

DISRUPTING ASSIMILATIONIST RESEARCH PRINCIPLES AND PRACTICES IN AUSTRALIA AND SWEDEN: SELF-DETERMINATION THROUGH THE ENACTMENT OF INDIGENOUS DIPLOMACIES

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Abstract: *Embedded with pre-existing meaning and a complex set of core principles and practices, “diplomacy” is a term familiar to most. Simply put, diplomacy is the established methods of influencing the decisions and behavior of foreign governments and peoples through dialogue, negotiation, and other measures to resolve conflict and maintain peace.¹ In this article, we review the literature pertaining to the concept of diplomacy, focusing primarily on the lesser recognized diplomacies of First Peoples² in Australia and Sweden. Through the telling of three significant events, historical and contemporary, drawn from many possible examples of the two nations, we demonstrate that Indigenous diplomacies are not new but rather newly recognized.³ We argue for the utilization of Indigenous diplomatic practices to realize self-determining research with, and by, First Peoples. In doing so, centuries of colonization that have resulted in power imbalances, which sought to assimilate and benefit settler/colonizer privilege through its governing institutions, may be disrupted and transformed.⁴ According to the literature search undertaken, this is an approach to Indigenous research that has received scant attention. Our discussion is guided by two key questions. First, can research informed by Indigenous diplomatic practices disrupt assimilationist research agendas set predominantly by society’s governing institutions? Second, can recognition of Indigenous diplomatic principles and practices facilitate self-determining research? We draw on our experiences as Indigenous and non-Indigenous researchers to suggest that the enactment of Indigenous diplomatic practices when undertaking our research ‘proper ways’ with First Peoples, according to Indigenous ways of knowing, being, and doing, has facilitated its success.*

INTRODUCTION

The term ‘diplomacy’ is familiar to most, embedded with pre-existing meaning and a complex set of core principles and practices. Simply put, diplomacy, is the established methods of influencing the decisions and behavior of foreign governments and peoples through dialogue, negotiation, and other measures to resolve conflict and keep the peace.⁵ By the 20th century, diplomatic principles

and practices developed in Europe for centuries, had been adopted globally, with the art of diplomacy establishing rules of governance in a myriad of cross-cultural situations.⁶ In modern times, diplomacy has come to be associated with a profession that involves the enactment of activities or skills governing international relations, with a diplomat typically being a country's representative abroad.

Most of the considerable literature pertaining to diplomacy has approached it in terms consistent with this dominant, historical understanding of what diplomacy is, what it is for, and who its practitioners may be.⁷ However, we are living in a time when the world of diplomacy is understood to be rapidly changing. As recently observed by Kuus, accounts of these trends present a picture of diplomacy as increasingly sped up, open, networked, and flexible.⁸ In this article, our discussion is guided by two key questions. First, can research informed by Indigenous diplomatic practices disrupt assimilationist research agendas set predominantly by society's governing institutions?⁹ Second, can the enactment of Indigenous diplomatic principles and practices in research facilitate self-determining research?⁹ We suggest a novel conceptual approach that borrows and bends the principles and practices of Indigenous diplomacies of Australian Aboriginal peoples and Sámi in Sweden to achieve self-determining research. Beier asserts:

inquiry into Indigenous people's diplomacies could seem like an add-on, a curiosity. In point of fact, however, the opposite is true. What many may be accustomed to thinking of as 'diplomacy' is actually a very narrow slice of human possibility in the interaction between political communities.⁹

