

# *Speaking on Your Own Behalf:* Managing Footing and Representation in “Indigenous,” Intercultural Public Discourse

Stephen Peters

*McGill University*

In Canadian cities, public podium talks featuring Indigenous speakers are increasingly turned to as an avenue for raising public awareness and promoting social change. Podium talks provide occasions for Indigenous activists and spokespeople to tell their own stories, to speak on their own behalf. Yet, as a particular mode of discursive interaction, they also organize how such telling unfolds. Through an in-depth discourse analysis of one talk addressing Indigenous eco-activism, focusing in particular on pronoun use and quoted speech, this paper examines the affordances and obligations present in speaking both *about* Indigenous people and *as* an Indigenous person to non-Indigenous audiences. Investigating how Indigenous speakers act both *with* and *against* the contexts of interaction provide one approach to thinking about Indigenous agency in contemporary Canada.

It must be recognized that no one truly has the kind of power that would enable them to write the story of their life free of other influences and pressures. We all face social/political/legal/economic/spiritual contexts that constrain the degree to which we can truly do what we want (Bakan, 1989). Nevertheless, the conditions we find ourselves in are not fixed or immovable, and they are subject to change and movement by a series of individual and collective actions over time and place. Indigenous peoples must once again take a greater part in influencing and defining the social/political/legal/economic/spiritual contexts, with and against, which the stories of their lives are worked out. Canada is a work in progress, and Indian agency must be respected as an important element in the continued construction of the country.... This means that Indigenous stories must find greater prominence in the multifaceted interactions they have with individuals, institutions, and ideologies that influence the unfolding of their world. (Burrows, 2001, p. 15)

**I**n the quote above, Anishnaabe legal scholar, John Burrows, affirms the place of Indigenous stories, as he puts it, in the ongoing construction of Canada. That Indigenous “storytellers” have an important role to play is, no doubt, self-evident to many. The continuing need for Burrows and others to make the point reflects the extent to which Indigenous actors continue to be stifled in exercising their due influence.

But beyond noting a general lack of recognition of “Indian agency” throughout Canadian history, Burrows’s main target is the recursive relationship between

Indigenous stories and the colonial contexts in which they are told. Indigenous stories, in the sense of the “stories of our lives,” as Burrows put it, are worked out—shaped, influenced, or constrained—in the social/political/legal/economic/spiritual contexts in which Indigenous lives are lived. Indigenous stories, in the sense of the opinions, experiences, and knowledges borne from Indigenous life, are likewise worked out—made legible—in these same contexts. While Indigenous stories are, for Burrows, a crucial mechanism for renewing ideologies, institutions, modes of interacting prevalent in Canada, it is these same ideologies, institutions, and modes of interacting that organize how it is these stories might be written and told, and what it is they might do.

Burrows’s reflection offers some guidance into what empirical approaches to discourse (or storytelling) and agency might investigate. If from a socio-cultural perspective, agency is best understood as the “socio-culturally mediated capacity to act” (Ahearn, 2001, p. 112), the passage specifies two key qualities relevant to Indigenous agency: the capacity of Indigenous people to tell their own story, and the capacity of Indigenous story-tellers to influence and define the contexts in which their stories are worked out. In this paper, I engage with these two aspects of Indigenous agency through an investigation of the practice of Indigenous, intercultural public speaking. Indigenous public speaking engagements are opportunities for Indigenous activists, scholars, elders, and leaders to tell their stories and to exert influence over the Canadian institutions and ideologies that shape their lives. They are also well-defined occasions for Indigenous speakers to *be* Indigenous and be recognized *as* Indigenous. At the same time, such presentations are laden with challenges, involving, as I discuss below, a complex entanglement of voicings of self, community, and culture. Indigenous public speaking engagements are, by design, complex multi-ethnic settings for working out Indigenous stories, in both senses, and, as such, important opportunities for analysts to understand better how Indigenous society and culture are being presented to Canadian publics on the ground.

The data for my analysis come from an environmental activist speaking event from early 2014. This event featured one Indigenous public podium speaker, Crystal Lameman of Beaver Lake First Nation, critically engaging with the context *with which* and *against which* she told her story and the story of her community. Focusing specifically on her talk and its staging, I examine how Lameman makes contact with the here-and-now of the event. By doing so, there is, I argue, much to be learned about how the genre of public, intercultural podium talks—as a context and mode of interaction for Indigenous storytelling—organize and enable the telling of Indigenous stories. There is also much to be appreciated about how Indigenous activist-educators like Crystal Lameman act agentively *within* this context and *on* this context through their public speaking.

In this spirit, this paper examines how one Indigenous speaker *handles* the organization of Indigenous podium talk and the communicative possibilities and constraints such organization implies. Analysis of a series of episodes from Lameman’s talk exemplifies the challenges inherent in self-consciously ethnic public speaking. Lameman’s effort to work with these challenges (to the extent that she is able) allows me to build the main arguments of this chapter. First, that Indigenous, intercultural podium talks present an abiding exigence for speakers to enfold their personal voice into the voice of their community. Second, that the

“Indigenous” category of Indigenous speaker (or any kind of “identity” speaker) does not simply reflect the biographical background that makes pertinent what speakers have to say. Rather, the ethnic identification of the speaker has implications for how Indigenous speakers participate in the activity of the podium talk. The interactional relevance of an ascribed identity is, in this sense, a conduit or enabler of talk, the means for discursive agency. These two aspects of Indigenous intercultural speaking events are presented, not as limits to agency, but as a set of conditions that mediate just how Indigenous peoples may “once again take a greater part in influencing and defining” Canadian contexts in public discourse.

