‘Welcome to a Coronavirus production’: Beyond Bows and Arrows’ Indigenous on-air community-building during lockdown

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Abstract
This article examines intertribal community-building in Indigenous-produced radio show Beyond Bows and Arrows, broadcast since 1983 in Dallas, Texas, and explores ways in which on-air Indigenous articulations function as acts of resurgence in turn reinforcing an Indigenous internationalism. In this critical exploration, I draw on Beyond Bows and Arrows (BBAA) content broadcast between April and June 2020. I analyse components of the radio sound text such as in-studio talk; discussion topics; music selection and verbal segues; and station-produced informational Public Service Announcements (PSAs); and identify recurring preoccupations over three months of weekly programming during the pandemic’s first lockdown. In particular, I consider BBAA’s foregrounding of pandemic protocols, calls for Census 2020 participation and Black Lives Matter solidarity at the start of the unsettled yet generative 2020 summer and examine how these articulations coalesce into an on-air structure of feeling which in turn embodies the show’s ongoing decolonizing project.

Keywords
alternative media, community radio, Covid-19, decolonization, grounded normativity, Indigenous cultural production, Indigenous internationalism, place-based practices, resurgence, voice

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As the first lockdown wore on into the summer of 2020, the pandemic revealed long-existing inequalities in the US (and elsewhere.) Alongside this, the Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests gained momentum across the US in response to the death of George Floyd in police custody. Throughout these complex times, community-produced radio has enabled listeners to negotiate crisis events by offering companionship along with information; and Indigenous radio in particular has provided an alternative set of perspectives through which to navigate an ongoing series of pivotal and precarious moments. Listening as a settler scholar, I identify and explore the diverse ways in which the Indigenous radio show Beyond Bows and Arrows (BBAA) provides on-air space for weekly expressions of Indigenous experiences. I then unpack how these on-air expressions are produced by a grounded normativity shaped by specificities of diversetal practices in the Dallas/Fort Worth (DFW) municipality. In turn, I consider how on-air articulations of these place-based Indigenous practices can strengthen an Indigenous internationalism characterized by intertribal solidarity.

‘Grounded normativity’ is defined by Indigenous scholars Glen Coulthard and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson as a rooted ethical situatedness which shapes ‘Indigenous place-based practices and associated forms of knowledge’ (Coulthard and Betasamosake Simpson, 2016: 254). By considering radio content as emerging from such culturally specific place-based practices, I can explore BBAA content more thoroughly as Indigenous radio. Through this culturally specific lens, I analyse how BBAA enabled alternative, locally distinctive expressions of everyday life altered under the first lockdown of the then-emergent pandemic. In particular, I examine the show’s consistent and relatable provision of Covid-19 preventative advice, calls for Indigenous participation in the Census, and discussion of BLM protests, all coalescing on air at the start of 2020’s unsettled summer. I explore and situate how these on-air expressions of pan-tribal participation and practice contribute to what Nick Estes defines as ‘a long tradition of Indigenous internationalism’, in which ‘Indigenous nations had often entered into relations with each other for alliance, kinship, war, peace, or trade’ (Estes, 2019: 203).

First, I want to situate BBAA’s history and project as an Indigenous radio show in the US cultural and broadcasting context. There are estimated to be between 50 and 70 tribally owned and managed radio stations on Indigenous reservations in the 50 US states.2 This provision is, however, substantially under-representative given there are (at time of writing) 574 federally recognized Tribal Nations and many state-recognized Indigenous bands, communities, nations, pueblos, tribes, and villages in the US geographical area, all defined as Indian Nations by the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), alongside additional Indigenous communities currently not officially recognized by the NCAI.3 Further spaces for Indigenous-produced radio are facilitated by community and National Public Radio (NPR) member stations, which schedule Indigenous shows (both syndicated and stand-alone, such as BBAA) daily or weekly across US cities and regions. The established Native American radio network Native Voice 1 (NV1) produces several Indigenous shows, syndicated on tribal stations and other community and NPR member stations, as well as streaming online. In addition to their widely syndicated daily current affairs show Native America Calling and news show National Native
News, NV1 produces several music shows, including *Indige***fi, Indigenous in Music, Reclaimed* and *Undercurrents.* Stand-alone (meaning non-syndicated) Indigenous shows are produced and broadcast mainly at community radio stations, including *I’m Awake,* broadcast on Minneapolis community station KRSM AM; *Native Talk Arizona,* streamed via online community radio based in Phoenix, Arizona; and the long-running *Indians for Indians* show, produced in southern Oklahoma since 1941 and currently broadcast and streaming at KACO FM.

