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IÑUPIAT IḶITQUSIAT
An Indigenist Ethics Approach for Working with Marginalized Knowledges in Technical Communication

Cana Uluak Itchuaqiyaq

Uvaŋa Uluak. *Maamaga aasrii* I'yiiqpak. *Iñupiaqatiuvuklu iḷavuklu Nuurviŋmiuŋurut.* My name is Uluak. My mother is Gladys I'yiiqpak (Wells) Pungowiyi. We are Iñupiat and our relatives are from Noorvik, a small village on the Kobuk River located in Northwest Alaska. I am also the daughter of the late Caleb Lumen Pungowiyi, a Siberian Yupik from the Qiwaaghmii clan of Savoonga, a small village located on St. Lawrence Island in the Bering Sea off the coast of Alaska. I am the fourth of nine children shared by my wonderful parents.

In this chapter, you will be hearing my voice. My voice, if you could hear its timbre, is both eager and reluctant. Though I am an Iñupiaq scholar with qualifications valued in academia, I am in no way an authority on the Iñupiat culture. That distinction, as I was taught, is solely for Elders. Therefore, so I can represent my Iñupiat people responsibly, I consulted the expert advice of Iñupiat Elders in writing this manuscript. To be clear, this process included multiple conversations, sending drafts for critique, implementing suggested changes, and so on, until the Elders told me "*tara*" (good enough). Without those steps, I could not be proud of this work.

In these pages, I will share how the *Iñupiat Iḷitqusiat*, a traditional ethical framework, is incorporated into the lives of tribal members. Though others have written about the *Iñupiat Iḷitqusiat* as a research methodology (Hogan and Topkok 2015), sharing this knowledge is not without risk. Simpson (2014) describes an aspect of sovereignty as "protecting the concerns of the community" through a refusal to tell certain stories or deliver certain Indigenous knowledges to outsiders (105). For example, in an article that incorporates Iñupiat Elder knowledges of traditional places, Kingston (2017) acts to protect cultural knowledges by refusing to provide the locations of these places for fear of looting (8). Similarly,

I was taught to be careful about sharing my cultural heritage with outsiders because appropriation/looting and marginalizing practices are real concerns with real impacts.

> "But what will they *do* with them?" my mother, an Iñupiaq Elder, asked after I called her to tell her the news of my first academic publication, this chapter, accepted on a promise to position our traditional values as a potential lens for research.
>
> "They'll use them to understand things that are happening," I answered. Her silence stared at me, showing me a long history of our people being noticed only once we were deemed useful.
>
> Finally, she asked, "Why do they need *our* tools? What can they *do to us* with them?"

* * * *

This chapter explores the ethical possibilities of engaging with marginalized communities in technical and professional communication (TPC) practice, research, and scholarship. I argue that using locally situated value systems as lenses for shifting one's paradigm from an ethnocentric, dominant-cultural perspective towards a perspective that is established from *within* marginalized communities is crucial for decolonial methodologies. Specifically, this chapter argues that those who wish to develop "Indigenist" research paradigms need a framework that challenges default dominant-culture perspectives. This chapter describes Indigenous virtue ethics, the embodiment of locally situated values, as a theoretical tool that provides locally appropriate analysis and offers an inroad for scholars from all backgrounds to challenge colonial thinking and effectively develop an Indigenist paradigm for social justice work. Though I provide practical advice about whether, when, and how scholars might consider using Indigenous knowledges, I hope that this chapter will help inform similar considerations regarding using knowledges created for and by marginalized populations.

Before we begin, I want to address those who (rightly) wonder about the appropriateness of non-Indigenous settler-scholars and practitioners using Indigenist paradigms and theoretical frameworks in their work. Some questions that you might have are: "Is it okay for me, a non-Indigenous person, to use this stuff, and when, exactly, is its use appropriate?" and "Is this chapter even written for someone like me?" To start, I validate your concerns and say *keep reading*. I offer the following experiences that illustrate how I, an Indigenous scholar, began to answer these questions for myself:

- At ATTW 2019, I attended a talk by technical communication scholar Victor Del Hierro about hip hop cyphers associated with hip hop culture. In his talk, Del Hierro argued that if you *visibly* benefit (such as in a scholarly publication) from the use of a cultural practice and are not a participant in, or accountable to, that community, then *that* is appropriation. This experience helped me understand that appropriateness-of-use is relationally based.