### *Speaking on Your Own Behalf* as Praxis in Indigenous Podium Talk

In Montreal public speaking engagements, or podium addresses, billing identified Indigenous speakers are relatively common. Over the course of my fieldwork, opportunities to see and hear Indigenous speakers arose weekly. Some events, like Lameman’s, were one-off engagements, others part of longer series, but all, without exception, joined the political with the cultural.<sup>1</sup> Primarily popular education events intended to teach the general, non-Indigenous public about Indigenous life and culture, audiences are most often sought out through non-Indigenous activist and non-governmental social networks, however, they are rarely restricted. Although the reach of Indigenous podium talk is relatively limited, their ubiquity is undeniable and indicative of the intensity with which reflexive discourse around Indigenous life and culture is being produced in Canada for non-Indigenous uptake. After decades of being *spoken for*, the new ethical standard for organizers, scholars, and concerned members of the public is for Indigenous people—Cree, Kanien’kehá:ka, Innu, Residential School survivors, urban Indigenous people, and so on—to tell their stories, to speak *on their own behalf* on the issues that touch their various communities.

If *speaking on your own behalf* is now the understood best practice in Indigenous popular education and awareness-raising, it should not suggest that doing so is straightforward or unproblematic. From an interactional perspective, the defining quality of decidedly “Indigenous” public speaking is that they overlay participation frameworks (e.g., speakers’ prolonged floor time, an attentive and mum audience; Goffman, 1981) with an ethnic divide assigned ahead of the interaction. An event delivers on the basis of a unification of participation roles and social categories (or “alignment”; see Zimmerman, 1998). While for organizers and audience members, Indigenous podium addresses provide an ethically responsible avenue for awareness raising and political mobilization, for analysts, what is most striking about cross-cultural addresses is that they involve, simultaneously, both the *presentation* and *performance* of Indigenous/non-Indigenous difference. From the podium, an Indigenous speaker speaks, at least to some extent, *as* an Indigenous person to an audience who, in some important way, is not. The face-to-face nature of podium talks brings this interactional dynamic to the fore, but it is true of all kinds of discourse practices where ethnically-identified speakers address outsiders. What kinds of challenges, constraints, or conditions does this impose on speakers?

<sup>1</sup> The data for this paper come out of 14 months of fieldwork carried out from 2013 to 2015. During this time over 70 events were tracked. For a selection of these events, including Lameman’s, fieldnotes and recordings were taken. When possible, interviews with speakers and organizers were also gathered.

How does this implied discourse structure shape how speakers can and do take up intercultural podium addresses? And, further, what might the organization of talk, and the talk itself, tell us about speaker agency?

### Indigenous Agency and Expression

After decades of representations of Indigenous peoples as the objects of the actions of others—portrayals that have motivated Western interventionism of all kinds (see, e.g., Blackstock, 2009; Castile, 2008)—there is clear warrant to bring to the fore (and share the *other* story) of how Indigenous peoples have always used the means available for their own purposes (see Cornell, 1988; Deloria, 1981; Jaimes, 1992; Manuel & Posluns, 1974; Tully, 2000). Indigenous agency and resiliency is now an object of scholarly inquiry and debate in its own right with a number of scholars theorizing what a distinctively Indigenous action is and what forms it may take (Alfred, 2005; Burrows, 2001; Gledhill, 2001; Harrison, Byrne, & Clarke, 2013; O’Neil Spady, 2009; Miller & Davidson-Hunt, 2013; Vizenor, 1994).

Even if theories of Indigenous agency are not always specified and incorporated within larger philosophical and empirical debates about human agency (e.g., the role of intentionality, collectivity, structure, discourse, etc.; Ahearn, 2001; Giddens, 1984; Taylor, 1985), accounts nevertheless imply conceptualizations of what agency is, how it is realized, and what marks it as Indigenous. Unsurprisingly, given Canada’s history of settler colonialism, social and political accounts of Indigenous agency have often been discussed with respect to Indigenous resistance to imposed governance, economic, and cultural systems (Alfred & Corntassel, 2005; Alfred, Coulthard, & Simmons, 2006; Blaser, Feit, & McRae, 2004; Hibbard & Lane, 2004; Maxwell, 1994; Reimerson, 2013; Todd, 2000/2001). The alignment of Indigenous agency with resistance reflects larger structure-agency dichotomies long-stressed in the social sciences. On the one hand, agency equates with subversion, newness, autonomy, and transformation within histories of domination and control. Structure, on the other, is a *constraint* or *limitation* to action. Whether the focus of inquiry is on autonomous Indigenous action or ongoing colonial systems of control and exploitation, accounts of agency as resistance tend to bifurcate Indigenous agency from the social norms and processes through which cross-cultural interaction takes place.

### Praxis and Indigenous, Intercultural Expression

The burgeoning research in North America on staged, intercultural Indigenous talk has similarly tended to separate out Indigenous discursive action from its intercultural contexts. Research has identified the performative power of recognizable Native American linguistic forms and heritage languages (Dinwoodie, 1998; P. Moore, 2007), the political work of Indigenous place names (Webster, 2010) and declarations of nationhood (Dinwoodie, 1998; Morris & Wander, 1990), and the malleability of native story-telling genres (Cruikshank, 1997). Across this work, scholars have provided much needed and often finely detailed insight into *just how* Indigenous speakers leverage the political utility of staged performances.

