Intercultural Education with the Indigenous Kaingáng Peoples of Sub-Amazonian Brazil: Creating Vectors of Learning, Understanding, and Empathy in Higher Education and Beyond using Triadic Contact Zones

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Abstract:

The creation of learning experiences that connect students in the Global North with Indigenous peoples is loaded with profound pedagogical potential (Restoule and Chaw-win-is 12-15; Zavala). Such learning experiences can vastly broaden university-level education in the Global North, providing students with access to perspectives, cosmologies, and knowledge-ways that significantly problematize and challenge their own. But their successful development and implementation requires understanding the complex ways in which information, perspective, and discussion flows within them. The transfer of knowledge in such contact zones frequently require translation and transformation As a consequence, and as this paper will show, such intercultural spaces are triadic spaces, where ideas are deconstructed and rebuilt in real-time to ensure that fundamental comprehension, relatability, and key learning outcomes can be achieved across cultural boundaries.

Keywords:

Indigenous, education, intercultural, south america, traditional knowledge

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The creation of learning experiences that connect students in the Global North with Indigenous peoples is loaded with profound pedagogical potential (Restoule and Chaw-win-is 12-15; Zavala). Such learning experiences can vastly broaden university-level education in the Global North, providing students in this region with access to perspectives, cosmologies, and knowledge-ways that significantly problematize and challenge their own. Through the use of online and digital communication tools, it is now possible to overcome what would otherwise be a series of insurmountable geographic, political, and cultural boundaries. In terms of engaging students on issues such as climate change, sustainability, discrimination, and de-colonial thinking, such digital Indigenous contact zones are incredibly powerful. But their successful development and implementation requires understanding the complex ways in which information, perspective, and discussion flows within them.

The transfer of knowledge in such contact zones is neither linear nor, as one might intuit, didactic (Srinivasan et al. 737-738). On the contrary, concepts and ideas frequently require translation and transformation by third parties who are familiar with the cultural frameworks of the primary participants (Indigenous Knowledge-Carriers and Global North Students) (Bruchac 3821). As a consequence, such intercultural spaces are triadic spaces, where ideas are deconstructed and rebuilt in real-time to ensure that fundamental comprehension, relatability, and key learning outcomes can be achieved across cultural boundaries. In this paper, the authors will examine the implementation of such a triadic contact zone designed to connect students at a British institute of higher education with Indigenous peoples in southern Brazil (Kaingáng). The paper will assess the ways in which information and ideas flowed (and were translated) within these learning experiences, drawing directly upon the experiences of Indigenous participants, students, and cultural mediators in order to identify a model that can be recreated by other educators seeking to integrate similar intercultural experiences into their pedagogy.

Background and Framework

For the Kaingáng people of southern Brazil, every eclipse is a learning opportunity. According to their oral traditions, Kamé, one of two creator spirits, would periodically devour his peer, Kairu. As the eclipse took hold, Kamé would appear victorious, but, as day turned to night, the folly of his actions was revealed. Only as Kairu emerged from Kamé would daylight (and with it, right and proper balance) return to the world (Vãgfy). For historic observers of this celestial play, the lesson could not have been clearer; balance between the two halves of creation was essential for a healthy, stable existence (Viega). Events such as this were a powerful way to explain fundamental social, cultural, and ecological truths. In a similar way, they continue to offer a framework of understanding that is deeply useful for the creation of intercultural learning spaces. In the story of the eclipse, there are two principle actors –Kamé and Kairu– but a third –the storyteller– is clearly implied. It is they who read the text of the cosmos, translating the astronomical dance into a tangible, relatable drama. Without this third party, the story, as a cultural (or intercultural) experience, could not be realised (Kapchan 135-151). The eclipse thus serves as an important reminder that, even within an ostensibly dyadic context, it is a triadic structure that best facilitates understanding and empathy.

This lesson is particularly important for educators who hope to create intercultural learning experiences that allow peoples in the Global North to learn from –not about– their Indigenous cousins in the Global South (Parsons et al. 7-14). The triadic structure facilitated by intercultural brokers and go-betweens has been an essential component of intercultural relations in South America since the

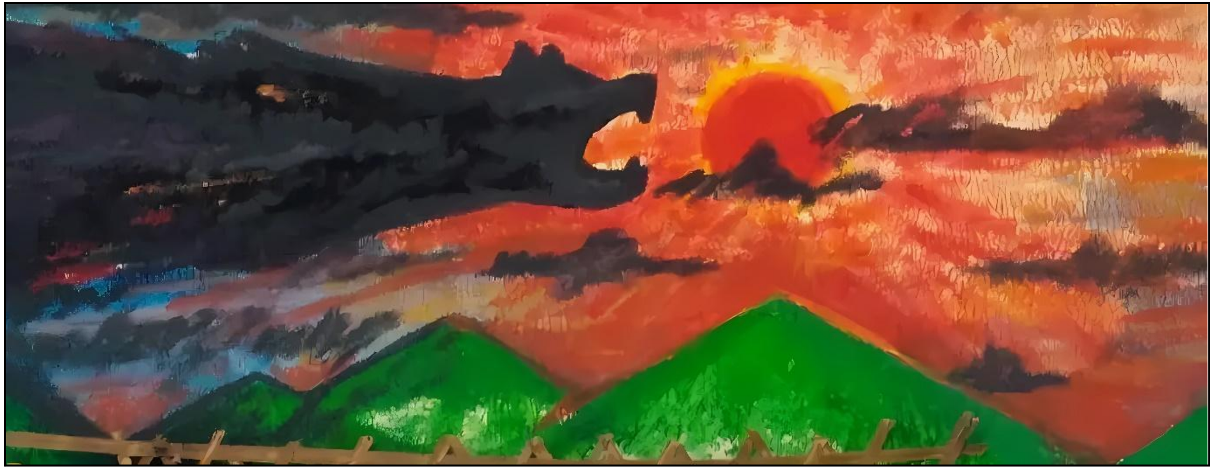

Fig. 1 Detail from a mural by Kaingáng artist Rãkag Dias. This painting depicts the moon ready to devour the sun as the total eclipse approaches.