- A non-Indigenous technical communication practitioner working for my tribe once told me how our tribe's value system informs how they make both professional and personal decisions. Their personal commitment to these values helped me understand that our traditional values can inspire community-driven and socially just action in anyone.

- While I was working on this chapter, my mother asked me some pointed questions, as you saw earlier in this chapter. In an earlier draft of this chapter, I ended the opening section with this statement: "*Mom, I am going to vouch for my colleagues and trust they won't let us down.*" A reviewer wisely noted that, though I was committed to validating Elders' input, I was not validating my own mother's concerns when it is her—and not some unknown scholar—that I should trust when it comes to protecting the welfare of our community. They further commented that this behavior models a disregard for local perspectives, such as "soft" nos, in favor of personal research agendas. I was reminded of a word my *aana*, my grandmother, would say to me: *piḷḷautaġġniaqsaġaluaġaa*. It means "a person who really tries to do a good job, but . . ." This experience showed me that, though I genuinely care about knowledge legitimation practices and decolonial methods, I make mistakes that wound those I care about the most. Good intentions do not equal good methods. (*Pisanġitchikpiñ*, Mom. I'm sorry. I am listening and will try to do better.)

TOWARDS AN INDIGENIST PARADIGM

I am the first of my siblings to attend graduate school and, once I finish, I will be one of the few Iñupiat to earn a PhD (Jones 2015, 22–26). I mention this only because I need to emphasize a dichotomy: though I was raised in a strong Inuit family and community honoring Inuit ways, I was also raised and trained by Western ways. This fact calls to attention how the default settings of my thinking can affect what I value instinctively. Fostering an Indigenous worldview when one has grown up in "two worlds" takes a great amount of personal and communal effort (Kawagley 2006, 91–121). This type of paradigm shift is best supported though the active incorporation of Indigenous values, which "bridge the cultural gap between Indigenous peoples and [non-Indigenous peoples]" (John-Shields 2017, 121), especially as they apply to cross-cultural personal, professional, and academic situations.

An Indigenous research paradigm (IRP) is the development of decolonial research practice that takes into account the worldview with which the research is approached. Wilson (2003) defines paradigm as "a set of underlying beliefs or assumptions that guide our actions, be they in research or teaching or life in general. Paradigms are based on theory and as such are intrinsically value-laden" (175). Beginning with an appropriate decolonial paradigm—in other words, actively committing to a reorientation away from settler/Western practices and focusing on Indigenous practices—is essential to an IRP. For those who wish to follow decolonial methods in their work, a shift in one's research paradigm as well as one's own personal paradigm is almost universally necessary in order to *enact* decoloniality instead of merely *using* "decolonize" as a catch-all term appropriated to mean human rights or social justice. Tuck and Yang (2012) state that "decolonization specifically requires the repatriation of Indigenous land and life. Decolonization is not a metonym for social justice" (21). In other words, though many have persuasively called for decolonial research practices in TPC (Agboka 2014; Haas 2012; Jones 2016), individuals must not treat decolonization metaphorically to be "grafted onto pre-existing [frameworks] . . . even if they are justice frameworks" (Tuck and Yang 2012, 3). Instead, decolonial frameworks must *begin* with an Indigenist paradigm (Wilson 2003, 2007, 2008), an enactment of value-laden beliefs that are based upon restoring and respecting the sovereignty of Indigenous peoples, lands, and knowledges, supporting community-developed aspirations, and supporting the changing and improving of unjust conditions (Smith 2012, 195–196).

Considering paradigmatic shifts is not new to TPC. Agboka (2018) describes how shifting paradigms towards centralizing ethics and Indigenous contexts in TPC pedagogy benefits local communities impacted by technical communication practice, especially marginalized communities. In his rationale for centralizing Indigenous human rights perspectives, he states, "technical communication, I believe, is a *virtuous* field, because we have been involved with issues of ethics for many years" (116, emphasis mine). By calling on the virtues of the field, Agboka declares that technical communicators are compelled to act upon set(s) of values driven by community-defined ethics. Sackey (2018) argues that TPC values should include environmental justice as an integral part of their socially just core (139), a move that centers the relationship humans/plants/animals/things have with the land, their corresponding environments, and other humans/plants/animals/things. These calls for paradigm shifts demonstrate the need to consider locally situated values as part of social justice praxis in TPC.

