

‘Our Hearts Through Our Voices’: Community Building in Hopi Radio During COVID-19

Katie Moylan

Associate Professor
School of Media, Communication and Sociology, University of Leicester, UK
Km264@le.ac.uk

Abstract

This article considers and seeks to amplify the community-building work of Hopi radio during the pandemic, exploring ways in which tribally-specific production practices at Hopi station KUYI FM exemplify and communicate Hopi values of compassion, empathy and resilience. In this exploration, I draw on radio practitioner perspectives and community-facing content, utilizing Indigenous concepts to analyse how KUYI’s production practices comprise ‘acts of resurgence’ (Corntassel 2012, Betasamosake Simpson 2017) as place-based practices produced within and emerging from a *grounded normativity* (Coulthard and Betasamosake Simpson 2016). Through this analysis, I examine in turn diverse ways in which KUYI’s COVID-19-specific programming reinforces community trust during the current pandemic and enables opportunities for building Indigenous solidarity.

Keywords

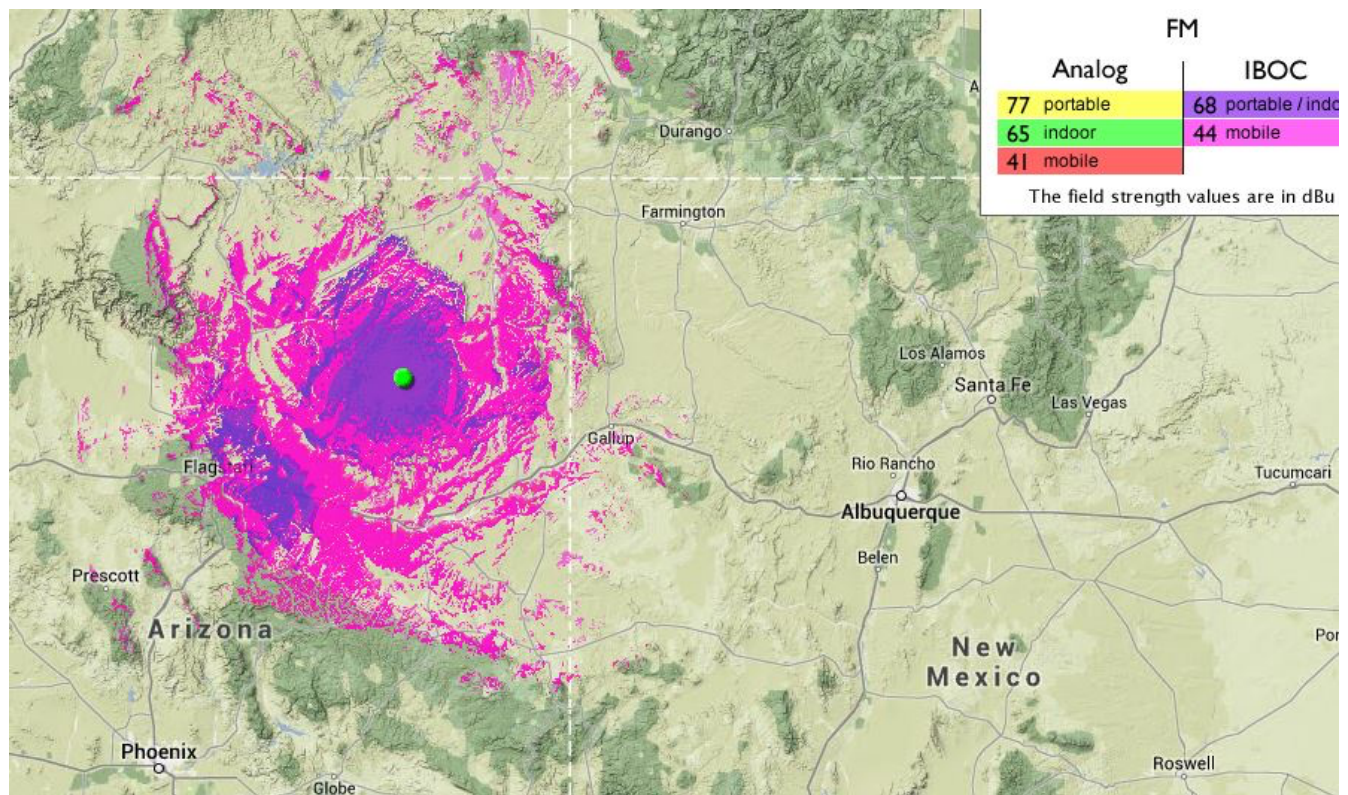
Indigenous radio, community radio, transcultural production, place-based practices, grounded normativity