But this emphasis on Indigenous discursive action has come somewhat at the expense of a better understanding of the staging of Indigenous intercultural

talk. Art gallery and museum exhibition research has, at least in part, filled the void. Clifford's (1988) classic study of why some Indigenous cultural productions ended up in museums while others managed to break into the world of Western art paved the way for a wealth of ethnographic and empirical studies exploring institutional practices of construing and attributing value to Indigenous difference and of establishing what counts as appropriate kinds of cultural exchange (e.g., Butler, 2000; King, 2011; Nelson, 2006; Townsend-Gault, 1995). The scholarship emphasizes how Indigenous expression always occurs within and must respond to larger networks of interest that fuel the presentation and circulation of Native American difference. Yet artistic productions nevertheless re-iterate and potentially transform their contexts of action (see, e.g., Elston, 2012; Fowler, 2007; Townsend-Gault, 2011).

Together, the discourse analytic work and research carried out in art and museum contexts suggest an approach to the analysis of Indigenous, intercultural expression that avoids, on the one hand, deterministic portrayals that erase Indigenous action, and, on the other, celebratory accounts overstating expressive will and freedom. Reflexive, Indigenous, intercultural expression is, as Myers (1994) has noted, essentially "fraught with difficulties" where "the rules of production [and] reception" are always under revision; but it is for those very reasons generative and potentially transformative (p. 679; see also Myers, 2013). Required is a kind of analysis that can identify just how speakers, performers, and artists engage with the rules that shape how and why their expressive acts are called for and heard.

Such an approach is not new to studies of oral performances. In his work on oral storytelling, Bauman (1986) identifies the central tension: If an oral performance is to be effective, it must abide by certain "social interactional ground rules, norms, strategies for performance and criteria for its interpretation and evaluation" (p. 4). But, at the same time, performances and the events in which they are carried out are emergent, making for variability and newness. Any individual performance is potentially transformative, re-figuring what a genre or practice of performance is about, what it does, and for whom. In oral performance, as Bauman puts it, "the individual and the creative are brought up to parity with tradition in a dialectic played out within the context of situated action, a kind of praxis" (p. 4). Taking intercultural talk as praxis allows analysts to consider the two sides of agency as proposed by Burrows (2001), to explore how actors act *with* the contexts which organize their activities and *against* these contexts, redefining them with this very activity. In the case of Crystal Lameman's event and others like it, we want to know how the explicit "Indigenous" framing and appeal of podium talks shape the "ground rules, norms, and strategies for performance" and how speakers grapple with those rules as they set out to do the work they have to do.

### Data and Analysis

Crystal Lameman's talk was organized by a US environmental NGO, 350 Maine, and addressed the impact of and the fight against tar sands development on Beaver Lake's traditional territory. My analysis centres on a critical exchange between Lameman and an audience member during the closing Q&A. The



exchange, transcribed in Excerpt 3, provokes an extended meta-commentary by Lameman on the conditions of participation—or ground rules—in intercultural public speaking events. The excerpt shows Lameman rejecting these conditions, but in doing so, abandoning, at least with respect to the question posed, the public speaking duties she had been invited to perform.

Prior to taking up this exchange, however, I examine two earlier episodes in Lameman's talk. The first comes from the beginning; the second from roughly midway. The two episodes present both the confident and more ambivalent ways Lameman participated in the organization and practice of intercultural podium talk. Across all three extracts, I target reflexive and indexical language<sup>2</sup> (Agha, 2007; Lucy, 1993). My analysis centres specifically on the speaking positions Lameman occupies over the course of her address. Except for Excerpt 1, I draw on data where the occupation becomes in some way troubled. Close attention to production formats and footing alignments<sup>3</sup> (including Lameman's own analysis of these footing alignment in Excerpt 3; Goffman, 1981) demonstrates the challenges speakers face with "speaking on their own behalf," or more precisely animating their voice and the voice of the community they represent as both overlapping and distinct. The episodes demonstrate the nature of the speaking positions available to Indigenous speakers in Indigenous public speaking events, their influence, and the obligations they present. In essence, the analysis that follows addresses perennial questions around the politics of representation, but targets, empirically, subaltern self-representation.

### Affirming Indigenous Speaker Agency

My analysis begins with the opening moments of Lameman's formal address (Excerpt 1), where we find evidence of just how Lameman comes to occupy the official podium speaker role. I aim to show how, through the use of an Indigenous language greeting, she *accepts* the *speaking on behalf* role implicit to the organization of Indigenous podium talks. The greeting allows, I argue, Lameman to discursively conjoin the dual tasks of *speaking about* and *speaking as* necessary to the *speaking on your own behalf* role. To use Stuart Hall's (1996) formulation, Lameman (figuratively and literally) *articulates* herself to the Indigenous public speaking activity and makes a claim for the kind of agency available in that activity. The point, while relatively straightforward, is important for appreciating the speech acts that follow. Moreover, it calls for, I believe, a slight rethinking of the pragmatics of Indigenous language greetings (see Ahlers, 2006; Graham, 2002).

Before turning to the excerpt, a brief overview of Duranti's (2004) insights into the language/agency relationship is useful in making clear how an Indigenous language greeting connects Lameman to the activity of Indigenous public speaking.