Though TPC scholars describe the benefits or needs of paradigmatic shifts *to the field*, they generally do not address the process and benefits of paradigmatic shifts *to the individual*. This difference is significant because, when it all boils down, it is within the scholar or practitioner that the enactment of ethical dispositions takes place (Colton and Holmes 2018, 45). Further, decolonial work is done in the spaces that paradigmatic shifts create. An IRP requires the performance of an Indigenist paradigm at its core (Wilson 2007, 193–194) and asks individuals to adhere to eleven principles that include:

- The reason for doing the research must be one that brings benefits to the Indigenous community.
- The foundation of the research question must lie within the reality of the Indigenous experience.
- Any theories developed or proposed must be grounded in an Indigenous epistemology and supported by the Elders and the community that live out this particular epistemology.
- It will be recognized that the researcher must assume a certain responsibility for the transformations and outcomes of the research project(s) which [they] bring into a community.
- It is advisable that a researcher work as part of a team of Indigenous scholars/thinkers and with the guidance of Elder(s) or knowledge-keepers. (Wilson 2007, 195).

An IRP (rightly) asks individuals to enact an Indigenous worldview in their research practices. Likewise, because a universal Indigenous experience does not exist, even researchers from Indigenous backgrounds may find it challenging to adopt worldviews from other Indigenous peoples. This practice of shifting paradigms is especially difficult to do when one is socialized into Western ways of thinking and acting. What is needed is a "replacement" set of values, like a set of new glasses, as a way of shedding, however temporary, one's default point of view. As the experience with my mother demonstrates, it is too easy to devalue the contributions or concerns of marginalized communities. Even when we are socialized in a marginalized community, we are also socialized into the dominant systems, and perhaps, may enact values according to convenience. To reorient one's way of thinking, planning, prioritizing, and analyzing requires a great deal of humility, accountability partners, and practice. I was lucky that I had a coalition of support (Walton, Moore, and Jones 2019, 71) who lovingly challenged me as I questioned my motives, my actions, and even the root argument of this chapter in order to act in accordance with the values I *claimed* I wanted to uphold.

INDIGENOUS VIRTUE ETHICS

Virtue ethics locates ethical and unethical actions in an individual's moral character or disposition through their habits (Colton and Holmes 2018, 14). The principles of an IRP require those who want to conduct decolonial research to change the habits instilled by mainstream Western academic training. According to philosopher Viola Cordova (2003), many Indigenous approaches to virtue ethics focus on ethical behaviors that are grounded in *communal* forms of relationality (173). Indigenous virtue ethics, then, offers an alternative to Western virtue ethics' stance that "does not privilege the individual over the community or vice versa" (Colton and Holmes 2018, 38). Instead, Indigenous virtue ethics situates the community in a privileged position over the individual and offers an appropriate lens, or localized theoretical paradigm, to replace default modes of thinking.

This chapter demonstrates what TPC scholarship would look like if one started from Indigenous knowledge systems as a foundation, as is required by an IRP. The specific Indigenous virtue ethics this chapter draws upon is based on northern Alaskan Iñupiat values, the *Iñupiat Iḷitqusiat* (*Iḷitqusiat*: spirit, a way of life, a habit). These values center ancestral knowledge and tribal responsibility in ways that ask individuals to understand who they are, how they represent themselves and the world around them, and how they affect others. There are seventeen possible values in the *Iñupiat Iḷitqusiat* to employ,[1] but this chapter will focus on three—responsibility to tribe, knowledge of family tree, and knowledge of language—as they center on Indigeneity and directly push back against colonialism through acts of survivance (Vizenor 1999, 15). I also demonstrate how these values inform the creation and subsequent analysis of personal biography statements in a technical document produced by and for an Indigenous community. These statements—like many forms of TPC specific to marginalized communities—exhibit genre features that are difficult and perhaps even impossible to understand if evaluated by Western rhetorical/ethical norms. Worse, forcing a Western lens can lead to misrepresentation and cultural erasure.

At this point, you might want a generalized set of Indigenous virtue ethics to work from. Rather, I will gently caution you to reconsider the paradigm associated with expecting knowledges in systematic or totalizing ways. Just as Indigenous peoples are not all the same, neither are our values. However, there are general ethical contours that Indigenous thinkers across communities and times share. Indigenous virtue ethics, in general, tend to focus on community-based Indigenous identity as paramount to individual identity (Cordova 2003, 177–178). Indigenous

virtue ethics are community-specific values. Learning what implicit or explicit values a community has and using those as your way of thinking about all aspects of working with/for that community is good practice. It's not enough to just "start with an Indigenous thinker" (although such a step is still important). Indigenous virtue ethics theory both requires and creates a firm commitment to decolonial approaches. Even if certain knowledges may seem to apply readily to any ethical problem in TPC, such knowledges may be subject to an enactment of sovereign refusal. Thus, for scholars wanting to use frameworks such as Indigenous virtue ethics (as a useful supplement to an IRP) for social justice work, it is more important to consider what paradigmatic starting places and constraints researchers find themselves in, relative to their subject positions, *before* adopting, rather than appropriating, conceptual frameworks that were originally designed for use by marginalized groups.