As a stand-alone show, *BBAA* has been produced and presented by Indigenous practitioners at the north Dallas community radio station KNON FM since 1983, serving DFW’s multiple and diverse tribal peoples. Dallas is home to an established pan-tribal community following the 1956 Relocation Act, which, combined with reduced subsidies to tribal reservations, strongly encouraged tribal community members to relocate to selected US cities where, however, they often did not receive the resources promised to them on arrival. Not-for-profit community radio stations such as KNON are often materially and structurally under-resourced, and almost all programming is produced and presented by volunteers, as community stations often offer locals the opportunity (and training) to produce and present their own shows (see Moylan, 2019). Additionally, this not-for-profit model gives many community stations greater scheduling autonomy than commercial or even public service stations, who have to keep advertisers or sponsors happy, for including diverse, community-led shows. Defined by UNESCO as radio managed and produced by and for the community (Fraser and Restrepo Estrada, 2001), ‘community radio’ responds to the diverse needs of target communities in distinct and specific ways depending on local and social contexts. John Downing identifies the historically situated representative capacities of such ‘media, generally small-scale and in many different forms, that express an alternative vision to hegemonic policies, priorities and perspectives’ (Downing, 2001: v). In the US, while ‘“public interest” was largely interpreted to exalt commercialism’, as Christina Dunbar-Hester explains, ‘after an initial period of experimentation, broadcasting was established as predominantly a commercial, networked medium’ (Dunbar-Hester, 2020: 16). In this commercialized environment, community radio was developed as a non-profit alternative form of radio. In their localized scale, and often shaped by grassroots production practices, community radio shows and stations facilitate creation of community-led content which can counter normative and reductive representations of marginalized communities circulating in the mainstream. Additionally, in the past five years improvements made to streaming technologies have had radical implications for community radio stations, as they are now able to consistently livestream community-led content globally. While a user-led hierarchy persists for mainstream media access at platform interface levels, community radio stations and shows today achieve greater reach than before due to accessible streaming via apps such as radio.garden or even Facebook Live, as discussed below.

Joy Elizabeth Hayes identifies the particular importance of community-produced radio for Indigenous groups, observing that ‘community media are embraced and become important cultural institutions in communities under threat. This is particularly the case in Indigenous communities, which have struggled for survival for centuries’ (Hayes, 2021: 20). The medium of radio has historically contributed to intertribal community-building in US contexts, alongside relative access to individual
Drawing on Philip Deloria’s observation (2004) of how driving across reservations delineated but also made connections across tribal lands, Amy M. Ware suggests that tribal radio facilitated the development of intertribal community-building through sustaining continuity of oral tribal traditions on air (Ware, 2009). In many ways, the medium of radio, with its emphasis on spoken delivery and communication, is particularly well suited as a means of Indigenous communication and expression; Ware describes ‘Native radio not only as a tool of subversion but also as a path to interpreting a particular Native use of Western technology that calls on tribal oral traditions’ (Ware, 2009: 87). Today, the availability of livestreaming Indigenous radio content is especially valuable for Indigenous community members living and working away from their tribal reservation, for whom locally produced radio (streamed across distances) serves as a tangible reminder of home. At the same time, pan-tribal programmes such as BBAA also enable tribally affiliated listeners listening via livestreaming to feel connected to their communities through listening to tribal musics alongside pan-tribal banter and vernacular.

‘The longest running American Indian radio program in the state of Texas’: Indigenous radio’s capacity for on-air acts of resurgence

Drawing on close critical analysis of BBAA programme content and considering this as produced within and emerging from the diverse particularities of DFW’s pan-tribal grounded normativity, I suggest that this long-established programme reinforces its capacity for intertribal community-building on-air through humour, conversational storytelling, listener shout-outs and song requests for both traditional and contemporary tribal music styles. Describing grassroots forms of community-building, David Harvey describes ‘the processes that produce, sustain and dissolve the contingent patterns of solidarity’ that comprise and continually reproduce what we understand as ‘community’ (Harvey, 2001: 192). Through its longevity, imbued with the trust of pan-tribal DFW listeners, I suggest BBAA’s multiple articulations of Indigeneity coalesce into such community-building practices. In turn, these on-air practices function as what Jeff Corntassel identifies as acts of resurgence, which work to counter US settler colonialism’s profound cultural and political disconnections across Indigenous peoples. Corntassel defines resurgence practices as reflecting ‘the spiritual, cultural, economic, social and political scope of the struggle [against forces of colonization]’ (Corntassel, 2012: 88). In particular, the regularly scheduled nature of radio programming lends itself to ongoing Indigenous articulations which are then reinforced through weekly familiarity. During the pandemic, these articulations also incorporated alternative framings of US pandemic discourses, generating new forms of resurgence, which were all the more essential given the disproportionate damage caused to many tribal communities by COVID.