The dominant understanding of diplomacy is therefore but one narrative among a plethora of complex core practices, among which are the many enactments of Indigenous diplomacies. The use of the plural is significant, as Indigenous peoples are not a homogenous group, with Rose asserting that today's Australian Aboriginal peoples "form a quilt of nearly five hundred separate and sovereign nations that cover the entire land."¹⁰ Conversely, Sápmi, the Sámi homeland, spans a substantial geographical area. Despite residing within the borders of Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia, Sámi are considered one people. Since the construction of the nation-states, Sámi people have been political underdogs within state borders.¹¹ However, as Indigenous peoples on an international political arena, Sámi people insist on being represented as one people rather than different regional groups, aiding more effective organization, mobilization and the construction of pan-Sámi political bodies.¹² Therefore, in its singular form, diplomacy reduces a diverse array of historical and contemporary human experiences into a single narrative that has become associated with the dominant understanding of state-centered diplomatic practice.¹³ Consequently, 'other diplomacies' are marginalized, rendered silent, and made invisible, including those of the Australian Aboriginal and Sámi in Sweden.¹⁴

RESEARCH APPROACH

In undertaking a literature review, the phrases “Indigenous Diplomacy,” “Cultural Diplomacy” and “Aboriginal Diplomacy” were entered into the Indigenous Collection Database (Informit) with the result of zero occurring for each of these searches. When the terms were entered not as a phrase, such as terms Aboriginal AND Diplomacy, three items were found; Indigenous AND Diplomacy yielded one result. The AIATSIS Catalogue Online returned 100 results for the term “Indigenous diplomacy” and 104 results for “Aboriginal diplomacy,” with the majority referring to tourism, mining, climate change and Native title. A general Google search for “Sámi diplomacy,” or “Samisk diplomati” in Swedish, generated only two hits related to actual Sámi diplomacy, both news articles in the *Sámediggi*’s, or the Sámi Parliament’s, web archive. The literature search revealed a myriad of synonyms, including: ethics-led practice; dispute resolution; conflict resolution; peace studies/building; protocols; and cultural diplomacy. However, while such terms may lend some understanding, they do not speak to Indigenous diplomacies and their enactment as we understand it in self-determining Indigenous research. In the following sections, we unpack the meaning of Indigenous diplomacies, which frames our exploration of Australian Indigenous diplomacies followed by a discussion of Sámi in Sweden diplomacies. We will demonstrate that Indigenous diplomacies, applied to research, have the potential to redress the power imbalance that tend to benefit the settler/colonizer and silence Indigenous peoples. First, we must introduce ourselves in accordance with Indigenous diplomatic practices.

POSITIONING OURSELVES

Positioning ourselves in our research observes and enacts cultural protocols. It is what Indigenous scholar Margaret Kovach, refers to as “relational work.”¹⁵ By introducing ourselves, we are honoring the Aboriginal protocols of: ‘who are you’ and ‘where do you come from?’¹⁶ The significance of explicitly introducing oneself and situating oneself culturally, is an important diplomatic practice for many First Peoples and therefore, critical in Indigenous research.¹⁷

Sheelagh is an Australian Aboriginal/Kamilaroi woman whose work is focused on Aboriginal education and Indigenous Studies and research. Her work borrows and bends the theoretical frameworks of cultural responsiveness and Critical Race Theory and uses the principles of the Indigenous storying methods of yarning¹⁸ and Storywork.¹⁹ This approach provides a pathway for doing research “proper ways,” an Aboriginal English term meaning the research is mindful of working in socially, ethically and culturally responsible ways, locating the research within the cultural ways of knowing, being and doing of participants and researcher.

Kristina is a Swedish researcher with a professional and research background in the fields of peace work, ethnology, conflict resolution or transformation and anti-discrimination work. Her passion for conflict transformation brought her into contact with Indigenous peoples in Australia and Sweden in the early 2000's as they could share interesting insights into conflict resolution. Kristina has worked extensively with Indigenous peoples in several countries on topics related to conflict, power relations and different forms of violence. Her research with Indigenous peoples is guided by Indigenous methodologies and, similar to Sheelagh, she is committed to doing research "proper ways."