early colonial period (Metcalf 1-11). Today, Indigenous peoples and educators can choose to inhabit the role of the 'go-between' (or intercultural broker) and, in so doing, can co-create instructive intercultural contact zones that help to spread awareness about Indigenous issues whilst creating new vectors to facilitate the transfer of knowledge and the construction of empathy (Sarmiento et al.). In so doing, they position themselves to combat what Jennifer Gutsell and Michael Inzlicht call "the empathy gap," the critical intellectual distance that separates vulnerable Indigenous communities in the Global South from relatively affluent consumers in the Global North (Gutsell and Inzlicht 596-603; Hollan 70-78). Moreover, they create an environment in which students empower themselves with the types of knowledge that can, as Carl Grant and Agostino Portera argue, help to reduce "ethnic, religious, linguistic, and cultural division" (Grant and Portera ix-x). The process of creating an effective intercultural contact zone is an active one; however, that requires near-constant acts of cultural and linguistic translation to ensure that ideas and concepts are not only understood, but relatable to peoples from very different cultural backgrounds. As such "there is need," as Marco Catarci argues, "for a wider recognition of the role of the intercultural mediator" and,

as this paper asserts, a far greater understanding of the triadic structure they embed into any contact zone they help to create (Cararci 65-84).

A triadic contact zone is an intercultural learning space that brings together Indigenous participants with non-Indigenous peoples that is mediated by individuals responsible for the process of translation, idea transformation, and the internalisation of new concepts. These spaces are a type of quasi-diplomatic space in which key learning outcomes are not necessarily rooted in the acquisition of specific facts, but the broadening of intercultural empathy and the deepening of understanding between communities. As such, they have wide applicability not only in higher education but other real-world settings: between students and Indigenous knowledge-carriers; between civil servants, politicians and Indigenous communities; between corporations mining for oil in the Amazon basin and their Indigenous neighbours; between loggers, farmers, and poachers and the Indigenous peoples who are adversely affected by their activities; all are areas in which the creation of triadic contact zones can be used to build hitherto unrealised vectors for the construction of empathy, understanding, and even allyship (James 587-607). This paper will examine a case study in the context of higher education, but the use of intercultural contact zones has broad applicability. By articulating the triadic structure of such spaces, and the dynamic flow of knowledge and perspectives that happen within them, this paper aims to provide a model that can be used as the basis for the successful creation of constructive educational contact zones, not only in higher education, but in a variety of fields and areas where intercultural contact and the empathy construction that can occur as a result of them are increasingly required.

Contact Zones

A triadic contact zone is space in which two primary parties (Indigenous and non-Indigenous) communicate with the assistance of a third (the education-facilitator) who serves to translate

language, ideas, concepts, and lived experience (Somerville and Perkins 253-266). It is a space in which constructive, educational discourse can emerge; but it is also a space that must be carefully managed to ensure that colonialist power imbalances are not reproduced. Contact zones are part of a far longer tradition that has, on balance, served to depower Indigenous peoples (Manathunga 165-168). As a consequence, its modern inheritors must work ceaselessly to ensure that the contact zones they help to create are constructive spaces that add value to Indigenous participants and communities, prioritising and platforming Indigenous Knowledge (Leonard). Designated education-facilitators must work in tandem towards a common goal, following a shared set of principles that centres and prioritises Indigenous voices (Chistianson et al. 257-260; Fredericks et al.). Whilst the creation of a cohesive and constructive dialogue is certainly the goal of any contact zone, not all voices can–or should–be platformed equally. Triadic learning spaces should encourage dialogue and the exchange of ideas, but they must create an environment in which non-Indigenous participants primarily learn from their Indigenous peers. Whatever power imbalances exist in the outside world, the modern contact zone should be a space in which Indigenous voices are heard–and the tools, context, and translation is provided to ensure that they are internalised and understood by non-Indigenous participants (Santoro et al. 65-76). Examples of other forms of intercultural pedagogical projects include those carried out by Byram, Markey, and Porto (Byram 256-259; Markey 264; Porto 248-251).

A contact zone is a complex and dynamic space in which information flows in multiple directions. It is a space in which participants need to be open to new ideas and perspectives, and where information is translated not only across linguistic barriers, but across cultural barriers also. In an ideal scenario, a contact zone is a space in which effective vectors of communication between Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants emerge quickly and organically. Within such a scenario, the education-facilitator would observe proceedings,

having no need to make direct interventions or provide significant amounts of additional context. In reality, however, differences in language, culture, and behaviours often necessitate more pro-active participation on their part (Tenembaum). Interactions within contact zones can be complex and layered, with different participant groups being guided by a range of (sometimes problematic) assumptions. An idea expressed clearly by one party may be difficult, perhaps impossible, for another to understand. Even in an ideal scenario, education-facilitators must diligently survey proceedings, ensuring that information is being communicated and understood effectively, engaging in a process of active listening even as they remain outwardly passive. In less than ideal scenarios, they should be prepared to intervene and mediate the space, ensuring that the discourse remains constructive, respectful, and additive. In either case, they should aim to act as custodians of healthy processes, whilst ensuring that they themselves do not become the dominant voices in the space (Hofstede 28-32).