BBAA has been broadcasting content by and for DFW’s diverse tribal communities since 1983 and represents itself as ‘the longest running American Indian radio program in the state of Texas’. BBAA is broadcast on community station KNON
89.3FM as one of the station’s many community-led programmes. In addition to BBAA, KNON’s schedule incorporates programmes from Ethiopian, Jewish and LGBTQ communities, as well as music programmes featuring blues, Cajun, country, gospel, hiphop, urban Latin, rock and reggae, reflecting diverse music preferences across the station’s urban DFW catchment area. The programme’s main host, Albert Old Crow (Cheyenne Arapaho), has been presenting and producing the show since the mid-1990s. A prior host was local student Harold Rogers (Navajo/Diné), who studied Communications at the University of Arlington-Texas and was a leader of the Native American Students’ Association (NASA). At time of writing, it is estimated there are over 76,000 American Indians and Alaska Natives living in the DFW metroplex. Because of DFW’s long-established intertribal communities, the metroplex is home to multiple intertribal organizations, including the Urban Inter-Tribal Center of Texas, the Texas branch of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women (MMIW), and NASA at the University of Arlington-Texas. The DFW area hosts multiple intertribal events throughout the year, including the annual American Indian Heritage Day in Texas and the annual NASA intertribal powwow, both well-established events in the metroplex calendar. BBAA routinely incorporates coverage of these organizations and upcoming events and has also established connections with and listeners among DFW incarcerated communities. BBAA goes out live for two hours each Sunday evening, simultaneously streaming online from the KNON website, and is hosted by Old Crow, Jessica Johnson and Cory Werthen. As is common practice in community radio (see Moylan, 2019), all three undertake researching and production duties in addition to presenting and monitoring calls and social media while on air. The show combines informal in-studio discussion and jokes, guest interviews and a diverse playlist, including powwow songs alongside contemporary music, as well as listener shout-outs and song requests. BBAA holds a fundraising pledge drive four times a year in conjunction with other community shows on KNON.

For this article’s exploration, I draw on BBAA content broadcast each Sunday from the start of April through the end of June 2020 and examine the show’s multiple modes of Indigenous articulation through close textual analysis. In particular, I analyse components of the radio sound text to identify recurring themes and preoccupations. These components incorporate in-studio talk and banter; discussion topics; music selection and verbal segues into a given track; and station-produced informational Public Service Announcements (PSAs). Such close listening enables critical recognition of ways in which voice is mobilized in community-produced radio, and how voice can embody ‘technological and institutional mediation’ as Lucas Bessire and Daniel Fisher suggest. They further argue that: ‘voice here comes to matter as a relationship between a global discourse of the voice as a sign of agency and self-expression and the technological and expressive practices of producing the voice for radio’ (Bessire and Fisher, 2013: 371). Thus, the radio voice communicates BBAA’s overall project of Indigenous inclusivity through each moment of spoken delivery. At the same time, the radio voice functions, as Jacob Smith argues, ‘as an index of the body, a conveyor of language, a social bond, a musical instrument of sublime flexibility, a gauge of emotion … and a register of everyday identity’
(Smith, 2008: 3). Following Smith, in conveying identity via particularities of accent and vernacular, the radio voice registers at several levels by reinforcing individual tribal identities of the three presenter-producers and therefore embodying multiple points of Indigenous identity for pan-tribal listeners, holistically reinforcing the show’s pan-tribal inclusivity in the process.

This assembled critical understanding of the capacities of voice enables me in turn to consider how Indigenous voices are deployed in *BBAA* to express empathy and solidarity with a pan-tribal listenership. Perhaps especially in radio, ‘there exists a unique relationship between voice interiority, and identity, and it is perhaps because of this that voice and speech are always associated with potency and magical power’, as Hamid Naficy observes about cultural production foregrounding marginalized voices (Naficy, 2001: 121). Radio particularly enables such community-building through its aural intimacy. Walter Ong argues for the capacity of sound to create a sense of interiority and immersion in the listener, suggesting that, in enabling these responses, sound functions as a ‘unifying sense’, producing a ‘harmony, a putting together’ (Ong, 1982: 72). Crucially, *BBAA* continues to broadcast live, often simultaneously streaming content via Facebook Live, an increasingly common practice for community radio shows seeking to expand their listener base. Radio’s residue as primarily a live medium continues to convey a strong sense of intimacy (Scannell, 1991) and ‘liveness’ remains a key component of the radio text, communicating not just connection but agency. John Durham Peters suggests that liveness denotes a communication of power, arguing that to broadcast ‘live’ ‘means that contingency is still possible, that the energy is actual, and that a new and singular event can take place’ (Durham Peters, 1999, 218). The intimacy enabled and produced by a live radio show (unlike a pre-recorded and edited podcast) allows for and encourages emotional responses to and engagement with in-studio discussion, enabling greater connection to stories and shared memories prompted by music, while reaffirming familiarity with known people, places and events (see also Rodero, 2020). Feelings of connectedness which emerge from such intimacy can then be mobilized and reinforced in their communality through on-air conversations, stories, even arguments that the listener can feel pleasurably pulled into. I suggest that *BBAA*’s liveness contributes a further layer of community credibility for listeners tuning in to (or streaming) the show in real time.

