VARIETIES OF INDIGENOUS EXPERIENCE: DIASPORAS, HOMELANDS, SOVEREIGNTIES

We shall visit our people who have gone to the lands of diaspora and tell them that we have built something, a new home for all of us. And taking a cue from the ocean's everflowing and encircling nature, we will travel far and wide to connect with oceanic and maritime peoples elsewhere, and swap stories of voyages that we have taken and those yet to be embarked on.

> --Epeli Hau'ofa, on the Oceania Centre for Arts and Culture, Suva.

Home is where the navel cord was cut.

> --A Melanesian saying.

"What contradictory people we are!"

> --Linda Tuhiwai Smith (at the Wenner Gren conference, "Indigenous Experience Today" March 2005)

"Indigenous experience" is difficult to contain: the senses of belonging evoked by the phrase are integral to many, and diverse, localisms and nationalisms.[1] Sometimes it comes down to a minimal claim, relational and strategic: "we were here before you." Feeling indigenous may crystallize around hostility to outsiders, to invaders or immigrants. Many forms of nativism sustain these sorts of borders, reflecting immediate political agendas, self-defense or aggression. (Amita Baviskar and Joseph Niamnjoh, this volume, offer cautionary examples.) The anteriority claimed can be relatively shallow and fundamentally contested: all sorts of people, these days, claim "indigeneity" vis à vis someone else. There are, nonetheless, many social groups with undeniably deep roots in a

familiar place, and they are the subjects of this essay. The peoples in question are called aboriginal, tribal, first nations, native, autocthonous, or a range of more particular, local names. They may or may not (or may only sometimes) claim the identity "indigenous." Whatever names these people take or are given, they are defined by long attachment to a locale and by violent histories of occupation, expropriation, and marginalization. A diverse range of experiences falls within this loose grouping, and its boundaries, despite attempts by the ILO and UN agencies to formally define indigenous peoples, are fuzzy. (Niezen 2003, Brown 2003)

This fuzziness suggests a certain open-ended historical dynamism. People are improvising new ways to be native: articulations, performances, and translations of old and new cultures and projects. The increase of indigenous movements at different scales—local, national, regional, and international--has been one of the surprises of the late twentieth century. Tribal ("archaic" or "primitive") peoples were, after all, destined to wither in the relentless wind of modernization. This was a historical <u>fact</u>, understood by everyone—except the people in question, busy with difficult and inventive survival struggles. This "survival" has been an interactive, dynamic process of shifting scales and affiliations, uprooting and re-rooting, the waxing and waning of identities. In the current moment these processes take shape as a complex emergence, a *présence indigène* or a performative indigenous "voice" (Tsing, this volume). What experiences of loss and renewal, what shifting past and present attachments, what social, cultural, and political strategies are active in these re-articulations? A growing body of scholarship grapples with these questions: for example the programmatic overview of Sahlins 1999 and the complex Native American histories of Harmon 1998 and Sturm 2002.

To grasp the active, unfinished, processes at work in various articulated sites of indigeneity it helps to open-up, or at least "loosen" (Teaiwa 2001), common understandings of key terms like native, authochthonous, and sovereign. The definitional closures built into these words, the cultural and political practices they authorize, are both necessary and dangerous. The strong claims they express contribute centrally to indigenous social movements. They also close down possibilities, and are, in practice,

supplemented and cross-cut by less absolute experiences and tactics. There are various ways to be "native" in relation to a place; assumptions of firstness or "autochthony" often obscure important histories of movement; and "sovereign" control is always compromised and relative. More happens under the sign of the indigenous than being born, or belonging, in a bounded land or nation.

This essay works to make space for contradiction and excess across a broad spectrum of indigenous experiences today by loosening the common opposition of "indigenous" and "diasporic" forms of life. The goal is a richer and more contingent realism, a fuller sense of what has happened, is happening, and may be emerging. The argument does not deny claims for landed, rooted or local identities, asserting that they really are, or ought to be, diasporic. Nor does it assume that cosmopolitan experiences are historically more progressive--even though new scales and dimensions of indigenous life are proliferating in a globally-interconnected, locally-inflected postmodernity. Questioning an essential opposition does not eliminate the historical differences or tensions expressed by the contrast. Native or tribal peoples claim, often with strong historical justification, to belong in a place, a densely familiar and deeply inhabited landscape. Australian Aborigines, for example, have been living in and with their "country" for an extremely long time--long enough to persuade even skeptics committed to a linear historical ontology, that it makes sense to say they have been there "forever," or "from the beginning." Such quintessentially "mythic" assertions of ancient origins evoke a "historical" continuity. With varying degrees of archaeological support, Inuit, Pacific islanders, the various native peoples of North and South America; Sami in Norway, Sweden, Finland, and Russia; the Dayaks of West Kilimantan, etc. all make credible claims, if not to autochthony, at least to deep local roots: an indigenous longue durée. Such historical experiences begin and end with lives grounded, profoundly, in one place. What could be more distant from diasporic identifications, experiences that originate in, are constituted by, physical displacements, uprootings?

Yet many of the experiences made visible and intelligible by diaspora theorists such as Hall (1990), Gilroy (1993), Mishra (1996 a, b), or Brah (1996), the transmigrant circuits

revealed by Roger Rouse (1991) and Nina Glick-Schiller (1995), and the historical pressures and structures analyzed by comparative sociologists like Robin Cohen (1997) have their equivalents, or near equivalents, in contemporary indigenous life. In everyday practices of mobility and dwelling, the line separating the diasporic from the indigenous thickens; a complex borderland opens up. Contested lines of indigenous autonomy and sovereignty are drawn across it: the fraught relationship of "off-island" Hawaiians to movements of native nationalism (Kauanui 1999), or tensions between urban-dwelling Aboriginals or Indians with those living close to ancestral lands. Indigenous attachments to place are complexly mediated and do not necessarily entail continuous residence, especially in contexts such as the United States, Canada, Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand where a majority of native people now live in cities. Thus it makes some sense to speak of "indigenous diasporas."