UNDERSTANDING INDIGENOUS DIPLOMACIES

Despite centuries of colonization in its various forms, today Indigenous peoples represent over 5,000 languages and cultures in more than 70 nation-states on six continents.²⁰ First contact between Indigenous peoples and settlers/colonizers saw both sides grappling to negotiate cross-cultural encounters, bringing their own distinct worldviews embedded with pre-existing meaning with them, alongside a complex set of core principles and practices. It was in these encounters, albeit enacted differently in Australia and Sweden, that both settler/colonizer and First Peoples performed their own rituals of diplomacy.²¹ Increasingly, as the acquisitive objectives of European colonizers became entrenched, both sides sought forms of allegiance and co-existence. What follows is a look at such distinct practices, some more successful than others. First we turn to Australian Aboriginal peoples and then to Sámi in Sweden.

AUSTRALIAN ABORIGINAL DIPLOMACIES

The diplomatic processes of establishing peace and alliances between the hundreds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island Countries, which have existed for thousands of generations, have been continuously practiced on the Australian continent.²² These practices governed relations pre- and post-invasion. While policies and practices of dispossessing colonization have disrupted these practices throughout Australia,²³ they have nonetheless adapted and survived, relying on the well-established ways in which peoples interact with one another, maintaining balance for both the collective and the individual within. In this section, I have chosen three examples that illustrate how diplomacies, Indigenous and colonizer, have been enacted in pre-colonization, in early contact, and in contemporary times.

Pre-colonization: Trading with the Makassans

Prior to British invasion in 1788, a number of peoples visited Australia over many centuries. For example, since at least the 1500s, Makassan sailors visited Australia to trade with the Yolngu people of East Arnhem land, mostly for the

harvest of sea trepang.²⁴ The Makassans were seasonal visitors who came to trade but did not stay; it was a relationship that reportedly worked well, socially and economically, for both peoples.²⁵ The relationship and subsequent trade relied on an ethos of mobility that gave rise to a system of trade and dispute resolution.²⁶ This system of protocols and observances were grounded in Indigenous peoples' own ways of knowing, being, and doing.²⁷ According to International Relations (IR), such transactions and interactions are referred to as "People's diplomacy," meaning a historically continuous process of communication, mutual knowledge, influence, and enrichment of cultures and people.²⁸ However, in the late eighteenth century, relations changed radically.

By the time the British arrived in Australia and the Pacific region in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, the principles and practices that underpinned the making of colonial empires were well-established, being honed from the fifteenth century in other imperial locations such as the Americas.²⁹ Settler/colonial rule had come to be variously initiated through rituals, ceremonies and symbolic acts. Historian Patricia Seed evocatively refers to these acts as the "habits of history" that included: the practice of erecting crosses and flags or burying coins to record a European presence on new territories; issuing verbal and written proclamations to Indigenous peoples; and enacting imperial diplomacy through the ritual use of objects like ornaments, medals, foodstuffs, blankets and, at times, guns.³⁰ Although these formalities implied the ideal of equivalent exchange, colonial authority and sovereignty were asserted through negotiation or, in Australia's case, force when reciprocity did not occur. These "habits of history" are evident in the encounters between colonizers and Australia's Indigenous peoples, beginning in the late eighteenth century.

The British Crown's formal instructions to Governor Arthur Phillip, who established the first colony in Sydney Cove in 1788, were to "endeavor by every possible means to open an intercourse with the natives [sic], and to conciliate their affections, and to enjoin his British subjects to 'live in amity and kindness with them.'"³¹ But Governor Phillip also had the authority to punish when deemed necessary.³² Phillip's approach to the Eora people is recorded as positive and outgoing from the start, 'A true man of the Enlightenment, he had a distinct concept of a civilized society and, hoped 'to cultivate an acquaintance with them without their having an idea of our great superiority over them, fixed.'³³

By no means the only successful mediator in the region, Woollarawarre Bennelong is arguably the most recognized mediator between the Aboriginal peoples of the Sydney region and the early colonists; in retrospect, he is also the most misrepresented and underestimated. Captured in November 1789 on the orders of Arthur Phillip, first governor of the convict colony of New South Wales, Woollarawarre Bennelong formed an unlikely friendship with his captor.

