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Indigenous rituals remake the larger-than-human community

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What would democracy look like if it involved the larger-than-human community? What events would promote and structure such multispecies communal participation? How could moves be made away from globally dominant anthropocentric notions and practices of politics and society-making towards thoroughly pluralistic and truly inclusive alternatives? What barriers surround the status quo of human exceptionalism or separatism, maintaining and protecting it from challenging visions and possibilities? Conversely, what matters within current cultural imaginations and systems could nurture more expansive ways of forming communities and enhancing relationships? What current conversations among humans expand into more widespread dialogue and diplomacy among that larger-than-human community? Crucially: What kind of persons are implicated in the making of the diverse kinds of democracy evoked in or behind these questions?

In this chapter I consider ways in which some Indigenous¹ festivals and some performances within them emerge from ritual repertoires and contribute towards addressing some of the above questions. Research at the annual Sámi organized, Riddu Riddu festival² and the biennial ORIGINS Festival of First Nations³ in London provides the primary material from which my reflections emerge. Like other festivalgoers (locals and visitors), I have been both entertained and educated, enthused and provoked. ‘Deep hanging out’ (Geertz 1998) and casual conversations that turned out be freighted with great significance have been part of the process of my learning from, among and with Indigenous hosts and knowledge-holders. Some more formal interviews have largely been means of checking the adequacy of my understanding of what I think I have experienced or been told. My rootedness in the academic study of religions has predisposed

me to attend to the more ritualized or ritually informed aspects of these and other festivals and performances. Experience, reading and discussion with colleagues (some included within this book) have deepened my appreciation of boundary-transgressing flows between ritual and theatre, education and entertainment and other apparent dichotomies. In particular, it is the sense that some performance pieces are potentially initiatory and transformative that alerts me to the possibility that festivals might create or enhance democracy for a larger polity.

Introducing Riddu Riđđu

Riddu Riđđu is an annual Indigenous cultural festival organized by a coastal Sámi community in an area simultaneously known as western Sápmi⁴ and Arctic Norway. It is hosted in Olmmáivággi (Manndalen in Norwegian) in the arctic municipality of Kåfjord in July each year since 1991. The festival's name means 'small storm at the coast'. It was initiated in the wake of the Sámi cultural revival – or perhaps the revival of pride in being Sámi which preceded that cultural revival. The festival's website is updated each year, but it always includes a summary of the history of the festival. The current page (Riddu Riđđu 2019) usefully sets out the festival's evolution from youthful conversations at a barbeque in 1991 to a cultural event of considerable international significance (also see publications by Siv Ellen Kraft 2009 and Thomas Hilder 2014).

Riddu Riđđu's origins and ethos as a storm of controversy about what it means to be Sámi, how to express sovereignty and, for some, how to develop the resources of traditional culture have continued to generate a storm of cultural creativity. Alongside Sámi participants, the festival now attracts performers and artists from many Indigenous nations globally. For example, it can include Māori rock bands, Mayan theatre groups, Mongolian throat-singers, Andean rappers, Khoi jazz poets and Cree film directors. The majority of festivalgoers are probably Sámi from the nearby locality and from across Sápmi. However, buses from regional airports (Tromsø and Alta) enable significant attendance by broader national and international audiences, many of them Indigenous. For all the excitement of festivity and spectacle, Riddu Riđđu has never lost its vision of encouraging and enhancing participation in Sámi and other Indigenous communities and cultures, and of contesting Indigenous marginalization in cultural, political, economic and other arenas. The festival's demonstration of Indigenous creativity and global connectedness promotes self-determination

and self-representation as vital aspects of Indigenous sovereignty. In these and other ways, Riddu Riddu expands the possibilities for understanding democracy.

The main festival site is in a bend in a river flowing from the mountains to the nearby fjord. A permanent cultural centre (the Center for Northern People) houses the organizers' offices, a library, gallery and seminar rooms, a performance space, showers and other facilities useful both for the festival and for local people outside of festival times. The site has a main stage area and nearby spaces that become a marketplace for Indigenous goods and the location of bars for alcoholic and soft drinks. Several food outlets are set up during the festival. A permanent cedar-log longhouse (constructed in a style traditional among the Nisga'a First Nation from British Columbia, Canada) is the most prominent construction in an otherwise temporary cultural village in which an earth lodge, lavvus (Sámi tents), tipis, small marquees and other structures are used during the festival for various events and displays. The festival has two main camping areas, a 'party field' near the main site and one further away up a hill for families and those desiring a quieter environment. (During the continuous daylight of the arctic summer the sleep patterns of festivalgoers do not always coincide.) There is a youth camp in which local youths meet each year with others invited from another Indigenous nation (e.g. Ainu or Evenki) to learn and party together. The festival also has a parallel children's programme, including both educational and entertainment events. In addition to main stage concerts, the cultural centre and the cedar log-house host theatrical performances, talks and seminars, art exhibitions, book launches and other literary events and film shows.