What kind of sense? Translation is continually at issue. 0ne cannot simply import a concept that is associated with, say, the North Atlantic slave trade's aftermath (Gilroy) or with post-colonial migrations to former imperial centers (Brah) into situations of profound, ongoing connection with land and country, experiences associated with Australian Aborigenes, with Pacific Islanders, with Arctic Inuit, or with Mayan Indians. We need to explore the specificity of indigenous diasporas, or perhaps better, diasporic dimensions or conjunctures in contemporary native lives. To bring the language of diaspora into indigenous contexts is to confront its built-in difficulties. Among recent critiques of diasporic/postcolonial theorizing, native scholars (eg. Teaiwa, 2001) observe that when traveling, displacement and migration, are seen as normative, or at least characteristic of the contemporary world, the focus tends to relegate native peoples, yet again, to the past or to the margins. For example, when cultural-studies diaspora theorists reject "nativism" in its racist, little England, Thatcherite forms, they can make all deeply rooted attachments seem illegitimate, bad essentialisms. Genuinely complex indigenous histories, which involve mobility as well as staying put, and which have always been based on transformative, potentially expansive interactions, become invisible. The native is thrown out with the bathwater of nativism. (For correctives, see the essays in Diaz and Kauanui eds. 2001)

The result is to obscure specifically indigenous forms of interactive cosmopolitanism: genealogical inclusion of outsiders, trading relations, circular migration, vernacular discourses of "development," mission, maritime, and military travel, etc. (Swain 1993, Sahlins 1989, Phillips 1998, Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan 2003, Gegeo 1998, Chappell 1997) Exclusivist nativism is, of course, prominent in political indigenism: for example, the nationalist rhetoric of "Red Power," of Hawaiian sovereignty movements, of Native Fijian attacks on diasporic Indians. However, such claims are not sustainable in all, or even in most, lived circumstances. Across the current range of indigenous experiences, identifications are seldom exclusively local or inward-looking but rather work at multiple scales of interaction. The language of diaspora can be useful in bringing something of this complexity into view. It cannot transcend the tension between the material interests and normative visions of natives and newcomers, particularly in structurally unequal settler colonial situations. (Fujikane and Okamura, eds. 2000) But when diasporic displacements, memories, networks, and re-identifications are recognized as integral to tribal, aboriginal, native survival and dynamism, a lived, historical landscape of ruptures and affiliations becomes more visible.

"Diaspora theory" may have enjoyed its fifteen minutes of academic fame. Aihwa Ong (1999) and others writing about overseas Chinese have questioned its extension. Some cultural studies writers—like Ien Ang in her recent collection, *On Not Speaking Chinese* (2001)--have backed away from an earlier positive embrace of diasporic self-location, now grappling with the absolutist dimensions of what Benedict Anderson (1988) calls "long-distance nationalisms." In his accounts of Indian diaspora cultures, Vijay Mishra avoids celebration, always keeping the constitutive tension between essentialism and hybridity clearly in view, showing the "interrelated conditions" of what he calls diasporas of "exclusivism" and of "the border," the former focused on return the other on interaction and crossover (Mishra: 1996 a, b). Celebratory visions of diaspora, whether they take nationalist or anti-nationalist form, are permanently troubled by their opposites. This dialectical instability can be an analytic strength: the opposed tendencies of diasporic experience, exclusivism and border-crossing, are good to think with. Indeed, a

contradictory complexity with respect to belonging--both inside and outside national structures in contemporary multi-sited social worlds--may turn out to be diaspora's most productive "theoretical" contribution. The last section of this essay argues that indigenous claims to "sovereignty" contain analogous contradictions, and possibilities.

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Colin Calloway, an ethnohistorian of the Abenaki Indians in the US state of Vermont, uses the term diaspora to describe the dispersal of local Indian groups in the face of settler encroachments during the 19th century. (Calloway 1990) The apparent melting away of the Abenaki, which was interpreted as a disappearance (there were of course the usual military pressures and epidemiological disasters) was, according to Calloway, in part at least a movement to different, safer, places in the neighboring state of Maine, and in Canada. (See also Ghere 1993.) According to this account, diaspora was a means of survival for the Abenaki, who did not entirely lose contact with each other and are still around, reconstituting elements of their culture in new circumstances. For relatively mobile native groups, the experience of moving away from homelands under pressure may not be adequately captured by the notion of "exile." "Diaspora" gets somewhat closer to a socio-spatial reality of connectedness-in-dispersion.

 "Exile" denotes a condition of enforced absence, with the sustained expectation of returning home as soon as the conditions of expulsion can be corrected. The term thus applies to a broad range of displaced native peoples, even to those still living on their ancestral lands in reduced reservations or enclaves without the ability to freely hunt, fish, gather, travel or conduct ceremonies in appropriate sites. The goal of an actual return remains alive, and it takes concrete political form in land-claims and repatriations. At the same time, many people give up the idea of a physical return to traditional communities, and land, focusing instead on ceremonial observations, seasonal visits to reservations or "country," and symbolic tokens or performances of tradition. To the extent that later generations, forced or drawn into towns or cities, have no realistic intention of actually living continuously in traditional places, then the connection to lost homelands comes

closer to a diasporic relation, with its characteristic forms of longing, long distance nationalism, and displaced performances of "heritage." Diaspora classically presupposes distance from the place of origin and defered returns. This distinguishes it from the "circuits of migration" and "borderlands" experiences of many Mexicanos in the United States or Caribbeans in New York City, where coming and going is frequent. Yet modern communications can shrink distances and make many diasporas more like borderlands in the frequency and intimacy of possible contacts. (Clifford 1994)