The Iñupiat Iḷitqusiat

The *Iñupiat Iḷitqusiat*, a set of Indigenous virtue ethics, represent an oral tradition passed down through story for the Iñupiat of Northwest Alaska. In the early 1980s, Iñupiat Elders gathered together to codify these seventeen values as an act of survivance. These Elders—many born at the beginning of the twentieth century before Westerners established large-scale assimilation practices—were raised by the *Iñupiapaat*, Iñupiat who were considered exemplars of practicing traditional ways in their daily lives. The Elders of the 1980s, the first generation whose lives were deeply impacted by colonization, understood what was at stake. As an act of survivance, they worked together to distill what it meant to be Iñupiat through writing down their ancient values for the safekeeping of future generations. According to Iñupiaq Elder William *Iġġiaġruk* Hensley, who helped facilitate the codification of the values, the *Iñupiat Iḷitqusiat* "reflects an individual's Iñupiat spirit, reflected in behavior that connects one to a continuum and a sense of belonging."[2] If a tribal member were to exemplify these values in their daily living practices, they, too, could be *Iñupiapaaq*—even in today's modern context.

Iñuuniaqatiunik Ikayuutiḷiq—Responsibility to Tribe

> We are connected to each other through our cultural spirit handed down to us through our teachings and values.
>> —*Taimakŋa Alġaqsruutit (Elders' Advice, NANA Regional Elders Council 2016)*

Indigenous identity is relational. When I meet people from the greater Indigenous community, I usually tell them my name, my tribe, who my parents are, and where my relatives are from—much like I did in this chapter's opening lines. Why? By showing my lineage, I show to whom I am accountable. This action acknowledges that I am a reflection of my ancestors and my community. Being responsible means being account-able to my family and tribe, especially when I choose to speak publicly about our people. Though I am not a tribal spokesperson, I am often treated as such by nontribal audiences because of my positionality as an Iñupiaq scholar and my interest in Indigenous issues. As Gonzales et al.'s personal narratives in chapter 1 in this collection clearly demonstrate, there exists a reality that many marginalized and underrepresented schol-ars face: the tokenizing and fetishizing gaze that forces us to represent our people. Our actions—whether we intend them to or not—are read as an example of what it means to be [name your marginalized identity], which is problematic.

As I described in the opening section, during the process of writing this manuscript, I discussed my work with tribal Elders. Cherishing and imple-menting Elder wisdom helps one to act responsibly as part of a community. Because my writing represents our traditional knowledge to outsiders, I choose to act responsibly by not acting alone. It is important to remain humble and allow Elders to critique and direct my work, especially since my take adds a modern spin to their traditional context. This stepping back and allowing others to meaningfully contribute and critique my work is an act of humility that demonstrates a willingness to remain teachable. These values are not mine to interpret alone; they were carried by my ancestors and loaned to me as a way of making sense of my place in the world. How my ancestors—even as recently as my mother's generation—saw these values is different than how I interpret them from growing up in a domi-nantly Western-influenced culture. Therefore, I am cautious and humbly seek confirmation and counsel when I speak about my culture.

Researchers have a responsibility to act humbly when interacting with communities and when representing communities in their scholarly work and presentations.

Iḷisimaḷiq Iḷagiiḷiġmik—Knowledge of Family Tree

> To have family whom you love and who love you is important to an Iñupiaq. Our life is richer if we know who our relatives are and can stay in contact with them.
>
> > —*Taimakŋa Alġaqsruutit (Elders' Advice, NANA Regional Elders Council 2016)*

Knowledge of family tree means knowing from whom you arise. The Iñupiat connect with others through their family tree in more ways than just knowing direct ancestors and close relatives. Instead, we focus on knowing who has shaped us, our families, and our community. For example, traditional names hold a special weight in Iñupiat communities. One is named for someone as a way of honoring and carrying forth ancestors. I was named Uluak after my *aana* (grandmother) and that makes me (and any other person named Uluak) her *attatka*. Sharing a name also means sharing the community relationships associated with that name. When women and men are of the same age and community, they are considered *uumaatka* and *suunaatka*, and that bond is special because it links them together through time and space. This relationship also connects to the naming tradition. Though I am two generations younger, my *aana*'s uumaatka consider me their *uumaa* because I inherited the bonds she had with others. If someone met me and just said "I grew up with your *aana*" it has an entirely different meaning than saying, "*Uumaa*!" Practicing our language expresses these relationships in a way that cements connections that cannot be made otherwise.

