its run. With a new sense of permanence, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood finalized the paper’s format and raised the price to twenty cents per issue. The *Alaska Fisherman* took on a new aesthetic design and became a consistent, sixteen-page monthly paper [fig. 10]. It also began to solicit advertisements in order to finance the paper’s commitment to reclaiming Alaska lands, waters, and resources for Alaskans through becoming fully enfranchised citizens within the new authoritative U.S. Territorial governing system. It was also at this time that William Paul was replaced as secretary so that he could concentrate his simultaneous commitments as editor of the *Alaska Fisherman* and official attorney for the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood.
William Paul is known today as the first Alaska Native to be called to the bar in Alaska. He was also the first Alaska Native to be elected into the territorial legislature. In fact, from his childhood, he, Louis, and their family were often seen by U.S. educators and Christian clergymen in Alaska as the epitome of U.S. assimilation (Daley and James 43). They first
attended the Sitka Industrial Training School, where their mother also worked as a teacher. From there, William Paul travelled across the continent, at the age of fourteen, to attend Captain Richard Henry Pratt’s infamous Carlisle Indian Industrial School, where he learned printing from 1899 to 1902. Louis Paul followed and graduated from Carlisle Indian Industrial School four years later. According to William Paul’s student file, he entered Carlisle in the sixth grade and graduated after eighty months from the tenth grade (“William Paul” n.p.). After Carlisle, William Paul studied at Banks Business College in Philadelphia and then graduated with his baccalaureate degree in 1909 from Whitworth College in Tacoma, Washington, where he had served as President of the Criterion Literary Society—speech and debate—and as editor of the school paper, the Whitworthian (Whitworth University n.p.). Later he completed his law degree from LaSalle Extension University of Chicago (Daley and James 43). Sometime before returning to Alaska in 1920, William Paul wrote to Carlisle in gratitude, explaining that he was employed in Ladd, Washington, as both a storekeeper for a coal company and a timekeeper for the company’s mines. Louis was likewise employed as a blacksmith’s helper. William Paul writes, “We are employed here not as Indians, but as men” (“William Paul” n.p.).

William Paul’s expressed gratitude for the education that had enabled him and his brother Louis to work with the recognized dignity of human beings in the mainstream industrial United States does not erase the unexpressed pain and frustration in this letter over being separated from his familial home, language, culture, land, and water. Under William Paul’s editorship, for example, the Alaska Fisherman described how the same forces that had encouraged this early separation also controlled the Alaskan press in order to promote ongoing race prejudice and the resulting sociopolitical policies that he dedicated his adult life to fight against. The Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood asks, “When did the race problem begin?” and goes on to blame the
ongoing “race problem” on public office holders who “were southern born Democrats who brought with them certain notions of their superiority over every person whose skin is not white . . . who frequently violat[e] the constitution of our country, whose breach of the laws is well known to our public officials . . . [T]hese are in control of our press. They feed what race prejudice there is because it serves their purpose” (6). While William Paul and other Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood leaders learned to work within and gain respect from the U.S. economic engine, and while they encouraged fellow Alaska Natives to work in order to likewise attain such recognized humanity from the current social systems of power, they also worked to enter and alter those systems of power in an effort to secure the lives and lands of their fellow Alaska Natives. As American Indian legal historian Lisa Emmerich concludes, “Although [William Paul’s] life seemed to exemplify the success of contemporary Indian assimilation policies, he remained first, last, and always a Tlingit Indian man who valued his heritage” (277).

William Paul joined the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood after attending the 1920 annual convention with the encouragement of his brother, Louis, and the traditional Tlingit Chief Shakes (Daley and James 44). Together, the Paul brothers quickly became some of the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood’s most prominent and influential leaders. By the end of the convention, Louis Paul was elected as President and William Paul as Secretary. Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood historians, such as Stephen Haycox and Peter Metcalfe, agree that this 1920 convention forever shifted the focus of the organization from the top-heavy approach of “civilized” Indians—similar to the Society of American Indians—into a more grassroots political action organization—similar to the National Council of American Indians—in order to confront non-Indigenous politico-economic and cultural control of the Alaskan territory through bloc voting and commercial boycotting. This fight to reclaim economic and political control of Alaska
for Alaskans came at a complex cost and substantial cultural and linguistic loss. But as the Alaska Native Brotherhood’s then-Vice President Peter Simpson reported at that 1920 convention in Wrangell, “The Alaska Native Brotherhood was born out of necessity; our necessity” (Alaska Native Brotherhood, Minutes 8).

Likewise, the *Alaska Fisherman* was born out of both opportunity and necessity to connect Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood members and provide them with a collective voice within the public sphere. The *Alaska Fisherman*, like the *Ke Aloha Aina* of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina, came into being through collective action to become “the official voice of the Alaska Native Brotherhood” (Daley and James 44). As such, although William Paul served as the initial chief editor, and despite his outstanding individual achievements, he seldom signed editorials as the individual author. Except for republished articles or letters that William Paul wrote in his capacity as attorney, and the occasional report signed with the Anglicization of Paul’s Tlingit name, Shquindy, the majority of the *Alaska Fisherman* articles remain unsigned, as if produced by the collective membership of the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood rather than by an individual author. Rather than promoting individual newspaper personalities, the *Alaska Fisherman* functioned through a collectivist ideology. As the final two points of the *Alaska Fisherman*’s platform declare, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood wrote in order to inform and speak as Alaskans in order to bring Alaska Natives and allies together into a co-national body capable of reclaiming Alaska Native rights and lands. Thus, the *Alaska Fisherman* often speaks as and for “Alaskans, Alaska Natives, laborers, fishermen, and the little guys” (Daley and James 45). In this way, *The Alaska Fisherman* served more as a monthly messenger—a runner—along the Indigenous paper routes between the Alaska Native
Brotherhood/Sisterhood Grand Camp, subordinate camps, community members, their allies, and the larger Alaskan public.

Although it is difficult to retrace the exact numbers and strategies for its distribution, rival newspapers and politicians seem to have seen the *Alaska Fisherman* as a powerful reclamation of Alaska Native political voice, and therefore a serious impediment to their settler success. As Alaskan historian Stephen Haycox suggests, “Political opponents of William Paul came to fear him greatly, for he represented the potential to control the outcome of any election in which his influence might be used” (n.p.). Rival newspapers expressed that fear in the form of repeated tirades against William Paul and his politics. The *Petersburg Press* was one paper that saw William Paul’s influence as a threat. In 1926, it asked readers:

> Will you cast your vote for William L. Paul, organizer of the Native bloc, the breeder of racial hatred; the man who has made the Indians a political question . . . The man who has been described as “the most dangerous man in Alaskan politics” because he threatens to dominate Alaska and to rule the territory by and for the Indians who have placed him in power? (Atwood and Williams n.p.)

Haycox’s history and the *Petersburg Press*’s tirade against William Paul focus directly on William Paul the individual rather than the collective Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood that he had been elected to represent through the *Alaska Fisherman*. Other papers described him as an “unscrupulous politician; self-appointed dictator” and suggested that “he herds the natives . . . so that they will vote as directed by the manipulator” (“War on Womenfolk” 2).  