Indigenous populations actively sustain these sorts of diasporic borderlands, as we will see in an Alaskan example discussed in detail below. It will be no surprise to anyone who studies labor migrations that many native populations are spatially far flung. Indians from Michoacan inhabit Mexico City and do farm work in California. There are many thousands of Samoans in Auckland, Tongans in Salt Lake City, Hawaiians in Los Angeles. Significant Navajo populations can be found in the San Francisco Area (the result of government relocation programs in the 1960s). Examples could be multiplied: the classic portrayal by Mitchell (1960) of Mohawk steel workers, Gossen's early account of Chamulan migration as expansive cosmology (1999 [1983]), the Kabre diaspora and travel circuits integral to Piot's recent ethnography, *Remotely Global* (1999), Darnell's (1999) grounded "accordion model of nomadic Native American social organization."

When addressing the lived spectrum of indigenous separations from, and orientations to, homeland, village, or reservation, we need to complicate diasporic assumptions of "loss" and "distance." Likewise, urbanization should not be conceived as a one-way trip from village to city. Gidwani and Sivaramakrishnan (2003) provide a sophisticated critique of both Marxist and liberal modernisms in an ethnographically persuasive account of "circular migration" by "tribals" and "dalits" in India. Embodied practices of work and desire are portrayed in Gramscian terms as entangled counter-hegemonic projects opening up "rural cosmopolitan" possibilities for identity and cultural assertion. The same can be said of much contemporary "indigenous" migration--coerced, voluntary, or specific combinations of the two. Avoiding a modernist teleology of urbanization as the

simple abandonment of rural life, ethnographic accounts now follow the "routes" of multi-sited communities. (Lambert 2002 provides a rich West African case study.) The focus shifts to particular connections and translations, intermediate stopping places and circuits of return. For example, in Merlan's finely detailed ethnography, Australian Aboriginal "mobs" have clustered on the outskirts of towns, and at cattle stations, while orienting these settlements in the direction of traditional "country" and making regular journeys "out bush" in groups to gather traditional foods and to dance and sing at sacred sites. (Merlan 1998, also Christen 2004) Relations of kinship with country can, in practice, be sustained, even when the land is legally owned by non-Aboriginals. Of course there are struggles over multiple "uses" and access is not always negotiable. (The same goes for hunting, fishing, and gathering rights in North America.) But the essential fact of pragmatic, if not legally recognized, sovereignty is that concrete ties to ancestral places have not been severed. "Diasporic" distance is specific and relational.

These partially displaced, sustained relations to "country" need to be compared, along a continuum, with the seasonal, or deferred, "returns" of more distant city dwellers. Recent scholarship in Australia has invoked the language of diaspora when addressing differential attachments to land in the "Native Title Era." (Rigsby 1995, Smith 2000, Weiner 2002; see also Lilly's archaeological interventions: 2004, 2006) Without reducing Aboriginal identity to a single nexus of struggle, it is worth dwelling on how key issues of articulated continuity are being debated in the emerging land claims context. Benjamin Richard Smith (drawing on Rigsby) questions a rigid distinction, prevalent in both scholarship and law, between "traditional" and "historical" people. The former live in proximate relationships with ancient lands and customs and express this in "mythic" claims to have "been here forever;" the latter trace their "Aboriginal" heritage through colonial histories of displacement and recovered genealogies. Native Title law has tended to recognize the claims of locally-based groups while denying those of Aboriginals whose physical distance from country is viewed as an index of lost authenticity. Smith makes clear that many of the people he calls "diasporic," living in towns and cities, do not fall readily into either historical or traditional categories. He sees negotiable differences not an essential opposition. City dwellers tend to subscribe to a more

homogenous "tribal" model of Aboriginality than local people whose sense of belonging and ownership is based on specific clans and responsibilities to sites. This difference of perspective may lead to incomprehension and mutual suspicion. But in the process of making land-claims, the two groups can overcome initial suspicions and work together. One group learns to defer, at least some of the time, to the local knowledge of elders; the other, at least pragmatically, comes to embrace a wider "Aboriginal" mobilization and future. Of course there is no guarantee of unity in these contingent alliances. Drawing on what Merlan (1997) observes is an "epistemological openness" in Aboriginal connections to country, and on a common, underlying socio-cultural structure, diasporic and local people fashion new coalitions and scales of identification. Rather than embodying the "mythic" past and the "historical" future, local and diasporic groups represent "two trajectories of cultural continuity articulating with changing contexts." (Smith 2000: 8. See also Sutton, 1988, for practical fusions of myth and history.)

James Weiner (2002) challenges legal and anthropological notions of "continuity" that see specific traits (such as physical proximity to country, language fluency, religious observance, etc.) as make-or-break conditions of identity. He recognizes a more polythetic and dynamic ensemble-through-time. (See also Clifford 1988, 2001.) The reproduction of social life is always a matter of recurring "loss" and "recovery," of selective transmission and reconstructed history in changing circumstances. Urban Aboriginals who reconnect identities and affiliations are doing nothing fundamentally new. Drawing on Jewish diaspora experiences, Weiner lends support to land rights for displaced Aboriginals: "the idea or image of a homeland, such as has sustained diasporic populations throughout the world in countless examples through the centuries, would be sufficient to maintain something that the legal profession would have to call proprietary rights to country." This rather strong culturalist position is kept in tension with a materialist criterion deployed by Australian courts (and more than a few hard-nosed Marxists) that would require native title to be based on continuing use, "a system of economic and adaptational relations to a particular territory." Accepting the tension, and properly rejecting any ideational/materialist dichotomy, Weiner concludes: "Somewhere between these two poles—as imaginary as they are unrealistic in Australian terms—lie all

of the native title claims in Australia." ((p. 10, original emphases)) Between these poles, too, lies an uneven continuum of ideational, embodied, structural and material practices that needs to be understood as both complexly rooted and diasporic.