Introduction

Existing and entrenched economic and societal inequalities in the US became much more visible with the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic in the first half of 2020. As COVID-19 swiftly spread within some areas while seemingly remaining almost non-existent in others, localized reactions produced diverse official as well as informal responses. Development of guidelines and protocols varied substantially at the local level, determined regionally by community expectations, place-specific economic and political pressures and characterized by differing and unequal access to resources. Writing from within this deeply ambiguous and uncertain context, I explore community-building practices in dedicated COVID-19 programming produced by Indigenous community station KUYI FM, broadcasting content by and for Hopi and Tewa communities in northeast Arizona. My analysis considers production and station practices as explained by Hopi radio practitioners to examine ways in which Hopi radio has been enabling community-building during the pandemic crisis. In particular, I explore how place-based practices of community-building in KUYI radio production can function as acts of *resurgence*, drawing on Corntassel (2012) and Betasamosake Simpson (2016, 2017). Jeff Corntassel considers practices of resurgence as reflecting ‘the spiritual, cultural, economic, social and political scope of the struggle [against forces of colonization]’ (Corntassel 2012, 88). These elements coalesce in the tribally-specific community-building work in KUYI’s everyday radio production practice, as will be explained and explored. Hopi production practices are in turn generated within and through a *grounded normativity* as defined by Coulthard and Betasamosake Simpson (2016) and shaped by principles of relationality (Wilson 2008).

Based in a short row of storefronts in Second Mesa in Keams Canyon on Hopi lands, surrounded by Navajo, or Diné, lands and beyond that by the state of Arizona, KUYI broadcasts locally on 88.1 FM with a strong signal reach from Winslow to Window Rock, Arizona.



Map 1. NPR Coverage Map

This substantial signal reach, boosted by a second LP signal broadcasting on 89.1FM, enables KUYI to transmit to the entirety of the Hopi reservation as well as to places beyond its official edges. KUYI also streams live via two streaming services and posts regularly on a dedicated Facebook page. KUYI's 69,000-watt broadcast and online streaming coverage incorporates upward of 270,000 people located in Navajo, Coconino and Apache counties containing the Hopi and Navajo reservations, Grand Canyon National Park as well as the cities of Flagstaff and Winslow.¹ Broadcasting since 2000, KUYI speaks to Hopi and Tewa communities across the twelve Hopi villages, as well as to other listeners within their antenna range or tuning in online. On their official tribal website, the Hopi describe themselves thusly: 'The Hopi Tribe is a sovereign nation located in northeastern Arizona. The reservation occupies part of Coconino and Navajo counties, encompasses more than 1.5 million acres, and is made up of 12 villages on three mesas.'² Station manager Richard Davis confirms KUYI communicates regularly with between four to five distinct tribal communities within its broadcast radius.³ Additionally, as Hopi lands are encircled by Navajo or Diné lands the communities overlap in multiple, everyday ways. This spatial intersection of Hopi and Navajo lands with the state of Arizona and the nearby New Mexico state line is host to several tribal stations serving Navajo communities.⁴ Self-described as a 'Native American Public Radio Station'⁵, KUYI combines local Hopi-produced programming with nationally syndicated Native Voice 1 shows such as *National Native News* and *Undercurrents*, produced by and for Indigenous communities across the US.

Recognising the Cultural Work of Community and Indigenous Radio

From March 2020, KUYI has been producing dedicated live COVID-19 coverage. The idea for this article came to me following my attendance at a strategic planning meeting at the KUYI studio. The meeting took place on 16 March 2020, just as the real impact of COVID-19 in the US was emerging in mainstream media coverage but was not at all fully acknowledged by Donald Trump's presidential administration and was therefore being downplayed by national news networks such as FOX and ABC. I first visited KUYI in April 2017 to meet practitioners and discuss the specificities of Hopi-produced radio programming. Our first round-table interview in 2017 explored particularities of Hopi radio production practices such as culturally-appropriate nuances of sharing information on-air on a seasonal basis and the processes involved in recording stories told by elders for radio broadcast (see Moylan 2019). My ongoing research interest in ways in which community-produced radio facilitates self-expression of communities otherwise marginalized by mainstream media, first led me to Indigenous, or tribal, radio and to KUYI, as well as Hualapai station KWLP and Pascua Yaqui station KPYT, also visited in 2017. In 2019 I began researching Indigenous community radio content and practice more widely, supported by an EU/Marie Curie Global Research Fellowship.

The founder of South Africa's community radio station Bush Radio, Zane Ibrahim, described 'community radio' as being '10% radio, 90% community', reinforcing recognition of the importance of radio as a medium and means for community-building and articulations of community identity, particularly for communities marginalized in mainstream media (Ibrahim in Radio Regen et al 2005, 16). Defined by UNESCO as radio managed and produced by and for the community (UNESCO 2001),

¹ Information from KUYI FAQ sent by email from Richard Davis, 31 March 2021.