Introducing ORIGINS

The ORIGINS Festival of First Nations has been hosted biennially in London, UK, since 2009. Organized by the Border Crossings Company, it brings Indigenous musicians, theatre-makers, visual artists, film-makers and cooks to exhibit and explain, to perform and inform, to debate and celebrate. Put more boldly, 'ORIGINS creates a unique opportunity to engage with Indigenous artists and activists at the cutting edge of cultural resistance, environmentalism and spiritual tradition' (Border Crossings 2019a). Venues across London host diverse events including (but not limited to) dances and musical recitals in the British Museum, films and gallery tours in the National Maritime Museum, comedy and talks at Rich Mix, theatre in Shakespeare's Globe, ritual/spectacle

in West End Parks, art in the Baldwin Gallery and in embassy galleries, and walking tours to encounter sites of Imperial and Indigenous engagement. Some of the participants visit schools to provide special intercultural educational opportunities for various age groups. The festival audiences are predominantly Londoners or otherwise British. However, there are events in which performers and other contributors to the festival meet together and enrich their understandings of each others' cultural and artistic traditions. While audiences are expected to be entertained, they are also presented with educational and inspirational opportunities and challenges. The primary goal of the festival is to highlight Indigenous perspectives on contemporary issues including 'the environment, globalization, truth and reconciliation, and healing' and to provide a forum in which audiences and opinion-formers can engage directly with Indigenous representatives. A short film, 'Indigenous in London' (Open University 2016), accessible on YouTube not only introduces ORIGINS but also presents some of the festival performers addressing themes discussed in this chapter.

Trans-Indigeneity, custom and ritual

Riddu Ridđu and ORIGINS expand the possibilities of Chadwick Allen's term 'trans-Indigenous'. He coined this to advance critical consideration of literatures and other cultural productions in which works from different places, communities or cultures contribute to a global Indigenous movement. He argues that comparative conjunctions (e.g. 'American Indian *and* Maori') can encourage invidious assertions of likeness or difference, doing nothing to produce 'an enlarged view of evolving cultures or their (post)colonial histories, or a more precise analysis of self-representation' (2012: xiv). Conversely, the prefix *trans-* enables more productive scholarship by attending to processes of juxtaposition, crossing, unequal and/or uneven encounter, change and, most powerfully, transformation. At Riddu Ridđu and ORIGINS Indigenous performers, artists and culture teachers encounter each other and participate in the co-creation of transformative events and inspire further respect for Indigenous arts, cultures and lives. Indeed, they are the creation of global Indigeneity, rich with complex similarities, differences, diplomacy and conversation.

The festivals also provide rich examples of the resonance between Allen's 'trans-Indigenous' and the term 'trans-customary' which inspires him. As he writes,

Māori artist and art scholar Robert Jahnke has developed a conceptual model for contemporary Māori visual art that imagines a continuum running between the pole ‘customary’ (art created by Māori that maintains ‘a visual correspondence with historical models’) and its opposite pole, ‘non-customary’ (art created by Māori in which ‘visual correspondence and empathy with historical models [is] absent’). Much of contemporary Māori art is produced in the vast middle space between these poles, Jahnke argues, and it is neither ‘hybrid’ nor caught ‘between’ but ‘trans-customary’: art that establishes not a strict correspondence with customary forms but rather a ‘visual empathy with customary practice’ through the use of ‘pattern, form, medium and technique’.

(Allen 2012: 153, citing Jahnke 2006: 48–50)

In other words, ancestors handed on patterns or protocols that had served well as they adapted to situations in their time and established a ‘customary pole’ to which further generations could resort as necessary.

