How do *you* say watermelon?

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We borrowed words from Thurman Hester's sharing of Choctaw language and pedagogy for our title, "How do *you* say watermelon?" The elder's question exemplified Choctaws' respectful teaching while encouraging the student to find and understand relationships. Similarly, this paper presents the position and process of post*indian* gamer by centralizing experience, ours and the readers' as conveyed via story. Our story of post*indian* gamers grounds itself in our experiences playing and learning about Sla'hal and other games played on Turtle Island prior to the colonizing invasion that began in 1492. We come as colonizer educated, indian educated, and *indian* educated post*indians*, using Vizenor's vernacular. We come with indigenous lived experiences and recipients of teachings by indigenous elders of our ancestral nations as well as elders who are local to our current living place of Lushootseed speaking peoples of the Salish Sea. We name ourselves Post*indian* Gamers and Turtle Islanders—aləshək s'chəgwutsidabsh in local Lushootseed language. We call upon our experiences and the experiences of those who came before us. Our actions include creating and visioning a future of survivance gaming and games of survivance. We strive to bring historic philosophies of Turtle Islanders to contemporary gaming with an enactment of such philosophies in game goals, mechanics, aesthetics, language, value.

This paper has four separately styled sections to create varied opportunities for readers to experience how very old indigenous games, particularly Sla'hal, inform contemporary game development (Adams et al.; Tomhave; Bushnell). The first section, most similar to works written within the Westernized academy, shares stories about Sla'hal and briefly describes the details of Sla'hal's game play. This section then employs Vizenor's theoretical writings to elucidate connections between historical indigenous games, as we have experienced them and learned about them from our elders, and understandings about the nature of our world that comes from the same elders plus selected writings by indigene within the Westernized academy. The second

section is a colored diagram that portrays one of our Vizenored understandings of contemporary indigenous games and gamers. In the third section, we offer an indigenous categorization strategy for tagging and identifying games. Finally, we share how our actual analysis of games occurs in conversation.

SLA'HAL ORIGINS

Turtle Islanders play a game known here, around the Salish Sea, as Sla'hal or Bone Games (see Figure 1). About forty years ago a full set of Sla'hal game pieces were found alongside mastodon bones. Buried in the muck of a cattail marsh were half a mastodon's worth of bones. In one of the ribs was the tip of a bone point made from a different mastodon. The other half of the mastodon's bones were eighty feet away, upslope in a camp area on drier ground. The camp bones were broken and scattered among scorched rocks indicating butchering and cooking. Archeologists could see the 6,700-year-old volcanic ash layer from Mt. Mazama and subsequent carbon dating of the deeper area where the bones were laid, revealing an age of 13,800 years. In this sediment the set of Sla'hal pieces were found (Gustafson; Waters et al.; Grayson and Meltzer). If you are a student of archeology, you may be scratching your head about now since there are other stories that say human people did not arrive here that long ago. If you know Turtle Islander stories, you'll know that this was just about the time that the Pleistocene epoch ice sheets moved off the land and human people were able to move back north as they followed the retreating ice.
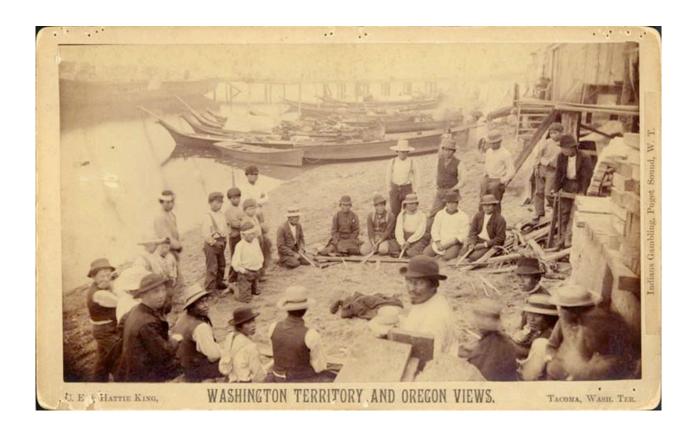
Figure 1. Sla'hal being played on a Salish Sea beach in 1884.