Despite this friendship, in May Bennelong escaped, and he was not seen until September when he was among a large assembly of Indigenous peoples at Manly, one of whom wounded Phillip with a spear. Bennelong expressed concern for Phillip and frequently appeared near Sydney Cove to inquire after the governor's health. The encounter served to re-establish contact with Governor Phillip and, when assured that he would not be detained, Bennelong began to frequent the settlement with many of his compatriots, who made the Government House yard their headquarters.³⁴

A highlight of Bennelong's diplomatic career was his visit to England between 1792 and 1795 with his kinsman Yemmerrawanne.³⁵ Smith argues that Bennelong was a master politician, and despite resistance and difficulties, he brokered alliances with both his own people and with the British colonizers. From his earliest negotiations with Governor Phillip, Bennelong's 'constant endeavour', in the words of Clendinnen, 'was to establish his clan, as embodied in his person, in an enduring reciprocal relationship with the British – the relationship of profitable intimacy and mutual forbearance'.³⁶ The next section will illustrate how Bennelong's struggle for reciprocity, relationship and mutuality between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples continues to be sought by Aboriginal Peoples in contemporary times.

Contemporary Times: Statement from the Heart, 2017

The Statement from the Heart came after generations of Indigenous struggles for recognition, and calls for a stronger voice in determining Indigenous affairs. In 2017, a constitutional convention of 250 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander delegates was held at the foot of Uluru, a massive, sacred, sandstone monolith in the heart of Australia, on the lands of the Anangu people. Overall, the Uluru Statement from the Heart was a national Indigenous consensus position on Indigenous constitutional recognition. The statement called for the establishment of a "First Nations Voice" enshrined in the Australia Constitution and the establishment of a Makarrata³⁷ Commission to supervise agreement-making and truth-telling between governments and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. The Statement was the culmination of 13 regional dialogues held around the country.³⁸

The statement is placed at the center of over 250 delegates' signatures who attended the conference, who had reached consensus on the issue. 100 First Nations are represented in the statement by signatories who included the name of their nation. The official painted and signed canvas of the Statement was presented to Malcolm Turnbull, the then Australian Prime Minister, and Bill Shorten, the then-leader of the opposition, on August 5, 2017, at the Garma Festival in northeast Arnhem Land in the Northern Territory.³⁹ On October 26, 2017, Turnbull issued a joint statement with the attorney general, George Brandis, and the Indigenous Affairs Minister, Nigel Scullion, rejecting the statement.⁴⁰ The

Statement remains unresolved and joins other important statements calling for recognition and sovereignty that Aboriginal peoples have made throughout the decades.

Similar to the examples shared in the next section from Sámi in Sweden, the aforementioned examples of Indigenous diplomatic practices have not always been successful, yet they persist and have potential for disrupting Indigenous research agendas governed primarily by society's dominant institutions, whose focus is predominantly on assimilation rather than self-determination.

SÁMI DIPLOMACIES

Sámi people are also involved in long-standing, continuous acts of diplomacy. Following Heininen⁴¹ Sámi people have practiced regional as well as interregional and international collaboration on a daily basis for thousands of years. Sámi people have populated the North Calotte region for a couple of thousand years.⁴² During this time Sámi have also been subjected to painful intrusions such as race biology, dislocation, forced conversion to Christianity, and a continuous loss of their traditional lands due to extractive activities and, more currently, climate change.⁴³ Despite this, Sámi people have repeatedly managed to mobilize and use diplomatic measures to be heard in a number of different arenas. The following examples are only a few of very many that illustrate this.

The Reindeer Keeper System – Reindeer Diplomacy?

One of several Sámi livelihoods is reindeer herding. Furthermore, the reindeer holds a central position in Sámi culture, history, and society for reindeer-herding and non-reindeer-herding Sámi alike.⁴⁴ Brännlund has investigated reindeer husbandry resilience and writes that the reindeer keeper system, or *skötesrensensystem* in Swedish, provided flexibility and enabled Sámi to keep their herds intact even though they might need to be elsewhere, as someone else could care for their animals.⁴⁵ The reindeer keeper system also had another effect, evidenced by the work of Nordin, who has studied the reindeer keeper system in Gällivare parish in Northern Sweden. According to Nordin, the Swedish settlers who colonized the area at the end of the 1800s struggled in the new and unfamiliar territory; as a result, they depended on the Sámi. The reindeer keeper system meant that a settler or farmer could own a number of reindeer and that a Sámi family would care for and herd the animals.⁴⁶ This system showed components of both conflict management and reciprocity, key concepts in the dominant narrative of diplomacy.