Such trans-customary resources are employed in evolving all sorts of performances, as illustrated in the following brief examples from Riddu Riddu. A Tuvan zither (a *yat kha*) might be played to accompany not only the Tuvan *kanzat kargyraa* throat-singing style, but also Indigenized reggae, rock or country genres. (‘Indigenized’ alludes to the analytical continuum ‘indigenization–extension’ proposed by Paul C. Johnson 2005.) First Nation Canadian and Māori bands invite Sámi colleagues to meld yoik chants into their performances. Allen and Jahnke’s ‘vast middle space’ is strongly evoked by frequent references to the authority of Nils-Aslak Valkepää, the late poet-laureate of Sápmi, whose revitalization of yoik as a contemporary art form with historical inspiration is widely celebrated. Similarly, in her several appearances at Riddu Riddu festivals, Moana (lead singer of Moana and the Tribe) has opened her band’s set by calling ‘From our mountains to your mountains, from our rivers to your rivers.’ This translates one element of traditional Māori greetings (particularly in guest-making *powhiri* ceremonies) to achieve various purposes including locating performers and audiences in relation to places of origin, honouring the local (Indigenous) land and its custodians, placing visitors and hosts in relation to Indigenous traditional knowledges and protocols and acknowledging that mountains and rivers actively participate in these relationships.

In these examples, the customary pole of the continuum in Jahnke’s model is largely formed from rituals. These are adapted and improvised on to create performance acts of many kinds. Potentially, here as elsewhere, the juxtaposition of the terms ‘ritual’ and ‘performance’ is transformative. According to Jonathan Z. Smith’s definition:

Ritual is a means of performing the ways things ought to be in conscious tension to the way things are in such a way that this ritualized perfection is recollected in the ordinary, uncontrolled, course of things. (1982: 63)⁵

More recent scholarship (e.g. Grimes 2006, 2014a) focuses on what people actually do and what actually happens when people do rituals. It is less impressed by distinctions between ritual and theatre – because both require the collaboration of all those present during performances, because both can be life-changing to one degree or another and because the interplay of script and improvisation is shared between them. Inspired by Allen, Jahnke and Grimes’s provocations, I propose that Smith’s dictum might be shifted to make it both future facing and subjunctive, as follows:

Ritual is a means of performing the ways things *might become* in *conversation with customary practice* in such a way that this ritualized *innovation might inform* the ordinary *and always emerging*, course of things.

The relationship between theatre and ritual is not usefully described by contrasts between, for example, fixity and innovation, performers and audiences, transformation and entertainment. These putative contrasts more often play out as creative flows. Such perspectives on ritual and performance inform the following discussion of what happens at Riddu Riddu and ORIGINS when Indigenous performers draw on customary rituals to innovate performances that captivate and potentially educate others about relating with(in) the larger-than-human world.

Relationality, dividuals and rituals

To grasp some of what is at stake in the constitution of Indigenous communities, it is useful to consider the notion and performance of *dividual* relationality. The term ‘dividual’ originated with McKim Marriot’s (1976) discussion of ‘diversity without dualism’ among Indian Hindus and with Marilyn Strathern’s (1988) contrast between the ambitions of Melanesians and ‘Westerners’ to grow different kinds of person. Both Marriot and Strathern contrasted ideal types and recognized that in lived reality both conceptions of personhood and relationality are evident everywhere. In the specifics of real life, cultures emerge from continuous tensions between differences of valuation, emphasis and ambition to grow individuals or dividuals. Whatever the value of Bruno Latour’s assertion that ‘we have never been modern’ (1993; also see Latour 2013),

the project of Modernity has emphasized the interiority, separateness and singularity of individuals. For example, in the realm of politics and citizenship, Modern persons are expected to demonstrate loyalty as individual taxpayers and voters in Nation States, neither constrained nor compelled by other kinds of relationship. Citizens might also be cousins, chefs, drivers, pet-owners, club-members, bloggers and other kinds of relation. While such relationships are not negated by the requirements of citizenship, they are seen as different, other-than-political ways in which each putatively bounded and discrete self relates to other individuals. Principally, however, it was the curtailment of transnational loyalties (e.g. loyalties to Roman Catholic or Protestant princes) in the process of organizing Nation States according to Westphalian system principles (Cavanaugh 1995, 2009) that most forcefully shaped Modern citizenship.