A story that echoes from the past is that Sla'hal began as a contest between animal people and human people vying for the win to be hunters with the loss relegating those to be hunted. Human people won that first encounter and with it they received the right to eat animals for sustenance and to use the animal people's songs for guardian spirit songs. Sla'hal also was used to replace war and bloodshed among indigenous nations. The story of Sla'hal goes something like this:

> Al tudi tuhok! A long time ago! All the animal people and all the human people could easily talk with each other. Animals were the first people and were given knowledge on how to live. Human people came later and were told to observe and learn from animals. Human people were told to live within the rules of interrelatedness with their world so that balance would be maintained and there would be abundance for all.
>
> After a while, human people stopped following the animals' teachings which led to anger, hate, and war. The land was smitten with hardship and lack of food. Human

people began to starve and their bones could be seen scattered around. They became easy prey of the animal people. Eventually there were only a few human elders remaining who could remember the blissful times when humans and animals lived harmoniously and followed common rules. The human elders called all the remaining people and animals together for a truce.

They all came together but they argued and argued and could not settle on a solution. Eventually they went to an old woman. A very, very old woman with deeply wrinkled skin. She told the animal people and the human people that they could settle their dispute with a game called Sla'hal. She told them how Sla'hal worked and that the team who ended up with all the counting sticks could decide the dispute the way they wanted. This decision would be binding and the dispute would end without further argument.

She told them how to make two sets of bones that could be hidden in a fist. In each set, one bone was unmarked and one was marked. Each side began the contest with an equal number of counting sticks.

The animal people and the human people began. The sticks went back and forth but neither side could win them all. The animal people went back to the old woman and asked for help. She gave them a song to sing while they were hiding the bones. The song helped the animal people to hide the bones from the human people.

Now the human people and the animal people played Sla'hal again. Now the animal people were winning. They would sing their song and hide the bones. They taunted the human people. "I'm going to eat that one first." "That one over there looks tasty." Eventually the animal people won all but two of the counting sticks.

Now the human people were very frightened. They were losing and they did not want to get eaten by the animal people. The human people went to the old woman. The old woman took pity on the human people and gave them a song also.

Now the human people and the animal people played Sla'hal again. The human people sang their song. They sang and hid the bones and they began winning the sticks back. The animal people were frightened. They eventually lost all the counting sticks to the human people. When they lost the last stick, they jumped up and ran in all directions. They hid all over the land so that the human people had search for them

when they hunted, for the human people had won the game and made the decision that they would be hunters and the animal people the hunted.

And that is the story of Sla'hal.

SLA'HAL ARTIFACTS AND MECHANICS

The materials of Sla'hal are easily crafted or created by human people:

- Two pairs of small bones that can be hidden in a person's hand.
- Each set has one marked and one unmarked bone.
- Historically and typically these are from a foreleg of a deer.
- Counting sticks—about 20 so each team has 10.
- Kick stick.
- Drum—hand drums or log/plank in front of each team.
- Sla'hal Songs

Sla'hal game mechanics include observing, thinking, moving, singing, feeling, and focused perceptions. Two members of the 'hiding' team hide a bone in each hand—one is marked and one is plain. The objective of the game is to identify which bone is in which hand.

Sla'hal is played in teams and begins with members of each team facing each other in a line. Often played on sandy beaches, each team might have a log in front of them to beat on as a drum. Just as often now, players are sitting in chairs with hand drums.

Each team begins play with tally, or counting sticks—usually ten. Teams each choose a leader whose first action is to play for being the first hiding team. Each leader hides one marked and one plain bone in their hands and the other leader identifies which bone is in which hand. Whichever leader guesses the plain bone twice wins the kick stick and the right to be first at hiding.

The hiding team begins by singing and then the team leader indicates two members who will hold the bones. Holders hide their hands as they put one bone in each hand, moving and using the team songs to minimize the guessing team's ability to identify which bone ends up in which hand.

Sla'hal songs are accompanied by drumming, either hand drums or sticks pounding on logs or boards lying on the ground in front of players.

The leader on the guessing team indicates a pointer for the team. The pointer's task is to

identify in which hands the plain bones are held. Each time the pointer cannot identify the placement of the bones, a tally stick is given from the guessing team to the hiding team. When the pointer correctly identifies where the plain bones are, the bones are handed over to the guessing team, which then becomes the hiding team and the roles are reversed. The game ends when one team has lost all their tally sticks. Historically, the teams included entire villages competing with each other. The game has been known to last over four days and nights of continuous playing.

