

Introduction: 'What Matters: Indigenous LGBTIQ+ Pasts, Presents & Futures'

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Keywords: Special Issue, LGBTIQ+, Indigenous LGBTIQ+ peoples, Settler colonialism, Symposium

<https://doi.org/10.54760/001c.90948>

Journal of Global Indigeneity

Vol. 7, Issue 2, 2023

This special issue by guest editor Associate Professor Corrinne Sullivan, includes papers presented at the 'What Matters: Indigenous LGBTIQ+ Pasts, Presents and Futures' symposium held at Western Sydney University in December 2022. This symposium included presentations from across the disciplines on a wide variety of historical, contemporary, and future topics related to Indigenous sexuality and/or gender diverse peoples and communities. The symposium's approach encouraged critical and creative contributions that could be presented by individuals or collectives, scholars, and community members. Indigenous authorship and collaborations were privileged, and the symposium organisers particularly encouraged submissions from Early Career Researchers (ECRs) and Higher Degree Research (HDR) students.

This strategy proved successful with the majority of the papers published here written by Indigenous authors, ECRs and HDR students. The papers represent a diversity of disciplines reflecting a range of approaches to investigating this topic: Geography, Sociology, Criminology, Indigenous queer Studies, Media and Communications and Critical Gender Studies. The papers critically interrogate Indigenous LGBTIQ+ peoples' relationships, connections and representations in the media, fiction, poetry, and digital spaces, as well as their lived experiences of sustaining wellbeing and surviving the criminal justice system. They all stress the importance of understanding context, most importantly, the impact of settler colonial institutions, laws, media representations, values, and policies on the daily lives of Indigenous LGBTIQ+ peoples. And although there is an emerging body of evidence that addresses the needs, experiences and aspirations of Indigenous queer peoples, the papers highlight a lack of research across a wide spectrum of different areas of inquiry. While not ignoring the challenges, the papers emphasise the positive, highlighting values such as love, safety, interconnectedness, wellbeing, transitional justice, and resistance.

Coe (2023) discusses the ways Indigenous LGBTIQ+ peoples harness digital spaces to co-create cultures of care and kin-making, revealing interconnected online practices that support wellbeing and allow them to thrive with mutual responsibility, feelings of safety and love. Coe finds that Indigenous gender

and sexuality diverse peoples harness digital spaces to transcend territorially defined place-based communities to co-create new, informal, digital communities. These communities are composed of relatively homogenous subjectivities and are centred on shared identities, histories, experiences, practices, and resistances. Drawing on in-depth qualitative interviews with Aboriginal queer women and using Cultural Interface theory, the article explores how participants co-create identity communities and kinship through TikTok, Instagram and Spotify. Additionally, the paper highlights the significance of Indigenous queer digital communities and found families that influence participants' experiences of social and emotional wellbeing (SEWB). These digital cultures of care and kinship creation demonstrate how participants' concepts of wellbeing are practised online and how media technologies are harnessed to improve approaches to family based on reciprocity, responsibility, and love. Participants also demonstrate how their ideas of intimacy, kinship and identity transgress and challenge settler norms of intimacy, family, identity, gender, and sexuality. This intentional co-creation of online Indigenous queer communities and identities enables participants to create and sustain online communities that challenge dominant settler colonial values and framings within relatively 'safe spaces' they have constructed online. By challenging heteropatriarchal settler colonialism through the co-creation of public and private identities and communities enables Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ peoples to flourish and mutually strengthen individual and collective wellbeing.

Transitional justice processes and mechanisms are the subject of Phelan's (2023) paper that examines, interrogates, and responds to the legacies of massive and serious human right abuses within the criminal justice system in so-called Australia. The paper uses transitional justice as a counter to these abuses, aiming to present an alternative narrative based on societal transformation and reconciliation, particularly as this relates to racialised colonial violence. Globally, gender and sexual minorities are some of the most oppressed groups, enduring significant and overwhelming human rights violations under colonising regimes, yet have mostly been excluded from these processes. Despite more than thirty-five truth commissions being conducted in different countries with a history of settler conflict and violence, almost none have been able to embrace the participation and testimony of the LGBTIQQA+ community. In Australia, states and territories are progressing truth and justice processes as fundamental mechanisms supporting treaties between these jurisdictions and First Nations Peoples. From first contact, Phelan argues, colonisation has embedded and enforced restrictive social constructions of gender and sexuality conformism. As a result, Indigenous LGBTIQQA+ people have experienced significant historical and ongoing harm from settler states specifically targeting non-compliant genders and/or sexualities. The inclusion of Indigenous LGBTIQQA+ communities in Australian truth-telling and transitional justice processes, is critical to ensuring that truth-telling is representative, accurate and comprehensive. Due

to the fact that individuals and communities can face significant psychosocial risks with being involved in these processes, however, Indigenous LGBTIQ+ cultural safety, health, social and emotional wellbeing supports, must be prioritised. The paper goes on to propose direct guidelines and actions for supporting Indigenous LGBTIQ+ safety and wellbeing in truth and justice processes.