In several conferences I have contrasted definitions of 'person' which privilege interiority with a relational and/or animistic understanding of the 'in-between-ness' of persons-as-relations. In attempting to evoke the integral and definitive dividual relationality of animists, I have portrayed personhood as something that happens *between* people as they engage with others. This requires more careful reflection, especially because, as Arnar Árnason points out, the Modern assumption is that 'social relations exist between points, or roles, in a structure, or at best *between* the people temporarily occupying these positions' (2012: 68, original emphasis).⁶ Dividual personhood is conceived differently. Persons are not points or positions in a structure but assemblages of (plural and fluid) relations. It is precisely in engaging and interacting with others that personhood emerges. It is not a matter of identity but of performance or interaction. A person is the performance of relationality with and among others. Perhaps I really should follow Nurit Bird-David more closely as she insists that we should think and speak about 'relatives' rather than 'persons' (Bird-David 2018). My reluctance to abandon 'person' is only encouraged because it does seem to trouble more dominant notions about personhood. However, the crucial point here is that because some relations are closer than others, kinship and locality-rooted relations are often crucial to performances and interactions in Indigenous festivals. Encounters with persons with different kinship and locational relations provide opportunities for conversation and the enrichment of trans-Indigeneity.

These contrasts between Modernity and Indigeneity and between individuals and dividuals are all the more important here because they are braided or entangled with divergent valuations of ritual. The religious reformations of Early Modernity paralleled and fuelled developments in political, military and

other cultural complexes by hardening and policing the boundaries between previously fluid transnational religious affiliations (again see Cavanaugh 1995, 2009). Certainly there had been previous objections to some ways of doing ritual – biblical and other ancient texts inveighed against ritual divorced from morality and they opposed ‘mere show’. But Western European religious reforms privileged belief over action or forms of thought over performances – especially when the latter could mask questionable loyalties. A string of other effects logically followed. Mind and interiority were valued above the sensorium of bodies and matter. At extremes, theatre and dance were also made dangerously suspect unless they could be domesticated and cultivated to serve ‘national interests’ or ‘religious virtues’.

Conversely, Indigenous knowledge systems continued to exalt ceremonies and dramatic storytelling. In periods and places where Indigenous ceremonies were banned, Indigenous knowledges were denigrated and their performers or sharers were persecuted, the subterfuge of ‘entertainment’ could be employed to aid what Gerald Vizenor calls ‘survivance’ and ‘transmotion’ (1999; 2019: 37–51). Powwows and other dances could sometimes not only maintain social connections but also mask the continuing practice of world-making and/or initiatory ceremonies. Such dance cultures continue to evolve to meet contemporary needs and challenges. The more recent flowering of Indigenous literature and film is also similarly resistant to the deadening or depressing imagination of ‘disappearing natives’ in the face of (claimed) white supremacy. Presence, resistance and creativity are themes of both *Riddu Riddu* and *ORIGINS*, but it is the particular evocation of relations with and among the larger-than-human community which invites further reflection. Entertainment at festivals is part of the entrainment in which ethical imperatives and cultural expectations are presented. Stories encourage knowledge about how to become a *good* person (usually in a lifelong negotiation with local norms) while rituals are among the ways in which ideas or norms become enacted.

Festivals and the larger-than-human community

Festivals are hugely entertaining and enjoyable events. They are full of drama, excitement, novelty, creativity and emotion. Even when performers, films or discussions tackle genocide, colonialism, dislocation, language-loss and other difficult topics they are typically engaging and inspiring. In a chapter like this it is hard to avoid making festivals sound overly serious. While the festivity of these

events should not be ignored in favour of elevating all the cultural and political ferment they involve, this chapter focuses on some ways in which festivals bring a larger-than-human community – or a more inclusive polity – into view and consideration. It is about what ‘citizen’ and ‘citizenship’ can mean when these are juxtaposed with kinship and other relational terms used in and/or about performances. These are necessary steps in reflecting on how ritually informed performances can broaden and deepen notions and practices of democracy.

It is important to note that the most obvious references to democracy at these festivals focus on relationships between Indigenous communities and the Nation States that dominate them. Treaties, sovereignty, Indigenous and tribal governance, land-rights, respect for subsistence practices and language-use are all more explicitly presented as political issues than relationships with animals, fish and other members of the larger-than-human community. Nonetheless, the latter are not treated as merely romantic additions to the pursuit of liberty and democracy. Indeed, as festivals devoted to contemporary Indigenous performance it is the strong sense that Indigenous arts and creativity are vital to the assertion of sovereignty that makes them valuable in considerations of democracy and its rituals. Within that arena, it is precisely because the notion of a larger-than-human polity cannot be taken-for-granted as a necessary contribution to understanding and improving democracy that it demands attention. The following discussion, therefore, largely pays attention to the performance of relationality to argue that *Riddu Ridđu* and *ORIGINS* share with other Indigenous activities an insistence that the project of democracy will remain incomplete until the larger-than-human polity is respected.