PHILOSOPHICAL UNDERPININGS OF HISTORICAL INDIGENOUS GAMES

We hear our stories. We live our stories. We reproduce our stories. We represent our stories. Our stories construct us and we construct them. They continue to be told as if they ride the ripples of a stone cast into water by those who came before. We hear that Sla'hal is played by human people all across Turtle Island. We hear that all human players use the same game pieces and the same rules. Stories that we hear from Turtle Islanders are in agreement that Sla'hal is a method for non-violent conflict resolution whose outcome is binding. Sla'hal is also a way for human people to have fun, to laugh and sing together. Some call it gambling—and it can be— with high stake rewards. Some call it a guessing game—but they would be the neophytes. Some call it a contest of spirit, of power, of spirit power, a communal encounter of wits, endurance, and remembering. Sla'hal brings us together in a communal contest of shared rhythms and additive spirit power.

Communal stories ripple and echo through time (McLeod). Stories of Sla'hal teach us to settle differences, sing together and live with fluidity. They teach us to honor agreements and live in community with all peoples and elements of our world. Communal stories come to us from intentional stone tosses that mobilize the unseen world, the spirit world, the dark matter of the universe. Communal stories teach us how to grow in our understanding of interconnections and tap into shared connections with our spirit world. As stones thrown into a lake cause ripples, so our ancestors' stories echo through time.

In the playing of Sla'hal there is no divide between natural worlds, spiritual worlds, cultural worlds, and game worlds. As an embodiment of an indigenous philosophy of holism or holistic thinking, the playing of Sla'hal calls upon an entire understanding of reality, wherein human people are expected to do their part to maintain balance (Cajete). In Lushootseed there is

a word—syehub—that means a traditional old story or teaching from our ancestors about the world before it was changed to become as it is now(Bates; Hilbert, 1980). Sla'hal stories come from that ancient time. Sla'hal stories guide human people to maintain relationships with each other and with animal peoples. They teach how to use songs and rhythms to enhance understandings. They elucidate the importance of nature, of physicality, of spirit. Sla'hal stories represent and reflect the cultural ideals of joining together, of resolving conflicts peaceably, of utilizing all resources without separation into mutually exclusive categories of natural or spiritual or cognitive or rhythmic.

The game of Sla'hal is an organized contest in which players compete to achieve an objective with agreed upon rules and shared metaphors. Sla'hal players' shared metaphors, values, philosophies, and explanations of reality are indigenous and different from those of the colonizers (Deloria). Indigenous realities often stress the importance of being relational, multi-contextual, interdependent independence, fluidly balanced, community focused, subjectively experienced, and creatively cognizant of complexity. Sla'hal and other indigenous games strengthened such values, built community, and honed individual skills. As such, they facilitated sustainability(Cajete). As noted above, the mechanics and playing of Sla'hal integrates song, physical exercise, leadership, ritual, political philosophy, mythic story, and community cohesion. Sla'hal offered a place for playing out social issues of society with expectations of fairplay and teamwork. While Sla'hal has high-stakes winning and losing, it also values individual players' skill development and personal expression in a collaborative milieu.

Discussions of indigenous gaming and play could hardly be complete without undertaking at least a cursory role of the ultimate native gamers—Coyote, Raven, Blue Jay, Mink, Spider, and other 'trickster' figures. As Vizenor's comic holotrope, Coyote problematizes the world and sets communal expectations on their collective contingent heads. Indigenous games tap into a creative play of the universe encouraging players to practice the art of Coyote—fluidly interconnected tangents yielding innumerable possibilities at maintaining sustainable, cyclical balances. Success requires enactment of communal integrity with close observations that yield internalized respect for everything, their places, and most importantly their connections within the unified whole where anomalies do not exist except as prompts for ponderings of how they fit in. No thing pre-exists separately, but it is a boundary project of relationships where boundaries can shift and provisionally materialize during interactions. Games help construct the shared

world of meaning, all the while having fun at creative play. Always celebrating life.

CONTEMPORARY INDIGENOUS GAMES and GAMERS

N.D.N. Player Research Group strives to be post*indian* in our observing, critiquing, and developing games. As social and physical scientists, our Vizenoresque concepts of *indian*, survivance, post*indian,* transmotion and games are pictured in Figure 2. For the visual processors and learners our full-color diagram elucidates a certain Turtle Islander and Post*indian* Gamer transmotion showing various connections of indigenous gamers and games. Turtle Islanders *(green box)* were avid gamers with one game in particular being played by hundreds of nations—Sla'hal, or Bone Game *(light green 'button')*. Therefore, when we started development of our own first game, *Potlatch*, we went to local elders to learn about the game that dates back to at least 13,000 years ago in our area. LaCrosse was also played by Turtle Islanders prior to 1492 but not in our region.