Effective translation is essential to the development of an effective contact zone. Language is not purely a system of predesignated rules used to materialise thought. As Johnathan D. Culler argues, language articulates and organises a person's understanding of the world and, as a consequence, the act of linguistic translation is necessarily an act of cultural translation also (Culler 3-63). Decisions must be made in real-time, moving between a focus, for example, upon the form of what is being said versus a focus upon the content. Simultaneous translation requires particular attention be paid to the layered information that can be contained in any given expression of thought. They are translating words, to be sure, but those words contain emotion, nuance, and even innuendo that must also find some expression, with an appropriate level of emphasis, in the translation. That is particularly important when communicating the statements made by Indigenous peoples which contain references to their suffering and hard-fought resistance to oppression. As a consequence, the

act of translation is a dynamic force within the contact zone, even as it should, ideally, appear invisible. In so doing, it will, as Lawrence Venuti argues, make the (original) speaker as visible as possible (Venuti 1-34). For Indigenous persons, many of whom are likely to have been marginalised throughout their lives, this is a critical consideration.

The Education-Facilitator

It is the role of the education-facilitator(s) to ensure that contact zones are seamless, constructive spaces that prioritise Indigenous voices and wellbeing, whilst also creating quality learning opportunities for non-Indigenous participants. As Selami Ahmet Salgur argues, the role of the educator in intercultural development is key, but it is essential that educators creating intercultural contact zones recognise that they are taking on a distinct role within them (Salgur 1-5). They must serve as a mediating force, constructing and maintaining a mutually relatable flow of discourse. Designated education-facilitators must possess significant familiarity with the cultures, lived experiences, and perspectives of a space's Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants, ensuring that ideas and sentiment are translated across cultural, as well as linguistic, barriers. As a consequence, the process of intercultural education must begin long before the initiation of the contact zone. Education-facilitators must work to ensure that non-Indigenous participants enter such a space with a clear appreciation for the wider structural imbalances that exist between themselves and their Indigenous peers, and the position of relative privilege they likely enjoy (Czaykowska-Higgins 15-17). The education-facilitator must ensure that preparatory guidance is offered, and that non-Indigenous participants are empowered to act with informed respect (Gorski 87-90). Aside from providing the organisational structure, education-facilitators act as intercultural mediators, ensuring the creation of a constructive discourse underpinned by measured dialogue whilst providing the necessary context for the effective internalisation of ideas.

The term 'education-facilitator' is deliberately broad and it should not be applied to professional educators exclusively. Hard boundaries between the different participant groups do not exist within a contact zone. Rather, the participants will likely exist on a spectrum of participatory potential that reflects the dynamic fluidity that can emerge within such spaces. That is particularly pertinent to Indigenous participants, who are frequently experienced navigators of complex intercultural landscapes and, depending upon a range of factors (such as age, geographic location, personal history, etc.) they may already be experienced in the translation and transmission of complex ideas and concepts across cultural boundaries (Santos et al.). Non-Indigenous education-facilitators should respect the intercultural experience and agency of a space's Indigenous participants and be prepared to take a less active role when/if required. They should aim to facilitate as much–or as little–as an unfolding dialogue requires, providing the type of moment-to-moment management that will create intellectual and emotional space for Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants to engage in an effective discourse whilst ensuring that colonialist assumptions or ideas do not go unchallenged.

To be effective, non-Indigenous facilitators must possess an informed understanding of the wider context in which they operate. They must appreciate not only modern structural imbalances, and their own privilege, but also the ways in which their predecessors have compounded these issues–often in spite of their own best intentions (Nakayama and Martin 111-140). The construction of any contact zone must occur from an informed position, with insight into the wider tradition of problematic, failed, or colonialist contact zones used to identify, and preemptively mitigate, likely points of failure. Properly executed, contact zones have the potential to deepen the knowledge base of non-Indigenous participants whilst encouraging the development of new levels of intercultural empathy and allyship (Hollan 70-78). They can also serve as empowering platforms for Indigenous peoples who are

frequently denied a voice on the global –or even regional–stage, but they are also fraught with the potential to reinforce existing colonialist structures. As a consequence, non-Indigenous facilitators should ensure that they understand key aspects of the triadic structure's roots, and its implications for their own work.

The Triadic Tradition

Intercultural relations across the Americas have frequently relied upon the triadic structure created by the 'go-between,' a varied group of actors of European, Indigenous, or mixed-race descent with complex and, often, contradictory loyalties and motivations who are the functional antecedents of the modern education-facilitator. The go-between's role has rarely been recognised, however, with even prominent examples appearing inconsistently within the historic record and subsequent academic discourse (Merrell 19-41; Metcalf 1-11; Szasz). As a consequence, the precedent set by this group is rarely, if ever, explored in wider discussions about educational projects that seek to cross cultural and ethnic boundaries (Dewi et al.; Murray).

Go-betweens were inherently complex individuals whose modern inheritors, the education-facilitator, would benefit significantly from understanding the precedent they set, and the tradition in which they operate. Like their modern counterparts, go-betweens carried out a vast array of functions that were required for the successful–and peaceful–execution of even basic cross-cultural interactions. They frequently had one foot in both the Indigenous and non-Indigenous worlds and aside from translating languages, they translated custom, cosmology, ideas, concepts, and worldviews (Richter 50-67). This little discussed class of people lived between and acted across cultures, working, depending upon the example, for benevolent, malevolent, or selfish ends. Theirs was a complex existence and go-betweens evade easy description or categorisation. Many of them were of white European descent,

some of whom, such as the Frenchman known only to history by his Tupinambá name, Karwattuware, became far more interested in advancing the interests of their Indigenous peers than those of their fellow Europeans (Metcalf 65-67). On the opposite end of the spectrum, La Milanche, an Indigenous Nahua woman who served as Hernán Cortés's lover and go-between, played a substantial role that allowed a limited number of Spanish conquistadors to build large, powerful alliances that could be used to overthrow the region's mighty Indigenous empires (Metcalf 4).