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seeking to repress William Paul even went as far as arresting his mother and charging her with “inducing an Indian to vote.” In an article entitled “War on Womenfolk” published in the Alaska Fisherman, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood then concludes, “General Custer lost his last fight because he attacked the women and children of the Sioux. To make war on women is to put iron into a man’s soul” (2). The root of this expressed fear and resulting absurd action, however, was not in William Paul as an individual, in one “civilized Indian”; rather it was in the solidarity of Alaska Natives whom William Paul promoted and represented. The root of the settlers’ fear was that their exploitation of Alaska Native lands and waters would be found out, that they would be held responsible for their deceit, and that they would be forced to return or at least compensate for the stolen resources. The fear was that through the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood, Alaska Natives were regaining their ability to speak in the public and political sphere, and that they were speaking out together. The collective, co-national Alaska Natives were being mobilized and settlers in power read the Alaska Fisherman with the fear that its platform of restoring Alaska Native sovereignty might ultimately be realized.

Throughout its nine-year run, the Alaska Fisherman maintained the same structure and continued to publish similar content centered on the paper’s foundational platform, which although framed as from and for the masculine Alaska Native fisherman, always also included news about and from the Sisterhood. The first five pages of each paper were printed in two-columns with a larger font and without advertisements. The remaining eleven pages split into three columns with advertisements filling the right-most column. The Alaska Fisherman consistently featured anonymously written articles condemning unregulated commercial fishing and other unchecked exploitations of Alaska natural resources; explaining political platforms, promoting specific candidates, describing significant world and U.S. news, recapping Alaska
Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood conventions, announcing Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood news, outlining contemporary legislature for Alaska Natives, and expressing Alaska Native positions to non-Indigenous readers.

On October 15, 1924, for example, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood published a list entitled “What the Indians Want.” Speaking through the authority of the collective “Indians,” the list includes, in part, the abolishment of all fish traps, direct election of all principal territorial officers, a decent workmen’s compensation, abolishment of fish hatcheries, and “[n]o more favoritism to the big mine owner as against the little fellow” (7). In many ways, the complete list of what Alaska Natives wanted in 1924 mirrors what Cherokee writer Thomas King describes as a future based on realized, recognized, and active sovereignty (193–214).

The Alaska Fisherman also reprinted articles published throughout the United States and its territories, including Hawai‘i. On July 15, 1924, for example, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood republished an article from the Honolulu Star-Bulletin entitled “Emphasize the ‘Citizens’.” The reprint is introduced in the following way: “A friend handed us the Honolulu Star-Bulletin of April 24, 1924th issue, in which there is an editorial as above entitled. It has proven very interesting to us from many standpoints. It is short and so we reprint it” (11, emphasis added). Through this brief introduction, we first see the communal voice through which the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood wrote and addressed their readership. This reprint, which discusses the federal classification system used throughout Hawai‘i based exclusively on signifiers of race and blood rather than citizenship, also highlights the extent to which the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood considered local Alaska socio-politics in light of the obscurity and ambiguity with which the United States governed its territories. This reprint also links the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood to the earlier activism of the Hui Aloha...
‘Āina in a way that evidences the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood’s interest in and access to information regarding other Indigenous peoples and their shared, as well as distinct relationships with the United States.

The title page of the *Alaska Fisherman*’s final year exemplifies how, although the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood could no longer afford to print their newspaper, they remained consistent in furthering their fundamental four-point platform. By this time, William Paul was campaigning as an independent for the position of Attorney General of Alaska and Louis Paul had been appointed as editor and manager of the newspaper. And rather than beginning with an image of the salmon most frequently featured on the newspaper’s front page, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood substituted the salmon image for a direct call to action issued to non-Indigenous allies by William Paul. Entitled “We Are Doing Our Share,” it reads, “We rise at this time to tell the world that we favor the immediate abolishment of the Bureau of Fisheries from Alaska, the turning of the fisheries of Alaska over to the people of Alaska, and the employment of free born American citizens in that service.” William Paul continues:

The Colonists organized a “Boston tea party” and disguised as Indians boarded a British trader and dumped its cargo overboard in protest against the misrule by King George III. The white citizens of the territory, aside from a few, idle away their efforts in places of congregation and let real Indians organize and protest the encroachments of the Bureau of Fisheries. . . . Alaska would be free in a short time if the white people of Alaska would fight for liberty as hard as the Indians are doing. Quit talking around the poolrooms and make a united protest. (Front cover)
In this bold call for allies to stand alongside Alaska Natives against the federal monopoly of Alaskan land and resources, William Paul summarizes and celebrates the ongoing solidarity of the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood while comparing the U.S. Federal Bureau to colonial England. At the same time, he reverses the role of Indians and revolutionaries. Rather than depicting Alaska Natives as impoverished, idle drunks as mainstream narratives then—and now—so frequently did, he describes how Alaska Natives, Alaska’s earliest revolutionaries, were donning colonial costumes and customs as “civilized” Indians to “protest against the misrule” of the Bureau of Fisheries and, by extension, the U.S. federal government. Here William Paul recognizes the need for allies but, rather than slipping into a colonial rhetoric of subservience as in the Alaska Native Brotherhood’s original Grand Camp Constitution, he celebrates Alaska Native aptitude and activism.

While the content of this pre-statehood, exclusively Alaska Native newspaper remained consistent, it has been a greater archival and intellectual challenge to determine some of the fundamental sources that influenced the Alaska Fisherman’s structure and content. As mentioned, William Paul as the paper’s chief editor, first learned printing at Carlisle and again at Whitworth. Yet the structure, format, and especially the scope of the content differ drastically from Carlisle’s student newspapers and magazines in that the paper remains aesthetically and thematically committed to Alaska Native land and resources. Likewise, although members of the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood leaders had contributed to the publications of the aforementioned Sheldon Jackson School’s the Thlinget and the Verstovian, the Alaska Fisherman shows little resemblance to these school-run newspapers, which would seem to be the Alaska Fisherman.

66 See The Red Man (1890-99, 1910-19) and The Indian Craftsman (1900-09).
Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood’s most immediate print-cultural source. Yet, despite the Pauls’ and other members’ apprenticeships in federal and missionary school newspapers, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood established their own unique format and design to best frame and promote the paper’s purpose and platform as they worked to mobilize Alaska Natives in solidarity in order to collectively reclaim Alaska land and water for Alaskans. Like *Ke Aloha Aina*, the *Alaska Fisherman* exemplifies how Alaska Natives took the medium of the newspaper introduced to the territory by federal employees and missionaries, and claimed it for Alaska Native peoples and purposes according to their own longstanding traditions of co-national communicative exchange. As American literary scholar Phillip Round argues in relation to early American Indian autobiographies, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood recognized in the publication of a newspaper “the ways in which print provided [them] and their communities with a much-needed weapon in their battles against relocation, allotment, and cultural erasure” (5).

In fact, while historians have noted the suspicion with which some Alaska Native community members and elders have viewed literature in print as a departure from the oral tradition (Dauenhauer and Dauenhauer x–xi), the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood recognized the *Alaska Fisherman* as a form of “cultural continuity” (Daley and James 63). Daley and James turn specifically to an article they attribute to William Paul entitled “A Thlinget Legend: How and Why the Cormorant Lost His Tongue” published in the *Alaska Fisherman* on April 15, 1926. I return to this specific story and cite it here in full to note how the lack of an attributed author emphasizes the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood’s collective understanding that their newspaper was an act not only of cultural continuity, but also of astute cultural adaptability and co-national political activism:
Raven (called Ye’l by the Thlingets) the Creator and Benefactor of mankind was walking along the beach with his servant Cormorant (Called Whiskey-bottle for a nickname because they sit on low rocks and look like whiskey bottles—but called Yuk by the Natives). They came to town and were told that there was plenty of halibut out in front of the town. So Raven and Yuk decided to go fishing.

