A remarkable photograph taken at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis provides a glimpse into the lives of people on display at the fair, capturing in this case two Native women from opposite sides of the globe, in an unstaged and revealing moment (see fig. 1). This photograph, titled “Ainu and Patagonian Women Getting Acquainted” does not fit the archetypical representations of Indigenous peoples at the turn of the twentieth century; it is neither a posed anthropological portrait, nor is it intended to capture these “primitive” women in their “modern” surroundings. Instead it is a candid and unscripted moment between two women that requires a new lens of analysis to reveal its significance. On the left we see an Ainu woman wearing warm layers over her traditional embroidered attus; underneath this she wears leggings and Western-style shoes. Her hands are on her knees as she leans toward the Patagonian woman, who is looking toward the Ainu woman as she sits on the ground in front of a building, bundled against the cold with her dog in her lap.¹ That this transnational Indigenous encounter was made possible in this instance is striking for a number of reasons. Most readily evident, perhaps, is that it occurred at the 1904 exposition—a context that foregrounds imperial desires to display technological and racial progress at the turn of the century—yet the goals of empire are neither the subject of the photograph, nor are they necessarily relevant to the interactions of these Native women. Even though this image raises many questions, using it as a starting point for examining the experiences of these women at the fair might seem an impossible task. But the fact remains that the historical moment this photograph evidences, the women’s interest in each other, and the manner in which they made meaning of their experiences while at the fair are very real. This article engages the questions the image poses and offers an analysis that might recover Indigenous perspectives. Previous means of analysis relegate
these women and their experiences—and thus the experiences of all Indigenous peoples—to the realm of unknowable, unimportant, and powerless positions in history. By contrast, this essay seeks to provide a theoretical space where explorations of transnational Indigenous encounters can be undertaken to illuminate their significances and to highlight the intellectual possibilities opened up in the process. By interrogating the encounter captured in this photograph and reading against the colonialist discourse embedded in selected archival materials and contemporary scholarship, this article demonstrates both the challenges presented by an incomplete and colonialist record and the possibilities for exploring historical Indigenous consciousness.

Revealing the many ways that Indigenous peoples have always been active actors on the global stage is a contemporary scholarly challenge. It requires us to look at the archives more carefully and to read against the colonialist narratives that cloak experiences such as those portrayed in the photograph.
at hand. To do otherwise would be to perpetuate historical silences. For as Michel Rolph Trouillot outlines in *Silencing the Past*, these silences are not only produced in the compilation and selection of materials that become an archive. More precisely, it is in the scholarly act of reading, interpreting, and constructing narratives from the archive that these silences become even more deeply entrenched. Without question, there have been many instances when Native peoples saw that strategic negotiating power could be garnered by uniting toward common goals, and some of these instances are regularly acknowledged in standard historical narratives, albeit in sanitized versions that are most often removed from their political contexts and are defined as ultimately unsuccessful and surprising moments in history. As Shari Huhndorf tells us, “anti-colonial indigenous alliances have a long history.” Yet the prevalence of such events suggests that rather than being anomalies, these historical moments are evidence of an ever emerging and expanding Indigenous consciousness, similar to the way colonial nation-states were trading in knowledge of colonial processes, as I have argued extensively elsewhere. To be clear, examining the historical record to shed light on transnational Indigenous encounters is not about seeking a continuous resistance movement where there is none. It is about recognizing Indigenous resistance as a continual part of Native negotiations with colonial regimes and about considering how moments of colonial celebrations of empire may have inadvertently served anticolonial purposes by presenting the Indigenous participants with opportunities to interact across larger distances than had been practical or possible in the past.

Attempting to view the image presented here through the lenses more commonly used in world’s fair studies—those focused on the original intent of the fair organizers, expressions of empire, and the display of pseudo-scientific racial hierarchies—might cause us to see this photograph and the circumstances of its production from a vantage point that claims the experiences of Indigenous peoples are irrecoverable. This, however, is a standpoint that provides the rationale for leaving questions about Native experiences unexamined, in spite of the fact that there is much we do know. In the case of this photograph, we know that two women, one Ainu and one Tzoneca, began this journey to the St. Louis fair at a time when transcontinental and trans-Pacific travel was still a new possibility and an even rarer opportunity for Indigenous peoples. In the cold months that followed the dawn of 1904, these women and members of their communities were presented the opportunity to travel to St. Louis to be part of a grand exposition. Once there, they would be expected to live and to perform their traditional lifeways for visitors for the good part of a year, as if they had never left home. Thus, even at world’s fairs, Indigenous peoples built
communities and interacted with each other and their colonizers in ways that have yet to be critically examined. This article is an attempt to excavate such interactions and to consider how these encounters and interactions may have informed later decisions to bring Indigenous concerns to global audiences.

The subject of transnational Indigenous encounters, particularly at world’s fairs, with rare exception, has not been addressed in contemporary scholarship. For example, the recent book *Anthropology Goes to the Fair* by Nancy Parezo and Don Fowler offers a comprehensive account of the fair, clearly intended to demonstrate that the 1904 fair came as the discipline of anthropology was becoming an academic and increasingly Boasian pursuit rather than the purview of hobbyists, even though it was primarily hobbyists, particularly W. J. McGee, who were in charge of representing anthropology at the fair. The authors go to great lengths to recover the names of as many of the Native participants in the fair as they can and work to piece together how the participants “were assembled, cared for, treated, displayed, and interpreted.” But in the end, the development of the field of anthropology and the fair’s role in it becomes the focus of this text, despite the authors’ declared intentions to reinsert Native presence into narratives about the fair. To avoid such a pitfall, I would like to follow the lead of Ngugi wa Thiong’o and move the center away from its usual hegemonic focus and toward the experience of the people who found themselves “on display.”