I have been listening to *BBAA* on and off since I first heard about the show in 2017. I was immediately struck by the relaxed and diverse ways the show engages variously with tribal communities in DFW and, more widely, tribal communities elsewhere in Texas and in Oklahoma. Then, listening locally in Dallas from autumn 2019, I became familiar not only with the format but also with localized references to the DFW area. My familiarity with the show, albeit as a settler scholar, situates me as a semi-regular listener, conversant with the show format and the three presenter-producers. This familiarity also meant I was attuned to nuances in on-air conversation, which often incorporates teasing humour and storytelling about guests and friends known to the show hosts. Along with *BBAA*’s regular listeners, I felt connected to a wider community through our shared experience of what Larisa Mann calls ‘synchronous listening’ in real time (Mann, 2019).
‘That’s the heart of our people out there beating’: Reinforcing Indigenous internationalism though intertribal community-building

Beyond Bows and Arrows is recognized by regular listeners as a source of diverse traditional and contemporary tribal music, as can regularly be seen from recurring comments on the show’s Facebook page.13 During an in-studio discussion in May 2020, following Albert Old Crow’s weekly introduction to the show, co-host Cory Werthen asserts: ‘I think this is the only place in the metroplex or maybe even in Texas, where you can turn your FM dial and hear Native American music. You don’t even have to be on the internet.’ Old Crow confirms this: ‘I believe you may be correct; the only American Indian program in the state of Texas. I’m not sure but I’m sure if we’re not somebody’ll tell us’ (BBAA, 3 May 2020) Guests invited for on-air interviews regularly mention the show’s importance for local tribal communities, as did contributor John Tiddark, of the Urban Inter-Tribal Center of Texas board of trustees:

Albert, I appreciate that this show has done a lot of good community work, bringing back songs and things that really hit you sometimes in the heart and in your memories, and we all enjoy that. (BBAA, 28 June 2020)

BBAA in-studio conversation usually encompasses everyday conversation and often teasing between the hosts, as they discuss everything from local events to family updates, the weather and the most recent football game. Regular shout-outs and song requests come in from listeners during the show, via the studio phone or Facebook. Since the advent of Covid-19, in-studio conversation extends to observations about variations witnessed in public adherence – or not – to protective and distancing protocols in the DFW area.

Occasionally BBAA offers a critique of official governmental responses (or lack thereof) to ongoing Indigenous issues. During the 28 June show, Albert Old Crow reads out a news item about the then-President Trump’s scheduled 4 July rally at Mount Rushmore, which generated protests from Indigenous activists citing the multiple treaties that remain unhonoured by the US government. After reading out the line, ‘The White House declines to comment’, Old Crow remarks that:

Of course they did. Because the US government has made hundreds of treaties, and they have not recognized, or followed up, on any of them, so why should they start now. That’s not a slanted view; that’s just fact, ladies and gentlemen.

Albert Old Crow’s reaffirmation of historical truths reinforces intertribal recognition that, as Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz argues, ‘[t]odays Indigenous nations and communities are societies formed by their resistance to colonialism, through which they have carried their practices and histories’ (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014: 7). Old Crow’s historical retelling functions as a decolonizing action by challenging and speaking back to the performative function and invocation of treaties sanctioned by US settler colonialism. I suggest Albert Old Crow’s reclaiming of history from an Indigenous perspective exemplifies
an act of resurgence emerging from a *grounded normativity* of Indigenous experience. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson and Glen Coulthard explain how ‘[g]rounded normativity houses and reproduces the practices and procedures, based on deep reciprocity, that are inherently informed by an intimate relationship to place’ (Coulthard and Betasamosake Simpson, 2016: 254). Through this continuing reproduction, *BBAA*’s on-air articulations, comprising acts of resurgence rooted in DFW pan-tribal place-based practices, continually coalesce into on-air Indigenous community-building.

*BBAA* regularly plays song requests from listeners, often as part of a birthday or other celebratory shout-out. As noted earlier, the wide range of tribal music styles played on the show is a substantial draw for many listeners. The show additionally sometimes plays archival material from Oklahoma-based radio show *Indians for Indians*, which has been broadcasting since 1941 and is perhaps the longest running radio show by and for Native Americans in the US. For some listeners, music played on the show reminds them of their own tribal practices. As one guest says,

sometimes when that gourd dance comes on I can’t sit still. My knee hurting, my back and everything and I have to get up and dance around, man. Even a war dance! I tried that too…. I felt like I was a young man again just listening to that music. That’s how it hits you, that’s where Indian music is, the beat of the drum, that’s the heart of our people out there beating. That drum means a lot to us, the circle means a lot to us.