It seems that Yuk being a real fisherman caught all the halibut and Raven caught nothing. As they were returning, Raven figured a way to hide his disgrace from the townspeople, so he said to Yuk: “My partner, what is on your tongue? Stick out your tongue so that I can look at it.” Yuk obeyed his master and stuck out his tongue. In those days the Cormorant could talk just as well as anybody else. Raven now seized Yuk’s tongue and pulled it out. Then Raven said “Let me hear you talk.” Yuk tried to talk and was only able to say “Wah-h-h-h---.” Raven than [sic] said “That is fine. You talk much better now than you used to,” and Yuk believed it.

Since that day, Yuk has never said more than just “Wah-h-h—” for the Thlingets claim the Cormorant lost his tongue at that time.

When they came to town, Raven appropriated all the halibut, taking his time, lifting the halibut out in full view of the crowd of people who had gathered to watch such a successful fisherman. Yuk was frantic and tried to stop him. He called to the people that the halibut was his, but nobody could understand him. Finally, when Raven lifted a great, big halibut up, Yuk made a queer noise which attracted the people’s attention. Raven however explained to the people; “This is
the one, about which he telling, this big one. When I hooked it, a very hard time I found.”

And thus it has ever been. The means of speech or the control of the press, has meant that the servant who has indeed caught the halibut is cheated. The person or group of people without the power of telling what they have done can be robbed. (“A Thlinget Legend”)

Through this retelling of a traditional Tlingit story, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood trace their newspaper’s literary lineage to traditional oral narratives in a way that applies those narratives to their contemporary sociopolitical situation. Here the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood argue that printing the Alaska Fisherman is a way of reclaiming Alaska Native voice after that voice and language had been forcefully limited. And they connect that reclamation of voice directly to the literal survival of Alaska Native peoples as well as to their sovereignty over the territory and resources of Alaska.

Although the Alaska Fisherman’s foremost platform, “Alaska for Alaskans,” continues to be contested over eighty years since the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood discontinued their paper, the collective public voice it fostered paved the way for the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood, alongside their other Indigenous and non-Indigenous allies, to push for the Tlingit-Haida Jurisdictional Act (1935), which gave Alaska Natives the right to bring suit against the United States. Collectively, they brought the Indian Reorganization Act (1934) to Alaska in 1941 to reclaim federal recognition of Alaskan Native sovereignty. In solidarity, they pushed for the Anti-Discrimination Act (1945), which ended segregation of public places,
including schools in Alaska. Co-nationally, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood and their allies fostered these and other critical reclamations of many of the once stolen civil liberties, as well as traditional lands and waterways, from which Alaska Natives continue to support themselves today.

**Indian News Letter (1929–38)**

While the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood worked through the *Alaska Fisherman* to organize and influence their collective Alaska Native voice so that it was capable of legalizing land claims, gaining federally recognized sovereignty, and ending segregation nineteen years prior to the nationwide Civil Rights Act (1964), the National Council of American Indians was also working through a vast network of Indigenous paper routes capable of keeping local lodges and communities continually connected with each other and with National Council headquarters in Washington, D.C. As their newest form of co-national communication, the National Council of American Indians designed and began to issue an *Indian News Letter* under the editor/authorship of Gertrude Bonnin in 1929. Perhaps because the National Council of American Indians did not purchase their own printing press as the Hui Aloha ‘Āina and the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood did, however, very few copies remain extant either in the Bonnins’ or other archives. Thus, it remains unknown exactly how many issues of the *Indian News Letter* were published and whether the aims and approach of the newsletter shifted over time, and if so why. The four surviving one-page versions that I have been able to locate (those for December 20, 1928; February 22, 1932; January 25, 1933; and April–May 1933), however, demonstrate

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both the scope and substance of the *Indian News Letter* in a way that broadens both Gertrude Bonnin’s individual output and the National Council of American Indians’ collective literary production.

But because the archival record is limited compared to the full-microfilmed and digitized versions of the *Alaska Fisherman* and *Ke Aloha ʻĀina*, it is important to begin an analysis of the *Indian News Letter* by discussing what the National Council aspired for their newsletter to become, rather than to only document what the limited archive suggests the newsletter was. First, from Gertrude Bonnin’s personal correspondence, we learn that although the surviving newsletters feature her as sole editor/author, she longed for a more collective process in composing the *Indian News Letter*. In a personal letter written three years since the first issue of the *Indian News Letter*, Gertrude Bonnin expressed such a collectivist ideal:

> We should have at least 6 workers who could be assigned to follow certain bills. We have Indians who are qualified to do the work but they cannot afford the expense of living in Washington for a long period at a time. We have no funds to meet such expenses. . . . If I had such a corps of helpers, able workers, plus stenographic help, I would have time to keep my friends and supporters informed through bulletins, sent out weekly or oftener if conditions made it necessary. . . . This would be the ideal. (Letter to Ida M. Gurwell 2)

Unable to achieve this collectivist ideal of sharing the responsibility of representing and addressing a continent of Indigenous capabilities and complaints, Gertrude Bonnin issued the *Indian News Letter* as often as she could to entreat her readership to put their diverse skills and passions into local action to protect themselves and their lands while collectively fighting for the lands and lives of all Indigenous peoples.
Structurally, the surviving newsletters also do not represent the National Council of American Indians’ initial aesthetic ideal. As expressed in the previous correspondence, Gertrude Bonnin seems to have typed at least early issues of the *Indian News Letter* on her own. Thus, the surviving newsletters have no aesthetic alterations beyond the all-caps and underlining functions of a standard 1920s–1930s typewriter. It is also possible, however, that these few surviving newsletters are only drafts and that the final versions did reflect both the structure and frequency that the National Council of American Indians originally envisioned. On April 15, 1932, John A. Floyd, Manager of the Mount Vernon Print Shop in downtown Washington D.C., provided a detailed description of the *Indian News Letter* aesthetic in the form of a price estimate addressed to Raymond Bonnin [fig. 11].
Figure 11: Letter to Captain Bonnin, 15 Apr. 1932. MSS 1704. Gertrude Bonnin and Raymond Bonnin Collection. Courtesy of the L. Tom Perry Special Collections. Brigham Young University. Provo, UT.
Through this estimate, Floyd provides the details necessary to imagine the aesthetic design the National Council of American Indians had in mind for their weekly *Indian News Letter*, at least beginning in 1932. Perhaps, samples of this proposed three-columned newsletter with a two-color cover will resurface through ongoing archival research. Meanwhile, all that remains available to reimagine the structural framework is this incomplete April 15, 1929 draft template [fig. 12] printed on the campground letterhead discussed in Chapter One.