Confronting the actual diversity of indigenous societies, one works with a series of contexts and scales, new terms of political mobilization and expanded social maps. Collective terms such as Native American, Native Alaskan, First Peoples (in Canada), Kanak (in New Caledonia), Mayan (in Guatemala), Aboriginal (in Australia, Masyarakat Adat (in Indonesia), etc. represent articulated identities--alliances of particular "tribes," language groups, villages, or clans. They include people sustaining different spatial and social relations with ancestral places, a range of distances from "land." For all who identify as "native," "tribal," or "indigenous, a feeling of connectedness to a homeland and to kin, a feeling of grounded peoplehood, is basic. How this feeling is practiced, in discursive, embodied, emplaced ways, can be quite varied. Urban populations may or may not return to rural places for family gatherings, ceremonial events, dance festivals, subsistence activities, pow wows, etc. For some it is a matter of frequent visits; others go once a year, for summer or mid-winter social activities; some return rarely or never.

The varieties of indigenous experience proliferate between the poles of autochthony (we are here and have been here forever) and diaspora (we yearn for a homeland: "Next year in the Black Hills!"). Seeing an articulated continuum, a complex range of affiliations, offers a fresh perspective on both ends of the spectrum. If there are diasporic aspects of indigenous life, the reverse is also true. For something like an indigenous desire animates diasporic consciousness: the search for somewhere to belong that is outside the imagined community of the dominant nation-state. In diaspora, the authentic home is found in another imagined place (simultaneously past and future, lost and desired) as well as in concrete social networks of linked places. This whole range of felt attachments is crucially a part of what Avtar Brah has called "a homing desire" (Brah 1996: 180). Diasporic dwelling-practices (as distinct from the absolutist ideologies of return that often accompany them) avoid the either/or of exile or assimilation. People make a place here by keeping alive a strong feeling of attachment elsewhere. The all-or-nothing of

naturalization, of proper citizenship, is sidestepped, but without condemning oneself to a condition of permanent marginality. This, at least is the project of diasporic belonging: to be Black *and* British, Muslim *and* French, Latino *and* U.S. American. In this lived practice, various strong forms of "cultural citizenship" emerge and become battlegrounds, as the hyphen in "nation-state" loosens. (Flores and Benmayor, eds, 1997, Ramirez 2005)

Analogues from indigenous experience are not hard to find: it is common, for example, to be a tribally enrolled American Indian, to love baseball and be proud of one's service in the United States Army. Such "double belonging" (a phrase applied to Turks in Germany by Riva Kastoriano, 2003) requires a portable sense of the indigenous. It is why claims to ethnic identity or peoplehood can be profound yet not nationalist in a bounded, territorial sense (Hall 1989). In lived practice, then, indigenous and diasporic multiple attachments are not mutually exclusive. And although there are certainly situations of political struggle in which the ideological opposition indigenous/diasporic is activated, there are also a great many relatively invisible intermediate, pragmatic experiences where the two kinds of belonging interpenetrate and coexist. The purpose of opening up the borderland between diasporic and indigenous paradigms is to recognize an uneven terrain of spatial scales, cultural affiliations and social projects. (Tsing 2000 offers a lucid and complex map.) A realistic account of "indigenous experience" engages with actual life overflowing the definitions, the political programs and all the museums of archaism and authenticity—self-created and externally imposed.

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Let us now turn to a particular case, drawn from the work of Ann Fienup-Riordan (1990, 2000), an anthropologist who has worked closely for nearly thirty years with the Nelson Island Yup'ik of Western Alaska. Fienup-Riordan and her native collaborators have described Yup'ik society, colonial and post-colonial, in considerable detail. What follows are the broad outlines.

Before the arrival of the Russians in the late 18th Century the inhabitants of the Kuskokwim and Yukon deltas lived a life of settled mobility, "nomadic" within discrete territories. Hunting, gathering, and fishing (freshwater and ocean) provided a relatively rich livelihood. Long classified as "Eskimos" (based on linguistic and social similarities to Inupiaq and Inuit), Yup'ik have never lived in igloos or speared seals through the ice. In many ways they defy common stereotypes (Fienup-Riordan 1990). The colonial impact of the Russians was relatively light, since there were no sea-otters to hunt along the Bering Sea coast. The aboriginal inhabitants of Western Alaska did not suffer the harsh conquest and forced labor-regimes imposed on their neighbors to the south, "Aleuts"—a Russian catch-all term now distinguished as Onangan (Aleutian Islanders) and Alutiiq (former Pacific Eskimos). Later, the absence of gold in Yup'ik territories spared them the heavy disruptions experienced by other native populations in Alaska. Yup'ik did suffer from contact diseases, and their societies underwent disruptive changes.

If Russian influence was more gradual than elsewhere, it did result in widespread conversion to Russian Orthodoxy (albeit with syncretic indigenous components), the presence of creole kinship (Russian colonization encouraged intermarriage), and new trade and commercial relationships. After the Americans took control of Alaska in the 1870s, fresh missionaries arrived, and new indigenized Christianities took hold, particularly Catholic and Moravian. Over these years, native kinship structures, village affiliations, subsistence food consumption, and language use, while undergoing transformations, remained viable. In recent decades, with the renewal of native land claims in Alaska, heritage displays, development activities, and identity politics, Yup'iit have sustained their reputation as a locally-rooted people, confident in their sense of identity, still connected with traditional affiliations while pragmatically asserting new ways to be native.