Understanding Indigenous polities and their (extensive) citizenry begins with introductions. At *Riddu Ridđu* and *ORIGINS* Indigenous performers commonly identify themselves in relation to specific places. This statement might seem banal. Many people introduce themselves as coming from particular nations, regions, cities or communities. Depending on the context they might name the place of their birth or refer to their current hometown or workplace. However, locations are more programmatic within Indigenous cultures. It is not so much the context of colonialism, removal or dislocation – or other aspects of victimry or betrayal (Vizenor 1999, 2019) – but, rather, the definitively Indigenous reference to belonging and kinship that is referenced. There is a shared sensibility among Indigenous participants in these festivals that makes statements about places resonant. Places are not just locations to come from and return to. People belong to places at least as much as places belong to people. Places are communities in which belonging brings responsibilities as well as rights. They emplace kinship

and customs. As Keith Basso learnt from his Apache colleagues, ‘wisdom sits in places’ (1996) and ‘sense of place’ becomes ‘a “mode of communion with a total way of living” ... [and] may gather unto itself a potent religious force, especially if one considers the root of the word in *religare*, which is “to bind or fasten fast”’ (Basso 1996: 145, citing Seamus Heaney 1980: 133).

Much of this is encapsulated in Moana’s Riddu Riddū greeting (‘From our mountains to your mountains, from our rivers to your rivers’), cited earlier. She self-identifies as Indigenous to a place and offers respect to the place she now stands in – the place-community of others’ Indigeneity. This establishes and shares awareness of the ideological and physical common ground on which Indigenous people meet each other while paying respect to both homeland and the current host community. But Moana’s innovation from customary Māori speech-making also makes her a diplomat. She deploys words from guest-making rituals (i.e. ceremonies that transform strangers into guests on Māori land and in Māori communities) to bring a message from distant mountains and rivers to the mountains and rivers surrounding the festival site. This is more than a reference to scenery and not only a merism – that is a rhetorical device in which ‘mountains and rivers’ refers to the entire place and community. Rather, it acknowledges mountains and rivers as full and active participants in larger-than-human communities. Although spoken in less than ten seconds, Moana’s greetings achieved, enacted or performed much of what Riddu Riddū is about.

Another aspect to Indigenous performers’ introductions that might widen our view of the nature of community can be heard in the identification of clan and totemic relationships. Examples are included in the Open University (2016) film ‘Indigenous in London’. These show that performers do not consider themselves to be virtuoso individuals but as authorized by their communities to share matters of importance. For those who name themselves in relation to clans and totemic groups it is not only human kin who are referenced but also members of other species. In their understanding, animals, plants, lands and waters are not only ‘good to think’ (Lévi-Strauss 1969: 89) or heraldic symbols but actual relations, kin within a wider community from which rights and responsibilities follow (also see Harvey 2013: 126–7).

In addition to naming the place- and clan-communities from which they come, Indigenous performers at Riddu Riddū and ORIGINS typically acknowledge the priority, prestige and authority of their host communities. Moana’s greeting does this in its acknowledgement of local mountains and rivers and those located in relation to them. Others use phrases like ‘we honour

the traditional owners or custodians of this land'. This is more than 'it's nice to be here' or 'thanks for having me'. Often it involves seeking permission from hosts to share knowledge or customs brought from elsewhere. At Riddu Riddu this is as straightforward as it is in other Indigenous-led events, especially those on lands not ceded to colonial or settler Nation States. Nonetheless, precisely because it refers to ideas and practices that have evolved in distant communities, it can be challenging because of its difference from local customs. At its most positive, the honouring of hosts or local knowledges is a bright thread woven through the festival – well exemplified when visiting performers invite Sámi colleagues to join them on stage, perhaps to add yoik chants to their acts.