This template also suggests a number of interesting moves that the National Council of American Indians may have been experimenting with. First, the Council renames the newsletter as *Indian News*. This shift in title seems to move away from the personalized newsletter and embraces the National Council’s aspirations of speaking for and to all American Indian peoples across the continent. The template also asserts complete collective authorship as “published by the National Council of American Indians” rather than individually by President Gertrude Bonnin. Finally, the Council seems to consider changing the organization’s name to National American Indian Council. Like the National Council’s renaming of the *Hodinöhsö:ni’ Confederacy* to the Indian National Confederacy discussed in Chapter Two, the newsletter template’s contemplated name change seems to be playing with possibilities of how to better represent both the demographic realities and aspirations of the National Council of American Indians. While the template and surrounding archive do not reflect the realization of the National Council’s editorial and aesthetic aspirations, the surviving newsletters do document the purpose and content of, as well as the response to the *Indian News Letter*. They also highlight how Gertrude Bonnin and the National Council of American Indians rhetorically maneuvered between the collective and individual author and reader depending on the content of each newsletter.
Similar to the Hui Aloha ‘Āina’s collectivist writings, which used the Hawaiian language to describe land as central to the organization’s activism and the English language to describe Kānaka activism as nation-based patriotism, Gertrude Bonnin described the purpose of the *Indian News Letter* differently depending on the Indigeneity of her audience. When writing to non-Indigenous readers, she describes the newsletter’s core purpose as educating American Indians in simplified English on the unilateral legislation affecting American Indians as it was...
debated in Congress. As early as April 2, 1929, for example, Gertrude Bonnin wrote to the Indian Defense Association in California in her capacity as both President of the National Council of American Indians and editor/author of the *Indian News Letter*, explaining, “Our Indian people have no libraries or Newspapers in English simplified, touching upon their special needs peculiar to their Reservation environment. They look so eagerly for such News Letters as we can issue from time to time” (Letter to Miss Washburn). In January of the following year, Gertrude Bonnin issued a number of identical personal letters, with an attached copy of the *Indian News Letter*, seeking contributions from non-Indigenous friends and allies from New York and California. She writes, “Through our Washington headquarters, we send out this News-Letter, and we find our Indians on their scattered reservations responding to them, eager for news about their affairs as discussed in the Nation’s capitol” (Letter to Stansbury Hagar). In each of these personal letters, written primarily to fundraise among potential non-Indigenous allies, Gertrude Bonnin suggests that the *News Letter’s* main purpose was to inform and educate reservation-based Indigenous communities about pertinent contemporary issues affecting Native America.

When Gertrude Bonnin describes the purpose of the *Indian News Letter* to her Indigenous readers, however, she connects it to the common thread of the National Council of American Indians’ Constitution, Petition, and personal outreach to Indigenous communities throughout North America. For example, on May 28, 1930, Gertrude Bonnin wrote to a Creek “Indian Kinsman,” describing the National Council of American Indians’ founding fundamental purposes, and attaching a copy of their Constitution and Petition. She then concluded by explaining the central purposes of the *Indian News Letter*:

*Our headquarters here in Washington, D. C. is a listening post. We are here when Congress is in session and making laws. We also watch what the Bureau of Indian*
Affairs is doing; we send our Indian-News Letter about once a month to our 
Lodges. By this way, we hope to help all tribes save their lands; and have some 
land for their children too. (Letter to Indian Kinsman)

In this description, Bonnin does not acknowledge a need to simplify laws or language, as she 
does to her non-Indigenous readership who may have presumed Indigenous illiteracy. And rather 
than describing many American Indians as living in “scattered reservations,” as she does to her 
non-Indigenous correspondents, she describes them as organizing in co-national solidarity. All 
the while, she also remains careful not to slip into a pan-Indigenous, cosmopolitan conception of 
Indigenous North Americans. Rather, she describes herself and the other National Council 
delegates as listening for, speaking for, and writing to all American Indians in order to help them 
protect their tribal-specific lands for themselves and their children. In this way, the Indian News 
Letter becomes another literary outlet for promoting land-based co-nationalist Indigenous 
activism, each nation becoming mobilized together in collective solidarity to support each 
nation’s, as well as all Indigenous nations’, distinct struggle for land-based survival and 
sovereignty.

Unlike the National Council of American Indians’ Constitution and Petition, however, the 
Indian News Letter alternates between an individual and collective authorial rhetoric when 
addressing its transcontinental, co-national audience. And while there are no letters to the editor, 
advertisements, or other evidence from which one can more adequately imagine the Indian News 
Letter’s collective readership, this shift from the collective rhetoric and unnamed authorship that 
characterize both the National Council of American Indians’ Constitution and Petition to 
Gertrude Bonnin’s personal, presidential voice in the Indian News Letter, also highlights the 
varying audiences for the National Council of American Indians’ various genres of writing.
While the Constitution sought to establish the National Council of American Indians as a collective organization representing all American Indians and the Petition sought to persuade Congress through the power of that collective, the *Indian News Letter* was directed specifically to National Council members and allies. Although too few newsletters have been preserved in the archives to analyze the consistency and development of Bonnin’s individualist/collectivist rhetoric, her specific strategies concerning when to speak as an individual and when to speak on behalf of the collective Council highlight the rhetorical sophistication of the *Indian News Letter*.

On October 10, 1928, for example, Gertrude Bonnin issued a personal letter to all members in anticipation of the forthcoming *Indian News Letter*. The letter begins, “My Dear Indian Kinsmen,” explicitly stating that this letter is a personal correspondence from herself to her collective Indigenous readers linked in their shared commitment and responsibilities to one another and to their lands. In the first half of the newsletter, Bonnin describes a correspondence she had recently sent to U.S. presidential candidates Republican Herbert Hoover and Democrat Alfred E. Smith, asking for “justice for the [A]merican Indians and a voice in their own affairs.” According to Gertrude Bonnin, Hoover, who later won the presidency, had not yet responded; Smith, on the other hand, had replied immediately and promised to grant both. Bonnin then explains:

> According to all Indian statements and from my own personal observations, the Indians are very poor and hungry. They have no voice in their affairs. They are neglected whether sick or well, whether young or old, most of them, nearly all of them live in bad houses, wearing rags, and with little or no food. Their complaints to government officials go unheeded.
She then concludes with an imperative: “These are some of the things against which you have been complaining and which you want changed. Now you have a chance this fall to do your part. Do You Really Want A Change? This means YOU, my Indian kinsmen. Vote for the man who will help you” (Letter to My Dear Indian Kinsmen, underlining and capitalization in original). Through this personal imperative rhetoric, Gertrude Bonnin addresses both the need for the collective organization to hold Washington accountable to all American Indian citizens—“help Indians”—and for individual members to embody the National Council of American Indians’ most fundamental purpose by “help[ing] themselves.” Because this preliminary newsletter is a call for the necessary direct individual action that makes any collective effort effective, i.e. for individuals to go to the polls and to vote in this case, Gertrude Bonnin addresses each of her readers personally and directly as individuals.

On February 22, 1932, three years into the run of the Indian News Letter, Bonnin shifts her rhetoric so that she speaks not as the individual President speaking to her collective readership but as the collective National Council addressing each individual reader directly. She begins, “Dear Indian Kinsman.” She then introduces a number of enclosed legislative bills under consideration in Congress and persuades readers to recognize the hypocrisy of the federal government:

“The government of the United States is not in any sense founded on the Christian religion” are words of George Washington, our first President of the United States. The government is founded upon the Constitution of the United States. Don’t let yourself be confused between the two. One says “Thou shalt not kill.” The other provides for
MAKING WARS. Religion deals with Spiritual Laws; Government deals with man-made laws.