**Historical Silences, “Moving the Center,” and Speculative Scholarship**

To take up this call to “move the center” one must proceed with the understanding that archival materials—however collected, assembled, and reproduced as fact—are repositories of colonial privilege. As Trouillot tells us, “the ultimate mark of power may be its invisibility; the ultimate challenge, the exposition of its roots.” Being aware that this vantage point is evident in archival materials (photographic and otherwise) on an intellectual level is one thing; seeing it within archival materials and interrogating the sources to lay bare the colonial desires embedded within them, is another. When examining archival materials for echoes of Indigenous experiences—mediated/interpreted by colonial agents though they may be—one must consciously read such texts as much for what they do say as for what they do not. Exposing the roots and residue of colonial power as exerted in the process of recording and making meaning of that which is observed is part of the challenge faced by contemporary
scholars of Indigenous studies. The necessarily speculative nature of such work does not make it somehow less important. After all, much of what has made it into the historical record as “fact” about Native people is equally, if not more, speculative—in that colonial lenses were used to judge and interpret Indigenous cultures against “civilized” conventions of the era—and yet the colonial vantage point goes unchallenged and remains intact when reproduced in contemporary scholarship.\textsuperscript{11} Simply because colonial suppositions have become part of the archival record, privileging them and allowing them to be endlessly cited as “fact” does not make it the case. Rather than basing the speculation in this research on imperialist assumptions about Native peoples or allowing the speculative “facts” from archival materials to have the final say, I intend to raise alternative readings of these events that privilege the possibility that Native peoples at the fairs were thoughtfully engaged with their surroundings. This should not be a radical assertion, yet precisely because the experiences this article discusses—when illuminating moments of transnational Indigenous exchange that complicate spaces of encounter—run counter to more familiar narratives about Indigenous pasts, it becomes so.

Thus this article uses a grounding in particular Indigenous traditions, cultures, and histories to interrogate the colonial assumptions that permeate both archival records and scholarship about the 1904 fair.\textsuperscript{12} To begin to answer some of the questions raised by the image “Ainu and Patagonian Women Getting Acquainted,” I will first examine the treatment of this photograph when it appeared in the public domain on two recent occasions. Then using a journal kept, published, and sold at the fair by Frederick Starr—the man charged with “collecting” the Ainu group for exhibit—the analysis moves toward considering what the experiences of the Ainu group were like on route to and after arrival at the fairgrounds. Then the focus moves from the specific cases of Ainu and Tzoneca experiences to the geography of the fair to illustrate more broadly how transnational Indigenous encounters, interactions, and exchange were unintended consequences of the fair’s design. And finally the article returns to the Ainu group, this time focusing briefly on the youngest members of the fair group, to raise the possibility that the turn Ainu political activism takes in the 1960s and 1970s, from assimilationist leanings to a move toward a global Indigenous rights movement, may have been partly informed by precisely the sorts of transnational Indigenous encounters and exchange made possible for the first time on a broad scale at the 1904 exposition. I thus raise the possibility that seeds of a global anticolonial movement may have been collected at the fair, remaining nascent for decades until the fertile grounds of the late
Photographic Evidence

When I first embarked on this project, the image of these two Indigenous women together at the fair quelled lingering suspicions that my investigations into transnational Indigenous encounters were more of a historical hope than a reality. How this image has appeared recently in the public domain reveals how the significance of the transnational Indigenous exchange it evidences has been overshadowed in its presentation. This photograph, although relatively obscure, has appeared twice in the last decade in widely available media. The most recent was as a part of the St. Louis Public Library’s online exhibit, commemorating the centennial anniversary of the 1904 fair, called “Celebrating the Louisiana Purchase.” The other was in a large volume published by the Smithsonian Institution in 1999, as part of a renewed global interest in Ainu people, titled *Ainu: The Spirit of a Northern People.* This publication coincided with a large exhibit by the same name for the Smithsonian’s National Museum of Natural History. The key difference between the way the St. Louis Public Library and the Smithsonian represent this image is visible in the text that accompanies the image in each instance.

In the case of the St. Louis Public Library exhibit, the caption for this picture refers to the women not by their individual names but simply in the manner established by the photo’s title, calling them “Ainu woman” and “Patagonian woman.” But these women are not unnamed in the library’s exhibit because they are unknown. Their names actually appear elsewhere on the library’s Web site, handwritten on the individual photographs of them taken by fair documenters. Using these and other records, it is not difficult to find their names. Santukno Hiramura is the name of the Ainu woman, and the Tzoneca woman’s name is Lorenza. Even Lorenza’s dog—which is always in Lorenza’s arms in photos of her—had its name, “Kik,” recorded by the fair’s record keepers. Yet, despite the availability of this information, by not explicitly naming these women, the implication and “take home” message to the viewers of the St. Louis library’s online exhibit is that it did not, and does not, matter who these women were—beyond their presence at the fair, their gender, and ethnic designations. This is further reinforced by text that accompanies this image on the Web site: “It is interesting to speculate about conversations these women had when they met on the Fairgrounds. Would a Patagonian woman ask an Ainu woman about raising her children?”
To be fair, this text acknowledges that the women were historical actors engaging each other, but what is concerning is the fact that the question is posed rhetorically, allowing readers to accept the implication that “we will never know,” or perhaps—and this would be of greater concern—“we do not care to know.”15 In part due to the diligence of the fair documenters, who saw themselves as preserving images of “dying races,” there are starting points for exploring the experiences of these women. This fact underscores that the textual laments that allow readers and scholars alike to be comfortable with dismissing the importance of Indigenous experiences effectively reinscribe the “vanishing Native” archetype that still plagues contemporary representations of Native peoples. Part of the insidiousness of this narrative of Native disappearance is that it is much easier to maintain than it is to write Native actors and experiences into public consciousness.