I’ve been involved with powwows since I can remember. My grandmother started me war dancing when I didn’t even know how to spell my own name. (*BBAA*, 28 June, 2020)

Referencing shared cultural practices such as war dancing again comprises a resurgence action which reinforces the show’s decolonizing project. As Betasamosake Simpson argues, all Indigenous practices, incorporating everyday as well as ceremonial tribal practices, are enacted within a decolonizing impetus; they are as directly political as challenging and protesting treaty violations. She asserts that “cultural” practices … embodied our political practices, because they were powerful, and regenerating language, ceremony, and land-based practices is always political’. She further insists that ‘from within Indigenous thought … the cultural and the political are joined and inseparable, and they are both generated through place-based practices – practices that require land’ (Betasamosake Simpson, 2017: 49–50). Therefore, amplifying cultural practices, place-based as they necessarily are, invokes the work of decolonization through recognition of the grounded normativity which produced such practices.

Through ongoing community-building, located in acts of resurgence embodied within everyday radio practices such as playing listener shout-outs and song requests, alongside inclusion of regular guest contributors from the DFW intertribal community, I suggest that *BBAA* produces and reinforces a *structure of feeling*, reinforcing and strengthening a shared sense of community among the DFW intertribal community and beyond, for those listening online. Conceived by Raymond Williams as comprising a set of ‘meanings and values as they are actively lived and felt’ (Williams, 1977: 132), a structure of feeling gathers all the elements of a show into an emotionally resonant and familiar repertoire, the more powerful as it is experienced live and anew each week. This
community-building encompasses what Deondre Smiles (2019) terms a ‘hybrid community’, comprised of Indigenous and non-Native listeners alike. I argue that radio shows have a particular capacity to produce structures of feeling (see also Moylan, 2018), in which formal components such as in-studio banter, guest interviews, music selection and community-facing PSAs all come together to draw the listener into an on-air community, reinforced on Facebook Live via streaming. While Facebook remains a contested and problematic platform in relation to how user data is used and how posts are overseen, the interface also carries the capacity for listener participation in real time during the show. As intertribal radio, BBAA reinforces a structure of feeling which speaks to diverse tribal communities across the DFW and beyond via its online reach. In turn, reinforcing and amplifying intertribal alliances through this on-air – and livestreamed – structure of feeling constitutes ongoing acts of resurgence.

Writing about Indigenous uses of social media, Angel Hinzo and Lynn Clark describe ways in which ‘social media practices … have the ability to amplify [the] endeavour to share contemporary Indigenous perspectives, making Indigenous perspectives readily available while … they afford provocative glimpses to perspectives that differ from those of the established norm’ (Hinzo and Clark, 2019: 804). Linda Tuhiwai-Smith identifies an ongoing need for ‘acts of reclaiming, reformulating and reconstituting indigenous cultures and languages’ (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999: 142) as inherent to an ongoing struggle for self-determination which necessarily involves ‘rewriting and rereigning our position in history. Indigenous peoples want to tell our own stories, write our own versions, in our own ways, for our own purposes’ (Tuhiwai-Smith, 1999: 28). I suggest BBAA’s articulations of everyday life through intertribal perspectives and via humour, music and anecdotal storytelling, comprises an ongoing decolonizing process, reclaiming and reinforcing tribal identity through community-specific articulations. Building on this, I argue that such tribally produced radio content, shared and disseminated across both analogue and online registers, incorporates decolonizing strategies which work to challenge dominant narratives reproduced by settler colonialism. In turn, these decolonizing ‘rereignings’ can comprise a ‘sovereignty constituted through fluid, emergent and contingent assemblages’ (Akama et al., 2017: 63) located in ongoing practices of resistance and affirmation. Finally, I suggest that BBAA established and trusted positionality in turn meant that once the first lockdown began, the show embodied an Indigenous-led alternative to mainstream, top-down pandemic discourses in north Texas and nationally.

‘Your life is more important in the Native community as a Native male’: Advocating solidarity and staying safe

Unusually, BBAA continued to broadcast live from the KNON studios from the start of the first lockdown and throughout the pandemic, rather than broadcasting remotely. In spring and early summer 2020, on-air conversation between the three hosts incorporated discussion of personal protective equipment (or PPE) and social distancing protocols (and humorous but critical commentary on people who ignored them) and diverse tribal responses to re-opening in nearby Texas and Oklahoma tribal lands. From March
2020, the BBAAS hosts developed protective protocols for in-studio production, which the hosts referenced live on air as well as on Facebook Live as they set up the studio according to Texas state Covid-19 guidelines. During the show, the three hosts reflexively described in-studio cleaning, sanitizing and social distancing protocols, while offering preventative advice to listeners every Sunday. Covid-19 commentary took place alongside the show’s quarterly pledge drive and on-air calls for Native Americans to participate in the 2020 Census.