² From the main page of the Hopi Tribal website, <https://www.hopi-nsn.gov/>, accessed 10 April 2021.

³ Interview with Richard Davis, via Skype, May 14, 2020. Jana Wilbricht confirms 12 villages on Hopi in her informative article on tribal community radio, "Tribal radio stations as key community informants and sites of resistance to mainstream media narratives" (Wilbricht 2019, p. 49). Details of KUYI's history and first broadcast date can be found on the station's website, <https://www.kuyi.net/about-kuyi> (accessed 11 August 2020)

⁴ In Indigenous media coverage and anecdotally in conversations with Indigenous radio practitioners, both 'Navajo' and 'Diné' are names used to describe this community. I therefore include both terms here to reflect this diverse usage.

⁵ From the KUYI homepage, <https://www.kuyi.net/>, accessed 24 August 2020.

community radio responds to the diverse needs of communities in distinct and specific ways depending on local and social contexts. In 2000 the FCC authorized the creation of a new, low power radio service with the intent ‘to create a class of community stations not controlled by existing media concern—i.e. commercial entities’, as Jeffrey M. Echert explains (Echert 2015, 240). These new low power (LP) licenses represented a new opportunity in the US for the creation of standalone community and non-profit stations. In 2010, The Local Community Radio Act further legitimated the link between LP licensing and community-facing provision and in October 2013 the FCC opened a second window for applications for new LP stations, receiving 2,800 applications. As Echert suggests, ‘[i]n an industry dominated by only a few voices, community stations now have the chance to raise their own voices above the din’ (Echert 2015: 237). Structurally and materially, community radio creates a space for community self-representation where mainstream media continually fails to do so.

Radio technology from its beginnings embodied a facility for ‘community-building’, as argued by John Hartley (2000, see also Hendy 2000), facilitating and potentially nurturing a collective sense of belonging for communities through shared programming. Through such programming radio also has the capacity for *reproducing locality*, strengthening a sense of belonging for communities connected (even in part) by geography. In relation to Indigenous self-representation via media production, Leanne Betasamosake Simpson observes that ‘[w]hen we don’t have content that accurately reflects our lives, being a content provider is important’ (Betasamosake Simpson 2017, 225). The radio medium is itself well suited for Indigenous cultural expression; as an aural form it emphasizes cadence and delivery and has the capacity for a range of nuances in voiced talk and storytelling. Tribal radio stations, and standalone Indigenous shows broadcast on other stations, enable everyday reinforcement of tribally-specific values in content produced for and by Indigenous communities otherwise significantly under-represented in US mainstream radio.⁶

In analysing radio content, I argue that to consider radio shows critically we need to study these *as* radio, experiencing these as regularly scheduled broadcasting listened to as a routine everyday activity. Thus I began tuning into KUYI’s updates daily. Listening to an assemblage of radio texts from a single station—talk, news, music—produces a range of impressions for the hearer depending on the genre/s of music played, topics under discussion and each presenter’s tone and personality. Such impressions are discrete and meaningful in each instance, but also coalesce into a continuous form of community-building, in which distinct layers of cultural expression combine to reinforce a nuanced and particular sense of belonging forged through shared experiences. I was already familiar with some of KUYI’s programming from my earlier research; daily news and community calendar updates are a staple of the KUYI schedule and are broadcast live four times a day Monday through Friday. However, from mid-March 2020 both the news coverage and, more poignantly, the community calendar changed radically—as indeed did so much of radio coverage in the US and globally. At KUYI, COVID-19 updates from Flagstaff NPR affiliate station KNAU were combined with local news of testing and cases on Hopi. As springtime and the pandemic progressed, details of previously scheduled events were supplanted first by cancellations, then by details of grocery store hours for elders and later by updates on testing locations, curfew hours and, from late May, Hopi school graduation ceremonies and celebrations. I became newly familiar with KUYI’s presenters, which revolved between Burt, Jennifer, Richard and Thomas.⁷ Burt tended to present the 8am news, community calendar and weather, sometimes presenting again at noon,

⁶ There is no single, universal term for radio produced by and for Indigenous communities. ‘Indigenous’, ‘American Indian’, ‘Native American’ and ‘tribal’ are all in use to describe radio produced by Indigenous communities in US contexts, depending on who you ask. This article utilizes ‘Indigenous’ and ‘tribal’ as these two terms were most often in use by practitioners in my experience.

⁷ Presenters introduce themselves on air with their first name only. The presenters’ full names are Burt Poley, Jennifer Himel, Thomas Humeyestewa and Richard Davis.

while Jennifer, Thomas or Richard usually presented the 5pm update. Each presenter conveyed a warm delivery, despite the often-grim news, expressing an empathy reassuring for community members listening in. Listening immersively to KUYI's everyday programming connected me to ways in which these broadcasts reinforced specific tribal values on-air as a continuous flow of collective cultural expression. KUYI's collective practices and its deeply rooted place within the Hopi communities it represents can be read as emerging from and illustrative of practices of *grounded normativity*. Defined by Leanne Betasamosake Simpson and Glen Coulthard,

“grounded normativity” refers to the ethical frameworks provided by these Indigenous place-based practices and associated forms of knowledge. Grounded normativity houses and reproduces the practices and procedures, based on deep reciprocity, that are inherently informed by an intimate relationship to place.