After framing the specific bills within the very real hypocrisy and misconception of U.S. Christian paternalism, Bonnin describes the proposed bills as seeking to limit the power of the federal Indian Bureau. She implores readers to make their voices heard through letters of local protest to persuade their respective Congressional representatives in favor of the bills and concludes with another imperative:

By our own united efforts let us push on this constructive program to ‘HELP INDIANS HELP THEMSELVES.’ You have a mind, a heart and a life. Make USE of them daily. Our stay on Earth is short, after all. Make use of life wherever you are. **ACT!!**” *(Indian News Letter, capitalization and underlining in original)*

Throughout this newsletter [fig. 13], rather than writing a personal exhortation as President, Gertrude Bonnin addresses each individual reader as “you,” whose individual actions work in solidarity with the collective “us” from which Bonnin writes to push against the ongoing injustices against all American Indians.
INDIAN NEWS LETTER
37 Bliss Building
Washington, D. C.

WHAT WASHINGTON SAI D ABOUT GOVERNMENT
SENATOR FRAZIER INTRODUCES CONSTRUCTIVE INDIAN BILLS.

DEAR INDIAN KINSMAN:

"THE GOVERNMENT OF THE UNITED STATES IS NOT IN ANY SENSE FOUNDED ON THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION." are words of George Washington, our first President of the United States. The government is founded upon the Constitution of the United States. Don't let yourself be confused between the two. One says "THOU SHALT NOT KILL." The Supreme Court provides for MAKING WARS. Religion deals with Spiritual Laws; Government deals with man-made laws.

The government has many things to do for the general welfare of the people. The people, through citizenship, choose and elect officials of the government, including the President of the United States. The people, through citizenship, help to make laws. Government runs only according to these man-made laws. Citizen Indians, Get busy. Citizens owe it to their Senators and Representatives to inform them of desirable legislation. Since Congressmen are not mind readers WRITE LETTERS to them. There is no law prohibiting Indians against writing letters.

Here with inclosed are two important Indian Bills recently introduced by our good friend, Senator Frazier. Believing our motto: "Help Indians help themselves" it is up to each one of us to help by writing Senators and Congressmen to enact these Bills into Laws. (Congressman Edgar Howard is Chairman of the House Indian Affairs Committee).

THE BILL "S.3588" gives each tribe the right to act for the best interest of all concerned; it clearly sets out how to establish a tribal council, and thus prevent any controversy with Superintendents. It provides a recall if the council acts contrary to the wishes of the people at any time. We do not want ex-convicts, or unfrocked churchmen, or failures living on charity to be made members of our tribal councils.

THE BILL "S.3717" RELATING TO THE REMOVAL OF CERTAIN EMPLOYEES

In the Indian Service. Under existing law, it is almost impossible to oust unsatisfactory employees. Under our Bill, it will be possible to remove them, and greatly aid in carrying into effect the good intent of our Government toward us Indian citizens. It is to be expected the Indian Bureau will object to any diminishing of its powers. Even the Secretary of the Interior who said something about handing you a pickle and letting you howl, may object on a real show down. Such interference must not discourage you. "Keep your eye on the ball" and do good teamwork, by our own united efforts let us push on this constructive program to "HELP INDIANS HELP THEMSELVES". You have a mind, a heart and a life. Make USE of them daily. Our stay on Earth is short, after all. Make use of life wherever you are. ACT!!

Yours for the Indian Cause,

Gertrude Bonnin
President, National Council of American Indians, Inc.

(This letter re-issued by request.)

Figure 13: Indian News Letter. 22 Feb. 1932. MSS 1704. Gertrude Bonnin and Raymond Bonnin Collection. Courtesy of the L. Tom Perry Special Collections. Brigham Young University. Provo, UT.
In the January 25, 1933 issue of *Indian News Letter*, Gertrude Bonnin makes a final rhetorical shift and addresses her collective readership through a collective authorial voice. She begins, “Greetings Indian Kinsmen.” Rather than calling individuals to action in this example, this newsletter provides readers with a general update from Congress, an expression of hopeful expectations for Franklin D. Roosevelt’s election and forthcoming presidency, a description of the effects of government debt and the Great Depression throughout Native and non-Native America, and an inventory of the challenges of the “so-called machine age.” To do this, Gertrude Bonnin interprets her contemporary sociopolitical situation through a traditional Sioux story, just as the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood interpreted their contemporary sociopolitical situation through a retelling of a traditional Tlingit story:

BUREAUCRACY AND THE MACHINE AGE are a destructive pair of overgrown twins. Their visitation upon our earth is called “World Depression.” They are the white man’s IYA TWINS. According to Indian mythology, IYA was a dreaded monster that swallowed entire villages alive. Thereafter within his belly could be heard faint sounds of barking dogs, whinnying ponies, voices of children and wailing men and women. So now as of old, IYA TWINS would have us believe humanity was made for their consumption. (2, capitalization in original)

Like the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood’s interpretation of their contemporary Alaska Native context through the story of “How and Why the Cormorant Lost His Tongue,” Gertrude Bonnin turns to the familiar Sioux story cycle of Iya and Iktomi, 68 in order to explain the effects

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68 Gertrude Bonnin includes some of the Iya and Iktomi stories in her earlier, popular collections *Old Indian Legends* (1901) and *American Indian Stories* (1921).
of the increasing bureaucratic industrialization of Indigenous lands in the United States. In this way, Bonnin, like the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood, exemplifies what Cherokee literary scholar Christopher Teuton describes as “a sociocritical practice in Native oral traditions” (198). Here Bonnin turns to, retells, and reapplies stories from her Sioux oral tradition with new, contemporaneous, sociopolitical implications.

Throughout the remainder of this 1933 newsletter, Bonnin celebrates U.S. Vice President Charles Curtis’ (Kaw) seventy-third birthday, and expresses support for two Indian Bills she describes as “the beginning of Indians’ Declaration of Independence.” Then in keeping with the newsletters’ now customary concluding entreaties, Bonnin exhorts her collective audience to individual action. “Indians, are you blind, deaf and dumb human beings?” she asks, repeating the stereotypical depictions of Native Americans throughout the 1930s:

No! Prove you are alive by self-help activities. You are grown up. Begin in your own hearts. Have more confidence in yourselves. Use your God-given powers. The way is open for improvement in your hearts, in your homes, your Lodges, and your daily duties. Muster enough courage to wake up, and exert yourself wherever you are.

From this encouraging entreaty addressed to individual readers, Bonnin returns to the collective to express how courageously engaged individuals are necessary in the ongoing efforts of the

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69 Charles Curtis was the first and only acknowledged Native American to be elected as Vice President of the United States.
70 The first of these bills was bill S. 3668, a predecessor to the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act (Wilkins, Documents of 479). The second was bill S. 3717, which would have authorized tribal petitioners to remove corrupt Bureau of Indian Affairs employees from reservations (482).
National Council of American Indians as “the only all-Indian organization with national scope in America” (Indian News Letter).