1492 was chosen as a number that represents a certain change process that occurred, and is occurring, on Turtle Island. It represents a racialization of Turtle Islanders that included the assault on our sovereign citizenships as *indians* were redefined to be ethnic minorities within a colonial project (Deloria). After 1492, the European newcomers *(grey box)* tried several ways to colonize the place and the peoples *(grey arrow)* but they were met with constant resistances with what Vizenor refers to as survivance *(light green lightning bolt)*, "an active repudiation of dominance, tragedy, and victimry; a sense of native presence over absence, nihility, and victimry; an active resistance and repudiation of dominance, obtrusive themes of tragedy, nihilism, and victrimry; a presence; and, a practice" (Vizenor).

Colonization leads to at least two groups—*indians* and Survivors *(yellow circle)*. "The *indian* is a simulation, the absence of natives" with no native ancestors or stories (Vizenor). Survivors are those who have completely succumbed to colonization. We recognize Survivors and *indians* as dominated absences of natives who reproduce colonization in games *(yellow 'button')*. We associate these peoples with colonizer games having colonizer philosophical underpinnings with perhaps a skinning of 'native.' Games such as *Age of Empire*, *Assassin's Creed*, and *Civilization*.

Resistances and survivance yields *Postindian* Warrior *(light green circle)*. *Postindian* are those who "must waver over the aesthetic ruins of '*indian*' simulations" (Vizenor). They are

contemporary indigene who actively resist and reconceptualize those imagined identities placed on us by colonizers during the past five hundred years. The border between *indians* and *postindians* we find to be fluid and shimmering with interconnected influences. Identities and positions are not fixed, particularly when *postindian* gamers *(lavender circle)* find themselves with few choices for games.
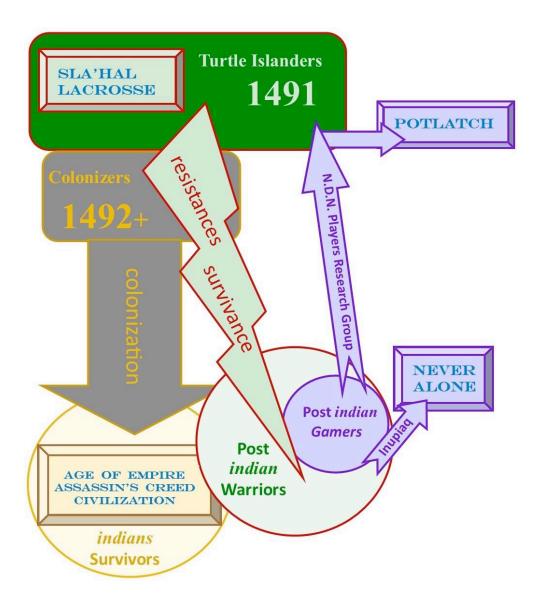

Figure 2. Post*indian* Gamer Transmotion

From this position of survivance, Post*indian* game developers have found actions *(lavender arrows)* to bring their gaming into better alignment with their indigenous philosophies.

Perhaps the most well-known are the Inupiaq storytellers who developed the game about survivance, *Never Alone (lavender 'button')*. Without the same strong connection to place and old stories of the Inupiaq game developers, N.D.N. Players Research Group utilized indigenous and westernized research methods to better understand local histories, philosophies and games. From these knowledges we developed *Potlatch: A Game About Economics*. Survivance, political strategy, and game sovereignty shape the game's mechanics around indigenous economic systems and philosophies utilizing historical actions and values about resources and relationships. Survivance informs Turtle Islander art, art motifs, colors, and shapes (see Figure 3). *Potlatch: A Game About Economics* is an educational survivance game that enacts the political strategy of teaching about an economic system indigenous to people of the Salish Sea region using local indigenous art and language. *Potlatch* is survivance using political strategy of game sovereignty to teach all students, with particular intent to teach students and teachers within Washington State's K-12 "Since Time Immemorial" curriculum on local native history. Bringing in Anishinaabe pedagogy to layer survivance actions, *Potlatch* models accretive thinking with the basic level card game informing future level board games with purposeful intent of mastering knowledge about peoples of the Salish Sea region (Gross).
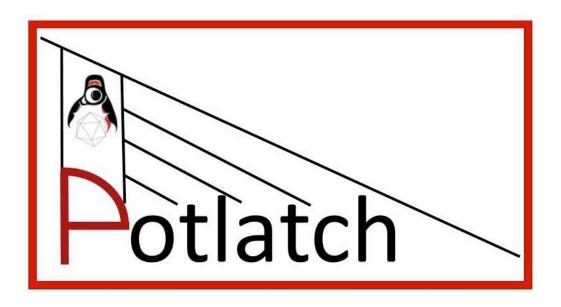