Nordin writes that the “settlers were invited to participate in the system of *skötesrenar*, and hence a relation based on mutual interdependence and trust soon developed.”⁴⁷ The system worked as a form of relationship guarantee, where

a Sámi family could give a reindeer and an identifying reindeer mark to a settler family in return for storage space or accommodation. The reindeer would then be cared for as part of the Sámi family's herd but the meat after slaughter belonged to the settler family, in accordance with long-established ways of knowing, being, and doing.⁴⁸

Nordin demonstrates the importance of the reindeer keeper system for Sámi people as it “made life easier for them,” as well as minimizing the risk of conflict between Sámi and settlers since it involved economic interdependence.⁴⁹ Therefore, the reindeer keeper system constitutes an important act of diplomacy between Sámi and settlers.

Elsa Laula Renberg – Sámi Activist and Politician

Another version of Sámi diplomacy was demonstrated by Sámi activist and midwife, Elsa Laula (later married Renberg). Elsa Laula was born into a reindeer farming Sámi family in Hattfjelldal in Nordland. At the turn of the nineteenth century, when Sámi mobilization culminated, the first Sámi national association was formed, as well as several local associations and a Sámi women's association and Elsa Laula published a document called *Inför lif eller död?* – in English *Facing life or death*.⁵⁰ Elsa Laula Renberg is known as a pioneer in the history of Sámi mobilization.⁵¹ Where the reindeer keeper system was designed to stave off conflict before it started, Laula Renberg was not afraid of speaking candidly about the issues Sámi people faced as a result of colonization. Because of this she became the driving force behind the first Sámi Congress in 1917.⁵²

Laula Renberg resisted the idea of Sámi as only reindeer herders; instead, she focused her struggle on Sámi people's rights to their lands and thus their rights to cultivate any form of livelihood on the lands that they owned. She also pointed to the poignant problems that Sámi faced at the time and today, including land conflicts with settlers and ever-shrinking reindeer grazing lands.⁵³

Elsa Laula Renberg carried a message of internal diplomacy at a time when the political situation facing Sámi in all four nation-states was one of divide-and-conquer. Sámi were to remain nomadic reindeer herders or become assimilated by the respective nation-state.⁵⁴ Laula Renberg saw and argued for a dynamic and developing Sámi society where Sámi would also have the right to other livelihoods than reindeer herding and where Sámi would have the rights to their traditional lands as a united people. This way, Sámi people would be able to maintain Sámi knowledge, education, and the variety of livelihoods.⁵⁵ Elsa Laula Renberg was an important diplomatic force in her active days and has remained an iconic figure in Sámi society today, igniting hope and wills to work for Sámi rights.

Contemporary Times: Policy Regarding Research and Project Collaboration with Sámiid Riikkasearvi

Like the Australian Aboriginal examples shared, the examples of Sámi diplomacies have not been without consequences. Sámi activism, diplomacy and strategic know-how can be seen in contemporary policy documents such as the “Policy regarding research and project collaboration with Sámiid Riikkasearvi.”⁵⁶ Sámiid Riikkasearvi is a national Sámi organization in Sweden founded in 1950 with the mission to oversee Sámi issues. Members include both Sámi associations and Sámi reindeer herding communities. The work of Sámiid Riikkasearvi includes a whole range of issues impacting Sámi; however, reindeer husbandry is the organization’s main concern.⁵⁷

The aforementioned policy document was developed by Sámiid Riikkasearvi to help both researchers, Sámi associations, and reindeer herding communities. Importantly it formulates a list of questions to be asked by the potential researcher or project worker prior to contact with Sámiid Riikkasearvi. This ensures that research or collaborations are founded on equal terms and not on outdated notions of Indigenous peoples as objects to be studied. In a situation where many Sámi communities and associations are all too often expected to participate in projects—research and other—without compensation or any guarantees for beneficial outcomes, these guidelines can provide some relief. The fact that the guidelines are designed to help both potential researchers and research participants also holds potential to build bridges and extend and develop the Indigenous research field in Sweden.