<sup>2</sup> In particular, I examine metapragmatic framing devices, pronoun use, reported speech, and meta-commentary. My goal is not to examine these devices in their own right but to bring into view how Lameman understands and engages in the public speaking role.

<sup>3</sup> "Production format" refers to the arrangement of different aspects of a speaker (Goffman, 1981). The concept opens up the blunt category of "speaker" to finer analytic divisions: the animator (the person doing the speaking), the principal (person or people whose views are expressed), and the author (the originator of the words spoken, which can differ from the animator as in quoted speech). Production formats, which can be specified for any utterance, give insight into in what capacity a speaker is speaking, i.e., on behalf of whom. Footing refers to the "alignments [speakers] take up to [themselves] and others present" (Goffman, 1981, p. 128). Changes in production format imply changes in footing (Levinson, 1987).

Duranti explains that any speaking performance is in two senses agentic. First, it provides an opportunity for a speaker to describe the world and in doing so affect the beliefs and possible future actions of their listener. Second, simply the use of language, regardless of what is said—or even it being understood—is a form of “ego-affirming agency” (p. 455), that is, speaking itself establishes the speaker as a possible discursive doer. As Duranti puts it, “the very act of speaking in front of others who can perceive such an act establishes the speaker as a being whose existence must be reckoned with in terms of his or her communicative goals and abilities” (p. 455).

The generality of Duranti’s observations risk limiting their usefulness. However, in overtly intercultural speaking situations, when specific identities and specific linguistic codes are in play, Duranti’s insight can be leveraged to reveal just how speakers *reflexively* affirm and specify their agency in the here-and-now of their talk.

*Excerpt 1*

- 45 ((Lameman, emphatic laughter))  
 46 ↑↑I guess we should have looked up there first HAHABA ((*elevated pitch, laughter before and after speech triggered by the realization that the slides were visible to the audience*))  
 47 HA .hh ↑So(h)rry we were wondering why you guys were saying no it’s good  
 48 HAHABA ((*Overlapping laughter from Lameman and the audience*))  
 49 OK um HA  
 50 Sorry about that um ((*clears throat*))  
 51 First of all  
 52 ah *tánisi* ((*“Hello” or “How are you” in Western Cree, Lameman pronounces as [tánisi] with vowel shortening*))  
 53 ah Hello  
 54 ah I want to acknowledge first of all hh the ah (.) the first people of ah this territory of what is now known as ah Montreal ah the greater part of ah what Montreal so °Quebec°  
 55 um ((*clears throat*))

After an extended period of technical difficulty involving roughly 30 seconds of informal talk (lines 1–50), a clear shift in footing occurs at line 51; Lameman’s laughter ceases, she issues a brief apology, and clears her throat as her address turns from jocular self-mockery to formal presentation. The first order of business is uttering the Cree word “*tánisi*.”

Greetings in Indigenous languages at the opening of an address are ubiquitous in intercultural podium talks and occur nearly without fail in my data. They are a “code-specific” (Garrett, 2005) practice, that is, a speech act whose effects depend on its formulation in a particular linguistic code. Indigenous greetings have most often been discussed as a means of *indexing* (signalling, pointing to) speakers’ Indigenous identity, invoking Western, monolingual language ideologies to do so (Ahlers, 2006;

Graham, 2002). Accounts of Indigenous greetings as “identity markers” (Ahlers, 2006, p. 62) are valuable for drawing attention to the pragmatic value of Indigenous language use in contexts of language shift. However, by focusing on ethnic categorization, identity marking explanations risk over-looking the specific here-and-now or participatory relevance of Native languages and the situated identities they evoke: Not only why an identity marker? But why now? And which one? (See Moore, 2012, for an assessment of “Native language as an identity marker”).

There are two qualities to Lameman’s use of *tánisi* that suggest she is less interested in signalling her Cree identity than she is in exhibiting her fidelity to the podium speaker role. First is the perfunctoriness of its delivery. Lameman doesn’t explicitly translate *tánisi* (although line 53 is the translation), nor does she state what language she is speaking, and she utters *tánisi* casually (evident in the vowel shortening of the first “i” sound; vowel shortening in Western Cree is typical in more casual speech; Wolfart & Carroll, 1981). Her metapragmatic framing, “First of all,” in line 51 is the second quality. Although she had been addressing her audience prior to line 51, “First of all” signals that the official business is just now starting, and it is to start with an Indigenous language utterance. The absence of any explicit effort to make clear what *tánisi* means or any further indication of her ethnic background suggests that indexing her identity is not the only, or even primary, function of her use of Cree. Yet, the metapragmatic framing, “First of all,” does indicate that she is doing *something*. What is indexed with *tánisi*, it appears, is the very *doing* of *speaking in an Indigenous language*. *Tánisi* references not only, or simply, who she is as an ethnic person, but also what she’s doing at the podium.

What is the importance of the distinction? For Duranti (2004), agency affirmations are the by-product of speaking. Here we see Lameman *staging* her communicative abilities in Cree. Adapting Duranti’s (2004) insights into ego-affirming agency for the case at hand, with *tánisi* Lameman *brings into existence herself as a Cree actor*. And she does so precisely as she embarks on the formal work of her invitation, that of “Indigenous” public speaker. Whatever speech acts follow will be performed by an *Indigenous* actor. Through “*tánisi*,” Lameman takes possession of the Indigenous public speaker role prepared for her in the event’s organization. She affirms her potential to speak as an Indigenous person, and she signals that her talk will be “Indigenous” speaking.