Similarly, our people value historic relationships to maintain our connectedness as a community that moves beyond blood relationships. Knowledge of family tree is how we find connections within our greater community. This form of connection pushes back against being othered because it situates individuals solidly within a collective. In my tribe, it is respectful to know who you are "related" to through familial and communal connections, but also to invest in knowing who others in your community are related to. I know my family tree and I also know others' family trees.

Researchers should pay attention to how people in a community are connected with one another to better understand context and as an act of respect.

Iḷisimaḷiq Uqapiaḷiġmik—Knowledge of Language

> Without our language we will not be able to preserve our culture wholly or understand fully what it is to be Iñupiaq.
> —*Taimakŋa Alġaqsruutit (Elders' Advice, NANA Regional Elders Council 2016)*

Though *Iñupiatun*, the language of the Iñupiat, is not currently the dominant language of the people of Northwest Alaska, it is still used, however imperfectly, in many community contexts. In my family's experience, my ancestors were beaten and berated for speaking *Iñupiatun*

and *Akuzipik* at school. Both of my parents remained fluent but chose
not to speak their languages to their children beyond basic expressions.
Their experiences were common, and consequently, many of us whose
parents or grandparents are fluent in our Indigenous languages are not
proficient in them despite great efforts at language revitalization.

Though many Iñupiat, like myself, are nonfluent *Iñupiatun* speakers,
using the little language we do know is a way to connect to our heri-
tage. Speaking our language, even just broken phrases peppered into
an English-language context, is an act of embodying our Indigeneity.
Though I have done my best to raise my children to value their Iñupiat
heritage, they have had limited connection to this heritage compared
to those living at "home" in Alaska. Their use of *Iñupiatun*, even the
small amount they know, is an act of survivance. For them, using words
like *uŋa* (that feeling of both pride and shyness from doing something
good or feeling loved) or *nuniaq* (to express affection by using baby
talk and giving praise), that have no English cognates, or words that do
like *arii* (an expression of pain, anger, or frustration), is meaningful.
Their utterances, though imperfect, are a method of expressing their
cultural heritage *to the best of their ability*. This is their way of declaring
their Indigeneity.

Researchers should recognize cultural expressions as sovereign com-
ponents of Indigenous communication practice and resist forcing famil-
iarized "translations" or validity judgements upon these expressions.

Iñupiat Iḷitqusiat Applied to NANA

This section will demonstrate the importance of using Indigenous vir-
tue ethics, or locally situated values, as both one's paradigm and tool
for analysis in enacting an IRP. In this case, both the Indigenous virtue
ethics theory, the *Iñupiat Iḷitqusiat*, and the texts analyzed, the 2019
NANA (Northwest Arctic Native Association) board of director (BOD)
candidates' personal statements (refer to figure 2.1), are appropriately
connected to one another. For background, NANA is a for-profit corpo-
ration that acts, in some ways, as a tacit tribal entity for the Iñupiat of
northwest Alaska. NANA, as a corporation and as a collective of Iñupiat
people, is strongly tied to the *Iñupiat Iḷitqusiat*, which forms the basis of
their corporate values in their mission statement (NANA, n.d.). NANA
was established through the Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act of
1971, which established regional corporations to manage traditional
lands, assist with tribal enrollment, and create economic opportuni-
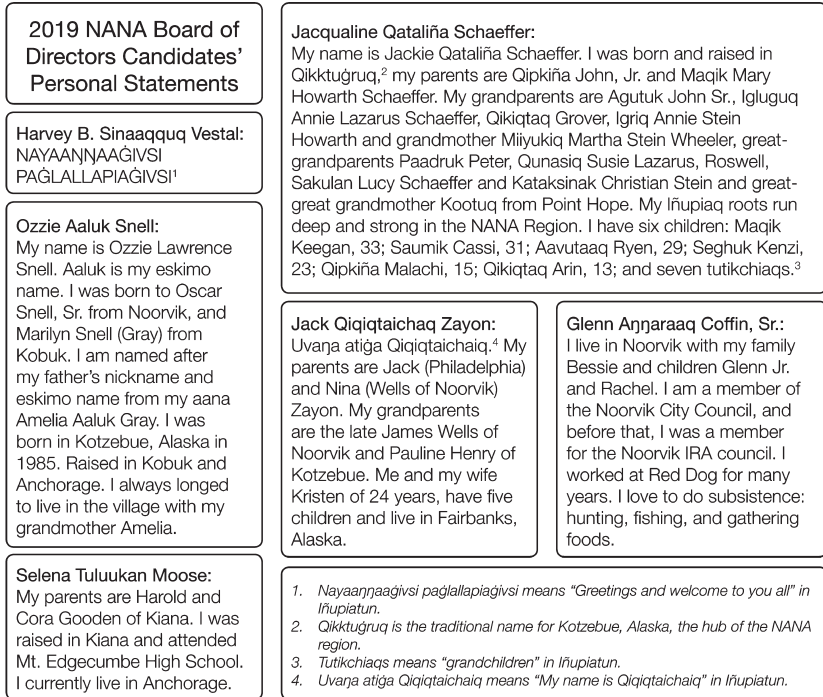ties. NANA is a 100 percent Indigenous-owned corporation. Therefore,