DISRUPTING RESEARCH THROUGH ENACTING SELF-DETERMINING INDIGENOUS DIPLOMACIES

Like the term “diplomacy,” the term “research” is familiar to most, saturated with pre-existing meaning and a complex set of core practices be they quantitative, qualitative or mixed-method. Both diplomacy and research function in highly ritualized ways, honed through centuries by the “habits of history.”⁵⁸ Martin evocatively writes of “terra nullius” styled research:

*In this research, we are present only as objects of curiosity and subjects of research. To be seen but not asked, heard nor respected. So the research has been undertaken in the same way Captain James Cook falsely claimed the eastern coast of the land to become known as Australia as terra nullius.*⁵⁹

Terra nullius-styled research, embedded with racialized narratives of inferiority and superiority, excluded Australian Aboriginal peoples from knowledge construction as defined by western thought.⁶⁰ Unfamiliar Australian Aboriginal knowledges and

methodologies were not, and are typically still not, valued or seen as legitimate ways of producing knowledge by society's governing institutions.⁶¹

Similarly, for Sámi in Sweden, the struggle to be heard on equal terms with the majority population remains an uphill battle. In the late 1800s, race biology became increasingly popular amongst some Swedish scientists, resulting in a governmental research institute for race biology, founded in 1922 in Uppsala, led by Herman Lundborg.⁶² Lundborg's methods included measuring skulls and photographing Sámi persons for the purpose of studying the Sámi 'race', which he was convinced would be detrimental to the Swedish 'race' if mixed.⁶³ His methods and studies were racist and intrusive and long since declared invalid by most people; however, a foundation for a deficit perspective was laid down and those scars still affect Sámi people today. Sámi communities and Sámi people are subjected to cultural, structural and extractive violence in interactions with organizations and companies, often in situations not only related to land conflicts⁶⁴ but also education.⁶⁵ This racialized attitude is one very important reason for furthering research undertaken in accordance with Indigenous principles and practices.

For example, when conducting research with Australian Aboriginal communities, it is necessary to understand that protocols, or diplomatic practices, are embedded in distinct Aboriginal epistemologies and ontologies. Australian Aboriginal kinship systems, for example, are based on "the principles of reciprocity, obligation, care and responsibility"⁶⁶ applied to both the individual and the collective as well as to land which they must protect as they would protect themselves.⁶⁷ One protocol is that of Welcome To and Acknowledgement of Country described to Sheelagh by her Elders, summarized here:

Long before colonisation we lived within our Country that the Ancestors had created in the beginning. All that we needed to live and survive were located within our Country's boundaries. However, at times we interacted with our neighbours, for ceremony or trade. But we would not just simply cross the boundary. Instead we would set up camp and wait. Our neighbours would see our campfires smoke and approach, observing us; determining our intentions. 'Did we mean harm?' If not, then we were Welcomed into our neighbours lands.⁶⁸

This diplomatic practice of Welcome to Country has survived policies and practices of dispossessing colonization. With colonization, Aboriginal peoples were forced to live on their neighbors' lands without protocols being enacted. As a result, the diplomatic practice of Acknowledgement of Country developed, enabling "foreigners" to fulfil the obligations of reciprocity, care and responsibility, that had protected land, individuals and the community for thousands of generations.