Although the St. Louis library’s use of this photograph is more recent than the Smithsonian’s, its caption seems more in line with thinking about Native peoples from an earlier era. In contrast, the 1999 Smithsonian exhibit was curated by Native and non-Native scholars who focus their work on Ainu people. This broader and more inclusive range of viewpoints is evident throughout the volume. This can be seen in the caption associated with the Smithsonian’s publication of this photograph of Santukno and Lorenza:

Comparing Notes: The 1904 St. Louis Exposition must have been remarkable for the native participants; it brought people from the far corners of the world into contact with each other and with Americans. In this unusually candid snapshot by Jessie Tarbox Beals, Sangtukno [sic], an Ainu woman, shares a moment with Lorenza, a Patagonian woman, and her dog.16

By providing this accompanying text, the Smithsonian presents this photograph in a manner that takes the perspective of those being photographed into consideration (surprisingly uncommon in the framing accompanying images of Indigenous peoples). This caption also credits the photographic style of the photographer who “captured” this image as a candid shot, as opposed to the often staged scenes or studio portraits that are markers of other photographs of the fair. The work of Jessie Tarbox Beals was aimed at capturing the unstaged moments of the fair, whether they fit into W. J. McGee’s narrative of racial and developmental progress or not. The fact that Jessie Tarbox Beals (not Jesse, as the Smithsonian text claims) sought out alternative views of the fair seems somehow less surprising when we consider her position as one of a few women professional photographers at the fair. Beals aimed to capture images of the fair as she saw it, rather than as she was supposed to have seen it. Thanks, in part,
to George Eastman’s marketing of Kodak cameras to “ladies,” photography was becoming an increasingly accessible medium for women, like Beals, with the means to support such an interest. As Laura Wexler explains in *Tender Violence*, “to the photographing woman, the fairs and expositions offered congenial stimulation and a way to gain recognition and make some money selling photographs. . . . The fairs encouraged them to emerge from domestic confinement and to test just how far the designation ‘lady with a camera’ would let them go.”

Official fair photographers spent their time taking photographs of what they were expected to document, from staged photographs of Native peoples in profile, to scenes that portrayed the progress of the civilized world. “Beals played the woman’s angle for all it was worth, which was considerable. She made many sets of ‘sympathetic’ pictures of domestic life on the anthropology exhibits.” Her interests at the fair are memorialized in a biography of her life that explains that Beals focused on “the scenes of the daily lives of exotic, little-known peoples in their native habitats. She took pictures of the Igorots, the Bogobos, the Zulus, the Hottentots, the Eskimos, the Filipinos and other defenseless recipients of missionary barrels.”

Due in part to Beals’s characteristic assertiveness and her interest in the Indigenous peoples at the fair, a variety of photographs like the one of Santukno, Lorenza, and Kik were taken at the fair. Thus, in the process of taking advantage of the power to document the world she saw through the viewfinder, Beals has also provided contemporary scholars with candid photographs of some of the daily interactions taking place in the anthropology section of the fair and, importantly, a repository of evidence of transnational Indigenous encounters at the 1904 St. Louis exposition. Beals managed to take many of the few existing photographs of the Tzongas upon their arrival, since she had been first on the scene. “By the time the other photographers arrived, Beals had already made her interpretation of the event.” It is unclear whether the photo of Santukno, Lorenza, and Kik was taken shortly after the arrival of the Tzongas or not. What is clear is that when the Tzongas arrived at the fair after their long journey, they were not keen on having photographs taken. Having been told while en route to the fair, both in Liverpool and in New York, that they would receive copies of photographs taken of them—copies that never materialized—the Tzongas were understandably tired of having cameras pointed at them. This is in part what led to the report that shortly after their arrival in St. Louis “an old Patagonian woman issued an edict that no black boxes were to be pointed at her people and she chased the camera men over a barbed wire fence. But Jessie had already made her images and they were exclusives.” Characterizing
Lorenza’s assertion that no more photographs could be taken at that time as the issuance of “an edict,” and describing her as “old” indicates that a familiar way of thinking about American Indian women—as either young, beautiful, and helpful to the colonizer or as old domineering hags who remained loyal to their people—is being employed to construct Lorenza in a particular light. Although they miss mentioning the inextricable linkage of Native women with their perceived colonial or tribal loyalties, Parezo and Fowler assert that Lorenza was often portrayed in the media as “sullen,” and that the Tzonecas were not particularly happy during their time at the fair. Parezo and Fowler also recount occasions when the Tzonecas report being lied to about various things—in addition to not receiving copies of photographs as promised, the group had agreed to come to St. Louis when they were promised white horses that also never materialized—an issue that would surely have left any group of people disenchanted and reluctant to fulfill the whims of fairgoers, the organizers, and the media.

While on one hand we can look at the body of work that Beals produced at the fair to find alternative narratives of fair experiences, we must remember that for Beals, as much as she may have been interested in the “exotic” and “little-known” peoples at the anthropology exhibit, fair photography was largely an economic endeavor. More to the point, much of her best-selling work supported the narratives that fair organizers were constructing for visitors, elements that were not necessarily evident in the more candid moments of Indigenous life at the fair. Perhaps to ameliorate this, Beals also asked members from different Indigenous nations to pose together in manners that more clearly supported the larger narratives of racial hierarchy, colonial progress, and the United States’ role in aiding in the racial uplift of many of the Indigenous groups on display. The most famous example of one of Beals’s posed pieces is also her best-selling photograph, titled “Pygmy and Patagonian Giant.” This juxtaposition—which mirrored the physical layout of the anthropology exhibit that began with “pygmies” and ended with “Patagonian Giants”—made a spectacle of human difference and supported the lessons of human progress portrayed in the exhibit.