Figure 3. Potlatch Card Back

INDIGENOUS GAME TAGS

N.D.N Players Research Group developed a system for tagging games that reflects our understandings of indigeneity. As Post*indian* gamers, we claim the power of self-definition with our tagging menus. N.D.N. Players Indigenous Game Tags represent a way of organizing games within indigenous philosophies. These tags come from our observations of what is not used as descriptors during our experiences of gameplay. Our tags create a beginning system that can be expanded, as others add tags that are meaningful to them. We attempted to develop a very inclusive list for all parts and stages of game concepts, development, marketing, and playing. Most game retailers sort and organize their games by genre Types. Genres consist of categories created by the gaming industry. These are in place so that when a game is labeled with one, consumers, developers, marketers, etc., all know what sort of similar mechanic challenges and game play can be expected. Genres tend to reflect less on content and more on game mechanics. Some of the largest and most recognizable are MMO, RPG, FPS, RTS, TBS, and so on (complete list included in Appendix B).

The digital distribution platform, Steam, and other game marketers utilize a Tag system. These tags are words or short phrases that offer as a whole, a more in-depth presentation of a game than just the genre. While many tags are also genres, the tag system allows developers and the gaming community a way to communicate a game's strong and weak points through a short list of words and the other games associated with them. For instance, while not a genre, "Female protagonist" is a tag that conveys that the game has a lead female. Other tags on the same game, such as "atmospheric", will paint the picture of the games as more about the game world than the fact that it's a Parkour FPS. Tags offer input into the content of the game where genre does not (see Appendix A for a full listing of N.D.N Players Indigenous Game Tags and Genres).

N.D.N. Players Research Group's system of game tags better convey the indigenous content of games. These tags include the added categories of Indigenous Content, Characters/Characters of Indigenous Games, Indigenous Stories, Indigenous Knowledges, Indigenous Histories past/Contemporary, and Poor Representation of Indigenous People, Culture and Histories (General).

Currently, game tags are organized by the industry thus: Game Genre: Industry standard genres

Genre Subtypes: industry standard sub genres

Play types: how gamers interact with the game

Game Description: tags added by the community not fitting with genre/sub-genre categories.

Game Characters: tags relating to prominent characters in the game

Development: tags relating to the game studio or dev process

Using the above system on *Potlatch: A Game About Economics* developed by N.D.N. Players Research Group, one would find:

Game Genre: Card Game, Strategy Game, Simulation, Indigenous Game

Genre Subtypes: Resource Management, Educational

Play types: Cooperative Play

Game Description: Indigenous Mechanics, Indigenous Philosophic Values, Indigenous Societal Values, Indigenous Economics, Indigenous Culture, Indigenous Art, Indigenous Education, Indigenous Language (Lushootseed), Potlatch, Coast Salish, Puget Sound

Development: Indi, Indigenous Developers, Indigenous Designers, Indigenous Artist, Postindian Gamer

Below are specific examples of how games are currently tagged by Steam and how N.D.N. Players Research Group would tag them from an indigenous perspective. We ask that you read these tags as if you were considering purchasing or playing the games mentioned. The first game, *Never Alone*, is considered an exemplar of an indigenous game. The other three have some indigenous elements.

Steam tags that are currently applied to *Never Alone Kisima Inŋitchuŋa*:

Game Genre: Action, Adventure

Genre Subtypes: Platformer, Puzzle, Side Scroller, Puzzle-Platformer

Play types: Local Co-Op, Local Multiplayer, Co-op, Singleplayer

Game Description: Atmospheric, Cute, Great Soundtrack, Story Rich, Casual, Short, 2.5D, 2D

Game Characters: Female Protagonist

Development: Indie

N.D.N. Players tags applied to *Never Alone Kisima Inŋitchuŋa*:

Game Description: Indigenous Game, Indigenous Story, Indigenous Setting Artic, Iñupiaq, Indigenous Artwork (Scrimshaw), Indigenous Language (Inupiat), Indigenous Culture, Indigenous Histories, Indigenous Tribal Representation (Iñupiaq)