2019 NANA Board of Directors Candidates' Personal Statements

Harvey B. Sinaaqquq Vestal:
NAYAAŊŊAAĠIVSI PAĠLALLAPIAĠIVSI[1]

Ozzie Aaluk Snell:
My name is Ozzie Lawrence Snell. Aaluk is my eskimo name. I was born to Oscar Snell, Sr. from Noorvik, and Marilyn Snell (Gray) from Kobuk. I am named after my father's nickname and eskimo name from my aana Amelia Aaluk Gray. I was born in Kotzebue, Alaska in 1985. Raised in Kobuk and Anchorage. I always longed to live in the village with my grandmother Amelia.

Selena Tuluukan Moose:
My parents are Harold and Cora Gooden of Kiana. I was raised in Kiana and attended Mt. Edgecumbe High School. I currently live in Anchorage.

Jacqualine Qataliña Schaeffer:
My name is Jackie Qataliña Schaeffer. I was born and raised in Qikktuǵruq,[2] my parents are Qipkiña John, Jr. and Maqik Mary Howarth Schaeffer. My grandparents are Agutuk John Sr., Igluguq Annie Lazarus Schaeffer, Qikiqtaq Grover, Igriq Annie Stein Howarth and grandmother Miiyukiq Martha Stein Wheeler, great-grandparents Paadruk Peter, Qunasiq Susie Lazarus, Roswell, Sakulan Lucy Schaeffer and Kataksinak Christian Stein and great-great grandmother Kootuq from Point Hope. My Iñupiaq roots run deep and strong in the NANA Region. I have six children: Maqik Keegan, 33; Saumik Cassi, 31; Aavutaaq Ryen, 29; Seghuk Kenzi, 23; Qipkiña Malachi, 15; Qikiqtaq Arin, 13; and seven tutikchiaqs.[3]

Jack Qiqiqtaichaq Zayon:
Uvaŋa atiġa Qiqiqtaichaiq.[4] My parents are Jack (Philadelphia) and Nina (Wells of Noorvik) Zayon. My grandparents are the late James Wells of Noorvik and Pauline Henry of Kotzebue. Me and my wife Kristen of 24 years, have five children and live in Fairbanks, Alaska.

Glenn Aŋŋaraaq Coffin, Sr.:
I live in Noorvik with my family Bessie and children Glenn Jr. and Rachel. I am a member of the Noorvik City Council, and before that, I was a member for the Noorvik IRA council. I worked at Red Dog for many years. I love to do subsistence: hunting, fishing, and gathering foods.

1. *Nayaaŋŋaaġivsi paġlallapiaġivsi* means "Greetings and welcome to you all" in Iñupiatun.
2. *Qikktuǵruq* is the traditional name for Kotzebue, Alaska, the hub of the NANA region.
3. *Tutikchiaqs* means "grandchildren" in Iñupiatun.
4. *Uvaŋa atiġa Qiqiqtaichaiq* means "My name is Qiqiqtaichaiq" in Iñupiatun.