Photographs can provide powerful evidence, yet they cannot tell the whole story, and the stories they tell are not created equal. As Wexler explains,
Thus attempts to re-view the photograph of Santukno and Lorenza in a manner that places Indigenous peoples at the center must take into consideration that these women had unique lived experiences that brought them together very far from home and that had bearing on their interactions and how they understood them. Lorenza and Santukno had traveled great distances with their families, young children, and perfect strangers, to be a part of the anthropology exhibit at the 1904 fair. Once there, these women were expected to set up homes, produce food and clothing, and exhibit tribal arts and musics, so that fairgoers might have a traditional and “authentic” experience from the safety of their figurative American backyards. In the case of Lorenza, she was the only adult woman member of the six-member Tzoneca group who traveled to the fair. “The Telehueche contingent consisted of an extended family from the province of Santa Cruz, Argentina. There were five adult men, one adult woman (Lorenza), an eight year old girl named Gigi.” According to photographic evidence, the Tzoneca group also had two dogs with them, a fact that brings us to an aspect of the photograph in question that has been overlooked. The curators of the library’s online exhibit and the editors of the Smithsonian collection seem to have missed what is holding Santukno’s interest in this image. Namely, that Santukno—whose family was not allowed to bring its dogs, even though dogs were considered important members of Ainu families—is looking most intently at Lorenza’s dog, Kik. Most Ainu families included dogs, which traditionally served important roles in Ainu survival. Some used dogs for hunting, some to pull dogsleds, and others to breed for income. When discussing the place dogs hold in Ainu life one scholar writes that “the treatment and spiritual station of dogs often reflect their unusual place as domestic animals that straddle both human and natural worlds.” The significance of dogs to Ainu communities was well known and is evident in the fact that in order to subdue Ainu resistance, Japanese colonial agents often threatened to “bind the legs of their prized hunting dogs and toss them in the rivers to drown.” And yet, it did not occur to those sent to “collect” a group of Ainu for the fair to bring the family dogs. Knowing the important role that dogs played in Ainu society at this time allows us to recognize that Santukno’s gaze is focused rather than casual, invoking a longing rather than a simple curiosity. Reading the photograph this way moves the center away from the intentions of the collectors and toward the experiences of the people who themselves were the objects of interest. Thus, this photograph has presented another entry point to accessing the histories and hidden narratives of Native experiences.
Considering the windows on Indigenous experience that this one photograph has opened suggests that the archives and the records of fairgoers and fair chroniclers contain embedded information that can further nuance our understanding of transnational Indigenous exchange. To do this we must look more closely at the circumstances surrounding how these women were selected for the fair. This is easier in the case of the Ainu woman, largely due to the fact that the man charged with “collecting” the Ainu group for the fair kept a record of the journey to gather the Ainu and bring them to St. Louis. While I have yet to find comparable records in the Tzoneca case, the fact remains that the interactions of individuals such as Santukno and Lorenza have been long overlooked, and we must work to illuminate such spaces of encounter.

Transnational Indigenous Exchange and Encounters

On his journey in January of 1904 to “collect” Ainu people and items of cultural production for exhibition, Fredrick Starr—who had been appointed by anthropology exhibit organizer W. J. McGee—took extensive notes to document this experience. Starr’s journal was published upon his return under the title *The Ainu Group at the St. Louis Exposition* and sold at the Ainu “exhibit” for $0.75 per copy.31 In this firsthand account many aspects of the Ainu group’s experiences are evident, if not directly stated, or fully understood, by Starr. And it is fair to say that he is not alone in missing the significance of some of what he shares in this journal. While Starr’s published journal has been utilized in other recent scholarship, much of the information within it that reveals what Native peoples were doing and saying at the time of “collection,” and at the fair, has gone largely unexamined. When interrogating this text in the manner described above, it becomes clear that Starr’s journal provides ample evidence of transnational Indigenous encounters. Some of the encounters evident in this text begin even before the Ainu group arrives at the fair. For example, while discussing their journey to the United States, Starr mentions that American Indians traveled to train stations to watch as trains, loaded with Ainu people and exhibit materials, traveled through American Indian homelands on their way to St. Louis. He writes, “both at stations and in the cars meetings with Indians took place and it was curious to see the mutual close inspection. On the whole the Ainu took the inspection well and sometimes reciprocated fully.”32 Starr also writes, “At Seattle . . . the men were much interested in the totem pole set up in the city and inquired about its use and the Indians who made it.”33 Although it does not fully reveal what the Ainu group may have thought about the Native
peoples they met, Starr’s colonialist narrative nevertheless documents that the Ainu people were curious about the Indigenous peoples they saw evidence of and encountered along the way. These experiences are also presented in a way that illustrates that there was interest on the part of all parties involved, with the groups in some cases “reciprocating fully.” That American Indian peoples traveled to train stations to see the Ainu visitors indicates a level of awareness not often attributed to Native peoples in this era. Moreover, rather than viewing this mutual interest as a historical anomaly, it seems worth considering how the parties in each case made meaning of these interactions. In other words, when we recognize the theoretical spaces that encounters and exchanges such as these occupy in the minds of the participants, this mutual interest ceases to be merely anecdotal. Instead, it becomes an indisputable example of a transnational Indigenous encounter that occurred at the beginning of the twentieth century. It is entirely possible that stories about these experiences would have been shared for a long time after such an event. That we might not be able to trace what these experiences meant to Ainu and American Indian peoples at the time—let alone follow the transmittal of such stories to the present—should not erase or overshadow these moments of exchange and the meaning people ascribed to them. Moreover, when viewed this way, the Ainu interest in totem poles foreshadows the cross-cultural explorations of Bikky Sunazawa, an Ainu artist—and son of Ainu rights activists discussed in the conclusion of this article—whose interest in totem poles led him to befriend Haida artist Bill Reid in the 1980s.

In their important intervention into world’s fair studies, Parezo and Fowler still miss many opportunities to interrogate the colonial assumptions embedded in their sources. Their use of Starr’s published journal is a prime example. Citing Starr, they state as fact that Ainu people had to obtain Japanese passports to travel to St. Louis; in doing so, they missed the opportunity to examine how race and nation informed this decision. Glossing over this fact is an example of a historical blindness that obscures a Native perspective by placing Indigenous people naturally into the nation-state that colonized them. To adopt an Indigenous perspective demands that scholars fully interrogate the archive as a repository of colonial privilege. When we fail to examine transnational Indigenous encounters as the experiences of people having nuanced engagement with their surroundings that include political, economic, diplomatic, and other sophisticated thought processes, our representations remain in lockstep with the original intent of anthropology displays of the 1904 exposition.