Game Characters: Indigenous Characters, Indigenous Protagonist, Indigenous Female Protagonist, Indigenous Protagonist Non-Human, Indigenous Characters Non-Human

Development: Indigenous Collaboration, Indigenous Writers, Postindian Gamer

Steam tags that are currently applied to *Assassin's Creed 3:*

Game Genre: Adventure, Action, Action-Adventure

Genre Subtypes: Sandbox, Stealth

Play types: Singleplayer, Multiplayer, Controller

Game Description: Open World, Third Person, Assassin, Parkour, Historical, America, Atmospheric, Hunting, Story Rich, Alternate History, Conspiracy, Casual

Tags Added By N.D.N. Players:

Game Description: Colonial Histories, Indigenous Histories, Indigenous Setting North East, Mohawk, Indigenous Alternate Histories, Indigenous Language (Mohawk), Indigenous Tribal representation (Mohawk), Skinned With Indigene, White Man's Indian, Redfacing

Game Characters: Indigenous Characters, Indigenous Protagonist

Development: Indigenous Collaboration

Steam tags that are currently applied to *Civilization I-V, IV*:

Game Genre: Strategy, Simulation

Genre Subtypes: Grand Strategy, Turn-Based Strategy, Turn-Based, 4X

Play types: Multiplayer, Singleplayer, Co-op

Game Description: Historical, Hex Grid, Replay Value, Moddable, Tactical, Economy, Diplomacy, Great Soundtrack, Classic, Touch-Friendly, Education

Tags Added By N.D.N. Players:

Game Description: Colonial Histories, Indigenous Representation (Aztec, Polynesian, Inca, Iroquois, Maya, Shoshone) Indigenous Colonialism, Indigenous Languages (Nahuatl, Quechuan, Mohawk, Yucatec, Shoshone, Hawaiian), Skinned With Indigene, Redfacing, White Man's Indian, Assimilation

Game Characters: Indigenous Characters

Steam tags that are currently applied to *Age of Empires I-III:*

Game Genre: Strategy, Simulation, Adventure, Action

Genre Subtypes: RTS, Real-Time, Real-Time with Pause, Open World, Resource Management

Play types: Single Player, Online Co-Op, Multiplayer, Co-op

Game Description: City Builder, Historical, Base-Building, War, Classic, Military, Building

Tags Added By N.D.N. Players:

Game Description: Colonial Histories, Indigenous Representation (Aztec, Inca, Iroquois, Maya, Sioux) Indigenous Colonialism, Skinned With Indigene, Redfacing, White Man's Indian, Assimilation

Game Characters: Indigenous Characters

Our intent is that game purchasers and players will get a fuller understanding of how each game interfaces with indigeneity, and with the addition of N.D.N. Players tags. Our system can be both a marketing strategy and an educational tool.

SURVIVANCE GAMES IN CONVERSATION

Lastly, is an edited transcription based on a recorded podcast among the members of N.D.N. Players Research Group. Such storytelling and discussion represent one way Post*indian* gamers do their work. Similar to the story of indigenist knowledge by Adams, Wilson, Heavy Head, and Gordon in *Ceremony at a Boundary Fire,* it is short example of the process by which N.D.N. Players Research Group conducts indigenist research and analysis of games. The game under discussion is *Never Alone Kisima Iŋitchuŋa*.

Elvis Foxtrot = EF, Charlotte Tremendous Coho = CT, and Zero = 0

CT: *Never Alone*, is it merely an entertaining, niche game? Or is it an act of survivance?
EF: Um, while it is the highest selling indigenous videogame to date, if you really think about it, it's just a simple side scroller, admittedly a very nice looking one.
CT: Hmm, could it be the content?

0: Well, reviews of the game have praised it for its cultural content and its protagonists, a young woman and a snow fox. Also, the game has been criticized for its buggy gameplay.

EF: Hmm, what about the gameplay?

CT: Perhaps it's because you can only succeed through cooperative gameplay?

0: I don't think so, there have been several games, such as the Lego side scroller series have puzzles and areas that can only be solved or accessed by certain characters because of their special abilities.

EF: Hmm, if it isn't because of its platform, content, or gameplay, what makes *Never Alone* an act of survivance? Or, is it even an act of survivance?

0: Well, there have been a number of mainstream games that have American Indians integrated at various levels in it, such as *Assassin's Creed 3*, the *Civilization* series, and *Age of Empires* to name those that come to mind. But in each of those games, each are just skinned in various degrees with surface and sometimes trivial Indigenousness.