In spring 2020, localized responses to Covid-19 in mandates and messaging at US state and municipal levels were advocating different rates of urgency. The differences across local responses and the ways in which these were mandated across US states became increasingly evident as the first lockdown wore on. The importance and centrality of local and community media for updated local information on everything from business closures, Covid testing centres, school closures, cancelled graduation, music and sports events and senior shopping hours (and then vaccination information from 2021) became ever more apparent. Emma Rodero has identified ways in which radio itself has become more important during the pandemic, accruing greater credibility as a medium. Rodero describes radio’s capacity to produce a ‘feeling of closeness’ (Rodero, 2020: 3) and explains that ‘radio’s technical simplicity allows immediate response to events and disasters’, which has meant that, during the pandemic (in her research), ‘radio continues to be the most credible medium that respondents trust the most, and the one considered the most unbiased and fair’ (Rodero, 2020: 1, 10). Additionally, during the first lockdown, live radio broadcasting immediately underwent substantial transformations for listeners and practitioners alike. Producers and presenters quickly learned to produce radio remotely in a context where the need for local information became acute. Historically under-resourced, and thus accustomed to operating in contexts of precarity, many community radio stations and shows adjusted with alacrity to the new conditions of production and necessarily transformed requirements for content. Given its established community trust and community station home, BBAAS was able to offer an alternative localized perspective for the unprecedented and ongoing crisis as it unfolded. When the BLM protests began on the last weekend in May 2020 following George Floyd’s murder by Minneapolis police, another layer of crisis was (further) revealed. BBAAS provided a critical situatedness from which to consider and negotiate these crisis events even as the events themselves kept changing and expanding.

During lockdown, the BBAAS hosts began to talk about their everyday experiences of pandemic safety protocols in the DFW area. Concerns about the greater dangers of Covid-19 for tribal peoples were expressed alongside discussion of regional differences in ‘opening up’ reservation public spaces following lockdown, such as casinos. Also discussed were the new everyday issues around safely shopping for staples, the need to wear masks and how best to spend stimulus checks. From April 2020, pandemic commentary was often introduced with in-studio humorous conversation describing various safety protocol failures witnessed by the hosts when out shopping, peppered by pithy and humorous (but appropriate) advice for those failing to take the measures seriously. On 5 April, Albert Old Crow introduces the show as broadcast ‘here in the clean studios at KNON: welcome to a Coronavirus production’. He adds advice on
preventing the spread of COVID-19, saying ‘trust me: you are not the exception. All rules apply to you.’ Jessica Johnson then reminds listeners that ‘grocery time is not socializing time’ and she and Old Crow joke about how their masks fog up their glasses (BBAA, 5 April 2020). These comments were immediately relatable, reinforcing common experiences of what was becoming the new normal for all listeners. At the start of May, Johnson directed a comment more specifically at some members of local tribal communities, saying:

Don’t be too big of a man to social distance and to not wear a face mask and stay safe, because your life is more important in the Native community as a Native male; we need you and your experience to help teach the youth, than it is to try to have an ego with others. (BBAA, 3 May 2020)

This exemplifies the way in which all three BBAA practitioners speak from positionalities informed both by their individual tribal affiliations and experiences as DFW residents. When speaking about Covid prevention practices (and divergent attitudes to this), Indigenous positionality takes on an additional resonance, informed by historical resilience in the face of crisis. From historicized tribal perspectives, considering the pandemic’s encroachment as only the most recent in a history of genocides, many tribes have developed robust strategies drawing on place-based values rooted in resilience, produced through longevity of historical experience (Lakhani, 2020). Localized and distinct tribal practices were historically developed by Indigenous communities across the US in direct response to crises themselves created by settler colonialism. Existing – if contested – sovereignty confers on tribal communities the autonomy to make place-based decisions and has enabled some tribes to successfully protect their communities in the face of state attempts at intervention, even as many US states faltered in providing solid guidance and/or protections for their constituents.14 Shari M. Huhndorf describes the importance of Indigenous knowledges in combating settler colonial practices, arguing that: ‘not only does [tribal] cultural distinctiveness relate to political autonomy, but also indigenous traditions provide models for re-creating societies that oppose the colonial order’ (Huhndorf, 2009: 8). Indigenous approaches and knowledges, determined by the particularities of place and forged through resilience, continue to inform diverse survival strategies during the pandemic alongside protocols (or the lack thereof) mandated by top-down state directives often informed by economic rather than community care imperatives. In 2020, many Indigenous communities in diverse regions developed swift and strategic responses to the emergent dangers of Covid-19, in several places, well in advance of state (and certainly of national) responses.15

Speaking from an Indigenous grounded normativity, then, is to speak from an alternative situatedness rooted in historicized knowledge of negotiating crisis. BBAA’s grounded normativity, rooted in the DFW intertribal positionality of its three presenters, enables critique of dominant structures, as seen above in Albert Old Crow’s critique of treaty violations. The show’s intertribal grounded normativity also informs the hosts’ perspectives on the pandemic. During the 3 May show, Jessica Johnson comments on early re-opening of businesses by several tribes:
Especially with everything going on in the Navajo nation, it’s really scary to see; you know, this virus does attack our elders, it attacks us. Think about how many Native Americans, we’re the ones with diabetes, we’re the ones with the high blood pressure and underlying conditions. Your minorities are the ones who don’t have the best access to health care or the amount of hospital space to help keep you alive. And it’s really disheartening when our tribal leaders are jumping the gun and thinking of the almighty dollar instead of thinking of your people. And that’s not something that we would have done 200 years ago, 100 years ago. Two generations ago we would not have thought like that. (BBAA, 3 May 2020)