Three months later, the Indian News Letter for April–May 1933 speaks again through a collective-to-collective rhetoric and begins, “Dear Indian Kinsmen.” In this final example, Gertrude Bonnin conveys a more optimistic tone than in previous newsletters. She first reminds readers of the two bills mentioned in the previous newsletter: “our two Indian bills, one authorizing tribal councils and the other relating to removal of certain employees.” She then commends the appointment of John Collier as Roosevelt’s new U.S. Commissioner of Indian Affairs, attests to Collier’s sincerity and commitment to Indigenous peoples, and exclaims, “Arise! take new courage! Renew your efforts to live!” Gertrude Bonnin continues to list other recent federal appointments that promised to improve the conditions of and relationships with American Indians. She dedicates a full section to “NOTABLE APPOINTMENTS OF WOMEN TO PUBLIC OFFICE,” in which she expresses satisfaction that “[w]omen are becoming prominent in public affairs.” As stated in the sixth of eleven “main objects” in the Constitution and By-Laws of the National Council of American Indians, the National Council recognized that in order to protect and preserve the American Indian people and their lands, American Indian women would need to reclaim their sociopolitical positions and participate both in and beyond their tribal governing systems (3). Here Gertrude Bonnin celebrates the political aptitude of American women and suggests that the progressive reform promised by Roosevelt’s presidency while should encourage local American Indian men to provide space for similar community-level sociopolitical reform and local American Indian women to reclaim their positions as both cultural and political protectors of their peoples and lands.
This April–May 1933 newsletter, the last known surviving issue of the *Indian News Letter*, concludes by encouraging readers to stay home and to attend to their gardens rather than attending and being further exploited by the 1933 Chicago World’s Fair. While the National Council of American Indians encouraged the survival of all American Indians through U.S. citizenship, education, and so on, Gertrude Bonnin encouraged readers to avoid attending the Fair and to see this colonial celebration of Chicago’s “Century of Progress,” for what it was: a speculative venture promoted by real estate corporations interested in sustaining further profitable technological “progress” on Indigenous lands. Through each of these issues of the *Indian News Letter*, Gertrude Bonnin negotiates between the individual and collective audience and authorial rhetoric in order to address the specific content, concerns, and calls to action of each newsletter. While her rhetorical approach continually shifts, her commitment to American Indian people through the National Council of American Indians’ collective, co-national activism never does. She remains individually and collectively, as her signature on each newsletter states, “Yours for the Indian Cause.”

Although Gertrude Bonnin explicitly acknowledges her individual authorship of each of the surviving National Council of American Indians’ *Indian News Letters*, her strategic shifting between the individual and the collective was both rhetorical and literal. As President of the National Council of American Indians, Gertrude Bonnin lobbied and listened for, responded and wrote to, and presided over the National Council of American Indians’ D.C. “listening post” both individually and alongside other appointed Council delegates. According to the National Council of American Indians’ Constitution, it was requisite for their Councilor General and Executive Secretary-Treasurer to also reside in Washington, D.C. (6). Thus, while these elected officials fulfilled their individual responsibilities, Gertrude Bonnin continually listened, spoke, and wrote
in Washington, D.C. and elsewhere alongside at least Vice President Wade Crawford (Klamath), Councilor General O. K. Chandler (Cherokee), and her husband, Executive Secretary-Treasurer Raymond Bonnin.

Collectively, these D.C.-based National Council representatives also distributed the *Indian News Letter* by mailing, as Floyd’s previous price estimate suggests, individual copies to each subscribed National Council member. Unlike *Ke Aloha ‘Āina*, the *Alaska Fisherman*, and even the *Cherokee Phoenix*, the *Indian News Letter* was not a regional newspaper. There were no newsstands or paperboys. Rather, the *Indian News Letter* was a nationwide Indigenous newsletter sent individually to each subscribed member from at least forty-eight distinct tribes throughout North America, as well as non-Indigenous allies throughout the United States. Surely, as in the case of the readers of the *Cherokee Phoenix*, members of local National Council lodges gathered, read, and discussed each issue of the *Indian News Letter* together and considered how to respond in writing and deed. And because the newsletters were read and responded to almost exclusively by subscribed members and friends, the response was largely positive, one of encouragement and gratitude.

Gertrude Bonnin notes that it was these grateful responses that continually motivated the leadership of the National Council of American Indians to continue their fight despite their limited resources. In a personal letter written to a non-Indigenous reader on April 15, 1931, for example, Gertrude Bonnin wrote, “It makes me happy to know you liked my ‘Indian News Letter.’ Our Indian people like it too. One old man, past eighty, wrote saying: ‘It is encouraging and inspiring.’ She continues, “Such responses give me courage and strength to continue in this good work” (Letter to Miss Ida M. Gurwell). As Gertrude Bonnin describes throughout her hundreds of archived personal letters, keeping up with the travel, lobbying, listening, speaking,
and writing that went into the production and content of each *Indian News Letter* was physically and emotionally exhausting.

In an April 1930 response to a friend, Gertrude Bonnin describes herself as overwhelmed with the National Council of American Indians’ demanding work. She writes, “I have spent myself trying to help the Indian race, so utterly down and out, but with so little results. All I can say is I tried my very best. That doesn’t amount to much.” In this seldom-expressed feeling of self-defeat, Gertrude Bonnin continues, “How much I want to accept your invitation to seek refuge and rest in your home; I am tired and need rest. . . . I want to rest but don’t know how to rest.” She then concludes by attaching an *Indian News Letter* and explaining the reasons she finds no rest:

> It doesn’t seem possible that a country so full of church steeples can passively let America exterminate the Indian race through “slow starvation.” It is gruesome; and turns one’s stomach to think on it half seriously. . . . I wish Pa were here, so I could talk with him; perhaps he could wake me from the nightmare so tauntingly before me, about America’s empty “Halleyluyas” [sic] and unspeakable cruelty to a helpless Indian ward, “hog-tied and muzzled.” Where are the good Samaritans? (Letter to Sister Della)

With this insight into the personal context of the *Indian News Letter*, we see the tremendous emotional, intellectual, and physical labor and commitment that the newsletter represents, an individual and collective insight that can only be conjectured from Gertrude Bonnin’s more widely read stories and other individual writings. Thus, while inundated with a continent of complaints, and aching from an itinerary full of addressing and witnessing the height of U.S.
Christian hypocrisy with its resulting impoverished reservation communities, reader responses to the newsletter became medicinal.

Unlike federal assimilationist policies and practices, the reinvigorating literary medicine of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century Indigenous newspaper networks was reciprocal. Such medicine travelled multilaterally through newspapers and personal correspondence along the Indigenous paper routes of North America and the Pacific. It continued longstanding co-national, intellectual, cultural, economic, and sociopolitical networks of exchange that remained committed to the preservation and protection of each and all Indigenous peoples and lands. Like the trans-Pacific tapa, the transcontinental Hodinöhsö:ni’ runners, and in response to the exploitative settler ravens and insatiable industrial Iya twins, *Ke Aloha ʻĀina*, the *Alaska Fisherman*, and the *Indian News Letter* highlight the increasing solidarity and mobility of collective Indigenous literary activism being enacted in co-national resistance against U.S. imperial encroachment on Indigenous sovereignty and land.
Conclusion: Moving Together along the Road Forward

I lament the black
and naked past, a million ghosts
laid out across the ocean floor

..................
Who tells of those
disinterred, their
ground-up bones, their
poisoned eyes?