Details from Starr’s journal coupled with McGee’s articulations of meaning have elsewhere been used with little consideration of the Indigenous
perspective, particularly assertions that the clean-shaven faces of the young Ainu men at the time of “collection” were the result of their effort to look more “Japanese.” While it is likely that these young men were indeed clean shaven due to temporal pressures in Japan to appear less Ainu, reproducing this detail with little analysis obscures the lived reality of Ainu people in the winter of 1904. Such an assertion—in the original case and each time it is repeated in contemporary scholarship—quietly erases the enforcement of Japanese assimilation policies forbidding the practice of cultural beliefs that were manifested physically on Ainu bodies: in the forms of wearing earrings, tattoos, or beards. Ironically, when it came to choosing members of the Ainu group, it was precisely bearded older men and women with facial tattoos who were high on Starr’s list of desirable “acquisitions.” While it is possible that Starr instructed the young Ainu men to regrow their beards while at the fair to look more Ainu, the only thing we know with certainty comes from the photographic archives (see fig. 2). Photos taken before the group departs from Japan show the young Ainu men clean shaven, and the photographs of the group from the months that follow show the young men’s beards becoming consistently longer. This is something both Starr and McGee describe—and Parezo and Fowler reproduce—as the young Ainu men’s attempt to fulfill the desires of the onlookers who came to see “traditional” Ainu people. Despite such implications, it is highly unlikely that the average American attendee in 1904 had much, if any, information about what Ainu people were “supposed” to look like—other than what fair publicity and signage declared. Although the Ainu people were continuously referred to at the fair as the “hairy Ainu,” as they had been for centuries in Japan, there was little directly linking this reference to hirsuteness to beards specifically. Moreover, beards were common enough among European and American men that it is highly unlikely that beards would be viewed as an “oddity” in the way they had been in Asia. In fact, many fair visitors commented in postcards home and to fair officials that they were surprised to find the Ainu called the “Hairy Ainu” and as a result began to interpret Ainu women’s facial tattoos as facial hair.35

Consideration of the motives behind the young Ainu men’s decision to regrow their beards requires that we give careful thought to how being on display in a foreign country and seeing and interacting with other Indigenous people—also on display—affected Ainu people in this situation. It is entirely possible that Ainus on display at the 1904 fair saw the existence and continued survival of other Indigenous populations from around the world as a reason for renewed pride in their own culture. Furthermore, being in St. Louis provided
a temporary reprieve from Japanese colonial regulation, and this allowed the men to grow out their beards in the traditional Ainu way without suffering consequences. Thus, while it is possible the young men to chose to grow their beards out for the benefit of the visitors, such a reading—that privileges the expectations of fair visitors and the visions for the fair articulated by fair organizers—forecloses the possibility of alternative readings. Breaking away from conventions that privilege hegemonic interpretations of Indigenous decisions allows for the equally possible reading of this beard regrowth, as an expression of cultural pride, to emerge. Contemplating the motivations of the young Ainu men, and allowing for the possibility that they saw their role in the world as not solely focused on pleasing a white audience and fulfilling the desires of fair organizers, reconstitutes their vantage point with historical agency. Although a reading of Ainu decision making at the fair must foreground their colonized status, this should not mean that their actions are always interpreted as accommodating colonial desires, in a vacuum. If we consider how witnessing dozens of Indigenous cultures and peoples on display, and the crowds they were drawing, might have been understood by the Native participants, the possibilities for interpreting their decisions expand to include more complicated human motivations. When considered this way, interpreting Ainu beard re-growth at the fair as an expression of cultural pride and Indigenous identity becomes a distinct possibility.

While at the fair, Native peoples garnered attention and monies from onlookers and each other by making crafts, performing dances or songs, and charging for photographs to supplement their meager pay as fair participants. This caused a problem for fair organizers, who lamented that participants from different groups were purchasing items from each other and “contaminating” the ethnographic display by having items created by others in their homes. This exchange led McGee to request, after more stringent guidelines were resisted, that Native peoples be authentic during performance hours (from 9 to 11 a.m. and 2 to 4 p.m.), asking that all objects and possession that were not culturally appropriate be out of the sight of visitors.36 And it is here that we also see evidence of both cross-cultural curiosity and transnational Indigenous exchange occurring at the fair more broadly. This exchange and the act of charging visitors for items of cultural production, photographs, and other cultural commodities make it clear that Native peoples were interested in each other and saw performing Indigeneity as a valuable commodity. That these practices were encouraged by fair organizers should not undermine the fact that Native peoples were negotiating these experiences with their own motivations.
Rereading colonial records with the goal of revealing rather than obscuring Native experiences is challenging, but narrative history provides one tool for doing so. For the Ainu group, sharing their experiences with their home communities would have been even more memorable to their home audience than has—to date—been considered in examinations of the 1904 fair. Most of the nine Ainu people who were in St. Louis in 1904 had been prepared for departure by their communities in a very public and telling manner; their communities held funerary rights for them. Starr wrote in his journal that the Ainu group “reported that, at their leaving, there was a gathering of the village and much weeping, since they were looked upon as dead men never again to be seen in the old home.”

This largely overlooked historical detail reveals a great deal about the home community’s concerns for the traveling members and the collective recognition of the very real possibility that the travelers might never return home. The Ainu participants from the Saru River region of Hokkaido were each prepared so that if any one of them were to die while en route, they would be
able to make their way to the next world and meet their ancestors properly. Both the travelers themselves and their home community members knew that even if they did return, they would come home changed by the experiences that awaited them, and would therefore come home as different people. The simple scholarly recognition that the majority of group members had been ceremoniously prepared for death before they left strongly suggests that the return of the Ainu group to their homes in Ainu Mosir—quite literally from the dead—would have been uniquely memorable. Starr even considers this himself when he provides culturally specific details about rituals of return:

In [Hokkaido], when an Ainu has been away from the village and returns, his homecoming is made a public occasion. All the people gather, someone being their spokesman. He and the traveler seat themselves facing. He who has been away begins to sing, narrating his adventures, telling where he has been and what he has seen and done. Presently he stops and the other begins to sing the happenings of the village during the traveller’s absence from home. So they sing, alternating until both stories are completed. When our Ainu group returns, they will be received as those who were dead and have returned; what a many things the poor fellows will have to sing of the people and places they seen so far away from their home villages in the Saru River valley.39