Figure 2.1. 2019 NANA at-large board of directors candidates' personal statements (NANA 2019, 4–6).

"new" shareholders born after 1971, like myself, must show lineage to an original 1971 NANA shareholder and have at least one-fourth degree Alaska Native heritage.

The twenty-three-member NANA BOD consists of representatives from each village in the NANA region, as well as two "at-large" seats. In order to be a NANA BOD, one must be a NANA shareholder (i.e., have Iñupiaq heritage). Most BOD candidates focus on their personal statement to formally introduce themselves, and these statements are included in NANA's *Proxy Statement and Notice of Annual Meeting* (NANA 2019). All NANA shareholders have votes that can be divvied up and directed at any of the candidates. Therefore, savvy candidates write personal statements that have universal appeal among voters.

Because of its flexible style, I analyzed the first paragraph of the 2019 NANA at-large BOD candidates' personal statements (refer to figure 2.1) for demonstrations of the *Iñupiat Iḷitqusiat.* Most of the individuals running for the BOD display *Iñupiat Iḷitqusiat* in varying degrees. Demonstrating knowledge of family tree and knowledge of

language were primary factors among these biographies, a move distinct from typical Western proxy biographies. Though NANA is a for-profit corporation subject to Western norms in business practices, laws, and regulations, its status as an *Indigenous* corporation is clearly shown in the treatment of personal statements for BOD candidates.

The personal statements are important because they reflect a particular moral practice that, at first glance to many TPC or rhetoric scholars, seems to be an appeal to ethos (credibility). To an outsider, these statements mimic trying to convince an audience about one's credibility. However, these individuals are community members and NANA shareholders, which already establishes them as Iñupiaq. While it might be tempting for researchers outside this community to read these personal statements as deliberate appeals to ethos, a theoretical framework that is part of the familiar tools of many scholars—they are not. Though they model and cultivate ethical behavior, they are not ethical appeals meant to establish credibility. Instead, their action is about *accountability* and defining oneself through the culture and community they are responsible to. Exerting accountability rather than credibility prioritizes communal, cultural identity over individual identity. It is an act of survivance. Because these statements are created by and for an Indigenous community, discussing these moves in terms of ethos instead of survivance is ethnocentristic and commits the error of cultural erasure. Looking instead to the *Iñupiat Iḷitqusiat*, a locally situated value system and theoretical framework, for analysis is both appropriate and revealing. Furthermore, it enacts decolonial practice by acknowledging and respecting the sovereignty of Iñupiat knowledges and communication practices.

I should clarify that I am offering this comparison *only* as a cautionary tale. I do not intend or desire to reduce the *Iñupiat Iḷitqusiat* by comparing it to a Western tradition, which would subordinate this ethical framework's sovereignty in doing so. Instead, my intention is to highlight the cultural erasure involved in forcing dominant frames upon nondominant situations. Using an Indigenist research paradigm ethically mediates and fosters interpretation, via the *Iñupiat Iḷitqusiat*, of these technical documents because it inherently respects Indigenous sovereignty.

This is why researchers being locally situated is so important when working with marginalized populations. The practice of incorporating Indigenous virtue ethics into an Indigenist research paradigm offers TPC more than a set of prescriptions for how to work with Indigenous subject matters; it cultivates an ethical disposition toward respecting Indigenous knowledge. This disposition means opening up spaces where Indigenous communicative acts can be heard in and of themselves, and

the concerns of local communities in sharing these knowledges are respected. As I note in the beginning of this chapter, there is an ethical tension in bringing cultural knowledge to the table. Performing in a way that is both academic and cultural requires carefully negotiating the space between asserting and protecting cultural knowledge. Ultimately, the Elders I consulted agreed to share this knowledge with outsiders because understanding the importance of Indigenous virtue ethics, such as the *Iñupiat Iḷitqusiat*, to Indigenous communities is critical for TPC scholars who wish to act as their allies.

A DIRECTION FORWARD: WHO, WHETHER, WHEN, AND HOW

In writing this chapter, I had a coalition of support that generously contributed to this work that must be recognized before we move on. *Quyagipsi ikayuqapsitŋa* Mom, *Iġġiaġruk*, the Iñupiat community, and my ancestors. Thank you for helping me and for patiently sharing your wisdom as knowledge keepers. *Quyagipsi ikayuqapsitŋa* Jared Colton and Steve Holmes for being humble allies. *Quyagipsi ikayuqapsitŋa* to the editors and reviewers for helping me rise.