The extent to which the ‘host of violences’ enabled by settler colonialism (see Coulthard and Betasamosake Simpson, 2016) have perpetuated the precarity and vulnerability of many Indigenous communities became ever more evident in communities such as the Diné and others where structural poverty and lack of fundamental resources has meant that Covid-19 has caused far more damage and death than in many non-Indigenous communities. In a further layer of erasure, Covid-19 deaths among Indigenous Americans were left out of overall Covid-19 data collected on deaths by some US states, in which tribal community members have been instead categorized as ‘other’ (Nagle, 2020). Johnson expands on the discussion about the dangers of re-opening given the greater health risks for Native Americans, calling for comprehensive health service for tribal communities:

For me, it’s important, especially in an urban community, that we have the best services possible for our people; and then of course on a broader spectrum, that our tribes are also making sure that our people have services, because they deserve it. Every person should have the right to health care, and that’s really important, and that’s one of the reasons when we were writing the Census commercials that it’s really important that you’re marking the Census that you’re Native American and that you’re the head of household and that you’re putting that information on that document, because that’s going to give us that count and prove we’re still here, to help us get the money we need for our people. And that goes to education, health care, it funnels down to us. (BBAA, 3 May 2020)

By connecting the need for quality health care and other essential services to the corresponding need for data collection via the then-upcoming Census, Johnson mobilizes the established reach of BBAA to encourage structural participation. Johnson’s comment here imbues the show’s ongoing calls for Native American participation in the 2020 Census with greater credibility, highlighting the structural importance of the Census for providing updated information about Indigenous communities. From April 2020, BBAA regularly played a PSA stating the following:

All American Indians and Alaska Natives. We need an accurate count for the 2020 Census. It is very important as the Census data is used to inform the funding of resources and programmes in our communities and will affect the next generation. Shape our future. Start here. Learn more at 2020Census.gov (BBAA, 26 April 2020)
The emphasis here on shaping futures for the next generation resonates for all listeners, while the continuity of investing in future generations represents an important value for Indigenous communities.

A month later, the death of George Floyd prompted the first full weekend of BLM protests. That Sunday (31 May) on BBAA, Jessica Johnson and Albert Old Crow discuss the risks of participating in the protests. Johnson states, ‘that’s a fine line. Because (pause) what was being witnessed [George Floyd’s murder, on video] happened. And what do you do?’ Old Crow responds, ‘I live to fight another day. Still keep on videoing, that way you can say: oh yeah, it did happen.’ Johnson expands on the injustice of what happened:

Maybe if there was more people, maybe if there was more witnesses, then there’s different scenarios that could happen. But there’s so many things that could have happened before that man’s life was violently taken from him, that the state of Minnesota and those officers, there’s things they need to look at in their processes, because that’s not the first time their officers killed someone. (BBAA, 31 May 2020)

The DFW area was one of several epicentres for the BLM protests; Dallas in particular hosted protests on multiple days/evenings weekly throughout summer 2020. Solidarity was further expressed on BBAA by playing political and protest songs. Johnson’s calling for attention to police processes echoed activist statements of support and solidarity expressed over that weekend on social media. The support expressed by Indigenous groups embodied shared principles of Indigenous internationalism, which go ‘far beyond the project of seeking equality within the colonial state’, as Estes argues, belonging to a ‘tradition of radical Indigenous internationalism [which] imagined a world altogether free of colonial hierarchies of race, class, and nation’ (Estes, 2019: 176). Declarations of solidarity from activist groups were prompted by the ongoing evidence of state violence, based on hierarchical formations of race, which resulted in George Floyd’s death.

Conclusion: Reinforcing Indigenous internationalism through on-air expressions of solidarity – ‘We’re all [really] in this together’

During the first lockdowns, the phrase ‘we’re all in this together’ started to circulate in the US and the UK and likely elsewhere. From the start, however, this slogan was disingenuous; if anything the pandemic and the entrenched inequalities it has revealed has demonstrated that our experiences of the pandemic were and are hugely diverse, determined by financial and physical security or precarity, the nature of our work, whether we had children or others to be cared for, even how close we were to open green spaces. And yet, the discourse of ‘we’re all in this together’ had real traction for Indigenous communities. Covid-19 was devastating for the Diné reservation and communities, and for other tribal communities across the US and elsewhere. However, across tribal lands and reservations, tribal communities kept themselves safer by successfully negotiating protocols for their communities as part of their sovereignty. In relation to Indigenous radio, the
community-building work of tribal radio stations was recognized at federal level and stations received financial support for work they had been doing for years.\textsuperscript{16}

Crucially, 2020 was also the year when long-standing and unresolved Indigenous struggles began to be officially recognized on a wider basis. In several cases unjust precedents were reversed – even during the same summer as the then-President Trump attempted to stake a claim to Mount Rushmore. At official but also experiential registers, the message of ‘we are all in this together’ was expressed through ongoing messages of solidarity around the BLM protests and of support for everyone affected by the pandemic and its social and political fallout. Emergent Facebook groups such as the Social Distance Powwow, with a membership of 270.5 K at time of writing,\textsuperscript{17} further reinforce existing Indigenous internationalism, linking diverse and unique tribal communities together through a shared yet multifaceted Indigeneity in US geographical and political contexts.