(Betasamosake Simpson and Coulthard 2016, 254)

KUYI's on-air community-building is rooted in, reinforces and reproduces Hopi grounded normativity on the everyday basis made possible in scheduled broadcast radio.

My immersive listening was further inflected by the pandemic-specific content I heard every day. This for me reinforced Shawn Wilson's observation that 'research does not have to be formal' and that 'extra-intellectual' methods can contribute to a research design that allows for contextual elements (Wilson 2008, 110, 111). I combined methods of close reading of radio's textual aesthetic mechanisms (cadence, delivery) and communication strategies (item, guest and topic choice, live event broadcasts), alongside analysis of practitioner insights into their production processes. These insights were gathered through a Zoom conversation with KUYI practitioners Richard Davis, Jennifer Himel, Thomas 'Lana' Humeyestewa and Michelle Lohaumie in July 2020, as it was not possible for me to return to Hopi in person due to pandemic travel restrictions. This group conversation, arranged at a time which worked for everyone's schedule, provided space for everyone to contribute at the moment they chose. Their insights illuminate and define what is meaningful about KUYI's community-led production and enable this research to 'be true to the voices of all the participants and reflect an understanding of the topic that is shared by researcher and participants alike' (Wilson 2008, 101). KUYI's practitioners can give the truest account of their experiences and their meaning so their inclusion here is the only way I can be fully accountable in my exploration of KUYI's community-building work. Building on these, I consider KUYI's production practices as described by their practitioners as exemplifying the Indigenous critical idea of enacting *resurgence*, produced within grounded normativity and informed by principles of relationality. Corntassel envisions resurgence as 'embracing a daily existence conditioned by place-based cultural practices', observing that *how* these are engaged in is as important as the outcome of these 'struggles to reclaim, restore, and regenerate homeland relationships' (Corntassel 2012, 89). Resurgence is thus located in processes of practice as well as what may be produced. Consequently, I consider the collective discussion and decision-making practices at KUYI as examples of resurgence, as explored below.

'10% Radio, 90% Community': Hopi Broadcasting Practice as Embodying Everyday Resurgence

There are an estimated 50 to 70 tribally owned and managed radio stations on reservations in the 50 US states; Loris Taylor, CEO of Native Public Media puts the number of stations at 60.⁸

⁸ 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. Taylor is cited in Denetclaw, P, 'Inside the Studio at KNON, Dallas' Indigenous Radio Station', *Texas Observer*, 18 October 2021, <https://www.texasobserver.org/indigenous-radio-in->

See link to Map 2: <https://tinyurl.com/MappingIndigenousRadio>

Tribal radio ownership and management is 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 native villages in the US, all defined as Indian Nations by the National Congress of American Indians (NCAI), as well as additional Indigenous communities currently not officially recognized by the NCAI.⁹ For this research, ‘tribal stations’ are defined as such if they are tribally-owned, managed and/or staffed mainly by tribal members, and incorporate locally produced Indigenous community programming. Jana Wilbricht explains radio’s particular usefulness in relation to characteristics of everyday life in many Indigenous reservations, observing that

Radio is accessible even to households without electricity at very low cost, does not require literacy, provides programming in the local Indigenous language, and blends with rural lifestyles, e.g. in terms of requiring less attention than television and print media, which do not allow for multitasking and information consumption in the outdoors as readily as radio does.

(Wilbricht 2019, 53)

Carlos Jimenez, writing about US Indigenous radio, argues ‘the community-radio model suits low-income communities that have an urgent need to be informed and connected’ (Jimenez 2019, 266).

Crucially, many tribal stations broadcast via a community radio license, which means they are often under-funded and must continually work to raise money to ensure the ongoing smooth running of the station, although several tribal stations are supported by casino revenue on those reservations which host casinos. An alternative license category is the Tribal Priority license, which provides further resources, although these licenses are fewer and competitive to acquire. Most tribal stations remain under-resourced in material terms, which can make them especially vulnerable to infrastructural and technology crises. Many reservation-based radio stations have an Emergency Response capacity, meaning that for people living on the reservation they are often the first source of information in local crisis situations, including forest fires and extreme weather. Consequently, as COVID-19 took hold in Arizona and across the US, KUYI as well as other tribal stations served as the first and main source of local COVID-19 news, updates and information.