There is no need to paint a romantic picture of socio-cultural survival. Many Yup'iit continue to suffer the pernicious effects of colonial disruption, economic marginalization, and blocked futures. As elsewhere in native Alaska, alcoholism and high suicide rates take their toll. Welfare dependency coexists with independent, subsistence hunting and

fishing. The sweeping land settlements of 1971 (The Alaska Native Claims Settlement Act, or ANCSA) were a mixed blessing. ANCSA stabilized land holdings in a state where indigenous populations, while dispossessed of much territory, had never been subjected to the forced localization of a reservation system. And while it brought considerable new resources to tribal communities, ANCSA capped indigenous title to land and introduced property boundaries between native communities and native corporations. The settlement subsidized new forms of economic activity and the emergence of corporate elites. It also supported a broad range of heritage projects, the articulation, translation and performance of what Fienup-Riordan (2000: 167) calls "conscious culture." In Yup'ik country this involved the revival of mask-making and dancing, once banned, now encouraged, by Christian authorities--part of a more general context of native resurgence, alliance, and entanglement with state structures. (Dombrowski 2002 and Clifford 2004a offer contrasting assessments of these developments.) In this ongoing period of Native Alaskan socio-cultural realignments, tribal governments and liberal state structures can neither be separated nor melded in a functioning hegemony. Fienup-Riordan documents a generally hopeful story of Yup'ik continuity: a dynamic local tradition is sustained, refocused, and in certain respects strengthened by experiences of mobility and diaspora.

In *Hunting Tradition in a Changing World* (2000) Fienup-Riordan shows that movement out of traditional Yup'ik villages into regional towns and state urban centers has markedly increased. And while the story she tells may have a class bias, focused as it is on Yupiit who have the means to create extended networks, to travel and distribute food in the city. (p. 279, note 13), the phenomena she traces are far from limited to a narrow elite. Most importantly, this migration does not conform to the one-way "urbanization" of modernization models. There is considerable circulation between traditional Yup'ik country and new centers of native life in Anchorage, Alaska's largest city. Fienup-Riordan portrays these movements as part of an emerging Yup'ik "worldwide web:" multi-centered native life at new social and spatial scales. In 1970. 4,800 Alaska natives were living in Anchorage more-or-less permanently ("more-or-less" is an important qualification). By 1990 the number had risen to 14,500, and by 2000 it was approaching

19,000. In Fienup-Riordan's assessment, the trend reflects not so much an emptying of Yup'ik country as its extension.

Yup'ik circulation between village and city adapts and transforms traditional exchanges and seasonal rhythms. Formerly, the summer was a time of mobile hunting and gathering in small family units, the winter a time for coming together in large social groupings, intense ritual life, festivals and exchanges. For urban-based Yupiit similar social activities are performed in new ways and sometimes at different times. This is the result of many factors, including employment patterns and vacations as well as transportation possibilities. Yup'ik community is stitched together today with snowmachines, telephones, and especially airplanes, large and small. Yupiit living in Anchorage regularly return to villages around Nelson Island and the Kuskwokwim Delta to engage in fishing, hunting, and gathering of seasonal foods. "Subsistence" activities (widely identified in Alaska with native identity and "tradition") can be combined with commercial projects. In Winter, recently revived dance festivals, Catholic and Moravian holidays, and the Orthodox Christmas and New Year draw return visitors. During an especially intense period in early and mid-January, old mid-Winter traditions of social gathering and exchanges meld with Christian rituals brought by the Russians two centuries ago. (Fienup-Riordan 1990)

Yupiit who dwell in regional villages and towns visit Anchorage for a variety of reasons, including marriages, births, deaths, and shopping, dropping off frozen and recently-gathered "native foods." They also travel to the Alaska Native Medical Center. (ANMC is something more than a medical establishment; it is specifically designed for Native Alaskan health needs and organized with local cultures in mind. Its gift shop offers an important outlet for arts and crafts.) Political and educational gatherings are also a draw, for example the convention of Alaskan bilingual teachers which annually draws more than 1,000 participants from all over the state. Heritage performances and sharing of native foods play a central role in all such encounters.

Patterns of visiting and circulation between village and city are driven by interlocking social, economic, political, and cultural forces. Clearly many of the pressures and opportunities that are familiar from modernization theories, forces that work to "disembed" local societies (Giddens 1990), are responsible for the movement out of villages and into cities: an erosion of traditional subsistence, rural poverty, a search for employment, for wider socio-cultural horizons, for gender equality, etc. But what emerges from Fienup-Riordan's account is a recognizably "indigenous" form of modernity, or at least its entangled possibility. Traditional hunting, fishing and gathering, while they are threatened and regulated, have not been wiped out by capitalist modes of production and distribution. They take new forms alongside, and in conjunction with, modern economies. Communal (familial, village-level) affiliations and exchanges are extended by movements into and out of cities. Rather than a linear process of dis-embedding (or de-territorializing), one observes a transformation and extension of culturally distinctive spatial and social practices: re-embedding, extending territories, dwelling with airplanes.

Fienup-Riordan sees strategies of survival and "development," individual and communitarian, that are pursued to significant degrees on native terms. (Compare work on indigenous conceptions of development in Melanesia by Gegeo 1998, Sahlins 1989, 1993, Curtis 2002, and in Africa by Peel 1978) This agency is not free or unconstrained. Nor is it simply coerced. For example, more young women than young men from Yup'ik country are going to Anchorage—both in search of education and escaping village restrictions. Such "modernizing" strategies are not experienced as a loss of native identity--quite the contrary. In Anchorage Yupiit enter extended networks of economic exchange, politics, and culture—connections at state, national, and international levels. In these networks they come to feel "Yup'ik," rather than primarily rooted in specific kin groups or villages. This tribal or national ethnonym, which only began to be widely used after the 1960s, now marks distinction in multi-ethnic neighborhoods, in pan-Alaskan native settings, in Fourth World contacts, in relations with non-natives, in a variety of cultural performances, exhibits, websites, and the like.