At ORIGINS things are more complex. The opening ceremony is conducted according to protocols that Indigenous people recognize as respectful ways to initiate events (Harvey 2018). Visiting performers and participants are greeted, speeches of welcome are offered and references are made to location and ancestry. The festival director, Michael Walling, does this in concert with Indigenous colleagues. They always include an Indigenous Associate for the festival, someone who lives in London (or nearby) but is authorized by an Indigenous nation or community to represent them in some capacity. In 2019 the Associate was Stephanie Pratt, Cultural Ambassador of the Crow Creek Dakota Nation. Alongside her at the opening ceremony, the GAFA Arts Collective adapted the customs of the Samoan Ava ceremony to greet invited performers, artists, speakers and other festival participants. Crucially, this involves the pouring of libations honouring the larger-than-human community and ancestors before participants drink from the bowl ceremonially offered to them. Much of this could happen on Indigenous lands. That it happens in London makes it distinctive. Colonialism in its many forms and manifestations is not ignored. ORIGINS is not about decorating the dominant culture with spectacles of diversity, and appropriation is discouraged. In his opening speech, Michael Walling uses words like conversation, equity, justice, complexity and provocation. When he speaks of loss, he does not evoke an imaginary pre-contact purity and subsequent disappearance but addresses the diminishment of all lives and cultures under the continuing impact of colonization. He speaks of London's shameful bankrolling of such colonization. Bringing Indigenous people to London is part of his ambition to 'offer a space for a true diversity of languages, experiences, ideas and actions' in order to deepen a conversation aimed at 'allowing the Earth to become a space that we can all jointly inhabit in a sustainable, just and equitable way' (Border Crossings 2019b: 2). It is possible to see in this a respectful learning from Indigenous people about

how to apply Indigenous customary practices to contemporary contexts and, thereby, to appreciate that the interactive patterns of relational empathy have been effectively transmitted.

Indigenous contributors to the ORIGINS programme often continue this negotiation between respecting their hosts and contesting colonization. With considerable generosity and characteristic (somewhat edgy) humour, performers respond warmly to the possibility of speaking back to ‘the Empire’ and of encouraging audiences to consider the potential of different ways of relating to the world. For example, in the 2019 programme book Madeline Sayet introduces her ‘Where we belong’ performance (at the Sam Wanamaker Playhouse at Shakespeare’s Globe) by saying,

I share this story to honour [Mohegan ancestors, Mahomet Weyonomon and Samson Occom, who came to London in the 1700s], to offer voice to the many moments when we were all silenced. To remind the world that there is no such thing as the Last of the Mohegans. That not only are we here, but we may be in places you least expect.

(Border Crossings 2019b: 6)

Crucially, her performance arose from the experience of abandoning UK-based doctoral research about Shakespeare, going home and finding that she missed England. Wondering if this made her a ‘traitor’ she explored ancestral and present-day journeys and relations, exploring ‘questions that connect us in a world that seems set on building borders to divide us from one another’. In ways like these, Sayet and other Indigenous participants in ORIGINS offer careful respect to London hosts as well as forcefully sharing their discomfort with past and present colonialisms that diminish efforts towards increasing democracy.

At both Riddu Riddu and ORIGINS there are frequent references to trans-generational presence and involvement. A parallel youth camp and events at Riddu Riddu bring young people from different Indigenous nations together. They are intended to encourage younger Indigenous people to take pride and take part in their communities and in wider Indigenous movement. During ORIGINS a number of Indigenous performers spend time in local schools, not only offering talks to convey information but leading workshop-style sessions to enable more experiential and dialogical encounters. In both contexts, educational opportunities (tied in with creative activities) have a view to the longer term and arise from ambitions for increased understanding and dialogue between future generations. In both festivals it is common to hear references to ‘the seventh generation’ or to taking ‘seven generations’ into account when considering any

activity that might affect the future. As noted already, there are flows – some more complex than others – between celebrating Indigeneity and challenging more dominant cultural norms and processes. However, these youth-focused events might be labelled ‘re-generative’ to fuse different senses of ‘generation’ in a way that hopes for a more equitable and inclusive future.