On March 16, KUYI radio practitioners met to discuss health and safety strategies for continuing live broadcasting whilst negotiating the distancing protocols about to be implemented. The day-long meeting set out to determine and decide upon protocols going forward, including whether to keep the KUYI station premises open on a drop-in basis for visiting community members. Before decision-making was introduced into discussion, station manager Richard Davis began the meeting by asking everyone how they felt about COVID-19 and how their everyday lives and families were being affected. Group discussion focused on ways to ensure volunteer comfort given the emerging crisis paradigm. As the group discussed whether to keep the KUYI premises open for community members, local reliance on the station as a place of comfort as well as information was given as a reason to keep the station space open. This conversation centered around the station’s front door—as the site of health protocols such as ongoing disinfection, but also as the symbolic portal for access, meaning that the question of whether the door was to stay open became a multi-layered one. As station practitioners described their reactions, they referenced Hopi ways of coping, drawing on assembled knowledges of cultural teachings, herbal

texas/?fbclid=IwAR3t8qNIqzOO3WqcrakVqa7XVZidN9Py4_DC_pGcXTXSqO8B1rAqfyyWjw, accessed 19 October 2021.

⁹ This figure from National Congress of American Indians, accessed via ncai.org, April 2020.

medicines and established Hopi practices of resilience and faith. In the meeting, decision-making processes were characterized by a holistic approach, foregrounding values of compassion, empathy and resilience as important, both in themselves and in their role in shaping station strategies, such as reading the news in a compassionate way.

The meeting's observed practices of compassionate conversation, of careful listening and decision-making, can be understood as acts of resurgence which, combined, reinforce relational accountability (Wilson 2008) between practitioners and to communities served by KUYI. Corntassel defines resurgence as located in the recurring nature of these everyday actions, as he explains: 'These daily acts of *renewal*, whether through prayer, speaking your language, honoring your ancestors, etc., are the foundations of resurgence' (Corntassel 2012, 89, italics mine). KUYI practitioner Michelle Lomauhie describes the station's importance to local Hopi and Tewa communities at the everyday level, and how this changed when the station shut its doors during lockdown:

I only live not even two miles away from the station. I just miss interacting with the community members that come into the station, or the phone calls that we get for a song request or a birthday shout-out or the tourists that come by and need directions, or the students that come from other places and visit our station or visit Hopi land.

(M. Lomauhie, in group interview via Zoom, 20 July 2020)

KUYI's Development & Marketing Coordinator Jennifer Himel expands on this, saying 'I think I feel myself getting emotional at what Michelle's talking about because that's really what is at the heart of what makes KUYI great; all of the community interaction that we have.' She describes the importance of these everyday interactions for the community:

You might have nothing of material value to offer to someone as a gift when they come visit you, but the more important thing that you offer them is what's in your heart, and that could come in the warmth of your food or your coffee or that kind of thing. And that's harder to do at a distance like this, but ...I think talking on the phone and over the radio is how we try to do that.

(J. Himel, in group interview via Zoom)¹⁰

Both practitioners emphasise the value of place-based connection, generosity and warmth, in turn demonstrating the importance of relationships within their communities which shapes their work at KUYI. Centrality of relationships characterises many Indigenous values as part of tribal grounded normativity, which, Betasamosake-Simpson explains: 'starts with how we live in the world. Relationships within Indigenous thought are paramount' (Betasamosake Simpson 2016, 22). Maintaining ongoing connectiveness across Hopi and beyond, particularly during the distancing necessary in the pandemic, enables everyday resurgence through continual, on-air community renewal.

(Re-) Producing Locality: Accountability, Connectedness and Technical Reflexivity

On KUYI, updated news bulletins are interspersed with regular music programming as per the station's established schedule. In each KUYI bulletin, state and national COVID-19 coverage is provided by Arizona NPR affiliates, followed by local COVID-19 updates provided by the Hopi Tribe's Department of Health & Human Services. This in turn is followed by essential, regularly updated local information from the Hopi community calendar incorporating time-specific information for the day.

¹⁰ Ms Himel left her role at KUYI on July 23, 2020 to focus on a new role as a full-time small business owner (also communicated in the interview.)

Jennifer Himel describes the depth of community reliance on KUYI, particularly in relation to this localized coverage:

KUYI—it's very integral into the community, it's made by the community and it is the voice of Hopi. KUYI is the purest version of what we would want the [that] voice to be—it's very different from other forms of media, like the news, TV stations and other radio stations; who they're owned by specifically. KUYI is not owned by, like, a dozen corporations.... It's very much independent. I think that its role during this pandemic has been to be a very middle of the road voice that takes facts and evidence-based information and then presents that to the public.