That Starr considers what a momentous occasion their return would be makes it even more striking that this aspect of the Ainu group’s experience has gone unnoted in narratives that use the journal to construct their histories of the fair. Lest the impression be given that the impending departure was an entirely morose occasion for the Ainu group, and to offer as comprehensive a narrative of Ainu experience regarding travel to the fair as possible, it should be noted that at least one member of the group was excited about, and looking forward to, the trip. Starr documents this with an obvious level of satisfaction when he writes, “Goro was lively and happy and anxious to go. That was something, and we believed his influence would do much to cheer the somewhat morose Yazo, the timid Shirake, and the group that were mourned as dead.”40 It is clear however, that even as Starr shares this, he acknowledges that for most of the group, this was not a joyous occasion. In fact, from the very beginning of his attempts to gather a group of Ainu for the St. Louis fair, he recognizes a reluctance on the part of potential group members, and his endeavor proved successful only after he obtained the assistance of John Batchelor, a British citizen whose decades of missionary work among Ainu communities was influential and earned the respect of many Ainu people. As I have explained elsewhere, the Japanese government sought Americans to advise the Colonization Commission (開拓使) in its endeavors to colonize and develop Hokkaido.
in the 1870s. This international exchange of colonial practices involved the employ of a former Indian agent, Horace Capron, as the main advisor to the commission. And the influence of American Indian and U.S. land policies are evident in the 1899 law that Japan issued to regulate its interactions with Ainu people, the Former Natives Protection Policy (北海道旧土人保護法). While U.S. agents were more concerned with seeing the territory settled and making the land productive, the few British subjects in Hokkaido at the time, most notably Reverend John Batchelor, were more concerned with Ainu welfare and the introduction of Christianity among them. As Starr tells it, Batchelor was known for offering his home as a safe haven for Ainu who needed a place to stay for whatever reason. So, for these reasons, when Batchelor made requests of individual Ainus on behalf of Starr, it was difficult for those who felt they owed Batchelor a debt of gratitude to say no. In fact, as Starr writes, “Mr. Batchelor told [an Ainu man] that we wished him, with his wife and child, to go with us to the United States; that he would be gone nine months; that he should go. A look of blank helplessness came over [the Ainu man’s] face, but he replied that he would have to go, of course, if he said so.”41 Starr’s use of italics for the word he in the original indicates that the Ainu man’s reluctance to accept the offer was only overcome because Batchelor was making the request.

Amid the joy, reluctance, mourning, and manipulation—some might even argue coercion—that marked the departure of the Ainu group to the St. Louis exposition, few at home in Ainu Mosir expected the group to return. While the Ainu group had been selected to participate in the fair as a colonized and vanishing race, this experience was far from a death march. As the “Ainu and Patagonian Women Getting Acquainted” photograph and brief analysis of portions of Starr’s text has made clear, the Ainus were headed to a place where they would meet other Indigenous peoples with whom they would forge new relationships.

Stages of Empire

As Robert Rydell explains in All the World’s a Fair, the print media saw and reported that the 1904 fair would have long-lasting effects on visitors. Harper’s Magazine reported, “Remember that such a fair as this that St. Louis offers leaves no intelligent visitor where it found him. It fills him full of pictures and of knowledge that keep coming up in his mind for years afterwards. It gives him new standards, new means of comparison, new insight into the conditions of life in the world he is living in.”42 That such effects are predicted on behalf of the “intelligent” visitor is not only not a surprise; it is accepted as
undoubtedly the case. And yet, an equivalent assertion about the lasting effects of transnational Indigenous encounters on Native participants at the fair is most likely to be met with skepticism. Such skepticism betrays precisely how deeply entrenched the pseudo-science of racial hierarchies and primitivist discourses are to this day.

World’s fairs—as a growing scholarly literature contends—were stages upon which ideas of empire and progress were publicly displayed. But at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, exhibitions of non-Western people and cultures reached a pinnacle. Indeed, organizers constructed exhibits to educate the public about racial progress and hierarchy, and they selected self-made American geologist, anthropologist, and ethnologist W. J. McGee to be in charge of the anthropological portion of the fair. As Parezo and Fowler detail, McGee intended to exhibit his understanding of racial hierarchies “so that both white American visitors and Native participants would understand and accept it as truth.” McGee selected participants for the anthropology exhibit “so that every known stage of industrial and social development [were] typified among the peoples on the exposition grounds.” Here he describes these people in organizational order: “The selection . . . is devoted to types of both race and culture (or development). The race-types include the pygmies of Central Africa . . . Patagonian Giants; the Ainu people, or hairy folk, of whom little is known beyond the fact that they are white, rather than brown.” The “race-types” that McGee mentions were thus exhibited as part of a spectrum that began with the “pygmies” in the darkness of Africa and moved toward the Ainu, whom he indicates were “white.” McGee’s word choice and use of parentheses around the phrase “(or development)” is intended to explain the inclusion of the “white” Ainu in this display; that is, Ainu “whiteness” was a whiteness of difference, rooted in their perceived lack of “development.” McGee’s uses of “white” and “development” highlight the racial anxiety that existed at the time regarding the classification of Ainus as a racially “white” people. This concern was largely rooted in the fact that the Ainu, by virtue of themselves being colonized, represented a branch of the white race that had not mastered surrounding territories, peoples, and resources. The fact that the Ainu people had not been colonized by other, more developed white people, but rather by the decidedly nonwhite Japanese, raised anxieties that the fair’s narrative sought to soothe. Moreover, at the time of the 1904 fair, these racial anxieties with regard to Japan were even more heightened, because Japan was at war with Russia, a Western imperial nation. Thus, “(or development)” here distinguishes between levels of whiteness, allowing for Ainu “whiteness”
to still fit neatly within the “scientific” ideology of the evolution of racial hierarchies.

In re-creating the Native “homes” at the fair, the preferences and perspectives of the Indigenous participants were not considered. That reproducing the flora and fauna necessary for people’s subsistence was not possible seems to have been of little concern to McGee, despite the fact that he hoped the participants would do exactly that. Moreover, as Parezo and Fowler make clear, little thought was given to how peoples from various parts of the world would handle the climate of St. Louis, let alone how appropriate their traditional houses and clothing would be for nine consecutive months of midwestern weather.

The “ethnology exhibit” described above stood out in stark relief in the midst of exhibitions of the developmental “success” of the nation-states also represented at the fair. The message of progress and stages of civilization were underscored by the geographical layout of the fairgrounds. Each of the main nations, such as Japan, Great Britain, and the Republic of Mexico, had their own exhibits in the main section of the fair. In contrast, Native peoples on display were situated near each other in a separate area of the fair, where each group was limited, during performance hours to their respective onsite “reservations.”