CT: Can you provide some examples?

0: Uh sure. In *Age of Empires*, American Indians are represented. Of course though, they are Plains Indians. Also, as you progress along the technology tree, you lose whatever imagined cultural distinctiveness and well, become just like everyone else. It's like that the only way someone who isn't European can develop is, well, is develop like a European. And although in *Assassin's Creed 3* you get to play a character who is half Mohawk and speaks his language, it still is set within a Euro-English/American context.

CT: Hmm, isn't *Never Alone* also just a game that is just skinned with Indigenous? I mean, we've established that aside from its cultural context, there really isn't anything notable about the game.

0: Um, well, I think that one could say that. Mainly because I wonder who is playing the game and why? My concern is how often we are exoticized and eroticized in pop culture.

CT: That's the danger, isn't it? Well, regarding video games, what can we, and tribes do?

EF: Um, when potlatch was deemed illegal, what did the tribes do?

CT: They held them in secret and started using money.

EF: Why money?

CT: Well, traditional potlatch items were confiscated. But everyone has and uses money.

0: Yeah, basically, they incorporated a colonial item as a surrogate for traditional items, like

blankets, bentwood boxes, and such.

EF: So, what happened here is that what the Coast Salish Peoples did here, just like all colonized people did, was to hide, go underground, and use deception to misdirect.

CT and 0: Yeah.

EF: In other words, they took control of what they could, just like how the Hopi did when Edward Curtis decided to film the Snake Dance. To protect it, the Hopi did it in reverse.

0: Pretty much.

CT: But were those acts of survival or survivance?

EF: Survivance.

CT: Interesting, why?

EF: Well, um, although Curtis and his ilk felt the need to document the Vanishing Indian, as authentic as possible, we know that there have been acts of resistance to counter this.

0: The question is, when is resistance a survival act, and when is it a survivance act?

EF: Well, getting back to skinning, we have seen several games that have Native elements to them. Some, like *Never Alone* are quite beautiful. Others like some of the fighting characters in the *Killer Instinct* and *Street Fighter* series, well, not so much. Anyway, I think it becomes an act of survivance when the Native people in question are not cultural content advisors, or are just cultural content creators. I think it becomes survivance when what is presented and shared is controlled by the Nation in question. That it is they who deem what is appropriate to share with the rest of the world, and not the colonizer.

CT: What you've just identified is The Power to Name, and that stems from Muted Group Theory.

EF: Really? Cool!

0: Um, I'm not familiar with either of those.

EF: OK, well although Muted Group Theory has been adopted in Communication, Feminist Studies, and others, its origin is from Cultural Anthropology. According to British Anthropologist Edwin Ardener (1975), language between dominant and subaltern groups is unbalanced. Although he argued that men have mainly produced the ideas and knowledge of the world.

CT: I find that EXTREMELY problematic.

EF: Agreed. But I think he was coming up with an explanation on why we have hardly ever

heard of women accomplishments.

CT: To add to that, Dale Spender (1980) it's not just ideas and knowledge, it's the construction and use of language itself that constructs a reality that is masculine. Take for example gender pronouns. For a long time, the proper pronoun to use in writing was he, him, etc.

0: Or, you know, mankind instead of humanity, and man and woman.

EF: Or, that for many people, the imagined default for Americans, is White Americans even though we should hyphenate them with Euro-American, or European-Americans.

CT: Right. Furthermore, Cheris Kramarae identified seven parts of this process:

> 1. Women have more difficulty expressing themselves than men have. A common female experience is to lack a word for a feminine experience because men, who do not share the experience, have developed a term for it.
>
> 2. Women understand men's meaning more easily than men understand women's.
>
> 3. Women have created their own means of expression outside [the] dominant male system.
>
> 4. Women tend to express more dissatisfaction about communication than men express.
>
> 5. Women often make efforts to change the dominant rules of communication in order to get around or to resist conventional roles.
>
> 6. Traditionally, women have been less likely to coin new words that become popular in society at large.
>
> 7. And, the things women find humorous are quite different from the things men find humorous.

Plus, this is not something that is biologically determined, it is an extremely uneven power relationship.

0: Cool!

EF: Very cool!

CT: Well, I don't know about you but I'm getting hungry.

0: Me too.

EF: Let's eat.

[Group breaks up to eat dinner.]