She expands on community perceptions of KUYI's trustworthiness during the pandemic:

People are worried, they're nervous, they're scared, and so they turn to the radio station for their information, I see it a lot... And through all of it, people have been very positive about the station... and I feel like there is a sense of trust that they have given to the station that we have to be very careful with, and we're very grateful for.... people on both sides of the arguments of what the CARES act money is going to do, or how to proceed with social distancing or to not or to have the shutdown or not, they're always like, "listen to KUYI, if it's not on KUYI then it's not confirmed, it doesn't exist" or "if it's not on their Facebook page, it's not real" and I didn't anticipate it would be that level of non-partisan-type influence and I think that's really cool and also very delicate.

(J. Himel, in group interview)

As ongoing collective production processes, KUYI's community-building practices and the trust these reinforce function as "everyday" acts of resurgence' as described by Corntassel, through which in turn, 'one disrupts the colonial physical, social and political boundaries designed to impede our actions to restore our nationhood' (Corntassel 2012, 88). In this way, everyday acts of resurgence can serve a decolonizing function which Betasamosake Simpson connects to Indigenous nation-building:

Indigenous resurgence, in its most radical form, is nation building, not nation-state building, but nation building, again, in the context of grounded normativity by centering, amplifying, animating, and actualizing the processes of grounded normativity as flight paths or fugitive escapes from the violences of settler colonialism. This resurgence creates profoundly different ways of thinking, organizing, and being because the Indigenous processes that give birth to our collective resurgence are fundamentally nonhierarchical, nonexploitative, nonextractivist, and nonauthoritarian.

(Betasamosake Simpson 2016, 22)

KUYI invokes trust from its listening communities through its ongoing emphasis on locally-specific cultural coverage, incorporating the Hopi word of the day which follows each news report, followed by the weather report. Each bulletin concludes with a brief but warm farewell from the presenter, commenting on the weather or describing the view from the presenter's own window, and then signing off by encouraging listeners to stay safe. Richard Davis describes how KUYI's remote broadcasts have amplified community connectiveness in a unique way:

Jennifer might talk about what she sees outside her window, or when Burt's broadcasting, when Paaqavi village was the first village to fully shut down, he was literally the first broadcaster we've ever had broadcasting from quarantine. And I don't think there's been anything deeper in broadcasting than that connection right now. Here is someone in quarantine speaking to someone in quarantine, as well. So for now, everyone that gets on air, that's behind their voice, that we're in this together and it's not an us and them thing.

And I think that's probably the most unique part of this experience, for now. Because we are all living this shared experience and our hearts through our voices acknowledge that.

(R. Davis, in group interview, 20 July 2020)

KUYI's pandemic programming combines particularities of Hopi daily life and experiences with a warmth expressed by each of the presenters on air (and indeed in their insights here), coalescing in radio content that is reassuring in its local focus and trustworthy in its commitment to accurate, updated coverage. KUYI also publishes official COVID-19 updates on the station's Facebook page, reiterating what is read out in the daily bulletins to expand access to this crucial information. These articulations of Hopi community connectedness reinforce relational accountability in place-based practices which actively facilitate community health and well-being during the pandemic. Betasamosake Simpson argues that within an Indigenous system shaped by practices of grounded normativity, the

well-being of individuals is directly linked to the well-being of collectives. When an individual is hurt or sick or having a hard time, there is impact throughout the system, and the community has the obligation to respond.

(Betasamosake Simpson 2016, 23)

Generally, and likely globally, the importance of broadcast radio for information provision and community-building has become much more acute during the COVID-19 crisis. This shift additionally reflects an emerging paradigm in which the importance of *local* broadcasting has acquired a stark new significance given that US cities, regions and states are experiencing the pandemic and managing protocols and responses in very different ways. Consequently, the need for reliable local coverage and reporting has become more urgent. In this crisis context, the intimacy of the radio voice, speaking directly to the listener, is newly valuable, perhaps because more expressive than scrolling onscreen updates. Radio presenters and producers everywhere have had to radically adjust both their working practices (many necessarily moving to remote broadcasting and programme production from home) and the components of show content, newly conceived of to reflect and represent the concerns of an anxious and mainly quarantined listenership. As a result, at KUYI as Richard Davis observes, 'We're all growing accustomed to less fidelity in our broadcast media, whether it's visual or audio'; for example, home-produced radio is often accompanied by echoes over the connection or static on the line. However, what is produced in this less polished content is perhaps a greater intimacy, reflective of the more personal conditions of home-based production and the medium of radio is well situated to produce and sustain such intimacy. Writing about practices of orality, Walter Ong argues for the capacity of sound to create a sense of interiority and immersion in the listener. Through enabling these responses, sound functions as a 'unifying sense' for Ong, producing a 'harmony, a putting together' (Ong 1982: 72).