Clearly, an increase of traveling and dwelling beyond local villages and regional centers has contributed to an expanded articulation of "Yup'ik" identity. The experience is far from unique. A comparable, though differently compelled, Solomon Island experience is evoked by David Gegeo in which Malitans migrating away from their homeland "will see their movement as *an expansion of place*, and attendant on it will be a strengthening of the sense of indigeneity." (2001: 499, original emphasis) Indeed, many nationalisms have first been articulated by exiles or students in foreign capitals. (For example, Vicente Rafael (1989) on José Rizal and the Filipino "ilustrados.") Indigenous "tribal," as opposed to place-based or clan, affiliations, tend to be more characteristic of displaced populations living in urban settings where language, extended kinship, and consumable symbols of objectified "heritage" predominate over specific local ties with land and family. It would be wrong, however, to turn a contrast into an opposition. In practice, identifications are plural and situated: one is from a village, from Nelson Island, from the Kuskokwim region, a Yup'ik, or an Alaska Native, depending on the situation. Local affiliations are not replaced by wider "indigenous" formations in a zero-sum relation. Linda Tuhiwai Smith suggested a similar complexity at the Wenner Gren conference originating this volume, saying she grew up thinking that being bi-cultural was being a Maori person (since women's roles were so different in her mother's and father's tribes). Being "indigenous," she observed, has been a way of working through the different layers of her identity: "What contradictory people we are!"

In Alaska, the emergence of larger-scale "tribal" and "Native Alaskan" social formations is bound up with liberal multiculturalism and governmentality: ANCSA, native art markets, heritage venues, tourism, UN forums, NGOs etc. *Présence indigène* comes at a price. (Hale 2002, Clifford 2004a) The new scales and performances of identity are "called out," by hegemonic structures of managed multiculturalism. Yet the new identifications also transform and translate deep, if not always continuous, local roots (Friedman 1993). The range of phenomena sometimes lumped together as "identity politics" includes processes of interpellation, performativity, translation, and political strategy. When associating new tribal identifications with displaced populations it is critical to recognize the specificity and flexibility of native landedness, expansive senses

of "place" evoked by Gegeo. Large-scale tribal identities can remain in close articulation with other levels of affiliation and with homelands, both geographically and socially defined.

> At a time when men and women go from and come back to their home villages in greater numbers for longer periods of time, the villages themselves take on special importance. Personhood and "placehood" are closely intertwined in contemporary Yup'ik life. Although a person does not need uninterrupted residence on the land for that relationship to continue, the existence of the homeland is at the core of contemporary Yup'ik identity. (Fienup-Riordan: 156)

This perspective is echoed in the final sentences of "Yup'iks in the City," an essay by radio journalist John Active that is included in *Hunting Tradition*. Active suggests something of the performativity of native identity in urban settings: "All in all, Anchorage is a fun place to visit, but I wouldn't want to live there. Besides, the pavement is too hard on my ankles, and I always have to prove my Yup'icity to the kass'aqs [white people]." (Active 2000: 182)

As this view of the city and "Yup'icity" suggests, different kinds of performance are required in specific relational sites. For John Active, the city is a nice place to visit, but also a place of uncomfortable encounters and coerced performances. For other Yupiit it feels like an extension of home. For others (or at different times) it is an exciting new place to branch out. Fienup-Riordan clearly insists that "the existence of the homeland is at the core of contemporary Yup'ik identity," but she also rejects any linear progression between rural and urban, old and new, performative sites. Tribal diaspora is not a condition of exile, of obstructed return; it is more mutiplex, relational, and productive. (Compare Darnell's account of traditional Algonquian "semi-nomadic" social structure, "a process of subsistence-motivated expansion and contraction," sustained and translated in new historical contexts. 1999: 91) Fienup-Riordan offers concrete examples of ways that contacts with villages (kin ties) and land (subsistence activities) are sustained by urban Yup'iks from a connected distance that is not that of an émigré or an exile.

(Research on Indian communities in the San Francisco Bay area by Native American scholars Kurt Peters 1995 and Renya Ramirez 1995 echoes this complex experience of networking and multi-attachment.) The language of "diaspora" (in its recent versions overlapping with paradigms of extended borderlands and migrant cycles) renders something of these mobile, multi-polar, practices of belonging. "Transmigrants," who create and sustain very particular "transnational communities" might seem a more exact analogue. (eg: Levitt 2001) But while here is considerable overlap, the newly-articulated sense of tribal identification at something like a national scale combined with renewed yearnings for a return to tradition and land, are more suggestive of diasporas.

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No single analytic language can exhaust what is at stake in these complexly rooted and routed experiences. Diaspora discourse is good at keeping multi-sited, multi-scaled predicaments in view and resisting teleological narratives of transformation. It acknowledges but does not adequately analyze the political, economic, and social forces at work in contemporary displacements: histories of violent dispossession, the material push/pull of labor mobility, collective strategies of circular migration, individual flights from oppressive social conditions, consumerist desires, the lure of the modern, etc. And obviously, the socio-cultural connections sustained in diaspora networks cannot compensate for, though they may make more livable, the poverty and racial exclusions typically suffered by indigenous people. Moreover, there is an "indigenous" specificity that eludes diaspora's central emphasis on displacement, loss, and deferred desire for the homeland. People who identify as first nations, aboriginal, or tribal share histories of having been invaded and dispossessed within fairly recent memory. Many currently dwell either on reduced parcels of their former territory or nearby. The feeling that one has never left one's deep ancestral home is strong, both as a lived reality and as a redemptive political myth. This affects the ways space and time are experienced, distances and connections lived. Urban-based Yup'it, as understood by Fienup-Riordan, are not so much displaced from a homeland as extensions of it. She points to similar patterns for other Alaska native groups. Thus it is not a question of the center holding or not, but

rather one of open ended social networks sustaining transformed connections to land and kin, The tribal home--its animals, plants, social gatherings, shared foods, ancestors and spiritual powers—is not imagined from a distance. It is activated, "practiced" (de Certeau 1984), made meaningful in a range of sites by seasonal rituals, social gatherings, visits, and subsistence activities. "Diasporic" natives are more like offshoots than broken branches.