Go-betweens could wield vast amounts of power and influence in their own right, gaining and occupying, as they did, positions of significant influence and trust. The same is often true for modern education-facilitators. A properly motivated go-between could transform the words, or even the intentions, of one party or another, creating new vectors of sympathy, or new pathways to acrimony. Although they typically acted with intent, the consequences of their actions were often unforeseen and far-reaching (Kessell 25-43). It is thus important that the go-between's modern-day successors understand the wider implications of their legacy. The history of go-betweens in the Americas provides a potent precedent–and a potent set of warnings. Colonial go-betweens could be problematic figures whose actions frequently served to advance colonialist interests whilst undermining Indigenous autonomy, livelihoods, and fundamental human rights. Even those who acted in good faith towards Indigenous peoples often did lasting damage by facilitating compromise and change that resulted in a further upsetting of power imbalances that were already being exploited by European colonisers. Some, however, achieved the opposite effect and their example should be closely studied (White 142-185, 223-268). Modern inheritors of this tradition should therefore carefully examine the precedent they have set and the myriad of success and failure points they created (Tourneau 213-220).

Modern inheritors of the go-between tradition must work to ensure that their actions support and empower Indigenous actors within cross-cultural contact zones. They must recognise what many go-betweens failed to–that Indigenous peoples possess inherently valuable cultures of their own that should not be compelled (or encouraged) to change; and that colonialist interests and ways of thinking are not superior (Renwick et al. 1-25). Within a cross-cultural contact zone, the modern go-between should work fastidiously to ensure that their actions or interventions are never extractive, but add the type of value to Indigenous communities that they have openly declared and seek (Parsons et al. 7-14). Education-facilitators can, like their historic antecedents, be of Indigenous or non-Indigenous extraction, but their knowledge of all other actors in a cross-cultural space, whatever their cultural background, must be deep in order to ensure that they are able to translate ideas and concepts effectively. Their goals should be closely aligned to those of Indigenous communities and they should prioritise the development and deepening of intercultural empathy among non-Indigenous participants, not the strengthening of colonialist power structures (Snelgrove et al. 1-32). Indeed, the development of cross-cultural empathy is perhaps the most important, and readily achievable, learning outcome that should be embedded by them into all of the cross-cultural contact zones they help to create (DeTruk 384).

Education-facilitators who learn from the precedent set by historic go-betweens must accept that they can fail in their role and, in so doing, cause damage to communities that have already been affected by a range of social and economic inequalities. As a consequence, they must undergo a thorough process of preparation and reflection prior to the creation of any contact zone, investigating likely points of failure within their proposed project. Aside from developing strategies for successfully encouraging constructive discourse, education-facilitators must develop strategies for de-escalation and diplomatic reconciliation,

as well being able to set out a clear framework for participants that will prepare them to engage in the process with an open mind that is not limited by their own culturally specific set of expectations (Ilie 264-268). The modern go-between carries a significant responsibility; and a long, problematic history upon their shoulders. Understanding this, and responding appropriately to it, will best prepare them to facilitate constructive progress in areas of great importance to communities that were frequently made vulnerable by the actions of those who preceded them (Hagedorn 62-66).

Kaingáng People

The Kaingáng have been widely marginalised in Brazil. They belong to the Jê language family, an extensive group of Indigenous peoples found throughout much of the sub-Amazonian region, whose cultural roots date back thousands of years. Their traditional territories include (what are now) the states of São Paulo, Paraná, Santa Catarina, Rio Grande do Sul as well as the Argentine province of Misiones. Currently, the Kaingáng number approximately 50,000 persons living in 25 reserved areas. Like all members of the Jê, the Kaingáng are characterised by a dualistic moiety system that ensures cooperation between different bands (Mayberry-Lewis 1-13). Named after a pair of creator spirits, Kaimé and Kairu, these moieties arbitrarily separate the Kaingáng into two equally sized groups, members of whom identify as one extended family (Métraux 114-123). The Indigenous participants of this contact zone are situated in the settlement of Toldo Chimbangue in the western part of the state of Santa Catarina. This area is one of the largest agro-industrial regions in Brazil. As a result, many indigenous workers are hired for minimum wage to work within the meat industry, which has been one of the main economic engines that has fuelled the destruction of the rainforests in which the Kaingáng have traditionally lived. The forest remains important to this community, with regenerated biomass and the manufacture and sale

of handcrafts creating an important link between the Kaingáng and their cultural history (Viega 1-6).

The Kaingáng participants of the contact zone identify as warriors ("Há tyr") who work to improve the situation of their people. They have a multi-year relationship with the project's non-Indigenous education-facilitators, having worked closely with them to record aspects of their peoples' oral histories and folklore. They learned of this project through informal conversations with the education-facilitators and self-selected themselves to be involved in it, perceiving an opportunity to raise awareness of their community by speaking with an international audience.

Study Overview

Across much of the northern hemisphere, there is a significant interest in Indigenous peoples, particularly those linked to the effects of ecological change, sustainability, and violence to (and in) the rainforests of South America (Borunda 2019; Nicas et al.; Reid et al. 169-178; Reuters Staff). Despite significant amounts of interest, meaningful knowledge about Indigenous peoples in South America is constrained by a range of geographic, cultural, and economic barriers. The normalisation of online conferencing, facilitated by the COVID-19 pandemic, however, created pedagogical opportunities and, for educators with the appropriate network of contacts, intercultural experience, and understanding of the historic precedent, online intercultural contact zones are now a viable mode of pursuing intercultural pedagogical goals.