Presenter-producers themselves are also necessarily more reflexive about what they're saying as well as how they're sounding. For Richard Davis and the other KUYI practitioners, 'as long as we've got the soul within the audio then we'll be okay. As long as we've got some cultural touchstones within the audio I think we'll be okay. But that's still a great concern' (R. Davis interview, May 14, 2020). Technical reliability confers credibility but so too does on-air honesty and reflexivity, which further encourages listener trust. An example of such technical reflexivity is a video featuring KUYI producer Thomas 'Lana' Humeyestewa, posted on to KUYI's Facebook page, demonstrating the process of putting together a remote broadcast programme and explaining each step of the production process in a test run for livestreaming upcoming Tribal Council meetings.¹¹ Early in the pandemic, it became evident for KUYI practitioners that broadcasting Tribal Council meetings live was a way to ensure the transparency

¹¹ From KUYI Hopi Public Radio's Facebook page, <https://www.facebook.com/KUYIRadio>, accessed 22 May 2020.

of these proceedings and make them accessible to all Hopi and Tewa community members.¹² Jennifer Himel explains the importance of livecasting these meetings:

What I think is really important that continues with the station is to be broadcasting the Hopi tribal council meetings....The KUYI team has been trying to make this happen for years, as a sense of transparency, and because of the pandemic it basically was their only option in order to continue, because they are public meetings and so to broadcast them on the radio satisfies that requirement.

And it has really changed a lot of the way that I think people have been thinking of the way things operate, or that they can be part of that process, and I think that is something that will hopefully stick around in the continuing future because it allows people who previously had not had access or even cared so much to listen to those things, are now hearing them. And it just increases accountability and transparency and I think that's good for any level of government to have, in my opinion.

(J. Himel, in group interview)

Conclusion: 'We're All in it Together': Building on Indigenous Knowledges and Broadcasting Solidarity

One unforeseen positive consequence of COVID-19's encroachment has been institutional recognition at national level of a real need for reliable broadcasting in rural areas, resulting in a release of funds by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting following substantial lobbying by Sally Kane of the National Federation of Community Broadcasters and Loris Taylor of Native Public Media (Richard Davis interview, May 2020). This means that KUYI received much needed funds in Spring 2020 to further support their remote broadcasting during the pandemic crisis. Yet broadcasting remotely, particularly in the rural areas served by reservation-based tribal stations, carries continuing risks of technical problems, not least as the process is fundamentally dependent on fast and reliable internet connectivity. Additionally, and crucially, despite having received this funding, tribal stations providing essential hyperlocal information still remain under-resourced, as reported by Native Public Media in July 2020:

The National Indian Health Board found in a survey that only half of tribes reported getting updates about the outbreak from state and federal governments. Less than a fifth reported receiving resources.¹³

As many US states faltered in providing solid guidance and/or protections for their constituents, Indigenous approaches continued to embody and represent viable alternatives for negotiating the pandemic and its fallout. Localised and distinct tribal practices were historically developed by Indigenous communities across the US in direct response to crises themselves created by settler colonialism. As Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz argues, 'Today's Indigenous nations and communities are societies formed by their resistance to colonialism, through which they have carried their practices and histories' (Dunbar-

¹² Other tribal stations such as KPYT, serving the Pascua Yaqui; and KWLP, serving the Hualapai, have also been broadcasting Tribal Council meetings live on air and/or via the Facebook 'live' function. See Facebook pages for KWLP, <https://www.facebook.com/KWLP-The-Peach-116990994997185/>; and for KPYT, <https://www.facebook.com/kpyt100.3/>, accessed 6 August 2020.

¹³ Vitaglione, G. 2020. 'Battling lack of resources, Native stations provide lifeline with COVID coverage', *Native Public Media*, July 1, 2020, <https://www.nativepublicmedia.org/single-post/2020/06/30/Battling-lack-of-resources-Native-stations-provide-lifeline-with-COVID-coverage>, accessed 10 August 2020.

Ortiz 2014, 7). Shari M. Huhndorf describes the importance of Indigenous knowledges in combating settler colonial practices, arguing that ‘indigenous traditions provide models for re-creating societies that oppose the colonial order’ (Huhndorf 2009, 8). Such enduring tribal knowledges and everyday practices enable and sustain what Linda Tuhiwai-Smith identifies as Indigenous imperatives of ‘the survival of peoples, cultures and languages’ (Tuhiwai-Smith 1999, 142). In the face of another potential genocide, such approaches and knowledges, determined by the particularities of place and forged through resilience, continue alongside protocols (or the lack thereof) mandated by top-down state directives too often informed by economic rather than community care imperatives. Betasamosake Simpson and Coulthard assert that building on a grounded normativity which emerges from place-based practices, ‘our relationship to the land itself generates the processes, practices and knowledges that inform our political systems, and through which *we practice solidarity*’ (Betasamosake Simpson and Coulthard 2016, 254, italics in original). Describing grassroots forms of community-building, David Harvey describes ‘the processes that produce, sustain and dissolve the contingent patterns of solidarity’ that comprise the centre of what we consider a ‘community’ (Harvey 2001, 192). While strategies for coping with and combating COVID-19 are developed from tribally-specific local knowledges, shared experiences of past and present precarity can provide a basis for such ongoing solidarity.