No doubt this is an idealization. Negative experiences of exile, poverty, alienation from family, despair, loss of language and tradition, endlessly deferred returns, nostalgia and yearning, are certainly part of the varied experiences of native peoples living in settings removed from their homelands. The physical separation and different knowledge-bases of "diaspora" and "local" peoples cannot always be bridged by kin ties, exchanges, and political alliances. The politics of culture and identity at new "tribal," regional, and international scales cannot avoid failed, or very partial, translation between sites and generations, social exclusions, tests for racial purity and cultural authenticity. New leaders, culture brokers and economic elites, new dependencies on governmental, corporate, academic, and philanthropic resources are inextricably part of the processes by which extended indigenous connections are being made. Fienup-Riordan's Yup'ik "worldwide web" is both a description and a hope that cannot be automatically generalized. Yup'ik, who enjoy relatively strong ongoing connections with language, land, and tradition, are able to sustain social ties across an enlarged space. And in this rooted experience of routes, they represent one example from a spectrum of decentered indigenous stories. Yet if the locally-grounded "worldwide web" in Fienup-Riordan's account is an idealization, it is not a delusion. For it describes established native practices and aspirations in many parts of the world today. The rather bright Yup'ik picture will always be shadowed by other realities of poverty, racial subjugation, inferior health-care and education. Diasporic consciousness expresses contradictory experiences of loss and hope, despair and messianism (Clifford 1994). Thus, in thinking about indigenous diasporas, one necessarily confronts the disastrous histories of oppression that have created them and simultaneously the socio-cultural connections that sustain a sense of

peoplehood and, in tangled political-economic situations, project a rooted, expansive future.

While this essay has suggested some of the characteristic features of "indigenous diasporas," it has not drawn a sharp contrast with the experiences of other migrants and transnational dwellers. What has emerged is an uneven, overlapping range of experiences, constraints and possibilities. In practice, for those many self-identified natives who dwell in, and circulate through, urban and semi-urban settings, there can be no essential, privative opposition between "indigenous" and "diasporic" experiences. The terms break down in the compromises and inconsistencies of everyday life. We struggle for languages to represent the layered, faceted realities of the "indigenous" today, without imposing reductive, backward-looking criteria of authenticity. What's at stake in this representational struggle is an adequate <u>realism</u> in our ways of thinking comparatively about a range of old and emergent histories.

Realism is a term that needs to be used carefully. Here it is evoked in both its descriptive/historicist and pragmatic/political senses. The main problem with much descriptive realism is that it projects its vision of what's really there and what's really possible from an unacknowledged vantage point in time and space. Sooner or later, "full," "realistic" accounts of historical development, modernity, progress, Westernization, national liberation, etc. will be situated (Haraway 1988), or provincialized (Chakrabarty 2000) by the emergence of new historical subjects. Of course, some of these "new" subjects, whose interventions trouble formerly settled projections of the real, are not new (recently invented) but formerly silenced, marginalized peoples who, in specific conditions, attain a widely recognized presence or voice. The continuity (Friedman 1993) and ethnogenesis (Hill 1996) at work in these processes of survival/emergence include political *articulations*, conjunctural *performances*, and partial *translations* (Clifford 2004a). New historical subjects (in the present context, those loosely labeled "indigenous") are seen and heard in trans-local circuits, exerting enough political pressure to make them more than marginal actors in a broad historical field of forces.

Historical (historicized/translated) realism does not project one synthetic big story. It works with open-ended (because linear historical time is ontologically unfinished) "big enough stories," sites of contact, struggle, and dialog. (Clifford 2002) What counts as a big enough story--representing a force, happening, or presence that "matters" --is not something that can be finally decided by scholarly expertise, cultural or political authority. Every projection of "the real," however diverse, contested or polythetic, presupposes exclusion and forgetting: constitutive outsides, silences, or specters from unburied pasts that can re-emerge as "realistic" in conjunctures or emergencies either currently unimaginable or utopian. (Benjamin 1969) The current persistence and renaissance of so many different small-scale tribal and native societies re-articulated under the sign of the "indigenous" is just such a critique and expansion of the historically real. Real refers here, simultaneously, to something that actually exists and that has a future in a non-teleological postmodernity.

In this perspective, the present essay questions a conceptual opposition (diaspora vs. indigenous) that has impeded understanding of how native peoples have reckoned with experiences of genocide, material dispossession, forced assimilation, political, cultural, racial, and economic marginality, opportunities for change and re-identification. (Marisol de la Cadena, 2000, does similar work by opening up of the opposition *indio/mestizo*.) This kind of realism foregrounds complex histories: the syncretic experiences of diverse native Christians; or "travels" with Buffalo Bill, on whaling ships, as coerced and contract laborers; or the work of Aboriginals on cattle stations, Mayans in coffee plantations, Indians on high steel; or the broad range of "urban indigenous" experiences. This perspective struggles for a lucid ambivalence with respect to tribal engagements with tourism, with capitalist development, with museums and art markets. It views these activities as "historical practices" integral to "traditional futures." (Clifford 2004b) This, like any realism, is deployed at a particular moment and from a specific location.