Since early 2019, students studying undergraduate and postgraduate History at the British institution have received annual opportunities to participate in intercultural contact experiences with representatives of the Kaingáng people of sub-Amazonian Brazil (Santos et al.). The 2022 edition of this project involved fifteen British students, two Indigenous

participants, one British educator, two Brazilian educators, and one translator (see Table 1). The students were invited to participate in this project on a voluntary basis, in order to foster new intercultural competencies and deepen their understanding of Indigenous history. The students who participated in the project chose (self-selected) to participate in it. No credits were awarded for participation.

Participants	**Nationality**	**Number**	**Age**	**Gender**	**Level of Education**	**Degree**
Student(s)	British	8	19-20	F	Second year (sophomore)	History
Student(s)	British	5	19-20	M	Second year (sophomore)	History and Politics
Student(s)	German	1	20	F	Second year (sophomore)	History
Student(s)	British	1	22	F	Postgraduate (MA)	History
Indigenous	Kaingáng (Brazilian)	1	24-39	M	Postgraduate Degree Awarded	
Indigenous	Kaingáng and Guaraní (Brazilian)	1	24	F	Undergraduate Degree Awarded	
Education-Facilitator 1 (In-Person)	British	39	1	M	PhD	
Education-Facilitator 2 (In-Person)	Brazilian	62	1	M	PhD	
Education-Facilitator 3 (Remote)	Brazilian	40	1	F	PhD	
Translator	Brazilian	27	1	M	Undergraduate	

Table 1. Participants in the 2022 Contact Zone.

The overall learning experience comprised three component parts: (1) the preparatory session, (2) the contact zone, and (3) the follow-up seminar. Information, ideas, and knowledge flowed between each of these sessions. Although the contact zone represented the substantive portion of this learning experience, a properly executed preparatory session,

together with in situ opportunities to develop new contributions (questions) and a follow-up seminar proved essential in ensuring that knowledge acquired by this experience was properly contextualised and understood.

From the perspective of the educators who took part in this project, this learning experience aimed to facilitate the following learning outcomes:

1. A deepening of informed intercultural empathy
2. The expansion of knowledge related to the history and culture of the Kaingáng people
3. The further development of active listening skills and cross-cultural communication competencies

For the Kaingáng participants who took part, the teaching of the following key themes informed their participation:

1. The trans-generational nature of the violence committed against their community
2. The prevalence and ongoing nature of cultural genocide
3. The impact of ecological destruction upon the Kaingáng

Fifteen students participated in the contact zone. Prior to the primary session, they engaged in an in-depth, in-person preparatory session with their educators that built upon prior knowledge acquired over the course of their studies. At the start of the session, students were shown several short documentary-style pieces that provided them with essential knowledge about the Kaingáng peoples, their culture, and their history. Following this, they participated in a seminar-style discussion about the material, identifying key themes and drafting potential questions. Building upon this, they then developed a series of learning outcomes that they hoped to achieve within the contact zone. These were:

1. A deeper insight into Kaingáng history and folklore
2. An understanding of how women's experiences differ from those of men

3. An appreciation for how ecological change has impacted these people

The students then worked collaboratively to develop a cohesive questionnaire, under the guidance of their educators, which would satisfy these outcomes. Educators provided feedback to the students based upon the quality and suitability of the proposed questions (referring to the Kaingáng participants' learning outcomes). Finally, the students engaged in a discussion about contact zone etiquette, which included an overview of appropriate contact zone behaviours.

Although preparatory sessions necessarily precede the primary intercultural experience, educators were already acting as intercultural mediators by providing students with an opportunity to develop key behavioural competencies whilst imparting important contextual information that would allow them to better navigate the learning experience. Students thus received culturally relevant feedback on their emerging learning outcomes and questions, whilst also being instructed on the importance of patience, inclusive, and welcoming behaviours. Following the conclusion of the preparatory session, students were provided with links to the *Kaingáng Oral History Project*, an online resource that provides open access to a series of oral histories and commentaries (Reid). They were then invited to engage in an asynchronous discussion about the key themes that emerged from their reading of these texts whilst being allowed, under the guidance of their educators, to make minor changes to their questions that reflected their own deepening knowledge of these people and their culture.

Following the conclusion of this preparatory process, the contact zone was scheduled for 2pm UK time (10am in Brazil), and carried out via Zoom. The session was carried out in three stages, lasting approximately 110 minutes in total: first, the Kaingáng representatives introduced themselves and provided an opening statement in which they communicated the

key themes they wished to explore. This was followed by a question and answer session, with students taking turns to ask questions of the Kaingáng participants, drawing from the questionnaire they had developed as a group. As the question and answer session unfolded, students were able to develop new questions which were passed onto their education-facilitators who vetted them and offered feedback in real time. Finally, the Kaingáng participants were invited to make a closing statement where they underlined key themes and ideas. Following the completion of this session, the British students were invited to a follow-up roundtable where they talked about the experience and reflected upon the effectiveness of their questions and assess what progress that was made to achieving their chosen learning outcomes. This session also provided the educators with an opportunity to assess the success of their own learning outcomes whilst also providing feedback that could be used to inform future iterations of this project.

Data Collection and Positionality

This project created four distinct datasets: (1) student feedback, via an open-response questionnaire (see 'Findings and Future Development'); (2) notes and reflections, produced by the education-facilitators; (3) reflections produced by the project's Indigenous participants; and (4) a video recording of the learning experience. The first three datasets captured subjective impressions that could be compared and contrasted in order to assess how the contact zone was perceived and valued by its differing participants. The fourth dataset –the video recording–created an objective record of events, the fact (if not truth) of the matter against which the first three could be considered.