As an Aboriginal/Kamilaroi researcher, Sheelagh was highly aware of the need to undertake her research “proper ways.”⁶⁹ Sheelagh’s research sought to reveal a counterstory of Aboriginal education success through a critical ethnography at two sites in metropolitan Adelaide, South Australia, borrowing and bending the theoretical frameworks of cultural responsiveness and Critical Race Theory.⁷⁰ Sheelagh would “set up camp” within research sites. Conversation took place through yarning, buttering bread for school gatherings, providing gluten-free brownies at school events, and so on. Once “Welcomed to Country” these encounters enabled research participants to co-design the research, nominate participants, and help analyze findings. However, undertaking her research ‘proper ways’, was frequently met with resistance from within the academy. As so eloquently argued by Indigenous scholars Kovach and Wilson, much of the energy of Indigenous peoples has been trying to ‘fit in’ to the western system or resist assimilationist research practices.⁷¹

Kristina works to include Indigenous knowledges from the point of designing the research through to analysis and dissemination of results, thereby ensuring that Indigenous voices are “released into the research arena.”⁷² As a Swedish researcher, working with Indigenous communities on several continents and being mentored by the Sámi organization Sámiid Riikkasearvi as well as Adnyamathanha Elders in Australia, Kristina’s research processes have been enactments of diplomacy – where mutual Respect, Reciprocity and Relationships have been key in undertaking her research ‘proper ways’.

Underpinning our acts of research diplomacy illustrated above, we are ever-mindful of the words of wisdom from our Knowledge-Holders from across the globe. For example, Indigenous researcher Shawn Wilson, advises that “research is not just something that’s out there: it’s something that you’re building for yourself and for your community.”⁷³ Similarly, Brayboy and Maughan teach that “Indigenous Knowledges requires responsible behavior, and this is often achieved by considering the ramifications of actions before they are taken.”⁷⁴ Finally, educator and scholar, Tyson Kaawoppa Yunkaporta, proposes “The protocol we follow in this work is, ‘If you take something, put something back.’”⁷⁵

By borrowing and bending the concept of diplomacy and applying it to research with and by Indigenous peoples, we argue that long-established ways of knowing, being, and doing disrupt the dominant understanding of what research is, what it is for, and who its practitioners may be. Collaboration between Indigenous nations, both locally and globally, enables and strengthens the research process. By contrast, westernized research methodologies proceed with the assumption that if economic and social conditions were the same for Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, Indigenous peoples could “pull themselves up” and close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.⁷⁶ We argue that enacting Indigenous diplomacies when undertaking research has the power to disrupt

dominant assimilationist research agendas governed by society's institutions. New relationships based on reciprocity and respect rather than superiority and force, borne out of settler/colonizer diplomacies, can be negotiated and established. The emergence in recent decades of policies and guidelines that govern how society's institutions and the corresponding individuals, can conduct Indigenous research are evidence of a new way forward being enacted.

The Sámiid Riikkasearvi policy document discussed above is not the only one of its kind. For example, both Sámi Parliaments in Norway and Sweden have documents regarding research ethics underway or already completed; furthermore, there is ambition expressed to continue this work. These initiatives follow an international trend where ethical guidelines for research with Indigenous communities have been used and developed for years, with Australia being one such example. In Australia, the Aboriginal Medical and Research Council NSW Ethics Committee set out ethical requirements for research that focuses on or includes Aboriginal peoples.⁷⁷ Similarly, the Australian Institute for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, Guidelines for Ethical Research in Australia lay out how research is to be conducted with and by researchers in Indigenous spaces. Society's governing institutions, including universities, are obliged to adhere to the principles and practices stated.⁷⁸ The NHMRC and AIATSIS guidelines comprise a number of principles including: rights respect and recognition; negotiation, consultation, agreement and mutual understanding; participation, collaboration and partnership; benefits, outcomes and giving back; and managing research.