Recognizing one's own standpoint is, of course, difficult. Others can be counted on to help, not always generously. The present essay may be criticized as overly invested in the

interactive, spliced, spatially dispersed aspects of tribal or native lives at the expense of continuities in place, kinship, language and tradition. And this emphasis may be read as unfriendly to the necessary essentialist claims of nationalist movements for independence and sovereignty. There is warrant for this reading. The essay does argue that indigenous historical experiences are layered and fundamentally relational, that ethnically or racially absolute assertions foreshorten lived reality and foreclose crucial possibilities. Diaspora has not, however, been proposed as an alternative or cure for strong identity claims. Diasporic <u>dimensions</u> are understood as aspects of an uneven, continuum of attachments. Strong alternate claims to autochthony, localism, and cultural/racial essence are equally part of the process. Indeed, groups and individuals migrate between these apparently contradictory positions depending on situation, audience, or pragmatic goals. An adequate realism needs to grasp specific interactions of diasporic/cosmopolitan and authochtonous/nationalist experiences—ongoing historical dialogues and tensions performed under the contested sign of "indigeneity." (For an exemplary study, which keeps these dialogues and tensions in view, see Mallon 2005: "Samoan <u>tatau</u> as global practice.")

It is not simply a matter of richer "historicist" description: telling it as it was or like it is. Realism has inescapable political and even prophetic dimensions, for it prefigures what does and does not have a "real" chance of making a difference. The aspirations of indigenous movements today for self-determination and sovereignty reflect an altered balance of forces, a post-1960s shift in what may, in certain circumstances, and without guarantees, be possible. Much is emerging under the sign of indigenous sovereignty, and the term's range of practical meanings is difficult to circumscribe, taking into account specific local and national contexts as well as uneven conditions of "globalization." Exercised and negotiated at different scales, sovereignty's meanings today are different from those projected at the treaty of Westpahalia or imposed by Louis XIV and Napoleon. And they exceed the visions of integration and independence associated with either Wilsonian internationalism or anti-colonial national liberation. Sturm's (2002) subtle exploration of the Gramscian "contradictory consciousness" that has historically made and remade an irreducibly diverse "Cherokee Nation" is a case in point. Indigenous

sovereignty, in its current range of meanings, includes the "domestic dependent nation" status of Native Americans, the semi-independence of Nunavut, the national status of Vanuatu (and its transnational tax shelters), the bi-cultural polity emerging in Aotearoa/New Zealand, the cross border institutions of the Saami, the federalism of New Caledonia's Matignon and Noumea Accords, the "corporate" institutions of Native Alaskans, the broad range of agreements that govern uses of Aboriginal country in Australia, and intensifying struggles around natural resources and "cultural property."

Roger Maaka and Augie Fleras explore this "proliferation of sovereignty discourses" arguing that they do not reproduce the nineteenth-century models underlying settler-colonial states. The current discourses express "patterns of belonging that accentuate a sovereignty without secession, involving models of relative yet relational autonomy in non-coercive contexts." (Maaka and Flores 2000: 93, 108) Indigenous movements take advantage of interstitial possibilities, failures and openings within national/transnational governmental structures of "graduated sovereignty" (Ong 2000). James Tully, drawing on Taiaake Alfred's trenchant Mohawk vision (see Brown, this volume), sees indigenous social movements not as struggles <u>for</u> freedom (in the older sense of absolute independence, but as "struggles <u>of</u> freedom to modify the system of internal colonization from within." (Tully 2000: 58, original emphasis) Charles Hale (2002), in his Gramscian assessment of Mayan social movements, unevenly articulated with neo-liberal multiculturalism, comes to a similar conclusion. Attaining formal independence does not necessarily change the situation, as the predicament of Pacific microstates struggling to reconcile cultural/political autonomy with economic (inter)dependence shows. (Bensa and Wittersheim 1997). "Sovereignty," understood as a range of current practices, evokes pragmatic possibilities and structural limits. Thomas Biolsi's (2005) analysis of four distinct sovereignty claims currently made by Native Americans is a pointed reminder of this strategic complexity, as is Andrea Muehlebach's (2001) account of mobile "place-making" in struggles for self-determination and sovereignty at the United Nations.

Within each context, appeals to all-or-nothing ("ideological") sovereignty combine and alternate with negotiated ("pragmatic") sovereignty. A non-reductive assessment of the

historically possible, a political/prophetic realism, recognizes this necessary alternation and tactical flexibility. Without radical visions and maximalist claims indigenous movements risk cooptation. Without ad-hoc arrangements and coalitions, where economic and military power remain overwhelmingly unequal, little can be gained in the short term. And the risk of backlash is great. One of the values, perhaps, of bringing diaspora into the complex domain of the indigenous is to import a constitutive ambivalence. Diasporic experience is necessarily both nationalist and anti-nationalist. Absolutist invocations of blood, land, and return coexist with the arts of conviviality, the need to make homes away from home, among different peoples. Diasporic ruptures and connections--lost homelands, partial returns, relational identities, and world-spanning networks--are fundamental components of indigenous experience today.

NOTES

1. The present essay expands and refocuses a paper, "Indigenous Diasporas," forthcoming in Diasporas: après quinze années de ferveur, edited by William Berthomière and Christine Chivallon. Paris: Maison des Sciences de l'Homme. The volume collects papers from a conference, "La Notion de Diaspora," Poitiers, 15-16 May, 2003. I thank the organizers and participants for stimulating discussions, in a context of comparative diasporas. I am also grateful to Orin Starn and Marisol de la Cadena, as well as to participants in the Wenner Gren Conference, "Indigenous Experience Today," who helped me find my way through a different comparative landscape.

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