The authors of this paper are the education-facilitators and Indigenous participants who took part in this contact zone. As a consequence, we looked to elements of auto-ethnography, collaborative intercultural education, and self-study in order to create an

effective framework for assessment and reflection. By its very nature, a contact zone is an inclusive and immersive experience that is designed to encourage "the convergence of mental models" (Liu et al. 269-275). The authors of this work experienced this project from their own unique vantage points, but worked collectively to develop a consensus. Auto-ethnography is, as Ellis et al. put it, the process of 'retroactively and selectively' assessing past pedagogical practice (Ellist et al. 276-277). The multitude of cultural perspectives involved in this project, however, provided ample opportunities to check and balance perceived practice against the perception of others; and the reality of the video recording. This process required (and encouraged) significant 'intercultural competence' (de Hei et al. 190), in order to reduce what Loughram and Northfield describe as the distance between 'aspiration' and 'teaching practice' (Loughram and Northfield 8-10).

The non-Indigenous educators sought to remain actively aware of their position of comparative privilege throughout this process (Jacobs-Huey 792-795). Power imbalances between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples require vigilance and, particularly where the expression of Indigenous perspectives was concerned, the non-Indigenous participants actively sought to defer to the judgement of their Indigenous collaborators. The non-Indigenous educators recognise that Indigenous knowledge is not theirs to control; that it is rooted in centuries (or more) of tradition, place, experience, and community. It has been treated as an equal form of knowledge equal to that which is typically privileged by non-Indigenous scholars (Patel 19-23).

Dynamics within the Contact Zone

Because a comprehensive preparatory process had been carried out prior to the commencement of our contact zone, the British students entered it with a significant amount of contextual knowledge and a set of culturally appropriate, constructive questions that had

been developed through a process of interactive mediation led by education-facilitator 1. This level of preparation allowed the students and Indigenous participants to control the resulting dialogue with visible interventions on the part of the education-facilitators being relatively limited. Instead, the most visible mediating role was carried out by the translator. In the contact zone, this role is highly active, requiring the near-constant expenditure of energy as the translator works to build a cohesive linguistic bridge.

Education-facilitators take on highly active roles within the contact zone, even as they strive for comparative invisibility. Like their historical antecedents, they shape and, in real-time, reshape the contact zone whilst focusing attention on the two principal parties–in this case, the Kaingáng participants and the students. With the latter primarily asking a pre-mediated set of questions that focused their inquiries into a concise, constructive package, the vast majority of the time spent in the contact zone was dedicated to the responses–and therefore voices–of the Indigenous participants. The result was a dialogue in which Indigenous knowledge was thoroughly prioritised.

The students engaged in two primary activities within the contact zone: active listening and the creation of follow-up questions–for example, "do you often have to deal with prejudice?" Again, the role of the education-facilitator was critical, though largely invisible, as they read, vetted, and, where necessary, provided feedback to proposed questions. This was accomplished through the use of a shared online document (accessed through smart devices, such as tablets), ensuring that the Indigenous participants were not interrupted by this process. This allowed for a dynamic, responsive dialogue to emerge that evidenced active listening on the part of the students, providing feedback that allowed the Indigenous participants to assess the progress they were making towards the achievement of their own learning outcomes. For the Kaingáng, the contact zone became a space in which their voice was not only centred, but responsible for driving an evolving, responsive

discourse. For the students, it was a space in which their intellectual curiosity was heard, validated, and responded to.

This process resulted in a discourse that was structured, dynamic, and culturally sensitive. Premeditated student questions were already well-informed, but the ability to create follow-up questions allowed for the further deepening of inquiry and exploration of key themes. According to the video recording, it was Duko, the Kaingáng man, who answered student 4's question about colonial power imbalances ("How do people in your community stand-up to the power of the state?"), but student 4 also recognised an opportunity to potentially target the group's second learning outcome ("to develop an understanding of how women's experiences differed from those of men") by posing the same question to Ary, the Kaingáng woman, and comparing their respective answers. Using the shared online document, they obtained permission to do so and, from Ary, received an answer which, as they had hoped, engaged with the topic of women's experiences:

> as a woman I want to keep fighting because I want to protect my kids and send them to university. People think Indigenous people sending their kids to university means that they are going white but that is not true. Our traditional medicine still works but diseases are becoming more powerful so we need to add on to what we already have and make ourselves even stronger.

This response contrasted images of modern institutions with those of traditional medicine in a way that illustrated a key aspect of the lived experience for so many Indigenous peoples–the struggle between traditional and westernised forms of knowledge, a concept that can otherwise be difficult for students, who lack a frame of reference, to grasp.

Providing a discreet way for follow-up questions to be formulated created numerous opportunities to deepen discourse and understanding. To best enable this,

education-facilitators must remain fully engaged throughout the duration of the contact zone, promptly and effectively feeding back to the students in a timely manner. When the students asked about the effects of deforestation on Indigenous communities, the answer they received prompted a flurry of input to the online shared document:

> [w]e feel [its affects] in our skin. It brings us together, it makes us sad, but brings us closer still and it brings us closer to a national level of [inter-Indigenous] cooperation. Everyone across the world enjoys the exports of Brazil. Everyone is eating soy that was planted in land that was ripped out from under our fingers and it was watered by the blood that pours out of our skin.

Within the shared document, a new consensus question quickly emerged in response to this ("What can we do to help?") which was slightly modified by education-facilitator 1 into its final form ("What can we do to help Indigenous communities in this situation?"). The response to this, in turn, provided much material upon which the students could later reflect:

> One of the things you can do is join support groups…have knowledge about the products you have already purchased...The current government, we are losing the war against them. It is making the path easier to destroy us and plant over our bodies. Certainly, everyone in here, everyone in Europe, has already tasted our dead blood over and over. Through the 1500s to the 1800s, we have been looted. So look around in your churches and in your cathedrals for the gold that was taken from our dead hands.