Haunani-Kay Trask (Kānaka Maoli)

The Indigenous history of the North American hemisphere has been told by many as a story of loss and lament, a story of deracinating, genocidal violence waged in the name of Christianity, civilization, and progress. It is a true story, an embodied, ongoing, multigenerational story that profit-driven, settler-colonial governments continue to play down, cover up, and bury under selective public rhetoric, school curricula, and concrete condominiums. This true story of colonial violence has been systematically and willfully ignored by the mainstream. At the same time, it is also this skewed, singular story that many settler institutions want Indigenous peoples to always remember because it is a story of Indigenous defeat, inadequacy, inaptitude, and disappearance. But there has always been another story, indeed many distinct, interconnected stories that Indigenous peoples have been telling, writing, and publishing all along, despite the loss, despite the genocide, despite the ongoing exploitation of Indigenous peoples and lands. These stories, or tribalographies, are also true, embodied, ongoing, multigenerational stories of cultural, political, and physical kinship, sovereignty, and survival. They are stories of adaptive co-nationalism, collectivism, and solidarity in motion that have been learned from, recorded in, carried across, and told in order to protect Indigenous peoples and their lands. Limited as they may seem to contemporary non-Indigenous readers, they are stories of Indigenous victory, courage, collaboration, innovation, and presence. The collectivist writings
of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood, and the National Council of American Indians provide another set of essential Indigenous stories, co-nationalist stories that promote the coming together of Indigenous peoples while maintaining nation-specific sovereign commitments to distinct cultures and lands.

Beginning in 1893 in response to the U.S.-backed overthrow of the Hawaiian Kingdom, the Hui Aloha ‘Āina and allied organizations overcame social, economic, and political differences to gather the minds—and hands—of over 38,000 of the approximately 40,000 Kānaka Maoli in order to reclaim and protect their sovereignty, rights, and land. Collectively, they published a kumukānāwai (constitution), a palapala (petition), and a nūpepa (newspaper) aimed at encouraging all aloha ‘āina (patriots, attenders to the land) to remain steadfast in their commitment to their land (“Population of Hawaii”). Their ideas, texts, and bodies travelled throughout the Hawaiian Islands and the continental United States as mobilized Kānaka activists moved in solidarity to successfully avert the 1893 annexation of the Hawaiian Islands to the United States. Although the United States unconstitutionally annexed Hawai‘i as an official U.S. Territory only four years later, the efforts of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina carved out a space for contemporary aloha ‘āina, described today as Hawaiian nationalists, to continue to contest the illegal U.S. claiming of Hawaiian lands and resources.

Within the first four decades of the twentieth century throughout what is now Southeast Alaska, thousands of Tlingit, Haida, and Tsimshian women and men gathered as the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood. Dispossessed of their ancestral lands, waterways, and human rights, these Alaska Native activists gathered at least annually to collectively decide how to move forward in solidarity to reclaim what they had lost. Collectively, they published their decisions in the form of a constitution, various resolutions and petitions, and public newspapers.
that interjected Alaska Native ideas, perspectives, and politics into Alaskan popular and political discourse. As a result, these Alaska Native activists of the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood, alongside their allies, successfully lobbied for U.S. citizenship and suffrage as part of the 1924 U.S. Indian Civilization Act, demanded equal access to healthcare and worker’s compensation; laid the necessary legal groundwork for future substantial land claims, and desegregated all public areas throughout the territory of Alaska nineteen years prior to similar civil rights laws passed in the contiguous United States.

From 1926–38, the National Council of American Indians brought together the knowledge, perspectives, desires, and needs of thousands of American Indians across the North American continent into a renewed co-national Indigenous network. Collectively, they published a constitution, a petition, and a newsletter. Through their travels in person and in writing, they gathered the spirit and substance necessary to testify in solidarity against violations of Indigenous rights, to help several nations reconstitute themselves according to the 1934 Indian Reorganization Act, and to make successful land and resource claims for various tribal nations throughout the expanding United States which, according to Executive Secretary-Treasurer Raymond T. Bonnin, had saved American Indians millions of dollars, protected their water power sites, oil leases, and over twenty-two million acres of Indigenous land (Letter to Rev. Robert Clarkson).

But, let us not conclude by getting overly and inaccurately romantic as if the turn of the twentieth century was an era of outright Indigenous agreement and success. Surely, the most collaborative collectivism, the strongest solidarity, and the most capable co-nationalism have always been born out of heated discussions, differences, debate, and reciprocal compromise. Both within and beyond these organizations, Indigenous peoples everywhere have had their
longstanding and, at times, new disagreements, incongruities, and setbacks. As with any healthy collaborative effort, such challenges and the resulting debates are absolutely intrinsic to healthy co-nationalist Indigenous relationships. Often, such debates become intensely personal and require action-based apologies and forgiveness. A personal letter I came across in the archives of the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood highlights this reality. On December 1, 1947, at the close of an Annual Grand Camp Convention only two years after the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood had successfully campaigned for Alaska’s Anti-Discrimination Act, emeritus Grand President, Louis F. Paul, wrote to then President Cyril Zuboff (Tlingit): 71

My dear Cyril:

I wanted to talk with you before you left Sitka but you found it more important to spend your time at the Edgecomb [sic] School. 72 We did not get together. Just what did you learn of the school? Did you learn That the boys are pilfering and stealing food? That over $800 had been stolen? That those boys were put in jail? That stealing has been going on all summer? That much of the stealing that is going on is done by employees and the boys get blamed for it? That boys are punished by not letting them eat their meals? That one boy recently went three days without eating? That the food is poorly put up? That the flour is not clean and bugs are seen in the sliced bread? That the small boys’ matron uses a stick on the kids contrary to regulation? That the girls’ matron or advisor whatever you call her, is incompetent and does not give to the girls the kindly care they need? . .

72 Mt. Edgecumbe High School was founded in 1947 in Sitka and was originally administered as part of the federal boarding school system by the Bureau of Indian Affairs.
Do you know that four patients were expelled from the sanitarium for being in girls’ quarters; that they were given their clothes, taken to the Sitka side and dumped on the beach without money or place to go; that they wandered around all night and one of the boys hemorrhaged [sic]; that one of the employees reported this matter as being inhuman and he was fired for doing so. (Letter to Cyril)

Louis Paul continues, “You talk of unity and harmony. . . . I am at the point of declaring war and stating my facts and reasons to the camps.” I share this letter in my conclusion not to highlight the shortcomings of co-national Indigenous activism, but to highlight the complex intensity of the era both within and outside of these organizations. It is this anger at the experienced injustices, as well as the occasional internal disagreements, around which the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood, the Hui Aloha ʻĀina, and the National Council of American Indians came together and composed their constitutions, petitions, and newspapers. Frustrated from the inability to participate in the political process of Alaska, enraged by the illegal overthrow and annexation of Hawaiʻi, and sickened by the literal starvation of thousands of American Indians across the continent, these collectivist writings document the productive channeling of co-national anger into aspirational texts that deserve to be reintroduced alongside the burgeoning recovery and production of single-authored Indigenous literatures in order to develop a more robust Indigenous literary record that draws upon orature, and the longstanding, land-based, collectivist Indigenous literary practices that have been documented throughout and beyond North America and predate, perhaps even inform, later Eurowestern iterations of these same literary genres.

