UCLA
American Indian Culture and Research Journal

Title
Editorial Statement

Permalink
https://escholarship.org/uc/item/60f6m0fk

Journal
American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 48(2)

ISSN
0161-6463

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Publication Date
2025-07-14

DOI
10.17953/A3.47478

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Editorial Statement

David Delgado Shorter

In the two years since our journal moved to an open-access publishing model, the world has changed in many ways. Many of us in North America are feeling whiplashed by unprecedented cuts to those resources that have made Indigenous studies possible. By leaving the subscription-based budget for one completely dependent on institutional support, we knew that we incurred new and different risks. And now, with the attacks on area studies, research on colonialism, libraries (our primary sponsors), and higher education, and, in addition, considering our own university's budgetary constriction, we expect a daunting path ahead, financially. If you are able to connect us with institutional, nonprofit, or individual sponsors, please do so. In the meantime, we will continue to produce issue after issue of vital research pertaining to the health and sovereignty of Indigenous communities. Our work here has perhaps never been more relevant.

Extending Our Reach

Last year, at this time, our journal was averaging approximately 13,000 viewers each month. This year we are averaging approximately 30,000 viewers each month. Our December 2024 issue, "Still Bad Indians," has had more than 3,000 viewers, more than many top-selling books by academic publishers. Having been published only two months ago, our last issue, "Language Lives in Unexpected Places," has already accumulated more views in a single month than any other issue published since moving to open access. Consider this: in 2024, our journal was viewed more than 360,000 times. On average, 36 percent of visitors to our site decide to download one or more essays. These numbers are impressive by any measure. The statistics evidence not only the quality of our scholarly content but also the reach of AIS research inside and outside of academia. Our move to open access facilitates the widespread dissemination of data, Indigenous methodologies, and Indigenous theories.

Recognition

In the last two years, we have achieved other major milestones. We have raised our h-index factor from "good" to "excellent" among scholarly journals. Our essays have received not one but two national awards. We were added to the Directory of Open Access Journals, which accepts only those journals that can demonstrate a commitment to ethical publishing and rigorous quality control. Our editorial team has been invited to present and publish on our journal's successful transition to open access, particularly on the benefits of open access to Indigenous communities. We have more than thirty articles currently in our pipeline, and typically we are able to publish an article within eighteen months of submission.

A Special Event

One recent event stands out as meaningful. In May of 2024, we worked with the Indigenous Early Learning Collaborative Institute (IELCI) to publish a special issue devoted to community-based inquiry (CBI). We engaged the issue's guest editors and authors of that issue in a collaborative process of rethinking what counts as research, asking how research can be communicated in ways that resonate with educators inside Native communities. Building on that special issue, UCLA hosted authors and other CBI practitioners for a symposium. We are thankful to IELCI and campus partners for creating such an enlightening set of conversations, which may be viewed online. This special issue and associated symposium provided a model of the collaborative work often required in Indigenous studies, one in which the journal adopts community standards and forms in order to reach the people described in and doing the research.

New Practices and Policies

Since becoming the editor in chief in 2022, I have worked diligently with our editorial board and colleagues at UCLA to query what it might mean to indigenize a peer-review journal. We have expanded our editorial board to include more Indigenous experts, in addition to committing board positions to Indigenous scholars from our region. We have opened our review process to include elders and knowledge-bearers, irrespective of whether they hold terminal degrees. We have reshaped the peer-review process to shepherd authors toward revisions. We have created an early-career writing support award to attract junior scholars.

In addition, we have adopted new policies that we feel reflect Indigenous-centric publishing practices. This issue marks the first one published under these new practices.

First, in March of 2025, the UCLA American Indian Studies Center's publications committee—which oversees all matters of our journal's practices and policies—voted to approve a Statement of Ethics. After distribution as a draft to a range of Indigenous studies scholars the previous year, the statement explains the journal's position on plagiarism, the uses of artificial intelligence, and the issue of identity fraud in relation to self-identifying Indigenous authorship. We recognize that publishing plays a particularly key role in how academics rise into coveted positions of authority and, in some

cases, positions with job security; this recognition comes with ethical responsibility. We also recognize that authors' personal ethics often affect their research ethics. The journal now states clearly how we will handle claims of identity fraud and plagiarism.

Second, starting with this July 2025 issue, we are changing how we list authors' biographical statements. Historically, our journal has included short biographical notes at the bottom of the first page of each essay. Moving forward, we will instead list all authors in each issue's front matter. One benefit is creating room for larger authorship collaborations. We want our essays' authors to feel comfortable including others who are involved with research. In addition, we know that introducing oneself to others is often a matter of cultural importance, so we created space for slightly longer biographical statements. We welcome authors to orient our readers to those lands, ancestral ties, naming practices, tribal affiliations, and citizenships that ground authors and their communities. To create this room, we are moving author bios (with the limit expanding from three lines to eighty words) to a single alphabetical list preceding the issue's content. We hope these changes help foster a sense of learning about not only research topics but also authors and their communities. Stylistically, we hope by presenting an issue's authors in one space, we cultivate a sense of community in the field of Indigenous studies.

Gratitude and Welcoming

I would like to conclude by recognizing others. The journal thanks Clifford Trafzer, who has concluded his service, for his many years on our editorial board. We are thankful for the years of service provided by Randall Akee as both an editorial board member and the previous editor in chief. Dr. Akee is departing UCLA to begin his position as the inaugural Julie Johnson Kidd Professor of Indigenous Governance and Development at Harvard Kennedy School, as well as the next director of the Harvard Project. We wish you well, Randy!

Our editorial board welcomes two new members: Beth Rose Middleton Manning at UC Davis and Clementine Bordeaux (Sičáŋǧu Lakótapi) at UC Santa Cruz.

We also welcome members of our new Poets' Circle, a group of four poets who will review poetry submissions within special issues: Deborah Miranda (Ohlone Costanoan Esselen Nation, with Santa Ynez Band of Chumash Mission ancestry), Kenzie Allen (Haudenosaunee), Esther G. Belin (Diné), and Casandra López (Tongva and Luiseño).

We thank you for your contributions, your readership, your support in sharing our content, and for considering our journal for your research. We look forward to sharing more exciting issues in the next year. Let us know if you have any questions about possible special issues or suggestions for financial support.

Thank you to all our relations.