Riddu Ridđu and ORIGINS are not only trans-generational and re-generative in seeking to generate the future in the present moment, but they also make ancestors present. In addition to introductory speeches in which ancestors are invoked and/or acknowledged, there are performances in which those who have died are explicitly said to participate. In the 2015 ORIGINS festival, the Zugubal Dancers from Badu Island, Zenadh-Kes (or Torres Strait), brought their mask dances to the British Museum. Some years before, the dance group’s director, Alick Tipoti, had seen *Mawa* masks in the museum’s collection and told them he would return to dance for them. He gathered and trained a group and made replicas of ancestral masks which could be taken abroad and displayed to uninitiated and non-Indigenous audiences. But a ‘replica’ of a ‘representation’ of an ancestor (as these masks could be described) is also the real thing: an ancestor mask (see Altieri 2000; Harvey 2016; also see Whitehead 2013). Thus, at the British Museum, the Zugubal Dancers followed cultural protocols (e.g. not smiling while wearing their masks and costumes) both in their public performance and in their private audience with the older masks in the museum’s collection. (Some of the public performance can be seen in the ‘Indigenous in London’ film, Open University 2016.) For Tipoti and his colleagues, the ancestors are not gone into a distant time or place but are in the dance, the dancing and the dancers. The masks are ‘spiritual beings’ (Tipoti’s translation of *Zugubal*) and ‘spiritual ancestors’ (or *Muruygal*). They become present and observable as the masks move before and among their audiences, so that performance events potentially transform participants. They transform communities by materializing the presence of ancestors and enact the activity (and acting ability) of masks as animate persons. The definition, institutions and practice of democracy might be deeply affected by taking these trans-generational and other-than-human persons into account.

Riddu Ridđu and ORIGINS both provide other examples of ways in which the larger-than-human world is important to Indigenous people as more than location. Here I cite a conversation by a river. In 2014 the river that flows around three sides of the Riddu Ridđu festival site came very near to flooding. As I watched the river overflowing rocks on which ravens often sit, a local man told me, ‘This isn’t good for us, but it’s a disaster for the trout and even more so the

salmon.’ He explained that the fish were currently waiting to swim up the river to spawn. They too have their homelands, their Indigeneity. The flow and near ice-cold temperature of the water prevented them. The man asserted that the trout might just find another river. But, he said, the salmon would only return to the river of their birth. If the river flow kept them away, there would be no more salmon in this river. I might have mis-remembered whether it was trout and salmon that are most particular about their rivers. Equally, the man might have been misinformed. My point in summarizing the conversation is that this man appeared to be repeating what other local people were concerned about. (I acknowledge here that it is not only Sámi and other Indigenous people who are concerned for the well-being of fish, rivers and others.) While the threat to fish has clear dangers to coastal Sámi livelihoods – and perhaps to aspects of the cultural renaissance which Riddu Riddu is encouraging – it was absolutely clear that concern for the well-being, culture and rights of the fish and other river beings was the major issue. No yoik was offered, only deep concern and a sense of regret that human greed had caused this problem. Climate change may be global but at that moment particular fish in a particular river concerned a particular man and his community. Inter-species relationality might be a thoroughly Indigenous cultural emphasis, even a definitive element of trans-Indigeneity, but it is a theme elaborated from many vital local acts and encounters. Perhaps, after all, the man was yoiking.

Festive persons, democratic growth

At Riddu Riddu and ORIGINS the active presence of Indigenous performers and other participants is already an increase in democracy. A long history of destruction, marginalization and silencing is resisted and contested by such presence and performance. An alternative world is already made in which colonialism and genocide are not the only foundations for performances and other contemporary actions, nor do they strictly delimit the available trajectories of emergent political, ecological and other futures. Nation States are not the only ways to assemble communities and perform belonging and personhood. Voting, electioneering, forming political parties and tax-paying are not the only ways to engage with others in communities.

Chris Hartney’s intervention into efforts to define ‘indigenous’ provides part of a larger picture of sovereignty:

An indigenous tradition is one that continues to interrupt, problematise, and outright challenge the sovereignty claims of the modernist, post-colonial nation with its own claims of abiding sovereignty. ... This [unique political place of indigenous communities] is the holding of claims to sovereignty that precede and may not necessarily be extinguished by the sovereignty of the 'modern' and 'rational' secular state. ... The 1933 Montevideo Convention of the Rights and Duties of States legally defines a state as, amongst other conditions, an entity that has the 'capacity to enter into relations with other states.' In light of this, the simplest way to identify an indigenous community is to demarcate a community that is able to enter into relations, sympathies, and solidarities with other self-defined indigenous communities.

