

Hear our Stories: A Call to Action for Indigenizing Information Science Educational Spaces

Miranda Belarde-Lewis^a, Iisaaksiichaa Ross Braine^a, Jesse Brisbois^a, Tessa R. Campbell^a, Lisa Dirks^a, Mandi Harris^a, Nicole S. Kuhn^a, Clarita Lefthand-Begay^a, Sandra Littletree^a

^aUniversity of Washington, Information school, Seattle, WA. United States of America

mhbl@uw.edu, dabraine@uw.edu, jb97@uw.edu, tessar@uw.edu, lgdirks@uw.edu, harrism1@uw.edu, nskuhn06@uw.edu, clarita@uw.edu, sandy505@uw.edu

ABSTRACT

This panel will present a case study of the lived experiences of Native North American Indigenous (NNAI) students and faculty at the University of Washington's Information School (UW iSchool). NNAI students, both a racialized and politicized group (Brayboy, 2005), are the most underrepresented and underserved within higher educational institutions (Fish & Syed, 2018; Shield, 2004), representing both faculty and students. Overall, less than 0.3% of Native Americans represent the field of information science (Poole et al., 2021). The numbers of NNAI Peoples in information science fields are the most underrepresented of any racialized group (Ball & Lar-Son, 2021; Kim, 2023). Currently, the UW iSchool supports a community of six NNAI PhD students and three NNAI faculty members. Through their personal narratives the UW iSchool Native students and faculty panel will share strengths, strategies, and resources for navigating the multifaceted challenges they have encountered during their academic journeys.

The experiences of NNAI academics have revolved around the historical injustices and institutional biases which contribute to disproportionately higher dropout rates, lower graduation and retention rates, and limited access to culturally relevant resources (Braine & Segundo, (2015). Although it is imperative to identify and address these challenges to uphold principles of justice and promote equitable educational opportunities, this panel will take on a strength-based approach to highlight the successes of the NNAI students and faculty.

Our panel session will be moderated by Dr. Miranda Belarde-Lewis and will start with an overview of our topic, an introduction to the panel and a briefing on the UW iSchool. The iSchool is interdisciplinary in nature which is also reflected by the diversity of research specializations within our panel. Due to having a large number of presenters, each individual will

have five minutes to share their story. First, two out of the three faculty members will share their pathway from being a former PhD student at the iSchool to a current faculty member today. These faculty witnessed and participated in the initial development of Indigenous research groups and initiatives at the iSchool which provided support, resources, and mentorship opportunities for the NNAI community. Examples of these will be showcased in the panel examples such as iNative, the Indigenous Information Research Group (IIRG) and the Native North American Indigenous Knowledge (NNAIK) Initiative which address the information challenges within NNAI communities in support of tribal sovereignty and Indigenous empowerment. These faculty members will discuss how they were supported and mentored during their PhD journeys and how they are passing the baton onto the next generation of future Native faculty and researchers.

Second, four of the six students will share their journey of transitioning from a master's student in one of the programs at the iSchool to becoming a PhD student. These individuals will share their personal experience of mentorship and support received from the faculty members. The students will discuss the challenges they had to overcome during their transition. Third, the last two students and one faculty member will discuss their experience coming from interdisciplinary backgrounds and how their experience has been supported within a field that incorporates other fields. Their experiences of being part of a Directed Research Knowledge Family will be discussed. At its core, the yearlong DRG Knowledge Family revolved around an Indigenous Health Equity research team. This group prioritized Indigenous research methodologies and approaches.

This panel will provide a platform and space for NNAI academics to amplify their voices and perspectives to share strategies to promote equitable educational experiences for the NNAI experience in diverse areas of the field. Through the fostering of dialogue and sharing encouraging personal experiences and stories encountered at the UW iSchool, the aim is to develop solutions in order to create an inclusive and supportive space for NNAI academics to thrive.

Cultural identity and tribal sovereignty are central to the academic success and well-being of NNAI academics (Isaacs et al., 2020). Therefore, the panel will discuss the importance of culturally relevant education and community engagement initiatives. Through the incorporation of authentic and relevant Indigenous perspectives into the curriculum, the fostering of mentorship opportunities and the support for cultural revitalization efforts, academic institutions can create more inclusive learning environments which accurately represent the cultural identities of NNAI students and embrace their sense of belonging.

Through discussions using Dr. Littletree's "kitchen table methodology, participants will share best practices, have networking opportunities, and give guidance for other information schools to develop action plans in order to help foster a supportive educational environment for Indigenous scholarship. By leveraging collective expertise, resources, and advocacy efforts, we can drive meaningful change and advance support for NNAI students in academia and beyond, in person and in virtual settings. Together, we attend to a critical call to justice and ensure that the NNAI community receives the respect, dignity, and opportunities they deserve in pursuit of their education.

ALISE RESEARCH TAXONOMY TOPICS

Community Engagement; Education programs/schools; Social Justice; Specific Populations; Teaching Faculty.

AUTHOR KEYWORDS

Indigenous Education; Indigenous Knowledge; Indigenous Systems of Knowledge; Recruitment and Retainment; Storytelling.

Copyright 2024 by the authors. Published under a Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike 4.0 International License. See <https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.21900/j.alise.2024.1735>