Editorial

Indigenous digital games uniquely enact survivance by passing on teachings, telling our stories, and expressing our ways of knowing through varying weavings of code, design, art, music, and audio. Honoring this ongoing work involves recognizing the influence of traditional games as well as the role of the intergenerational kinships among Indigenous game developers and game players. Making and playing games is certainly not new in Indigenous communities. Rather, from analog to the digital, there is a vast network of support that has positioned us here now, with excitement for all that is to come.

Importantly, this network is intergenerational and international. Developers across many communities are mentoring the next generations to not only play Indigenous games but also to express themselves through games. Thanks to youth game development workshops such as Skins coordinated by Aboriginal Territories in Cyberspace and the Initiative for Indigenous Futures guided by Jason Edward Lewis and Skawennati, Indigenous Routes in collaboration with Dames Making Games, as well as those hosted by Joseph Arthur at Hoopa Valley and Darrick Baxter of Ogoki Learning Systems, self-determination is burgeoning in games by developers including Tehoniehtathe Delisle, Gabriela Aveiro-Ojeda, and Meagan Byrne.

As this and more work unfolds, there have been amazing nodes in the collective constellation of this network, such as the first ever Natives in Game Dev Gathering in 2015 hosted by industry-defining developer John Romero which brought together Maneco Manaque'to and others highlighted here. Still yet, it is with much importance that the Game Developers Conference 2017 held a panel for Indigenous game developers where game industry veteran Allen Turner stood with next generation developers Renee Nejo and Julia Keren-Detar as well as myself in an empowering series of lightning talks. This lightning reaches far, igniting across peoples. Similarly, this special issue serves as a constellation in and of itself, bringing together game analysis and game development with recognition for the work of scholars including Jodi Byrd and David Gaertner. Whether scholar, storyteller, coder, designer, artist, musician, educator, or an ever-changing hybrid, all roles are valued as contributors to survivance through games.

Kisima Inŋitchuŋa (Never Alone) is a defining act of survivance as the first game involving Indigenous communities to be widely distributed on consoles. "Playing in the Digital Qargi: Iñupiat Gaming and Online Competition in Kisima Inŋitchuŋa" describes self-determination in the design and aesthetics of the widely recognized platformer game. Katherine Meloche builds on the work of new media and digital storytelling scholar David Gaertner who sees *Never Alone* as an extension of Iñupiaq culture. She draws attention to the ways in which the gameplay expresses ongoing sovereignty, importantly making connections with the writings of Rachel Attituq Qitsualik and weaving in the words of storyteller and writer Ishmael Hope. Her reflection on *Never Alone* establishes a strong thread that runs throughout this special issue—games have always been integral in Indigenous communities and digital games excitedly add to existing forms of self-expression and interaction.

David Gaertner's analysis is then expanded on from an Indigenous perspective in "*Never Alone*: (Re)Coding the Comic Holotrope of Survivance" with depth and insights brought forth by Michelle Lee Brown. She uniquely (re)maps the experience of playing *Never Alone* as an act of

survivance that allows players to relate to and reshape stories. In order to do so, she looks to Mishuana Goeman's process of (re)mapping, an approach that calls for embracing and revisiting works to ultimately restructure analyses with emphases on connections and kinship. She generates new ways of understanding gameplay, particularly that of the Fox which she perceives as a Trickster relating to Vizenor's comic holotrope. She uplifts voices including Kim TallBear while embracing her positionality as an Indigenous player dissolving the boundaries of remediation with (re)mediation.

Collectively, Jeanette Bushnell, Jonathan Tomhave, and Tylor Prather robustly enact (re)mediation of several games with Indigenous representations and reify the connections between traditional games and digital games in "How do *you* say watermelon?" As Indigenous gamers and academics from varying nations who share in local Lushootseed language, they formed a community to deeply discuss games within Indigenous philosophies. Their conversations resulted in N.D.N. Players Indigenous Game Tags, which indicate ways of looking at games as acts of survivance and also as serve as inspiration for developing new survivance games. Their ongoing work forms constellations of connections among traditional games, digital games, and future possibilities in game design and aesthetics from a gamer-centered view.

Genuinely self-determined game development puts emphasis on players. For, in order to create a sovereign game space, gamers need to be more directly involved, not just to provide feedback at iterative stages of development, but to influence and have a direct hand in a game from its formation to distribution. This is particularly important in the context of reinforcing sovereignty through Indigenous games, as exemplified by David Dennison Lacho and Aaron Leon in "'Please mom? Can you please download it at home?'": Video Games as a Symbol of Linguistic Survivance." They describe a vital phase of community engagement for their forthcoming platformer game based on Splatsin oral stories. Through the process, they introduced youth and community members to games such as *Never Alone*, *Survivance*, *Idle No More: Blockade*, and *Spirits of Spring*, bringing forth and merging discussions of survivance from both gamer and developer perspectives.

With the intricate and well-established connections between Indigenous traditional games, digital games, game players, and game developers, "Transformations and Remembrances in the Digital Game *We Sing for Healing*" describes game development and the resulting game design. (Re)mapping is seen visually as I revisit and describe how I created a musical text choose-your-own-adventure game in collaboration with Exquisite Ghost. In returning to and retelling the story, the structure of connections within the game is brought into form as a constellation. In this work and others in this special issue, games and game development are recognized as fluid spaces within and from which can enact survivance.

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