(Hartney 2016: 221–2)

As Indigenous sovereignty has not been extinguished, Indigenous polities might outlast Westphalian Nation State constitutions and provide models for their replacement. In the meantime, Vizenor establishes the current importance of cultural creativity:

The actual practices of survivance create a vital and astute sense of presence over absence in history, stories, art, and literature. 'The nature of survivance creates a sense of narrative resistance to absence, literary tragedy, nihilism, and victimhood. Native survivance is an active sense of presence over historical absence' and the manifest manners of monotheism and cultural dominance. Native survivance is a continuance of visionary stories.

(Vizenor 2019: 38, citing Vizenor 2009: 1, 162)

Riddu Ridđu and ORIGINS confirm and affirm the contemporary cultural creativity of Indigenous people and present the possibility of new visions and increased liberty. The festivals go beyond 'narrative resistance' to place vision and creativity at the centre of stages. They invite responses not only (even if most immediately) from audiences but also from the embassies and other institutions of those Nation States which fund performers' participation and/or provide gallery spaces and other resources.

The presence of Indigenous people on international stages is already a transformation of a political and cultural world from which they were meant to have been removed – except perhaps as emblems of primitivity, romantic fantasies or savage terrors. Also, the interactions of performers from different Indigenous nations with each other and with their hosts and audiences – usually expressive of 'respect' – illustrate possibilities for diplomacy between communities. But

their performances add more. Indigenous performers and those responsive to them create opportunities to evolve democracy to involve the larger-than-human world. Even when this is not the main focus of a particular festival – or of the performances, installations, talks, films or other contributions to them – the widely shared Indigenous notion that humans are not the only persons is resonant and productive. Subtly stated in greetings or powerfully proclaimed from stages, screens and platforms, the pervasive Indigenous understanding that the world is larger-than-human enriches democratic thinking and activism.

Simultaneously, *Riddu Riddu* and *ORIGINS* evoke and encourage the celebration and enactment of relational and dividual ontologies. They proclaim that there are no utterly separate individuals but always relations to be respected. Communities are variously structured and assembled – but always as relations, and always in emergent and never entirely finished, fixed or static forms. Democracy is one label for modes of assembling politics in which there is an ideal (never yet perfectly performed) of forms of participation by an increasing majority of a community. Ideas about what forms of participation are legitimate (voting, protest, representative government, anarchist associations, etc.) have varied and changed. But what interests me here is the contribution Indigenous festivals – and the customary rituals from which many arise – make to understanding ‘community’. Questions about what rituals aid the increase and practice of democracy follow from that.

The ideal type (i.e. the ambition teased with and teased out in creation narratives and world-making rites as much as in festivals) is of an all-embracing larger-than-human community of persons (human and otherwise) whose co-inhabitation of a place (or shared emplacement) brings mutual responsibilities (also see Rose 1992, 1997, 2004). When Indigenous performers contribute to festivals they innovate from customary or traditional rites and stories to present – and make present – alternatives to the status quo. Trans-Indigenous, trans-cultural acts translate Indigenous commitments to the larger-than-human community into action. They take knowledge that has already been driven ‘deeply into the bone’ (Grimes 2000) of Indigeneity by repeated ritualization and narration and improvise performances of many kinds to inject the knowledge and respectful practice of relationality into the body politic of audiences and their communities. In doing so they expand on Grimes’s reflections:

What ritual dynamics might facilitate assemblages that foster justice and the thriving of a multitude of species on the planet? The beginning of a provisional answer is something like: Rituals that include, or are preceded by, at least one

sustained improvisational phase that stimulates attuned co-acting among the species, and that facilitates self-critical reflexivity.

(Grimes, this volume; also see Grimes 2013).

The trans-customary performances of *Riddu Ridđu* and *ORIGINS*, and trans-Indigenous dialogue on them, point powerfully towards the ritually informed achievement of increases in liberty, sovereignty, inter-species conversation and, thereby, a larger-than-human democracy.

Riddu Ridđu and *ORIGINS* cultivate democratic sensibilities and cultures by encouraging more active participation by Indigenous festivalgoers in their communities, by educating other audience members about the presence and creativity of Indigenous performers and by establishing that ‘community’ is larger than but inclusive of the human polity. Leanne Howe’s statement about stories is equally applicable to rituals and the festival performances they generate:

Our stories are unending connections to the past, present, and future. And, even if the worst comes to the worst and our people forget where we left our stories, the birds will remember and bring them back to us.

(Howe 2013: 38, cited in Justice 2018: xvii; also see Harvey 2017: 100–1)

In those stories and other acts, democratic relations within the larger-than-human world are renewed.