To generalize the observation, and to make a slight extension from the work of Ahlers (2006), I argue that Indigenous language openings in intercultural events be seen, not as marking speakers’ “transportable” ethnic identity but as functioning indexically to connect the speaker to the “institutional” or “situational” identities available in the event (Rampton, 2013, 2014; Zimmerman, 1998; see also Ochs, 1996). In this sense, *Indigenous* speaker belongs as much to the situation as it does to the identity of the speaker; it is a platform for action. For the remainder of this chapter, I build off this idea by examining how Lameman manages the identity and activity of Indigenous speakers. As we progress, we find Lameman increasingly uneasy with the role or, more specifically, the production formats it calls on her to take up.

## Doing Representation

Of the various speech acts that Lameman does, and that are involved in the role of Indigenous public speaker, the main task is, of course, to report or represent



Cree experience, knowledge, and political struggles. Indeed, the invitation frames Lameman's talk as one that

will awaken the audience to the current realities of how their community's land ecosystem, cultural heritage, and health are being sacrificed by the world's wealthiest and most powerful industries. (Public Facebook invite)

Insofar as Lameman speaks both as a member of Beaver Lake and about Beaver Lake, to represent the current realities of her community is at the same time *to be a representative*. Excerpt 2 demonstrates just how such an overlapping becomes troubling for Lameman. In the passage, Lameman traces a current dispute over tar sands development on treaty negotiated land to a particular Cree worldview rooted, as she explains, in Cree language. In this passage, Lameman represents Cree understanding of their relationship with the earth and locates this understanding in a further (ideologically laden) representation of Cree language. Footing alignments in lines 259 to 268 in particular show a rather typical example of Lameman both doing the job of representing and being a representative. However, by the end of the excerpt, we find Lameman distancing herself from representing act.

Excerpt 2

253 | So there's eleven treaties across Canada  
 254 | and my my people come from Treaty number six that was signed in 1876 .hh with  
 the British Cro:wn  
 255 | And it pro:mised (.) literally  
 ((brief break in recording))  
 256 | and to sustain yourselves to hunt, fish, trap, and forage  
 257 | just as if treaty had never been signed  
 258 | that is the agreement  
 259 | And in in return  
 260 | we would share the land  
 261 | Because in our language  
 262 | there literally is n:o word for ownership of land,  
 263 | We we do not have that  
 264 | because when you literally translate that ownership to o:wn land  
 265 | it it really it comes out in the literal English translation is y:ou cannot own your  
 Mother  
 266 | Our mother is the one who gives us life and nurtures US  
 267 | So you cannot own her  
 268 | But we can share what our creator has given us  
 269 | that's what the old people said

Except in line 268, where the “us” appears ambiguous, from 259 to the end of the passage Lameman makes extensive use of the exclusive first person plural pronominal forms (“we,” “us,” “our”) with their anaphoric reference being “my people” of line 254. Such use deictically marks a membership division between herself and her target audience as she reports the characteristics of her people (specifically, Cree language structure and Cree understanding of land ownership and treaty obligations). As expected, the use of first person deixis here is consistent over the entire talk; exclusive use of “we/us/our” occurs roughly twice as often as the inclusive usage.

In Goffman’s (1981) terms, the use of the exclusive “we” establishes the *principal*—the person or group responsible for the ideas expressed—as a Cree cultural collectivity of which she is a member. But it is Lameman, as *author* and *animator*, who is responsible for deciding which characteristics to report and how. She is here (and elsewhere in the talk) doing the work of representing and acting as representative; in other words, she is occupying the podium role and keeping with the invitation’s metapragmatic framing of her talk as an “awakening.”

However, in line 269, “that’s what the old people said,” a significant change of footing takes place. It is a traditionalization move, following Bauman (1992), linking the present talk to a tradition of similar talk. It authenticates Lameman as a community member, as Bauman explained, but it also shifts the “provenance,” as Bauman put it, of Lameman’s words. If initially Lameman assumes responsibility for how to report Cree understanding of their Treaty rights, by retrospectively reframing 259–268 as quoted speech she retroactively takes responsibility only for the reporting of the speech, not for deciding what to report and how. This duty is instead transferred to “the old people” (line 269), elders in her community.

Even if it is unlikely that Lameman meant lines 259–268 to be taken as a direct quote, the change in footing nevertheless unsettles her role as *author*. The passage indicates the delicate balance Lameman strikes in her talk between giving representations—as a member of the community represented—and simply animating prior representations. The analysis here suggests some equivocality on Lameman’s part. This simultaneous *allegiance to* and *discomfort with* the representative/representation work of the podium becomes more explicit in the subsequent Q&A discussion, which I turn to now.

## Refusing Representation

By the end of the talk, Lameman is no longer able to maintain the Indigenous speaker role she had, as I argued above, previously accepted and managed throughout her presentation. In response to a question probing earlier remarks she made, Lameman rebels against the activity of Indigenous podium talk, ultimately refusing to speak at all. To bend Goffman’s (1959) terminology, here, an “inopportune intrusion” penetrates “the impression that [the speaker had been], for wider social reasons, in a position to maintain” (p. 132), that is, the footing alignments Lameman had struck throughout her talk. By leaving Lameman, as Goffman predicted, “flustered” and out of “countenance,” (p. 132) the disruption lays bare the involvement obligations (or the “pressures” to return to Burrow’s, 2001, words) of the activity of Indigenous public speaking and the risks they pose for speakers.