Sullivan and colleagues' (2023) paper summarises the achievements of the Dalarinji (in Dharug, Your Story) research project, one of the first research projects to investigate the social and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ people living in so-called Australia. The aim of the project was to understand the social and emotional wellbeing of Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ peoples (lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer, sistagirl, brothaboy) living in the place now known as New South Wales (NSW), Australia. The project was codesigned and co-led by the research project partners, BlaQ Aboriginal Corporation, and the Aboriginal Project at ACON, Sydney. The paper describes the research process, and over the course of the project, the team held interviews, workshops, and online surveys to collect Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ peoples' needs, experiences and aspirations from across NSW. The article synthesises the available literature on Indigenous LGBTIQSB+ people at the start of the project in 2019 and tracks the progress of the field in line with project outputs since then. Using information from each of the project's publications, the article summarises the project's findings in relationship to debates about human rights; identity, belonging and connectedness; viable alternative futures and service provision. The article concludes with a commentary on work in the field and some suggestions regarding the way forward.

Reardon-Smith (2023) explores a series of recent works of speculative fiction and poetry by queer First Nations writers—including Ellen van Neerven, Laniyuk, Alison Whittaker, SJ Norman, and Jazz Money—to touch on the depth and breadth of Blak queer embodiment, erotics, joy, and imagination. The paper focuses on the author's findings by reading these texts from a position of vulnerability, and with the principle of companion-thinking in respect to Indigenous Standpoint Theory. The author is explicit about their positionality, relationality and responsibility as a queer white settler living on stolen Aboriginal Country. Reflecting in relationality with queer First Nations creative writing and erotics in this way, the author believes can reshape any limitations of possibility in envisaging a world beyond what Wiradjuri transgender/non-binary scholar and artist Sandy O'Sullivan (O'Sullivan et al., 2023, p. 1) calls "the colonial project of gender (and everything else)."

Wallace's (2023) contribution interrogates possible connections and relationships between the theories that emerge from the lived experiences in Abya Yala (now called the American continent) and so-called Australia.

Using Lugones ideas of the Sistema Moderno/Colonial de Género (Modern/Colonial System of Gender) and O'Sullivan's concept of the Colonial Project of Gender as their key theoretical constructs, Wallace proposes a way to retrieve and recognize resistances by queer Indigenous people to the imposition of colonialities within video games. They argue that modernity and colonialities attempt to reduce and simplify the complexities and diversities of queer Indigenous peoples through the imposition of heteronormative and cisnormative binary understandings in video games. The article concludes that video games are not only spaces of discomfort and potential marginalisation for queer Indigenous peoples but can also become places of resistance and co-constructed communities of kinship, and mutual identity.

O'Sullivan et al. take an innovative approach to analysing and describing their research into the representations of Indigenous queer people in media. The paper describes their preliminary audit of television programs searching for shows that included representations of Indigenous queer people both in so-called Australia and internationally. The findings of the audit was reinforced by analysis from an online survey that asked participants to highlight shows that included Indigenous and/or queer representations and for their opinions regarding if and how these worked and what was missing in these representations. The authors conclude that overall, the audit process and online survey, reveals the liminality of Indigenous queer representations and visibility, exposing their experiences of becoming visible, their lack of visibility and their expectations for more inclusive media spaces that will also be more fluid and expansive than the current exclusionary and limited television programming spaces. The audit and survey highlighted the fact that for queer, Indigenous characters and other racially complex representations, there is a lot more to be done. However, it also gives us a small glimpse into spaces that are able to be more inclusive and representations of Indigenous queer experiences of success and joy.

The collection of papers are unique, first, because they address a gap, the lack of understanding of the lived experiences and aspirations of Indigenous queer peoples, how they co-create online digital communities and sustain their unique relationalities as well as how they are represented in the media and navigate the criminal justice system. And, secondly, because they approach the topic from one of strength. While not ignoring the challenges and constraints, they interrogate the many ways in which Indigenous LGBTIQ+ peoples navigate, resist, and confront settler colonial values, representations, framings, and impositions. The collection of papers offer a unique insight into the different ways Indigenous LGBTIQ+ peoples struggle and overcome the limitations of settler colonialism through co-creating their own concepts and aspirations for justice, community, wellbeing, and representation.



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