Indigeneity. Community. Land. Collectivism. Solidarity. Co-nationalism. These are not mere literary tropes to toss around in the conference rooms of luxury hotels. No, these are the
inadequate words chosen in an attempt to represent the intricate, intersecting, invaluable lives and literatures of Indigenous literary activists who, at the turn of the twentieth century, chose to reclaim collectivist networks in the face of, as Gertrude Bonnin described, literal death by “actual starvation and landlessness” (Letter to S. G. Davis). As Kānaka literary scholar ku‘ualoha hoʻomanawanui reminds readers, “[I]n words is the power of life, in words is the power of death” (“I ka” 675). Indigenous literary scholars recognize that both the life-giving and fatal literality of language is as real today as it ever has been. Thus, let us never forget that there are always at least two sides to any story and Indigenous peoples have been sharing their stories orally, materially, and textually since long before settler societies began keeping statistics to celebrate their own genocidal claims to success. Like the contemporary Indigenous women whom Bay of Quinte Mohawk poet and author Beth Brant describes in her groundbreaking collection A Gathering of Spirit (1998), the Indigenous women and men of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood, and the National Council of American Indians worked diligently with their hands to “fight back” against settler statistics. They used their fists, pens, typewriters, and printing presses to maintain communicative kinship networks to protect their land in the face of violent physical, rhetorical, and cultural genocide. Their hands lived and worked in their present while pulling on their past because it was impossible for them to do one without the other (Brant back cover). By dedicating themselves to the protection of their peoples and lands, they, like so many others then and now, worked together to make possible the contemporary Indigenous present. Their writings now call upon the present to come together in building the Indigenous future. It is time literary scholars raise their hands up in gratitude for the tens of thousands of collectively aching Indigenous hands remembered in this dissertation and the many more projects to follow.
As a settler scholar and aspiring ally in Indigenous literary studies, my goal through this dissertation has been, much like the hope expressed by the many GLBTQ2 Indigenous writers who collaborated in the path-clearing publication *Sovereign Erotics* (2011), that by pushing on the past I can make a small “contribution toward a healthier and more respectful future” (1). It is my hope that readers will recognize the power and potential of recovering, reclaiming, and reconnecting Indigenous peoples, literatures, and lands collectively rather than only individually. Such work may come in the form of genre-specific, nation-specific, organization-specific, or region-specific studies. Such work could cross each of these methodological boundaries. Better yet, future studies will continue to break down these boundaries in ways that see multiple genres, nations, organizations, and regions working together, speaking to one another, and moving together down a road that recognizes both individual, land-based national sovereignty and the necessity of co-national Indigenous collaboration.

In 2014, then-President of the Native American and Indigenous Studies Association (NAISA), Chadwick Allen (Chickasaw ancestry) presented a powerfully provocative speech to the hundreds of students and scholars that make up the growing international field of Indigenous Studies. Allen argued for the need “to center the ‘I’ in NAISA.” Playing with the dual meaning of “I” to mean both Indigenous and individual, Allen encouraged his audience “to acknowledge the importance of our diverse personal locations—our many diverse ‘I’s—as the basis for beginning any intellectual inquiry, but to acknowledge, simultaneously, the importance of all our Indigenous scholarly and activist relations, all our many possible connections.” Allen explains further, “To center the ‘I’ in NAISA is thus to imagine our organization into the future not simply as a collection of individuals, communities, tribes, and nations gathered together for events such as this conference, but as significantly related, with all the privileges,
responsibilities, and hard work that reciprocal relationships entail” (2). Here Allen seeks to set the tone for the future of Indigenous Studies as one that understands and respects the field’s diverse personalities and individual positions in order to move toward a more critical, generous, and rigorously effective group of activist-minded scholars.

Such an approach works well to emphasize the need to both recognize the diverse distinctions within Indigeneity and to be willing to work together despite such distinctions. However, the best relationships are never built on overemphasizing the “I.” Centering the “I” in the invaluable relationships necessary for the future of Indigenous studies inherently also centers individual egos, desires, interests, decisions, and demands. By remembering the collectivist, co-national writings and work of the Hui Aloha ‘Āina, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood, and the National Council of American Indians, my hope has been to argue for the possibilities of decentering the “I” in Indigenous literary studies in order to exponentially broaden the literary base from which Indigenous literary scholars can learn and teach from as they continue to (re)connect Indigenous literatures and lands in a way that promotes contemporary co-nationalist networks strong enough to resist the ongoing forces of “progress” and “development” within and far beyond the academy.

ho’omanawanui recently concluded the Oxford Handbook on Indigenous American Literature (2014) by asking in her afterword, “What is the future of Indigenous literary studies?” Her response begins by replacing the “I” in Indigenous literary studies with the collective “we.” “We will continue to expand,” she writes. “New voices will join the chorus of ancient and modern artists and critics. . . . The complexities of our diversity will make us more vibrant. We will form thousands of brilliant constellations of thoughts, ideas, opinions, intellect, artistry, connecting across the broad expanse of the globe, the universe, cyberspace” (“I ka” 682,
emphasis added). For ho‘omanawanui, the future of Indigenous literary studies is in the collective. While her incredibly powerful projections (re)center the “we” in Indigenous literary studies, however, her emphasis remains on genres of individual literary craft. She writes, “We will experience joy, and pain, and sobering realizations, and be inspired, sometimes all at once, in reading the novels and plays and poetry and stories and criticism of our ancestors and our peers and their ancestors and our collective familial and literary descendants” (“I ka” 682, emphasis added). But why not also experience the intense joy, pain, realization, and inspiration, sometimes all at once, by the literary genres employed not only of Indigenous peoples’ “collective familial” ancestors, peers, and descendants, but also those written by and for Indigenous peoples’ “collective familial” ancestors in order to express anew their perspectives to our peers in our hopes to collectively build a better future for our descendants?

The writings and work of the Hui Aloha ʻĀina, the Alaska Native Brotherhood/Sisterhood, and the National Council of American Indians highlight the critical possibilities of reading, studying, discussing, experiencing, and producing literatures of both individuals and the collectives to which those same individuals have committed their writings and themselves. The Bonnins, the Pauls, and the Nāwahīs all led individual, incredibly productive literary and politically active lives. As such, they highlight the reality that every community, every collective, every nation, every co-national collaborative network is only possible through the commitment of individuals who are willing to decenter the “I” in favor of the “we.” Just as Indigenous lands were never meant to be divided into checkerboards of private property, Indigenous literatures grow out of longstanding literary traditions of communal composition, expression, and enactment; of individual intellectuals, authors, artists, activists, and everyday Indigenous peoples coming together to write to, in behalf of, and in protection of their
people and their land. What Gertrude Bonnin declared as a resistant response to the allotment of American Indian lands, I extend to the study of Indigenous literatures: “KEEP IT WHOLE AS ONE PIECE ALWAYS” (“My Dear Kinsmen,” original formatting). As we continue to gather individual ancestral, contemporary, and future literary stars into awe-inspiring constellations, as ho’omanawanui envisions, let us never forget that such constellations have always already existed. Despite the forceful colonial reconfigurations of the Indigenous cosmos, Indigenous individuals, committed to both their nations and all Indigenous nations, have remained connected and have continued to shine in solidarity. Collectively, moving in solidarity, co-nationally, they guide our steps as we continue moving together along the road forward.
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229


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