So far, I have attempted to say a lot in a short amount of space. I did this out of a sense of urgency and not because I had trouble distilling my argument. The truth is, I know firsthand what it's like to be an object of research, and I know how much it *hurts* to be dehumanized and misrepresented by "experts." However, I'm now in a position to help my community and stop this type of harm. I believe Indigenist research principles protect the integrity of Indigenous people and communities because "such research is grounded in that integrity" (Wilson 2007, 195). An important component of an IRP is the embodiment of an appropriate paradigm while conducting research. Incorporating Indigenous virtue ethics is useful in enacting that paradigm.

Indigenous virtue ethics is not a universal or essentialized framework that can be fully articulated in one article or applied to any case since not all Indigenous communities share the same morality. Because of the rhetorical sovereignty of Indigenous peoples and their knowledges (Lyons 2000, 449), Indigenous virtue ethics requires researchers to evaluate their own subjective stances. In addition to problems of appropriation, it matters whether an individual researcher is a member of the community under analysis, or is at least working closely with a community member, because their understanding contributes specific, localized meaning easily missed by nonmembers. In other words, not only can insider knowledge help with analysis, it also provides a way to ensure

research questions and developed theories are grounded in local experi-
ence and epistemologies (Wilson 2007, 195) and forces researchers to
consider the potential harm, however trace, research activities can inflict
on communities (Smith 2012, 22).

Such is not to say that non-Indigenous researchers should not strive
to use Indigenous methodologies or conduct research with Indigenous
communities. For example, Indigenous scholar Emily Legg and her col-
laborator Adam Strantz clearly argue for using Indigenous methodolo-
gies to benefit user experience design in chapter 3 of this collection. In
these circumstances, non-Indigenous researchers must be careful about
recolonizing their objects of inquiry through importing Western lenses
as a way of interacting with Indigenous knowledges. Wilson (2007)
clearly states that

> an Indigenist paradigm can be used by anyone who chooses to follow
> its tenets. It cannot and should not be claimed to belong only to people
> with "Aboriginal" heritage. . . . It is the use of an Indigenist paradigm that
> creates Indigenous knowledge. This knowledge cannot be advanced from
> a mainstream paradigm. . . . It is the philosophy behind our search for
> knowledge that makes this new knowledge a part of us, a part of who and
> what we are. And it is then the choice to follow this paradigm, philosophy,
> or world view that makes research Indigenist, not the ethnic or racial
> identity of the researcher. (193–94)

While this passage seems to be inviting everyone to the party, one
needs to understand the nuance within IRP principles and hear the
"but . . ." that is left unsaid. This is what makes Indigenous virtue ethics
so important to an IRP: they help with recognizing how "soft" nos are
expressed. In my culture, we don't generally say no very clearly, and
oftentimes it comes in the form of a question like, "Why do they need
our tools?" The absence of a clear no does not mean "yes." Though I pro-
pose Indigenous virtue ethics theory as a tool for scholars interested in
conducting decolonial research as part of the social justice turn in TPC,
this theory is not universally applicable. Certain knowledges remain sub-
ject to sovereign refusal, which is a topic that I hope to discuss further
in future work.

Finally, researchers whose personal experience and positionality
lie outside of the communities or perspectives they are research-
ing need to engage with community partners in helping frame their
research *and* outcomes or risk perpetuating cultural erasure, which is
part of the mechanisms of genocide (Driskill 2015; Lyons 2000; Tuck
and Yang 2012). Thus, scholars wanting to do decolonial research or
use Indigenous virtue ethics frameworks, *beginning at the beginning* of

a project, should adhere to the principles of an Indigenist research paradigm. As such, communities whose traditional knowledges these "new" tools arise from can and should be able to say "No, this isn't for you to use" in whatever way is appropriate for them to say it and be heard. It is the responsibility of the researcher to adapt to a paradigm that allows them to listen because Indigenous tools such as the *Iñupiat Iḷitqusiat* are sovereign and ultimately meant to support the aspirations of Indigenous communities.

NOTES

1. *Iñupiat Iḷitqusiat*: Knowledge of Family Tree, Love of Children, Avoid Conflict, Knowledge of Language, Cooperation, Family Roles, Sharing, Hard Work, Humor, Humility, Respect for Elders, Spirituality, Respect for Others, Respect for Nature, Domestic Skills, Responsibility to Tribe, Hunter Success.
2. William Iḡḡiaḡruk Hensley, email message to author, March 28, 2019

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