The need for Indigenous-led guidelines for researchers with ambitions to conduct research with Indigenous peoples is important for many reasons. Notably, mainstream academia's ongoing struggle to understand the value of Indigenous epistemologies and ontologies poses great risk for achieving successful outcomes,⁷⁹ and are at time problematic for meeting research or funding demands. Additionally, the way that research can be undertaken, and what researchers can expect from Indigenous communities, varies greatly. For instance, Sámi reindeer herding communities are always at the mercy of weather, today more than ever as extractive activities on reindeer herding lands are continuously increasing, thus shrinking the areas available for grazing. A researcher may want to book meetings or schedule interviews ahead and. However, with unpredictable weather conditions, meetings are likely to be rescheduled. Without a firm understanding of how Sámi reindeer herding communities work and prioritise, a researcher runs the risk of becoming increasingly frustrated. Similarly, in Australia, research progress can be slowed with the need to build reciprocal relationships. Additionally, cultural protocols, such as "Sorry Business" following a death in the community, takes priority and may mean meetings are cancelled last minute and cannot be rescheduled for weeks or months. As research diplomats, we need to enact ways of knowing, being, and

doing through respectful dialogue, negotiation, and other measures to resolve such issues for the benefit of the community and the research.

CONCLUSIONS

In this article, we have illustrated that Indigenous peoples have practiced diplomacies through their ways of knowing, being, and doing for centuries, long before contact with settlers/colonizers. However, Indigenous diplomacies have gone largely unacknowledged, or only recently recognized. In recent decades, First Peoples from around the globe have been pushing back against terra nullius-styled research with seminal work being published like Smith, L-T 1999, *Decolonising methodologies: Research and Indigenous peoples*, Zed Books Ltd, London and New York leading the way for change.

We as researchers with Australian Aboriginal and Sámi in Sweden First Peoples, have shown that doing research “proper ways” has the potential for disrupting traditional westernized research typically governed by society’s dominant institutions, including universities. We are not claiming Indigenous research diplomacies as necessarily “better”—though in some instances and respects they may well be—but, rather, as equally valid.⁸⁰ Moving away from the historical and dominant ways of research by enacting the principles and practices of Indigenous diplomacies, has the potential to redress the long-established power imbalance between Indigenous peoples and colonizers/settlers and working towards self-determination of First Peoples and the decolonization of governing institutions.

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NOTES

1 Alison Holmes, “Global diplomacy: Theories, types, and models,” *Taylor and Francis*, New York, (2018); Marshall Beier, “Indigenous Diplomacy,” in the SAGE Handbook of Diplomacy, (SAGE Publications Ltd, 2016).

2 We use a variety of terms to identify culturally diverse peoples who are, generally speaking, the First Peoples or Indigenous peoples of a nation. In Australia, officially, the term ‘Indigenous Australians’ refers to Aboriginal peoples from Mainland Australia, the Torres Strait Islands and, more recently, the Tiwi Islands. However, for many the term “Indigenous” has a painful history. Therefore, the term “Aboriginal” is generally preferred as an overarching term of distinct cultural identification. As Sápmi, the Sámi homeland, covers parts of four nation states and the Sámi are one Indigenous people in four countries, we use “Sámi in Sweden” rather than “Swedish Sámi.” These are often deemed “more appropriate” terms; however, we recognize that people may choose other ways of identifying.

3 Marshall Beier, “Indigenous Diplomacy,” in the SAGE Handbook of Diplomacy, (SAGE Publications Ltd, 2016).

4 Sheelagh Daniels-Mayes, Valerie Harwood, and Nyssa Murray, “On Settler Notions of Social Justice: The Importance of Disrupting and Displacing Colonising Narratives.” *In Higher Education, Pedagogy and Social Justice: Politics and Practice*, Palgrave Macmillan, Cham, (2019): 37-54; Kristina Sehlin MacNeil, “Shafted: a case of cultural and structural violence in the power relations between a Sami community and a mining company in Northern Sweden.” *Ethnologia Scandinavica* 45 (2015): 73-88.

5 Alison Holmes, “Global diplomacy: Theories, types, and models,” *Taylor and Francis*, New York, (2018); Marshall Beier, “Indigenous Diplomacy,” in the SAGE Handbook of Diplomacy, (SAGE Publications Ltd, 2016).

6 Ibid.

7 Beier, *Indigenous Diplomacy*, 642.

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