Before discussing the excerpt, a bit of background: In 2008, a lawsuit was brought against both the Canadian and Albertan governments by former chief Alphonso Lameman (Lameman's uncle, coincidentally) on behalf of Beaver Lake for infringing on the community's right to hunt and fish on their traditional territories, a violation, Lameman explains, of the Beaver Lake's treaty rights. The legal action brought considerable attention to the community from the environmental movement. Environmental organizations have found in Lameman, a bright and engaged community member who could potentially bring together Indigenous social justice concerns and eco-activism under a single agenda. Lameman has, for her part, taken advantage of a variety of avenues provided by the movement for both employment and for advancing the social justice issues of her community, including speaking at a number of events across Canada and the US.

Nevertheless, managing in her talk the facts of the lawsuit, the diverse wishes of her community, and her own opinion against the values of the North American environmental movement proved a formidable challenge for Lameman. While the lawsuit was brought in the name of the community (a particularity of Canadian law enshrined in Canada's *Indian Act*), the demands made in the lawsuit are not, of course, identical with the multiplicity of voices within the community. Beaver Lake has a variety of interests in and commitments to the tar sands industry. At the time of writing, Beaver Lake operated two tar sands ventures. The tar sands industry is a major employer in the community. Like all communities at hand to large scale industries, Beaver Lake is wedged between the economic returns and environmental costs of tar sands development. In representing this diversity, Lameman finds herself in a particularly challenging situation. In her role as Indigenous public speaker at a gathering of environmentalists, how can she represent all the diversity in her community without, herself, being representative of it?

Excerpt 3 is divided into three segments, transcribing on the page a speech chain that unfolded in Lameman's talk. In Excerpt 3b, a questioner from the audience asks Lameman to elaborate on a point she made earlier in her talk, contained in Excerpt 3a. Excerpt 3c is Lameman's response. The exchange centres on the account Lameman gives of an ongoing legal case and, more generally, her community's desires with respect to oil and gas development. Excerpt 3a finds Lameman managing the tricky task of balancing the specifics of the legal case with the wishes of a diverse community who she represents for the benefit of an audience who, presumably, have very specific ethical views on tar sands extraction.

Excerpt 3a

574	...you know ah it's-- thus you know save all human beings
575	You know taking on this fight that's gonna um ultimately protect us <u>all</u>
576	ah You know and what this litigation said was--
577	You know we're not saying
578	" <u>shut down the tar sands</u> "
579	You know what we're saying is you know
580	"the bitumen is there it's not going anywhere
581	let's slow <u>down</u> here."

582 | You know  
 583 |           “let’s take a step back and reassess what’s going on here”  
 584 | And ah and so they did that and you know ah...

Lameman begins, in line 576, with an attempt to represent the details of the lawsuit. However, she abandons the effort, and, in line 577, introduces once again an exclusive (although not clearly defined) “we,” which returns Lameman to the regular *community* representative role discussed in above. In doing so, Lameman avoids potentially misrepresenting an ongoing lawsuit. However, the shift in footing from “what this litigation said” to “we’re not saying” introduces a new bind associated with the representative role, specifically, either misrepresent a diverse Cree community or give an inclusive, but potentially unfavorable, impression of Beaver Lake and its representative.

There is evidence in the transcript that Lameman is indeed wary of how Beaver Lake’s diverse interests might displease her environmentalist audience. The shift in verb subject from “what this *litigation* said” to “we’re not saying” comes with a series of “you know” hedges prefacing three instances of reported speech. The hedges are appeals for a shared understanding within the interaction, a bid for convincing her audience of the self-evident nature of what follows. If successful, “you know” would head off any potential rift that may arise; they smooth the way for the “not saying to shut down the tar sands” position now attributed to her community. Should these hedges fail, the use of reported speech nevertheless affords Lameman some separation between her own view and the potentially controversial position expressed in a manner analogous to the traditionalization move discussed in Excerpt 1. As reported speech, she is not authoring these positions, even if the “we” includes her as principal. That her goal is to distance herself from the “not shut down the tar sands” position becomes even more evident in line 584 where the “we” is ultimately shifted to “they” in “so they did that...”. With the shift in pronoun, Lameman disaffiliates completely with the “let’s take a step back” / “we’re not saying shut down the tar sands” position. It is one of the very few times in the entire talk where Lameman marks a complete break between her own views and those of her community.

Without a careful analysis of Lameman’s use of pronouns in managing her production formats and footing alignment, such “distancing” efforts are easy to overlook. Precisely where Lameman stands on the issue eventually comes to a head in the subsequent Q&A period. Regardless of the intentions of the questioner (my fieldnotes indicate that the question was more conversational than antagonistic, a request for clarification, not justification) the question (transcribed in 3b) triggers an extensive episode of meta-commentary in 3c on the limited range of footings in Indigenous podium talk, and ends with Lameman refusing to answer at all.

*Excerpt 3b*<sup>4</sup>

1 | Um thank you for your talk  
 2 | um I would like to just clarify one emm one aspect to make sure I understood

<sup>4</sup> Line numbering starts over with this Q&A exchange.

- 3 | You said something about not wanting to say that--  
 4 | ah You're not saying to shut down the tar sands  
 5 | Is there a reason why you would not want to say that?