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 amongst 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).¹⁴ As of April 5, 2021, there were 1,268 cumulative positive COVID-19 cases amongst Hopi Tribe members, as reported on KUYI’s Facebook page from data provided by the Hopi Tribe’s Department of Health & Human Services.¹⁵ After low numbers in summer 2020 this marked a significant rise. Yet many Indigenous communities in diverse regions have produced swift and strategic responses to the emergent dangers of COVID-19, in several places well in advance of state (and certainly of national) responses.¹⁶ Existing if contested sovereignty confers tribal communities with autonomy to make place-based decisions and has enabled some tribes to successfully protect their communities in the face of state attempts at intervention.¹⁷

During the pandemic, KUYI’s programming, combining hyperlocal daily updates and livestreamed coverage of Tribal Council meetings alongside culturally-specific music and talk content,

¹⁴ See Nagle, R. 24 April 2020, ‘Native Americans being left out of US coronavirus data and labelled as “other”’, *The Guardian*, <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/apr/24/us-native-americans-left-out-coronavirus-data>, accessed 12 August 2020.

¹⁵ As published on KUYI Hopi Public Radio’s page on Facebook, <https://www.facebook.com/KUYIRadio/>, accessed 7 April 2021.

¹⁶ 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. See Krisst, R. ‘Fauci: Navajo a model for containing coronavirus’, 24 September 2020, <https://navajotimes.com/coronavirus-updates/fauci-navajo-a-model-for-containing-coronavirus/>, accessed 29 September 2020. Despite this, cases continue to rise in some places in the Arizona Diné communities; see <https://www.indianz.com/covid19/2020/09/29/navajo-nation-arizona-new-mexico-utah-249/>, accessed 29 September 2020.

¹⁷ See <https://www.newsday.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 Cheyenne River 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.

continues to draw on deep collective experience and practitioner resilience, coalescing in on-air forms of everyday resurgence. In turn, in reproducing and strengthening values of tribal grounded normativity, Corntassel argues, such ‘Indigenous resurgence means having the courage and imagination to envision life beyond the state’ (Corntassel 2012, 89). Exploring KUYI practices and content through Indigenous critical approaches enables analysis built on ideas in Indigenous practice to consider other Indigenous practices. This critical framework replaces a discipline-specific approach such as David Hesmondhalgh’s ‘moral economy’ framing (2017), which usefully enables a critique of capitalism but doesn’t identify the elements of such a ‘moral economy’ beyond normative values of ‘flourishing’ and ‘well-being’ not linked with acute health crises. Instead, reading Hopi radio practices as exemplifying values shaped by grounded normativity and relational accountability elides top-down deployments of ‘moral’ and ‘ethical’ as unproblematized tools of analysis and produces a necessary critical space for foregrounding the decolonizing work of these practices. In the process of exploring KUYI’s practices I hope to expand on Clemencia Rodriguez’s recognition that further and ongoing research is needed on diverse local uses of media, to theorise further ‘how embedded communicators creatively *use* media to address local needs within the boundaries of existing media ecologies that offer different resources and constraints in each historical situation’ (Rodriguez 2016, 36, italics in original). Ongoing processes of community-led radio production located within Hopi and Tewa grounded normativity enable sustained re-creation of what Betasamosake Simpson terms ‘Indigenous presences’. These in turn, she argues, ‘generate the conditions for Indigenous futures by deeply engaging in our nation-based grounded normativities’ and she concludes this point asserting ‘We must continuously build and rebuild Indigenous worlds’ (Betasamosake Simpson 2017, 246). The ongoing, everyday cultural production of radio programming in its small local way can be considered one form of such Indigenous world building, shaped and led by place-based values and providing tools for envisioning Hopi ‘Native futures’ (Tuck and Yang 2012). KUYI practitioner Michelle Lomaumie describes the lessons learned from broadcasting during the pandemic, and explains how these will inform KUYI’s broadcasting into the future:

Just be there for the community, and just learn a different way of living I guess; just making sure people understand that we want to protect ourselves and we want to protect the people in our community, too. Just help each other through this, we’re all in it together.

(M. Lomaumie, in group interview)

Acknowledgements

All my gratitude to Jennifer Himel, Thomas ‘Lana’ Humeyestewa, Michelle Lomaumie and Richard Davis of KUYI for their insights into their work. I have been honored to have been their guest at KUYI. Many thanks too to the anonymous peer reviewers whose thoughtful and useful suggestions helped to make this article better.

The research within this article received funding from the European Union’s Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement number 843645.

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