CONCLUSION

How do *you* say indigenous gaming? N.D.N. Players Research Group says it by finding connections between historical indigenous games, stories, and philosophies and contemporary games that may have indigenous elements. Vizenor's indigenous scholarship includes theories and language that offer a logical lens to clarify our work but we acknowledge that it is far from a complete platform for analysis. Much of our work has a much stronger education focus that is not evident with this limited scope.

Understanding the roles and mechanics of our ancestral games was a starting place for our discussion on developing games of survivance and survivance games as strategically managed sovereign spaces within our colonial and indigenous cultures. Bringing forward indigenous values into our game mechanics, art, language, and goals is how we enact our sovereignty. As a team of scholars, players, and developers we have attempted to help your ponderings as you play and develop indigenous games.

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APPENDIX A: N.D.N. Players Indigenous Game Tags and Genres

 Tags for Indigenous Games/ Games with Indigenous Content
1. Indigenous Game
2. Indigenous Developers
    a. Indigenous Artist
    b. Indigenous Writer
    c. Indigenous Programmer

3. Indigenous Collaboration

4. Indigenous Mechanics

Tags for Indigenous Characters/ Characters of Indigenous Games

1. Indigenous Characters

   a. Indigenous Protagonist

      i. Indigenous Protagonist Female

      ii. Indigenous Protagonist Male

      iii. Protagonist Non-human

   b. Indigenous Antagonist

      i. Indigenous Antagonist Female

      ii. Indigenous Antagonist Male

      iii. Antagonist Non-human

2. Non-binary Gender

   a. Indigenous Gender Concepts

Tags for Indigenous Stories

1. Indigenous Stories

   a. Indigenous Creation Stories

   b. Indigenized Stories

   c. Indigenous Migration Stories

   d. Indigenous Origin Stories

2. Indigenous Setting

   a. 'Skinned' with 'natural' environment

   b. Intergenerational

      i. Elders, children, etc.

   c. Specified by Region

   d. Specified by Nation

   e. Specified by Clan

   f. Specified by Ecosystem

   g. Specified by Habitat

  h. Specified by Language

3. Indigenous Fantasy / Steampunk

4. Indigenous Horror

5. Indigenous Science Fiction

6. Indigenous Futurism

7. Indigenous Clothing

8. Indigenous Artifacts

9. Indigenous Alternate Histories

Tags for Indigenous Knowledge

1. Indigenous Colonialism and Empire-building

2. Indigenous Philosophy

  a. Values

  b. Beliefs

  c. Practices

  d. Societal institutions

3. Indigenous Economy

4. Indigenous Culture

5. Indigenous Science

  a. Healing

  b. Nutrition

  c. Environment

6. Indigenous Music

  a. Instruments

  b. Vocals

  c. Songs

7. Indigenous Foods

  a. Subsistence

8. Indigenous Art

9. Indigenous Knowledge Systems

  a. Relational Epistemology

              i. Nature-culture relations

           ii. Mind-body relations

     b. Indigenous Pedagogy

     c. Indigenous Education

10. Indigenous Values

     a. Balance

11. Indigenous Politics

     a. Treaties

Tags for Indigenous Histories Past/ Contemporary

1. Contemporary Activism
2. Contemporary History
3. Genocide
4. Trauma
5. Assimilation
6. Acculturation
7. Indigenous Language
8. Colonial Histories
9. Indigenous Histories
10. Indigenous Colonialism and Empire-building
11. Indigenous Resistances
12. Indigenous Activisms
13. Post*indian* Gamer
14. Post*indian* Warrior
15. Indigenous Tribal Representation

     a. Specified by Region

     b. Specified by Nation

     c. Specified by Clan

     d. Specified by Ecosystem

     e. Specified by Habitat

     f. Specified by Language

Tags for Poor Representation of Indigenous People, Culture and Histories. (General)

1. Objectified Indigene
   a. Redfacing
   b. Whitewashing
   c. Eroticizied Indigene
   d. Exoticizied Indigene
   e. Skinned with Indigene
2. Romanticization of Indigeneity
3. White Man's Indian

APPENDIX B: Standard Game Genres

1   Action
   1.1   Platform games
   1.2   Shooter games
   1.3   Fighting games and beat 'em ups
2   Action-adventure
   2.1   Stealth game
   2.2   Survival horror
   2.3   Metroidvania
3   Adventure
   3.1   Text adventures
   3.2   Graphic adventures
   3.3   Visual novels
   3.4   Interactive movie
   3.5   Real-time 3D adventures
4   Role-playing
   4.1   Action RPG
   4.2   MMORPG