Leanne Betasamosake Simpson points out that ‘[w]hen we don’t have content that accurately reflects our lives, being a content provider is important’ (Betasamosake Simpson, 2017: 225). As a community-facing Indigenous radio show continually reinforcing intertribal community-building through place-based broadcast practices, \textit{BBAA} remains ‘strongly nurtured by continuous processes of solidarity formation and reaffirmation’; processes identified by David Harvey as integral to productive community-building. In turn, these weekly articulations of solidarity within programme content enable and encourage an intertribal Indigenous internationalism through which the \textit{BBAA} community of listeners can remain ‘embedded in broader processes of social change’ (Harvey, 2001: 193) located in such on-air acts of resurgence. In the spring of 2022, \textit{BBAA}’s practitioners were continuing to provide locally specific updates, including health and Covid booster vaccination information, alongside news of intertribal events, such as an Intertribal Community Council Community Cookout; an intertribal Youth Council meeting; MMIW TX Rematriate (Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women) awareness raising, a Town Hall meeting, stickball tournaments and upcoming powwows in Texas and Oklahoma.

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Notes

1. Following online, on-air and in person practice among members of tribal communities, this article invokes ‘Indigenous’, ‘Native’, ‘Native American’ and ‘tribal’ as descriptors, as each is regularly used and no term is universally agreed upon. (Other terms in community use but not in use in-text here are ‘American Indian’ and ‘Indian’; these are more often used among tribal community members with each other by my observation.)

2. This estimate is arrived at drawing on information from Native Public Media, Native Voice One and the Native American Journalists’ Association (NAJA) as of April 2020, and on anecdotal estimates from tribal radio practitioners, in conversation.

3. This figure is from the National Congress of American Indians, accessed via ncai.org (April 2021).

4. See: https://www.nv1.org/programs/ (accessed 5 May 2021), for further information about these programmes.

5. See https://www.nativerootsradio.com/ and https://radiophoenix.org/shows/native-talk-arizona/ (accessed 23 May 2022).

6. See https://www.loc.gov/static/programs/national-recording-preservation-board/documents/IndiansForIndians.pdf for background and context on the Indians for Indians show (accessed 30 June 2021). Indians for Indians currently broadcasts Saturday mornings on New Country, KACO 98.5FM, from Lawton, Oklahoma.

7. See the Beyond Bows and Arrows webpage on the KNON website, http://www.knon.org/beyond-bows-and-arrays/ (accessed 30 June 2021).

8. Dallas was one of multiple US cities chosen to host migrating tribal communities by the Board of Indian Affairs following the Relocation Act (see Burt, 1986).

9. Description from the Beyond Bows and Arrows webpage: http://www.knon.org/beyond-bows-and-arrays/ (accessed 30 June 2021).

10. See the KNON schedule for more details at: https://www.knon.org/knon-show-schedule/ (accessed 5 July 2021).

11. Harold Rogers also developed, produced and presented his own show for the University of Texas-Arlington’s radio station, Native Waves, which ran from autumn 2015 to spring 2017 (from communication with Professor Ken Roemer, University of Texas at Arlington, 27 July 2021).

12. From the Urban Inter-Tribal Center of Texas, https://uitct.org/mission-history/ (accessed 16 March 2021).

13. From my observation of BBAA’s Facebook page between April 2020 and June 2021, accessed weekly.

14. See https://www.newday.com/long-island/politics/shinnecock-nation-dot-southampton-1.44773939 on the contested Shinnecock billboard/monument and https://www.cnn.com/2020/05/09/us/south-dakota-sioux-tribes/index.html on the Sioux tribe’s rejection of South Dakota governor’s attempted injunction against their roadblocks, set up to protect the tribe (both accessed 22 May 2020).

15. For example, some reduction in numbers of new cases in the Arizona Diné or Navajo Nation following substantial number of deaths early in the pandemic, due to the Nation implementing substantial public safety measures, was praised by Dr Anthony Fauci (Krisst, 2020).

16. Most recently, Native American and other community stations received funding for Covid-19 messaging from the Corporation of Public Broadcasting. See https://www.cpb.org/pressroom/CPB-Funds-COVID-19-PSAs-Tribal-and-HBCU-Public-Radio-Stations (accessed 14 June 2021).

17. As of May 2022, https://www.facebook.com/groups/832568190487520 (accessed 24 May 2022.)
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