As serious as parts of the discussion were, the contact zone was also a place for levity and the building of empathy (Lähdesmäki and Koistinen 45-55). When asked about whether, as in Europe, womanhood is associated with domesticity, the Kaingáng representatives offered a light hearted response that connected positively with the students. "It is necessary for me to respond first," Duko informed the students, "so that I can defend myself before the

whipping can begin." The substantive response to this question, however, came from Ary, who offered a deep and compelling insight that resonated with many of the British students:

> I see it as women coming together, instead of it just being allowed to come together by men…We are telling them, when they are out camping, we are the ones 'hunting' and doing the labour intense jobs. When you're out, we're doing your job and you're not doing ours, but always in a very positive [way]. I see it as women are guiding the men…We have always –and you can see this in images of public [protests]– we are the ones in the forefront. It is always women and children first. We get beat up, and then the men beat up the police force later, but it is an ongoing struggle. It is almost…40 years ago that this fight began, but it is not so easy as it seems as we are still being criticised by the elderly women, and yet 'we were born but we should only work for the men', but I see this situation changing.

The students have their own experiences of generational divides, but this response provided them with significant room for personal reflection. Ary spoke of power and activism independent of traditional gender roles, but she also spoke of a different form of empowerment that, for women of an older generation, was frequently tied to the maintenance of long-standing gendered divisions. This apparent contradiction provided much fodder for discourse and debate in the follow-up session.

Over the course of two hours, the students had the opportunity to learn much from Duko and Ary. Contact zones necessarily create complex knowledge-transfers and there is much information, often too much, for non-Indigenous participants to successfully synthesise in situ. That was certainly the case with this project, but a pre-planned follow-up session provided an ideal opportunity for the students to reflect upon their experience whilst surveying and deconstructing the information that had been shared with them (Tarí 19-33).

With guidance from their educator, ideas that had been expressed subtly within the contact zone could be integrated into their thinking whilst outstanding questions or issues could be discussed in a seminar-style discussion. As with the early parts of the process, the follow-up session was a guided process. The students had naturally related to the contact zone through a lens shaped by their own lived experience and perspective. As a consequence, they naturally focused upon certain issues whilst not always recognising the implied emphasis that had been placed upon other topics by the Indigenous speakers. Issues around gender equality, for instance, were a popular topic of discussion; but few of the students noted the significance of the role attributed to the "elder women" in maintaining existing gendered roles, nor what this implied about intergenerational conflict (Soróg). Contact zones are spaces in which layers of meaning can be coded into any given statement. As a result, follow-up discussions are necessary to provide non-Indigenous participants with the opportunity to critically reflect upon their experience and to deconstruct the dialogue in a guided manner.

Findings and Future Development

To assess the effectiveness of this project, the students were invited to provide feedback to their educators. To accomplish this, we chose to utilise open-response questions that invited students to describe (1) positive aspects of the project; (2) any negative parts of the project; and (3) any areas where they believed the project could be improved. This approach to gathering feedback extended the qualitative aspect of the broader learning experience without unduly burdening or frustrating the participants. It also served to create an open information exchange that did not impose loaded phraseology upon the students (Rowley 310-314). Open-response questions required the students to prioritise and articulate their thoughts in their own words (Brown 200-219). Perhaps most importantly, it created a framework that invited discussions on the aspects of the process–positive or negative–that had the greatest

impact upon them, producing a valuable set of insights that could be built upon for future iterations of the project (Riiskjær 509-516).

Feedback about the project was notably positive with all students taking time to describe their satisfaction with the overall experience. They reported that the experience had "opened [their] eyes" to new ways of thinking and exposed them to "new ideas." The project built upon peoples and themes they were "already interested in" whilst providing them with a "really interesting way to learn about Indigenous peoples" that was novel in the context of their wider learning journey. The students particularly appreciated "hearing Indigenous people speak about their own lives" and "learning about things [we] didn't know about–like gender dynamics" or "women's experiences." The students also reported a lot of satisfaction with the "ecological elements" of the discussion. Climate change is a particularly relevant topic to British learners who often lack specific insight into its effects on distant geographic regions or its impact on vulnerable communities. The discussions related to this subject were seen as "really interesting," and the "type of thing I wish I'd known before." The feedback to the first question could be categorised into three key areas that the students particularly valued and were noted for future iterations of the project: (1) learning directly from Indigenous persons; (2) focusing upon issues relevant to the students' own interests; and (3) the agency they experienced in being able to pose questions directly to the Kaingáng representatives.

Despite being given an opportunity to report on negative aspects of the project, the students provided limited feedback to this question, with most (9 out of 15) choosing not to provide a response. It appears this was the result of high levels of student satisfaction ("this was really fun"; "I liked the experience very much"; "I wish we had more experiences like this"). Indeed, the only consistent theme that emerged from the six students who did respond

was that the duration of the contact zone–at nearly two hours–was too long. Students reported high levels of intellectual engagement, whilst also noting that fatigue was starting to become an issue by the end of the session. Several students suggested having “more than one session” with the Indigenous representatives, suggesting a potential path forward–a contact zone that takes place in two separate instalments with an intermediary session to facilitate discussion and the creation of new questions. This would also help to alleviate the potential, as one student noted, for the process of in situ question composition to “distract” from the process of actively listening to the Indigenous speakers.

Although negative feedback was limited, the students did provide some additional feedback when asked about potential improvements. They noted that the preparatory session was “really helpful” as it “explained things they did not [already] know.” One student suggested an additional preparatory session be added, providing an opportunity for further contextual information and a broader knowledge base to be established. Three students reiterated the desire for more contact, via an additional session, with the Indigenous representatives. Two students also asked for a greater degree of autonomy within the contact zone, by being able to ask follow-up questions without the need to undergo an in situ editing process. This suggestion is understandable but would introduce an unpredictable element with even well-intentioned follow-up questions risking the intellectual integrity of the contact zone. As a consequence, this suggestion will not be adopted for future iterations of the project, but a clearer explanation should be given to ensure that students understand the need for a controlled flow of information within contact zones. Indeed, explaining this to the students (who all study history) would provide an excellent opportunity to explore the historic roots of the triadic structure and how lessons from that process have been implemented into the modern contact zone in which they are participating.