The point of conflict is specifically with who, exactly, is not saying "shut down the tar sands" (line 578). The origins of the problem can be traced by briefly examining the use of the first person pronoun. The questioner begins posing her question in line 3, but stumbles with her attempt to re-report the reported speech event of line 578 (as reflected by the two "say" verbs). The "you" pronoun of the first conjugated verb in the line ("You said something about...") is clearly Lameman of the event. But as the reporting becomes too grammatically burdensome, the questioner opts for the simpler formation of lines 4 and 5, "You're not saying to shut down the tar sands / Is there a reason why you would not want to say that?".

While the "you" in lines 4 and 5 may very well have the exclusive community "we" of line 578 ("we're not saying") as its reference, Lameman clearly takes it as referencing her alone. Lameman is, thus, assigned the principal of the problematic "not shut down the tar sands" position, a position it appears she does not want to be understood as holding. What is striking in her response, however, is that instead of offering a clarification of her own stance towards oil and gas development, we hear why in the context of the podium talk, such a clarification of her personal opinion is impossible.

*Excerpt 3c*

- 6 | Shit ((spoken under her breath but still in the microphone and audible enough  
 to be picked up by the audience who begin to laugh)) (1s)  
 7 | um (4s) ((Lameman smiles; laughter in the crowd progressively increases))  
 8 | um ((throat clearing, laughter tapers off)) (1s)  
 9 | My personal opinion and that opinion of my leadership and my nation  
 as a whole a:nd our people as a whole are all different  
 10 | S:o (.) that question is very unfair to ask m:e(h) ((nervous laughter))  
 11 | which is why I-- I just won't answer it  
 12 | because um like I said I don't represent my nation  
 13 | I don't represent my leadership  
 14 | I represent my children and me as a citizen member of my community  
 15 | um And so I-- I can't answer that  
 16 | You know in a private con(h)versation  
 17 | me and you my personal opinion I would answer that  
 18 | but I can't answer that you know  
 19 | and have that out there you know  
 20 | and have it misconstrued



- 21 | and maybe me you know it comes out as if I'm speaking for my nation  
 or my leadership when I don't (1s)
- 22 | Sorry

In line 6 Lameman responds strongly to the question with a muffled, but still audible “shit.” The “shit” is humorous, and both the audience and Lameman delight in the impropriety. Her wry delivery suggests that she recognizes that she has been called out, as it were: the representor/representative footing she was in various ways maintaining can no longer be sustained. Although the response begins relatively light-hearted, it becomes much more defensive in line 10, and by line 11, Lameman refuses to respond to the question at all.

In her explanation of why, Lameman sketches out three available footing alignments for responding to the question, each unacceptable: that she speaks on behalf of (1) her community, (2) her leadership, (3) herself and her family. Although she had been previously managing the representative speaker role, Lameman rejects (1) and (2) outright (“my personal opinion and that opinion of my leadership and my nation as a whole and our people as a whole are all different,” line 9). Now having to defend “not shutting down the tar sands”, she responds that she can only adopt the much more circumscribed “principal” of (3), citing intra-community diversity.

Yet even after signalling that she can only speak on her own behalf and that of her family, Lameman nevertheless claims that even going forward in this manner is impossible: she cannot prevent being understood as in some way representative, as in either (1) or (2). In other words, Lameman’s response suggests that although she takes herself to be picked out by the questioner’s “you” (in lines 4 and 5)—that she’s indeed being asked for her personal opinion—she understands that her response will, nevertheless, be taken by the audience as reflective of an imagined (and unified) Beaver Lake voice. She identifies herself as caught in a metonymic replacement of her for her community inherent in the activity of podium talk. The podium prevents her personal opinion from remaining personal while it imposes generalities on her community that misrepresent its true diversity. She can do nothing but refuse to speak altogether.

### Discussion

The very same argument Lameman uses against responding to the question of Excerpt 3b could, of course, be extended to the talk as a whole, in effect, giving reason for refusing the invitation altogether. But to do so would be to forego the benefits that *were* possible by way of the podium and her partnership with 350 Maine. And therein lies the rub. It can hardly be unexpected, but easily overlooked, that the discursive acts through which political gains might be made are necessarily constituted by particular interactional demands and obligations that organize how these acts are carried out. While popular education events that allow Indigenous speakers to *speak on their own behalf* may be the best option we have for raising public awareness about Indigenous social and political struggle, the speeches possible are much more constrained, or ordered, than perhaps audiences are organizers realize.

## Ordering Indigenous Public Speaking

As with other studies of interaction, the premise of this paper is that social orders are built up by the everyday encounters people have with one another and the world around them. This means that, as analysts, we attempt to make sense of interactions always in view of larger ordering and re-ordering practices (Fine, 2003), the praxis approach discussed in the paper's first and second sections. What structures *reflexive Indigenous intercultural podium talks* as a kind of ordered interaction is the specific lamination of ethnic identity with public speaker role. By design—and set into motion by their framing in the publicity surrounding events—Indigenous public podium talks unify *being* Indigenous with the task of *representing* Indigenous life. Turning our attention to Lameman's reflexive engagement with the participatory demands of her talk allows for an appreciation of the experience of that ordering and a sense of how that order is maintained and challenged in actual activity.