Outside of these hours Native people were free to visit other exhibits, and it was not uncommon for Native peoples to spend time together; there is even a photograph from the fair showing Navajos visiting the Igorot village on a “Sunday outing.” While some might be tempted to claim that language barriers would have prevented communication during moments of such transnational Indigenous exchange, and while this likely posed a barrier in some cases, we should not underestimate Indigenous ingenuity. For evidence of this we need only look to a statement by Maria Martinez, a Tewa Pueblo woman, who mentions, when asked about her conversations with Geronimo, that “we talked Spanish because we didn’t know each other’s Indian.”

Yet, even while able to overcome some obstacles presented at the fair, Native peoples had little say about the design and layout of their exhibits, and found it difficult to negotiate various aspects of their lives at the fair. For example, Parezo and Fowler note that “the Ainu continuously protested that visitors were peering through their windows even though they had said that they had agreed to interact only with visitors outside their home.” The exhibits of the world’s nations, on the other hand, were a different story. For example, Japan’s was situated with the exhibits of other developed nations, and had been designed by Japanese officials. It would have been difficult for anyone, Indigenous or
otherwise, to miss the fact that the colonial and developed nations of the world were on display in one area while tribal peoples were in another.\textsuperscript{51}

\textbf{On the Power of Naming}

To conclude, I offer a story about the two youngest members of the Ainu group, two little girls known as Kiku and Kin, ages three and six, respectively, when they arrived at the fair.\textsuperscript{52} These names are particularly symbolic, and may not have been the girls’ original names. Kin is often referred to in primary materials as Kettle—a distinctly Ainu and not Japanese name. In Japanese, Kiku (菊) means “chrysanthemum” and Kin (金) means “gold.”\textsuperscript{53} Since the thirteenth century the Japanese royal family has used a golden chrysanthemum as its crest, and it remains to this day a literal and visual signifier of Japan. Naming the children after the colonial nation-state might have been a choice their Ainu families made as an outward expression of assimilation to garner favor from—or avoid the wrath of—the colonizer and to avoid having the children become the targets of discrimination. However, if the choice to change the girls’ Ainu names to Kiku and Kin was made when the Ainu group’s passports were issued by the Japanese government, this would have been a symbolic claiming of Ainu people as Japanese citizens by naming them for the colonial state.

Kiku and Kin were not the only Native children at the fair. Most of the groups of Native people present at the fair included one or more children, and the fair organizers planned for this, building community playgrounds and organizing “Children of All Nations” events to bring the children together—both for the sake of fairgoers and the enjoyment of the children. Children “from all nations” played together and observed each other, their families, and their cultures. Kiku and Kin and their cohort of other Native children in St. Louis lived together for months, thousands of miles away from home and their regular playmates. This set of interactions represents yet another point for investigation into moments of transnational Indigenous exchange that has escaped much consideration in the field to this point.

While this particular history is yet to be done, we must recall that as Starr’s journal states, stories about the fair would have been shared upon the group’s return. Being so young at the time of the fair, Kiku and Kin were poised to see dramatic changes in Ainu-Japanese governmental relationships. The girls were part of the first generation to grow up under the Former Native Protection Policy, which was passed only five years before the fair. But they likely also grew up hearing stories about their time at the fair. It is interesting to consider
how stories about interactions at the fair might have been shared beyond the individual villages the Ainu returned to. And even how they may have informed later Ainu resistance movements. The trajectory of Ainu social movements is very similar to that of American Indians, with many in the 1920s and ’30s urging assimilation to ensure survival. While it might be tempting to think of assimilationism as the antithesis of resistance, we must bear in mind that under such circumstances, the very act of survival is resistant. As elsewhere, Indigenous resistance movements took several forms, and as Richard Siddle underscores, in 1932 the Alliance for the Abolition of the Protection Act (Kyuudojin Hogoho Teppei Domei) was formed by the same group who had formed an Ainu welfare reform group led by Ichitaro Sunazawa in 1926.54 Siddle, further exhibiting a similarity with the timing and political trajectory of other Indigenous rights movements, calls the change seen in Ainu groups toward the end of the 1960s as a move from welfare politics to Indigenous rights. These new Ainu rights movements were pro-Ainu identity and culture reclamation and anti-assimilation. “The Ainu, as an indigenous people, were not just another disadvantaged social group in need of state welfare but a ‘nation’ desirous of decolonization.”55 In Ainu Mosir, North America, and elsewhere, the Native resistance movements of the 1970s are often pointed to as the moment a global Indigenous consciousness began to travel along a path that led contemporary Indigenous people to seek audiences at the United Nations and organize in many ways to work against oppression. Yet, it seems worth considering that the seeds for a global Indigenous rights movements might have been gathered much earlier and were kept safe until the political ground was thought to be appropriately fertile. As Siddle writes,

Ainu nationhood was greatly stimulated by contacts with indigenous peoples in other countries. Yoshimi Hiramura, the young founder of the Ainu newspaper Anutari Ainu, consciously identified with Native Americans after a trip to the United States in 1972, and the first issue of the paper devoted a page to the confrontation at Wounded Knee between activists of the American Indian Movement and federal authorities. Ainu began to travel and actively seek out other Native peoples, from China to Alaska.56

In 1992, during the inaugural activities for what the United Nations had declared was the “International Year for the Indigenous People,” an Ainu man named Giichi Nomura took the stage and declared himself and his fellow Ainu people Indigenous to what is now northern Japan. While this may not seem like a statement that would garner tremendous international attention, it did. Until then, the Japanese government had publicly maintained that it
was a homogenous nation with no racial or ethnic minority groups. Such national assertions had long precluded the possibility that there were any Indigenous populations in Japan, and thus Nomura’s statement was a public shaming of sorts, proclaiming, as it did, that the origin story of Japan as a one-race nation was simply myth. Shortly after this event, Japan declared it did not acknowledge the Ainu people as indigenous to northern Japan, but instead as an ethnic group within Japan. In a country whose textbooks had long taught that Ainu people were essentially extinct, where sameness is valued and individuality shunned, the government’s statement was truly shocking. In 2008, more than fifteen years later, Japan officially declared that Ainu people are Indigenous to northern Japan.