For the Kaingáng representatives, feedback was provided via follow-up conversations with educator 1. For them, this session proved valuable because it provided a platform through which they could carry out further resistance to the colonising process by centring their voices in front of an international audience that rarely acknowledges their existence (Hicks 1966; Hicks 1971; Métraux; Schaden). The scale of the genocide suffered by the Kaingáng and other Indigenous peoples is such that "there is nothing left [for us to do] but to resist, so that what remains of ancestral culture does not become extinct" (Vãgfy). In the modern era, resistance encompasses a wide range of activities, ranging from proactive demonstrations to the simple act of celebrating one's Indigenous identity, through an exploration of story, cosmology, and ways of knowing: "We need to teach the world that these lands had owners long before the Europeans arrived" (Vãgfy). The contact zone provided a platform for the Kaingáng representatives to work towards these aims by co-creating a space where they could declare that "the Portuguese invaded, occupied by force, the lands of our peoples" and that "this war is not over yet: the project for the occupation of indigenous lands is still ongoing today" (Vãgfy). The Kaingáng have few opportunities to be heard on either the national or the international stages, but through projects such as this, they are able to speak directly to an audience of active learners in the Global North, many of whom aspire to build careers in policy-making environments (Cunha; D'Angelis; Fernandes; Mota; Pereira; Tommasino; Wiik and Mora).

Discussion and Conclusions

Intercultural contact zones offer exciting, novel ways to learn and to teach. They are spaces that can bridge complex cultural gaps whilst technological solutions allow for the easy overcoming of geographic divides. They are also inherently complex spaces that exist within a centuries-long intercultural tradition that has too-often helped to empower colonising structures over Indigenous communities. As a consequence, the modern contact zone is a

space that must be managed carefully by individuals (or groups of individuals) who understand the methodological and ethical challenges that accompany them, and the opportunities that exist for them to challenge societal "division" whilst closing the "empathy gap" that can separate Indigenous from non-Indigenous peoples (Grant and Agostino ix-x; Gutsell and Inzlicht 70-78). Properly executed, a triadic structure can facilitate the flow of information in a constructive and additive way, providing distinct learning experiences for non-Indigenous learners; and platforms for otherwise marginalised Indigenous peoples where their voices, stories, and knowledge-ways are centred, heard, and celebrated.

The creation of an effective contact zone requires careful planning and constant mediation. In-depth preparatory sessions are required to ensure that non-Indigenous participants possess the necessary contextual knowledge, whilst having an opportunity to develop questions that will allow them to satisfy their intellectual curiosity in a constructive manner. The preparatory stage is an essential part of the process that may very well dictate the success of the wider learning experience. Properly executed, a preparatory session will create a framework that will allow the education-facilitator to become comparatively invisible, ostensibly observing a successful intercultural dialogue

Fig. 2 Mural painted by Kaingáng artist Rãkag Dias. It depicts the coming of a total eclipse, and a Kaingáng warrior who is preparing to shoot down the moon in order to protect the cosmic balance that will be destroyed by the consumption of the sun. This mural is located at the school in the Toldo Chimbangue, a Kaingáng community in the Brazilian state of Santa Catarina.

that requires only minimal direct intervention. Still, the education-facilitator must remain an active presence, synthesising the process of the dialogue and serving to ensure that the discourse remains constructive throughout. By carrying out a post-contact zone follow-up session, they can ensure that non-Indigenous learners fully understand and internalise the dialogue, accounting for cultural differences in nuance, delivery, and taste. Facilitators must play a highly active role throughout the learning experience, ensuring that problematic patterns identified in the historic record are not repeated whilst facilitating constructive, mutually additive levels of discourse.

Contact zones can be utilised broadly within educational environments, significantly deepening students' access to a range of knowledge-ways, perspectives, and insights that might otherwise be impossible for them to access. They also have significant value outside of

Higher Education. As Indigenous issues, ecological change, and the climate crisis intensifies, knowledge about Indigenous lives, cultures, and lived experiences are unlikely to keep pace in the Global North. Educators can do much in a traditional educational setting, but the triadic contact zone described in this paper can be adapted to work within a range of other contexts where intercultural dialogues with marginalised Indigenous peoples are necessary or desirable. Practitioners, policy makers, and NGOs can draw upon this example to develop effective vectors of communication, ensuring that policy and action are not just informed by awareness of Indigenous peoples, but the knowledge and experience they wish to impart.

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intercultural education in that region for more than twenty years. He is currently a professor at UnoChapecó where he teaches on the Master's Programs in Education.

Aldorado Antonio Fidelis is an Indigenous educator based at Toldo Chimbangue in southern Brazil. He gained both an undergraduate degree and a master's degree in education at UnoChapecó, for which he produced a thesis that recorded and examined the oral histories of his community: "The knowledge to which I was educated does not have reading, does not have writings, because it is from orality that life in life is presented to us indigenous people". Fidelis is known as Duko Vãgfy among his own community – a name he also uses when engaged in activism on behalf of his community.

Ariany Sales Dallabrida is an Indigenous activist of Kaingáng, Guarani, and Italian descent who received her "warrior instinct from [her] mother". She is of the Kamé moiety of the Kaingáng people and has spent much of her life engaged in "militancy, and getting involved with Indigenous movements" and today works as a "communicator." She is known as Ary Sorég among her own community.

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