I opened the analysis by attempting to show how, through the emblematic use of a single Cree word, Lameman accepts her podium role: she affirms her potential to act by affirming her Cree existence, and so joins her communicative acts with her Cree identity. She is, at this moment, and thereafter, *speaking* (and so acting) as a Cree. And yet, as the talk continues, we find evidence that she is increasingly troubled by what the situational relevance of what her Cree identity implies for her as a public speaker engaged in the activity of public speaking. These troubles are not abstractions, or after-the-fact characterizations of the address. They bear out in the kinds of footings Lameman strikes—in the kinds of alignments Lameman takes up with her audience through the organization of the production formats of her speech.

Whose words are being spoken? Whose position is being expressed? And what relation do these words and positions strike to those of the speaker who animates them? None of these appear to have straightforward answers. As we see in Lameman's talk, the use of pronouns and reported speech—the discursive material for Lameman to construct her footing alignments—become a site of micro-management and contestation. The ways pronouns and reported speech are and can be handled have very real implications for how Lameman represents (or mis-represents) her community and herself, and for how she might build avenues of affiliation between the social and political battles Indigenous people fight every day and the issues that animate and mobilize non-Indigenous publics.

## Agency *with* the Social Contexts of Indigenous Public Speaking

Crystal Lameman's particular engagement with the activity of Indigenous public speaking that January afternoon shows that Indigenous activists *are* aware of, and troubled by, the kinds of demands entailed in speaking on your own behalf (where "own" implies you *and* your community). Yet these participatory demands are part of the social context wherein Indigenous stories are able to be told and worked out. Although Lameman may have temporarily rejected the Indigenous public speaker role in the Q&A period, her willingness to participate in this event and others shows that speakers are willing to work *with* these participatory demands to take advantage of the political opportunities of podium talk. Working

*with* these contexts is one aspect of agency Burrows identifies, and it demonstrates the kinds of resiliency Indigenous populations in North America have exhibited since contact (Kirmayer, Dandeneau, Marshall, Phillips, & Williamson, 2011; Miller & Davidson-Hunt, 2013; Vizenor, 1994). Whatever challenges the speaking engagement did present Lameman, by giving her talk (and with the help of the organizers) she was able to raise over \$3000 dollars that afternoon towards Beaver Lake First Nation's legal fees while connecting with over a hundred audience members and a multiplicity of environmental organizations.<sup>5</sup>

In overtly intercultural contexts, implied ethnic membership is part of the context *with which* actions and activities are carried out. For an Indigenous agency enacted *with* social contexts, agents must adhere to (or "articulate" with; Hall, 1996) the context-specific participatory arrangement that makes their actions in some way culturally or ethnically recognizable. In this way, Indigenous group membership is not just the background to her intervention, but what provides for it. The question for analysts of reflexive, intercultural interaction is how does recognizable group membership become necessary to whatever action is being carried out? In the data presented in this paper we find Lameman using three specific devices: emblems of Cree language, reported speech (including traditionalization moves), and positioning a unified Beaver Lake community voice as the principal of her talk. Further analysis might aim to identify the extent to which such devices or others are in a sense mandatory to the cross-cultural political activities of Indigenous actors.

### Agency *Against* the Social Contexts of Indigenous Speaking

Lameman's meta-commentary in Excerpt 3c does suggest that the positioning of a unified Beaver Lake community voice as principal is in fact obligatory, or at least unavoidable. When these obligations become insupportable, it becomes necessary to ask about the second kind of agency Burrows identifies: how Indigenous speakers can influence and define the social contexts in which their stories are worked out. In our case, Lameman's refusal to act *with* the participatory demands in Excerpt 3 may be understood as an act *against* them. For those potential questioners who observed it, Lameman's self-censorship surely gave pause. In this way, Lameman's refusal to speak, however minute, counts among the "series of actions over time and place," as Burrows (2001, p. 15) put it, that change the social contexts for Indigenous public speaking. But while it's certainly right that Indigenous actors, like Crystal Lameman, "once again take a greater part in influencing and defining the social/political/legal/economic/spiritual contexts" (p. 15) within which they act, if acts like Lameman's self-censorship are to be effective, it takes all those invested in Indigenous public expression to be critical of how we organize ourselves to provide the venues for Indigenous people to speak on their own behalf.

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<sup>5</sup> In addition to 350 Maine, eight different provincial and local environmental organizations participated in the event.

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Stephen Peters ([stephen.peters@mail.mcgill.ca](mailto:stephen.peters@mail.mcgill.ca)) is a doctoral candidate in the Department of Integrated Studies in Education at McGill University. He has been a visiting scholar at the Center for Language, Discourse & Communication at King's College London and the Educational Linguistics Division at the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education. His research interests include Indigenous-non-Indigenous relationship building in Canada, intercultural communication, and cultural production in the human services.

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### Appendix A

Transcription conventions (modified from Jefferson, 2004)

(.)	A dot in parentheses indicates a short, untimed pause
(1s)	A number in parentheses indicates timed pause to the second
↑↓	Arrows indicate high or low pitch
°word°	Degree signs indicate soften speech
wor:d	Colon within a word indicates elongation of preceding sound
<u>word</u>	Underline indicates stressed syllable or word
wo(h)rd	Parenthesized <i>h</i> indicates laughter within a word
--	Dashes indicate cut off speech
.hh	Double <i>h</i> preceded by full stop indicates notable in-breath
hh	Double <i>h</i> without full stop indicates notable out-breath
((comment))	Doubled parentheses contain transcriber description of non-speech sound or other features