I have sought to show throughout this article that Indigenous experiences at the 1904 Louisiana Purchase Exposition and the decisions individual Native peoples made while there are significant in their own right. Their actions—the young Ainu men regrowing their beards, for example—may have been made with the new knowledge that there were many, many people around the world in similar political and colonial situations. Given the conventions of Ainu culture, specifically, we know that stories of these encounters would have been shared with their communities and friends when they returned home. Seeing how much attention was garnered by simply performing everyday Ainu lifeways—in a historical moment in which expressions of Ainu-ness were banned and belittled by the Japanese assimilationist government—may well have suggested to the Ainu group that there were people in other parts of the world who were interested in Native traditions. While we know that this “interest” stemmed from a desire to preserve these “primitive” and “vanishing” people, how might the narratives we construct about these experiences change if we consider that the motives behind this “interest” might have been understood and interpreted differently by the Native participants at the time? This question and the answers presented here are far from complete. But this discussion is offered as a means of moving Native experience, perceptions, and peoples from silenced and marginalized positions within these histories to the center of intellectual exploration, one that seeks out and critically engages with instances of transnational Indigenous exchange.
Notes

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1. Ainu people are indigenous to what is now northern Japan, the coast of Siberia, and nearby islands. Tzoneca people, more often referred to as the “Tehuelche” or “the Patagonians” in fair materials are indigenous to what is now Argentina.


3. Tecumseh’s attempt to unite certain American Indian tribes against the invaders is one of the most well known examples, although Metacomet’s War is often considered the first such event.


5. In the 1870s Japan sought advice from the United States on the “opening of new lands” that Ainu territories represented. That the main American advisor to the 開拓使 (Kaitakushi) Japanese Colonization Commission served as an Indian agent prior to his time in Japan should not be overlooked; see D. Medak-Saltzman, “Staging Empire: The Display and Erasure of Indigenous Peoples in Japanese and American Nation Building Projects (1860–1904)” (PhD diss., University of California, Berkeley, 2008).


7. A rare exception is Sharon Delmendo’s consideration of the paradox of Filipinos at the 1889 Paris Exposition being inspired to frame their resistance to American empire after witnessing American Indian performances in the Wild West shows—themselves displays of empire and Indian “authenticity”—in *The Star Entangled Banner: One Hundred Years of America in the Philippines* (Newark, N.J.: Rutgers University Press), 17, 29–36.


11. A prime example is calling ikupasuy, Ainu prayer sticks, “mustache lifters.” To the nineteenth-century European eye, Ainu use of ikupasuy was similar to the European use of devices to keep mustaches clean while eating and drinking. Ainus have long contested this as derogatory; see Fosco Maraini, “Ikupasuy: It’s Not a Mustache Lifter!” in *Ainu: Spirit of a Northern People*, ed. William W. Fitzhugh and Chisato O. Dubreuil, 327–34 (Los Angeles: Perpetua Press, 1999).

12. The reader will notice that while complicating the spaces of encounter where the Ainus are concerned, only bits and pieces of the Tzzonecas’ experiences have been illuminated. This treatment is not intended to undermine or diminish the experiences of the Tzzonecas at the fair but is due to the limited availability of resources in the Tzzoneca case.


15. This exchange is imagined using a Western conceptualization of gender, and women’s roles in world society, a point that is underscored by the fact that while this image is of two women and a dog, the hypothetical question posed in the caption is about child rearing.

16. Ibid.


18. Ibid., 279.

19. Ibid., 43.

20. Ibid., 276.

23. Lorenza is listed as forty-five years old in archival materials.
25. Here I am echoing Wexler’s argument (*Tender Violence*, 277) yet departing from it by underscoring that it is Beals’s candid photographs that may serve future endeavors in exploring transnational Indigenous exchange.
26. Ibid., 299.
30. This reference to the position of dogs in Ainu society is not based on the long-held and pejorative belief—initiated by Wa-jin (ethnic Japanese) and perpetuated by others—that Ainu are “hairy” because they trace their origin to a union between humans and dogs. While this belief was ostensibly based on a portion of an Ainu origin story, the story itself was about transformation, not about bestiality, as the colonial narrative implies, but it was nevertheless misused to justify inhumane treatment of Ainu people.
33. Ibid.
36. Ibid., 100.
37. The people living with John Batchelor at the time of “collection” were not part of the ceremonies.
39. Ibid., 116–18.
40. Ibid., 76.
41. Ibid., 56.
47. The names provide primitive allusions for visitors. Some of these living displays were referred to as “reservations” and the body of water near the “Philippine reservation” was named “Arrowhead Lake.”
49. Ibid., 272.
50. Japan sent national exhibits to almost every fair after 1873. The 1904 exhibition, however, was the first time Ainu people were part of exhibitions outside of Japan.
51. There is significant evidence (archival, photographic, etc.) that Native peoples interacted with each other at the fair. The first Olympic games held in the United States coincided with this fair and while nation-state representatives competed with each other in the “Olympic Games,” Native peoples were made to compete in “Anthropology Days” against their “own kind,” in “primitive” skills—all had to
participate in bow and arrow contests even though these were foreign tools to some Native participants.

52. Ages are approximate due to differences in how children’s ages were calculated in Japanese, and perhaps even Ainu, customs.

53. Although these names have been published with the English translations in reverse order, and then repeatedly published uncorrected, it is an error. My translations are accurate to the Japanese definition of these names.

54. Father of the late great artist Bikky Sunazawa. Bikky’s mother, Peramonkoro, was also an important Ainu rights activist.


56. Ibid., 114–15.

57. Much of the work published in Japanese studies argued the case of Japanese exceptionalism and cultural homogeneity until the early 1990s when a large body of work began arguing otherwise. These efforts occurred on the heels of Ainu efforts that were under way in the 1970s and 1980s (largely as an undertaking of the Ainu Association of Hokkaido 北海道アイヌ協会), in attempts to repeal the Former Native Protection Policy that had been in effect since 1899, a policy containing elements similar to the U.S. General Allotment Act of 1887.